

Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism

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Theory

Classical (Freudian) Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis, as inaugurated by Sigmund Freud, analyzes the psyche, which, according to the theory, is a site of irrational and unconscious conflict between primal desires and traumatic realities. The following slides represent the core of Freud's theory regarding models of psyche, unconscious and repression, pleasure and reality, sexuality, basic disorders, and symptom and cure.

Repression and the Unconscious

- ★ Two interrelated concepts underly all of Freud's work
 - ★ Repression: the procedure by which the conflicts and realities which the psyche cannot rationally deal with are put out of one's conscious, waking mind
 - ★ Unconscious: the part of the psyche into which conflicts and traumas are repressed

Two Models of Psyche

I. Id/Ego/Superego

- ★ Id (it): instinct or drive, the bodily and biological basis of all psychic processes
 - ★ Most id drives like sex are repressed; however, the id does not equal the unconscious.
- ★ Ego (I): the self, which originally develops out of the id, but is tested by reality and influenced by people in reality
 - ★ The ego manages the demands of 1) the libido and id, 2) external reality, and 3) super-ego.
 - ★ Overwhelmed by super-ego or reality, the ego represses prohibited drives or trauma.

I. Id/Ego/Super-ego

Concluded

★ Ego, continued

★ Anxiety and psychic unrest signal the breakdown of the ego's management of its various relations.

★ Super-ego (over-I): family and societal influences, voice of authority

★ The super-ego represents the ideal of higher humanity (you ought to be like this--like your father) and the reaction-formation against prohibition (you may not be like this--like your father).

★ Paradoxically, the super-ego's prohibitive idealism can give pleasure; thus the libido can become fused to its own negation, causing neurotic desire, for instance.

Two Models of Psyche

2. Unconscious/Pre-conscious/Conscious

- ★ Unconscious: the site of conflict and trauma, what one has repressed, what one cannot know without analytical help (It's not that one doesn't know she is obsessively washing her hands, but rather that she can't explain why)
- ★ Pre-conscious: what one is not thinking, but could if one chose to (short and long-term memory)
- ★ Conscious: what one is presently aware of

Pleasure and Reality

- ★ Pleasure principle: originally simply a tension derived from a unsatisfied drive of an erogenous zone, but as the psyche develops memory and fantasy, pleasure is coded into non-genital action of primary process, imagination, dreamwork, and wish-fulfillment
- ★ Reality principle: the secondary process thought of reason and judgment which rivals and supersedes the pleasure principle, thereby installing the unconscious of repressed desires

Pleasure and Reality

Continued

- ★ Eros vs Thanatos: undergirding the pleasure and reality principles, which exist in the order of the ego, are primal instincts, which exist in the irrational realm of the id.
- ★ Eros: the life instinct, pleasure derived from creation, love and affection
- ★ Thanatos: the death instinct, pleasure derived from (self-)destruction, hate and aggression

Pleasure and Reality

Concluded

- ★ Art: a reconciliation between pleasure and reality principles, a sublime working through of Eros and Thanatos.
- ★ Sublimation: the fulfillment of basic bodily drives via transformation into something “better,” civilized and artistic

Sexuality

- ★ Freud theorizes that humans pass through four stages of sexuality as they grow from infants to sexually active adults.
- ★ These stages seek to 1) localize desire from polymorphous perversity to genital pleasure and 2) transfer auto-erotic pleasure to others in the cause of heterosexual reproduction.
- ★ If a conflict or trauma in one of these stages is not resolved, then neurosis, psychosis, or perversity could result.

Sexuality

Continued

- ★ 1) oral, in which the mouth is the site of satisfaction,
- ★ 2) sadistic-anal, in which biting and excretion afford pleasure,
- ★ 3) phallic, in which the child undergoes the Oedipal complex of desire for the mother, rivalry with the father, and appropriate super-ego guilt taught through castration anxiety which causes the child to desire others outside the family; and the period of sexual latency which follows
 - ★ (Note: just because you don't remember your Oedipal complex doesn't mean it didn't happen. You were a toddler, and guilt veils or represses memory.)
- ★ 4) genital, green light for heterosexual reproduction

Three Basic Disorders

- ★ Neurosis: overwhelmed by reality and super-ego, the ego flees reality by suppressing id, desire, conflict, or trauma it cannot manage
- ★ Psychosis: with no support from the super-ego, the ego forecloses upon and remodels reality according to unchecked id, desire, conflict, or trauma
- ★ Perversion: due to a founding trauma which it disavows the reality of, the ego gives up real sexual pleasure for a symbolic substitute

Symptom and Cure

- ★ Everyone represses, but those for whom the unconscious causes debilitating suffering seek treatment with a psychoanalyst.
- ★ Symptom: manifest expression of unconscious conflict or trauma, a return of the repressed in somatic and agential form
- ★ Talking cure: the purpose of psychoanalysis is to reveal to the conscious mind through analytical discourse the unconscious underlying symptoms
- ★ Active Reversal: once an analysand realizes her unconscious conflicts, she can consciously seek to reverse them through new ways of being toward self, others, and the world

Theory

Lacanian Psychoanalysis

- ★ While Freud's key psychical topologies are unconscious/preconscious/conscious and id/ego/superego,
- ★ Jacques Lacan takes psychoanalysis into the realms of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real.

The Imaginary Order

- ★ The Imaginary, characterized by feelings of wholeness and fullness of being, is the realm of dyadic, unitary relation between child and mother inaugurated by
- ★ The Mirror Stage, that point in which the inchoate, impotent child looks at the mother, a caregiver, or a mirror and internalizes that image to give herself structure and control.

The Symbolic Order

- ★ The Symbolic Order, inaugurated by the father breaking the unitary bond of child and mother with language and substitution, with prohibition and the “No” (hence the No/Name-of-the-Father),
- ★ Causes the subject to lose her sense of complete being and thereby desire to fill the lack that initially split her not only from the mother but also from herself.

The Symbolic Order

Continued

- ★ Desire is desire to fill the lack opened by symbolic substitution, of using language.
- ★ The objet petit a is the lost object of desire that forms the subject's unconscious and motivates her unconscious actions, her drive to be whole.
- ★ While the Imaginary is characterized by unitary being, the Symbolic is comprised of the rules of meaning designed to satisfy the desire of the Big Other.

The Real

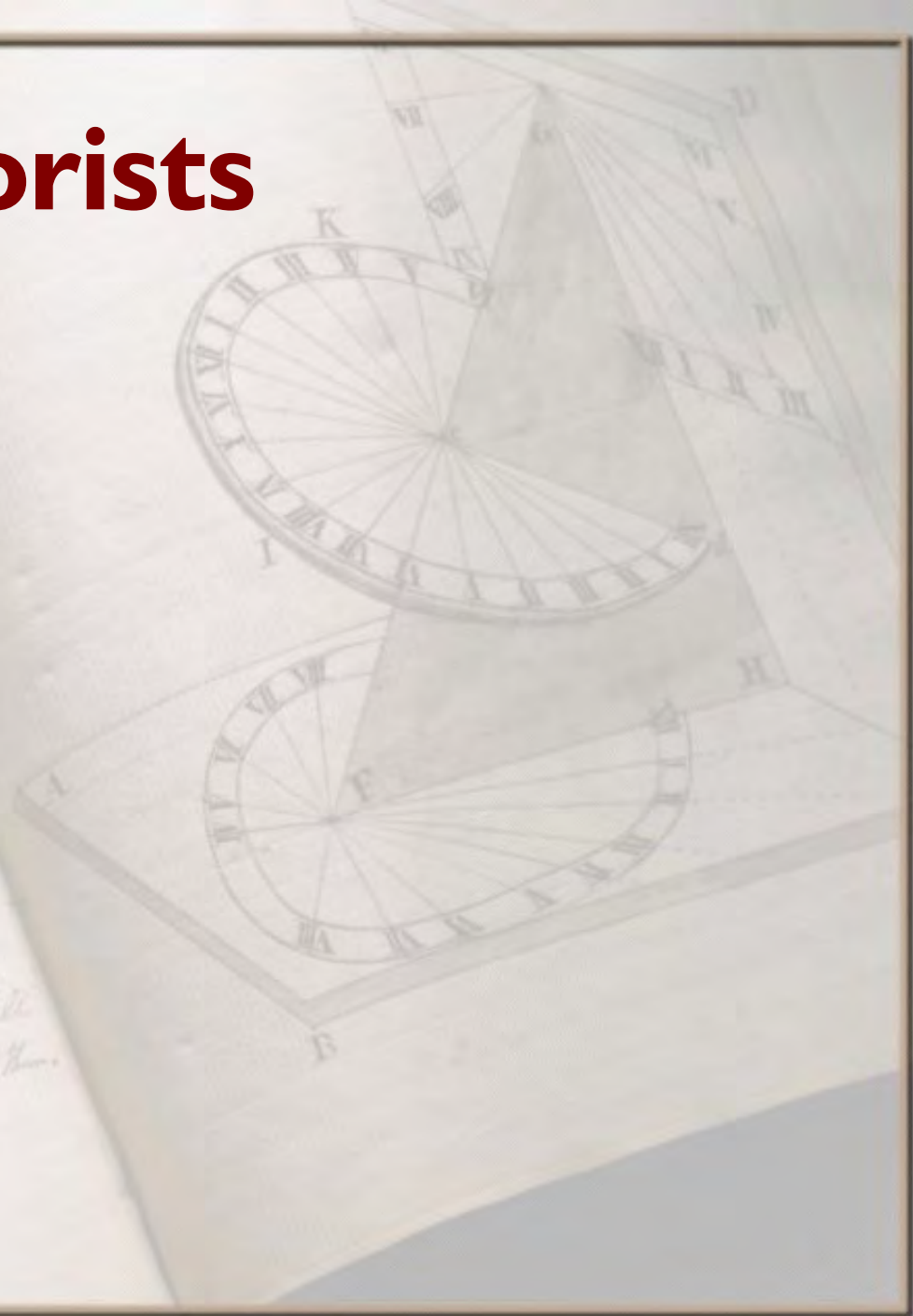
★ When the subject realizes that Symbolic meaning is an illusion covering a basic lack of Imaginary being, she encounters the traumatic, impossible, incomprehensible Real that exists beyond symbolization, that bores a hole in the Symbolic, that leaves her destitute and bereft, desubjectivized yet finally free to be driven to jouissance, real enjoyment.

Practice

- ★ Whereas classical criticism defines and defends literature's place in society and culture,
- ★ Psychoanalytic literary criticism looks at the psyche and psychological anxieties and issues of a literary text's
 - ★ Characters
 - ★ Author or Culture
 - ★ Reader or Society

Theorists

- ★ Sigmund Freud
- ★ Shoshana Felman
- ★ Jacques Lacan
- ★ Laura Mulvey



Sigmund Freud

“The Theme of the Three Caskets”

★ Argues that the choice of the lead casket is a displacement or substitution for the “dumb” woman, who symbolically represents the laws of Nature leading to inevitable death. Thus, the choice of the young, vibrant girl is really a reaction formation against, an unconscious recognition of, and, paradoxically, a gravitation toward Death because youth of necessity implies age and decay.

Sigmund Freud

“Creative Writers and Daydreaming”

★ Argues that as child age, they substitute imaginative, creative play for fantasy, dreams, and daydreams. Fantasies, because, they are comprised of repressed wishes, are often sources of shame and embarrassment. However, the creative writer uses art to sublimate her fantasies into socially acceptable literary pursuits.

Sigmund Freud

“Repression,” “The Unconscious,” “Negation”

- ★ Repression is *“turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious.”*
- ★ The unconscious is the content of that repression; the preconscious is that part of the mind which may be accessed at will; and the conscious is that of which we are aware.
- ★ “Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed.”

Shoshana Felman

“The Case of Poe”

- ★ Differentiates traditional psychoanalytic criticism that a) clinically diagnoses the author, Poe, or b) argues his pathology's roots in normal psychological experience from c) Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism that interprets the structure of the text itself, the purloined letter of “The Purloined Letter” as repetition-compulsion and seeks to analyze the unsayable and unreadable unconscious of the story.

Jacques Lacan

“Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”

★ Argues that psychoanalysis examines the effects and symptoms of signification--that the Symbolic constitutes the subject--and proves it by analyzing how the purloined letter positions the subjects around it, how the meaning of the letter possesses the subject who holds or wields it.

Jacques Lacan

“The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud”

★ Argues that we are subjects and “slaves of language,” i.e., the Symbolic Order that splits us from our initial Imaginary sense of being, creates the unconscious (“the unconscious is the discourse of the Other”), and forces us into the realm of substitution, of metonymic and metaphoric meaning. The letter kills/castrates Imaginary being, but poetry/literature is the creative spark that gives Symbolic life.

Jacques Lacan

“The Mirror Stage,” continued

- ★ Argues that the subject is a slave of language. After the mirror stage which forms an imaginary, dyadic relationship between mother and child, the child is forced into the symbolic order of the father’s and society’s language, which represses his original ontological relationship with the world of his mother into the unconscious.
- ★ Consequently, the subject desires to reconstitute his primal way of being, but cannot because language can only represent, it cannot realize. Desire becomes an neverending chain of metonymy.

Jacques Lacan

“The Mirror Stage”

★ Argues that the ego is created in the mirror stage when the infant, who is uncoordinated and inchoate, looks at a caregiver or mirror and internalizes that coherent image as the support structure of his identity, thus inaugurating the self as a fictional, alien, and othered ideal construct designed to contain formlessness and the self's primary desire to live up to the demands of the (Other) man in the mirror.

Jacques Lacan

“The Signification of the Phallus”

- ★ Argues that the phallus is not the real penis, but rather a signifying symbol of power, wholeness, and presence which everyone desires to possess because everyone feels castrated after their entry into the patriarchal symbolic, which severs their imaginary maternal relationship.
- ★ Although everyone wants to appear to have and to be the phallus because of the power it entails, no one really has it because it is just a signifier which slips through our grasp.

Laura Mulvey

★ Argues that narrative film gives pleasure to audiences, male and female alike, by influencing them to narcissistically identify with male heroes and voyeuristically turn women characters into fetishistic objects of the male desirous gaze.



Marxism and Marxist Literary Criticism

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Theory

Marxism, named after economic, political, and cultural philosopher Karl Marx, is a school of thought that examines how politically endorsed economic systems structure societies (organized communities) and cultures (the beliefs and values of communities).

Society

According to Marxism, societies are composed of two elements.

- ★ **Base: economics**

- ★ the material modes of production

- ★ **Superstructure: sociopolitical ideology**

- ★ the culture such as education, philosophy, religion, government, arts, and science

Class

Within a society, people are divided into classes.

- ★ (Socio-)economic class: a group of people categorized by a particular relationship to economic and social power, i.e., its relationship to the base and superstructure
- ★ bourgeoisie: in a capitalist system, those who own and control the base and implement the superstructure
- ★ proletariat: in a capitalist system, those who manage (but neither own nor control) the base and are programmed by the superstructure

Types of Societies

Marxism predominantly looks at three kinds of societies.

- ★ **Capitalism:** a free-market economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods
- ★ The bourgeoisie own the capital while the proletariat hire their bodies for wages (wage labor).

Types of Societies

Continued

- ★ **Socialism:** the stage after the proletarian revolution when a society is changing from capitalism to communism
- ★ The people control the means of production and operate it based on fairness rather than free-market.

Types of Societies

Concluded

- ★ **Communism:** the political theory in which all property and wealth is owned in a classless society by all the members of a community
- ★ Although the former Soviet Union and the present China and Cuba, for example, call themselves communist, they are oligarchies (government by a small group of people) and dictatorships (government by one ruler).
- ★ Although communism is the goal of Marxism, many, Marxists included, consider it a utopian dream, and instead focus on achieving at least class consciousness in the culture and socialism in the government at best.

The Dialectical Materialist View of History

- ★ Materialism: focus on the physical and worldly wealth and possessions, based on the belief that the mind follows the body
- ★ History: study of the past and how the past progresses into the present and future

Dialectical Materialism

Concluded

- ★ Dialectic: the progressive process by which two opposing thoughts, thesis and antithesis, become combined in a unified whole or synthesis
- ★ Dialectical materialism: the historical process by which opposing forces such as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the material reality and a culture's consciousness of its material reality perpetually struggle to bring about a justly organized and self-reflective society
- ★ Praxis: method by which theory is put into practice

Ideology and Consciousness

- ★ Ideology: originally and generically, a belief system brought about by cultural conditioning that portrays arbitrary structures of existence as natural and innate ways of being, such as capitalist ideology or Marxist ideology
- ★ However, after Althusser, the term has come to mean in many instances how the culture blinds an oppressed class to its material conditions of existence by erecting an illusion; common ideologies that operate in the service of American capitalism and those who hold power under capitalism are the American dream, patriotism, religion, individualism, consumerism.

Ideology and Consciousness

Continued

- ★ Alienation: originally from Marx, meaning the estrangement from one's own labor
- ★ However, the term now also suggests the estrangement from self and society, and the feeling of not belonging and subsequent withdrawal from the world.

Ideology and Consciousness

Continued

- ★ **Commodification:** treating objects and people for their economic or social status rather than for their aesthetic or human value
- ★ **Commodification of Desire:** humanity's wants and needs become entangled in conspicuous consumption and commodity fetish such that the ruling class does not need to physically oppress the classes that are under them if those classes purposefully sacrifice themselves as wage-slaves in order to acquire the stuff that the ideology programmed them to fixate on

Ideology and Consciousness

Concluded

- ★ **Class consciousness:** awareness of the (alienating and commodified) socioeconomic conditions of one's class
- ★ **False consciousness:** the lack of awareness or ideological illusions of one's conditions of existence

The Goal of Marxism

The goal of Marxist theory is to use a dialectical materialist view of history to reveal the ideologically constructed false consciousness of the alienated and commodified classes (both bourgeoisie and proletariat, or upper- middle-, and lowerclasses) in order that the socioeconomic conditions of existence be changed toward communist ends.

Marxist Literary Criticism

Whereas psychoanalytic literary critics interpret the psychological agonies and unconscious desires of authors, characters, and readers, Marxist literary critics approach a text in two ways, which can be applied singularly or simultaneously.

Marxist Literary Criticism

Continued

- ★ The Marxist critic looks “inside” the content of the text (for example, at the character and plot) for issues, ideas, and themes relating to the materialist history of capitalist socioeconomic class struggle.
- ★ The critic interprets how the work of literature *either* exposes and challenges *or* manifests and reifies class ideology.

Marxist Literary Criticism

Concluded

- ★ The Marxist critic looks “outside” the text at the level of form (at the genre, period, or movement of the work) and oftentimes at general types of texts, to determine how the class of text derives from and/or reifies its society’s dominant mode of production and/or superstructure.
- ★ First, the critic evaluates whether the form employs realism or experimentation, and then she evaluates whether the realist or experimental form serves ideological or revolutionary ends.

Marxist Literary Theorists

- ★ Karl Marx
- ★ Terry Eagleton
- ★ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno
- ★ Louis Althusser [ALT-whos-sair]

Karl Marx

from *The German Ideology*

- ★ Argues that the consciousness of the individual depends on the material conditions of production.
- ★ Traces the stages of ownership and division of labor from tribal, to communal, to feudal, to industrial.

Karl Marx

“Manifesto of the Communist Party”

- ★ Defines history as history of class struggle, the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat being the current form.
- ★ Argues that the bourgeoisie’s constant revolution of instruments of production results in the eradication of tradition and the installation of perpetual alienation, which will ultimately result in the proletariat uniting into a political, revolution class.

Terry Eagleton

from *Marxism and Literary Criticism*

★ Argues that a vulgar Marxist reading reduces art to basic economic factors and ideology while a rich Marxist reading examines how the “mediated” “conjuncture” of the work’s form, the social conditions in which it was made, the humanities from which it sprang, the social position of artist, the audience, and the aesthetic theories that influenced it.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno

- ★ Argue how the business of mass culture and art as entertainment suppresses individualized consciousness, eradicates consumer imagination, and programs audiences to become types who experience pleasure only in its prepackaged, canned form--on film.
- ★ Such taming of the masses makes them socio-, politico-, and economically complacent.

Louis Althusser

- ★ Argues that art should not only observe an internal distance from but also reveal ideology, by which he means the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.
- ★ Argues that Ideological State Apparatuses interpellate individuals as subjects so that external, repressive power is unnecessary because subjects submit freely to the State and accept their subjugation.



Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism

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Theory

While psychoanalysis examines the socially and sexually conflicted psyche and Marxism looks at the relationship between socioeconomic reality and ideology in advance of productive and conscious change, feminism criticizes patriarchal ideology and advocates women's shared creative and communal valorization.

Patriarchy

★ Patriarchal ideology blinds both women and men to the unequal yet equally debilitating socially constructed realities of gendered experience that not only conserve male power but also oppress, objectify, and other women through traditional, hierarchical, and binary gender roles.

Feminism(s)

★ While all feminists believe that 1) women are oppressed and 2) othered by 3) patriarchy, which is ensconced--established and concealed--in Western civilization, that 4) culture determines gender, and that 5) literature portrays gender issues, and while all feminists 6) act for gender equality, different feminists focus on different aspects and assert different causes of gender disparity.

Materialist Feminism

★ Like Marxism, materialist feminism looks at consciousness constructed from life, reality. While Marxism focuses on class struggle, materialist feminism analyzes how division of labor within the family leads to woman being othered locally by the family and culturally by the patriarchal institutions, with no shared collective experience, history, or tradition, their bodies objectified and their labor appropriated.

Psychoanalytic Feminism

★ Like Lacanian psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic feminism theorizes the relationship between the symbolic order of language and psychosexual existence. Psychoanalytic feminism looks more specifically, patriarchal binary thought and phallogocentrism, and the male gaze. *Écriture féminine*, overbrimming with vibrant, fluid meaning and originating in the semiotic self, breaks the boundaries of the social machine by virtue of being outside the predetermined binary oppositions of symbolic (male) logic.

Multicultural Feminism

★ While materialist feminism focuses on the patriarchal conditions of living and psychoanalytic feminism on the phallogocentric psyche, multicultural feminism charts the intersection of race, class, sexual orientation, and other cultural factors.

Gender Studies

★ Though technically not feminism because it does not advocate political change, gender studies' deconstruction of the fixed, binary, hierarchical gender oppositions (male/female, sex/gender) reveals a performative and decentered fluidity of gender identity and sexuality that coincides with feminist readings and goals.

Feminist Literary Criticism

★ Just as Marxist literary criticism analyzes how the work reinforces or resists capitalist ideology, feminist literary criticism examines how the text reifies or undermines patriarchal ideological operations, how it creates or portrays a female community, how it encompasses an intersection of forces (race, class, etc) acting on gender, how it portrays or establishes women's creativity, consciousness, and literary tradition, how its style of writing is gendered, and how it is received or rejected by its culture based on gender issues.

Virginia Woolf

“Shakespeare’s Sister”

- ★ Explain that “Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare” because they were not only *not* educated but invisible in the historical period. Posits the life of Shakespeare’s hypothetical sister Judith would be filled with mending socks and patriarchal beatings until she ran away to join a theatre whose members laughed at her, save for the actor-manager who impregnated her, causing her to commit suicide.

Adrienne Rich

“When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision”

★ Asserts personal self-knowledge and female literary consciousness via refusal of the patriarchal politics of literature and society. Posits that female “writing is re-naming” of the patriarchal myths and traditions.

Barbara Smith

“Toward a Black Feminist Criticism”

★ Points out the lack of scholarship on Black female authors, and asserts a critical methodology that examines the convergence of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar

"Tradition and the Female Talent: Modernism and Masculinism"

- ★ Not only apply a feminist critique of stereotyped female characters by male authors threatened by females' entry into literary circles as well as feeling of abandonment by the female mother-muse but also create a gynocritics of examining the female literary tradition.

Nina Baym

“Melodramas of Beset Manhood”

- ★ Illustrates how women have been left out of the American literary canon because traditionally male critical judgment defines the great American myth as a hero escaping from the feminizing society to the feminine virginal landscape.



The New Criticism

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Theory and Practice

- ★ Eschews philological, biographical, and historical criticism
- ★ Strives to create an objective, formalist criticism that finds meaning in “the text itself”
- ★ Advocates close reading that analyzes tension and complexity of formal structure and meaning via ambiguity, irony, and paradox
- ★ Resolves tensions of text into harmonious organic unity that engenders a universal theme

T. S. Eliot

- ★ *Technically, Eliot is not a New Critic, but he is considered a chief influence*
- ★ Tradition: the individual poet/poem must be considered within the context of literary history
- ★ Impersonality/Depersonalization: the poet/poem does not express a romantic self/feeling, but rather builds on ideas within the tradition
- ★ Dissociation of Sensibility: poetry should not sever thought from feeling, but rather constitute a complex analysis of thought united with feeling

Cleanth Brooks

- ★ Heresy of paraphrase: paraphrasing the poem violates the meaning of the poem
- ★ Organic unity: the poem is an harmonic whole
- ★ Irony: general incongruity of forces within the poem

Cleanth Brooks

Continued

- ★ Paradox: the poem makes contradictory statements that are harmonized into a whole
- ★ Ambiguity: multiplicity of connotive meaning
- ★ “Form is content”: the structure of the poem is part of the meaning of the poem

John Crowe Ransom

- ★ “Criticism, Inc.”: the scientific and systematic “business of criticism”
- ★ Aesthetic distance: the poet should write with a certain objective, critical detachment, akin to Eliot’s impersonality

William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley

- ★ **Intentional fallacy: the error of taking the author's intent for the meaning of the work**
- ★ **Affective fallacy: the error of taking a work's emotional effect for its meaning**
- ★ **Affective criticism: criticism that romantically looks at psychological effects of the work**
- ★ **Cognitive criticism: criticism that classically and objectively looks at the work**



Structuralism and Semiotics

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Theory

Structuralism is a multidisciplinary endeavor, particularly in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and literary studies, that seeks to determine how surface phenomena such as linguistic signs, social norms, and literary conventions are tied to an underlying, governing system, which itself corresponds to the organizing systems of the human mind. Structuralism is a human, social science.

Structure

- ★ A structure is a whole system, complete unto itself with internal regulations that provide stability yet allow for transformation of the system.
- ★ Examples of structures include language or sign systems, mating rituals, and narrative conventions.

Structural Linguistics

- ★ Founded by Ferdinand de Saussure, structural linguistics theorizes that an arbitrary, relational, and differential system of language mediates the human mind's experience of the world.
- ★ The human mind creates language as a system to organize world.

Structural Anthropology

- ★ Founded by Claude Lévi-Strauss, structural anthropology looks at the codes of social life.
- ★ Lévi-Strauss in particular looked at cultural myths, called mythemes, that transcend cultures, and therefore suggests a common human experience of, for instance, ritual codes and incest taboos.

Semiotics

- ★ Semiology is the science of signs.
- ★ Semiotics, as initially practiced by Roland Barthes, is the practice of analyzing sign systems, not just language, but objects, images, and behaviors; therefore, semiotics opens itself up to literary and media studies of film, television, and pop culture.

Practice

Comparing the Interpretive Practices

- ★ Whereas psychoanalytic criticism looks at *what* a text means in terms of conflicted unconscious psychological processes, Marxist criticism looks at *what* a text means in terms of social existence and class ideology, feminist criticism looks at *what* a text means in terms of gender existence and patriarchal ideology, and New Criticism looks at *what* a text means in terms of the relationship between form and content, . . .

Practice

- ★...structuralist criticism looks at *how* a text means in terms of an underlying system, be it literary writing or reading convention.
- ★Structuralism does not evaluate meaning or theme, it analyzes the structures that undergird the work and our understanding of it.

Practice

Three Versions of Structuralist Criticism

- ★ 1) **Genre Study:** Examines the structure and grammar of literary genres, for example Northrup Frye's archetypes, mythos, and quests.
- ★ 2) **Narratology:** Analyzes the narrative theory of grammar, patterns, and formulas that underlies a literary work.
- ★ 3) **Interpretive Conventions:** Analyzes the codes and conventions of reading and interpreting literature, for example literary competence and interpretive communities.

Theorists



- ★ Ferdinand de Saussure
- ★ Roman Jakobson
- ★ Claude Lévi-Strauss
- ★ Northrup Frye
- ★ Tzvetan Todorov
- ★ Roland Barthes

Ferdinand de Saussure

★As a structural linguist, Saussure theorizes that a signifier (sound or image) is only arbitrarily and conventionally related to a signified concept. Language is a structure of mind that does not convey positivist reality, but rather evokes relational value. Meaning exists in difference.

Roman Jakobson

Continued

- ★ Six functions predominate.
 - ★ Referential: the speaker simply denotes
 - ★ Emotive: the speaker expresses attitude
 - ★ Conative: the speaker implores an addressee
 - ★ Phatic: the speaker starts, stops, or sustains communication.
 - ★ Metalingual: the speaker and/or addressee check literary codes
 - ★ Poetic: in which a message is made for its own literary sake

Claude Lévi-Strauss

- ★ Lévi-Strauss looks for systematic patterns and synchronic repetitions across cultures, for example incest and kinship in languages, rituals, quests, mythemes. He argues that aspects of all cultures can be found within any one culture. Therefore, there exist common, universal ways for human consciousness to organize its experience and world.

Northrup Frye

- ★ Argues for a science of criticism that examines rhetorical and poetical structures. Criticism should move from an examination of a poet's private mythology to an analysis of genre and literary history through the archetypal symbol and myth. Such criticism constitutes literary anthropology which applies the four phases of the seasonal cycle to heroic quests.
- ★ Spring stories yield romance, summer stories are comedies, autumnal stories produce tragedies, and winter stories engender satires.

Tzvetan Todorov

- ★ Structuralist analysis finds the abstract grammar of a work rather than the meaning of a work. Narrative analysis in particular looks at a number of works to discern the basic structure of plot, which moves from disequilibrium to equilibrium.

Roland Barthes

- ★ Does semiotic readings of such things as soap ads and campaign photos.
- ★ Argues that the idea of a modern author (an individual with a single voice to express through her mastery of language) is dead because the codes and conventions of language and literature master the writer.



Poststructuralism And Deconstruction

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From Structuralism To Poststructuralism

- ★ Whereas structuralism valorized only the underlying system and codes of literature while decidedly excommunicating the writer, the reader, and meaning from the literary process,
- ★ Poststructuralism seeks the destruction of codes, systems, and structures in order to find a place for the writer, the reader, and the meaning of the text.

Structuralism vs. Poststructuralism

★ Like structuralism, poststructuralism is interdisciplinary. In terms of what we have studied or will study, Lacanian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and the New Historicism are versions of poststructuralism.

Structuralism vs. Poststructuralism

- ★ Structuralism and poststructuralism differ in three key areas:
 - ★ The underlying structure,
 - ★ Identity,
 - ★ And literary criticism.

The Underlying Structure

- ★ Structuralism analyzes the freeze-frame of the underlying system.
- ★ Poststructuralism analyzes *langue* in motion, the social context of codes: unfrozen, in human history, and reintegrated into time.
 - ★ Lacan's metonymy of desire (psychoanalysis)
 - ★ Derrida's différance (deconstruction)
 - ★ Foucault's discontinuous history (New Historicism)

Identity

- ★ Structuralism discusses the system only, not individual authors and not individual people.
- ★ The author is dead, replaced by myths and archetypes and the structural analysis of narrative.
- ★ The individual is nil, superceded by the discursive system.
- ★ Poststructuralism witnesses the reemergence of the author and individual, but subjected to language systems.
- ★ Lacan's subject exists only in relation to the Big Other
- ★ Derrida's decentered subject of discourse
- ★ Foucault's subject-positions derived from discourse

Literary Criticism

- ★ Structuralism analyzes how a text means in terms of underlying systems and structure, such as archetypes, genres, and narrative formulas.
- ★ Poststructuralism analyzes the shifting identities of the characters and the purposively playful meaning of the text.

Poststructuralist Literary Criticism

- ★ Analyze the fluctuating and shifting, non-essential and non-substantial, destabiliz-ed/-ing and performative subject-positions of the characters with respect to the various discursive networks to which they are subject(ed).
- ★ Analyze the paradoxes and the play, the contradictions and the shifts, the undecidability and the aporia of meaning within the text.
- ★ Meaning and “Truth” are suspected, debunked, dispelled, questioned, destabilized, contingent and situated rather than transcendent and absolute.

Types of Poststructuralism

- ★ Deconstruction is one version of poststructuralism, most associated with Derrida and de Man, that shows the play of meanings within the world and the work.
- ★ Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today* and Ross Murfin's "What Is Deconstruction?" focus exclusively on deconstruction and do not discuss the larger theory of poststructuralism. Deconstruction is a subset of poststructuralism; do not confuse one for the other.

Types of Poststructuralism

Concluded

- ★ New Historicism is another subset of poststructuralism, most associated with Foucault and Greenblatt, that shows the play of ideological power within individuals subjected to discourse.
- ★ Other versions of poststructuralism include Baudrillard's hyperreality (the deconstruction of the image vs reality hierarchy) and French feminist Cixous's *écriture féminine* (the play of the text become the pleasure of the body).

Deconstruction

Deconstructing Language

- ★ Due to the everyday, practical, and conventional use of language, we think language is a stable structure, but it is actually a slippery, endlessly deferring play of the chain of signifiers that never arrives at the signified, especially in literature.
- ★ Deconstruction thus attends to the ironies and ambiguities valorized by New Criticism, but it does not seek to resolve tensions into an harmonious, universal, meaningful theme.

Deconstruction

Deconstructing the World

★ After showing language's instabilities, deconstruction turned to the foundations of being: by deconstructing language, deconstruction disrupts logocentrism, the ground of Western thought. Absolute and transcendental metaphysics give way to decentered and disseminated discourse.

Deconstruction

Deconstructing Identity

- ★ Just as language and belief are destabilized, so too is identity. There are neither *a priori* nor innate organizing principles; rather identity is subject to (thus the term “subjectivity”) the decentered, unstable, shifting play of language and discourse systems.
- ★ Deconstruction does not discount structuralism's belief in an underlying system of human thought, but it shows how this system is as playful and prone to slippage as the language/discourse system, which it believes produces subjectivity.

Deconstruction

Deconstructing Literature

- ★ Deconstruction either 1) analyzes how the meaning of the text is ultimately undecidable because the conflicts and contradictions within the text produces conflicting and contradictory interpretations (again, this method is the exact opposite of how New Critics seek to expose and then resolve the tensions of the text). . . .

Deconstruction

Deconstructing Literature, continued

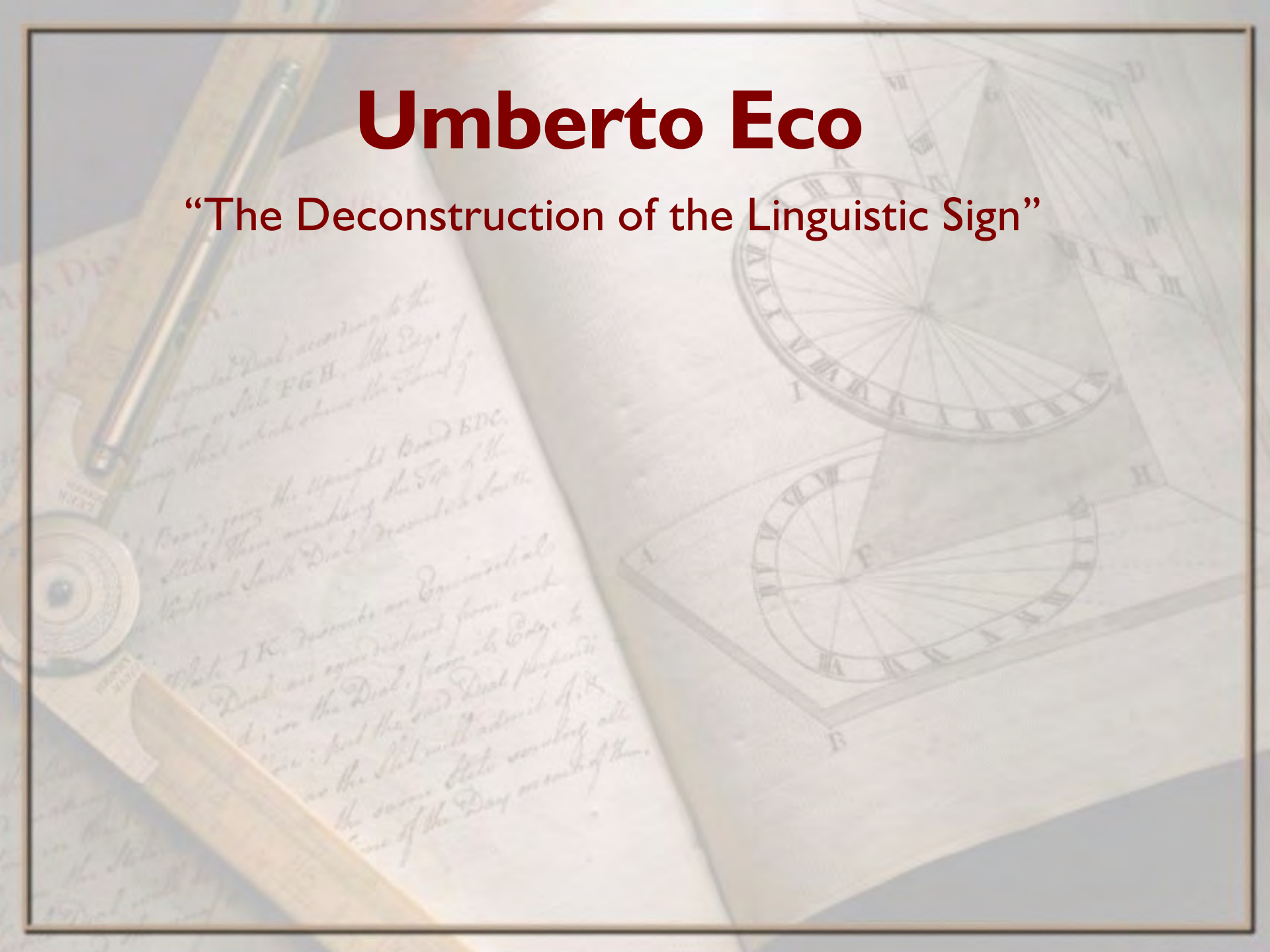
★Or 2) analyzes how the text paradoxically privileges both terms of the binary oppositions that structures it or, similarly, how the privileged position ceaselessly slips back and forth between terms, without being resolved.

Deconstructive Theorists

- ★ Umberto Eco: *structuralist* semiology that carries with deconstruction
- ★ Jacques Derrida: deconstructive philosophy
- ★ Paul de Man: deconstructive literary criticism
- ★ Barbara Johnson: deconstructive literary criticism

Umberto Eco

“The Deconstruction of the Linguistic Sign”



Jacques Derrida

- ★ Jacques Derrida represents the philosophical deconstruction wing of deconstruction, which unravels metaphysical hierarchies and decenters knowledge of the world.
- ★ Derrida argues that writing defies science because it cannot be measured. Writing is undecidable, exorbitant, and supplemental. Signs, words, and writing exist in question as an unclosable knowledge that renders inconclusive meaning.

Jacques Derrida

Continued

★ Using a major theme of Plato's *The Phaedrus*, which asserts that writing signals both the absence of the presence of the speaker and the death of truth, Derrida argues that writing constitutes a serious game or play of meaning that subtly supplants signification and exceeds truth in its very dissemination.

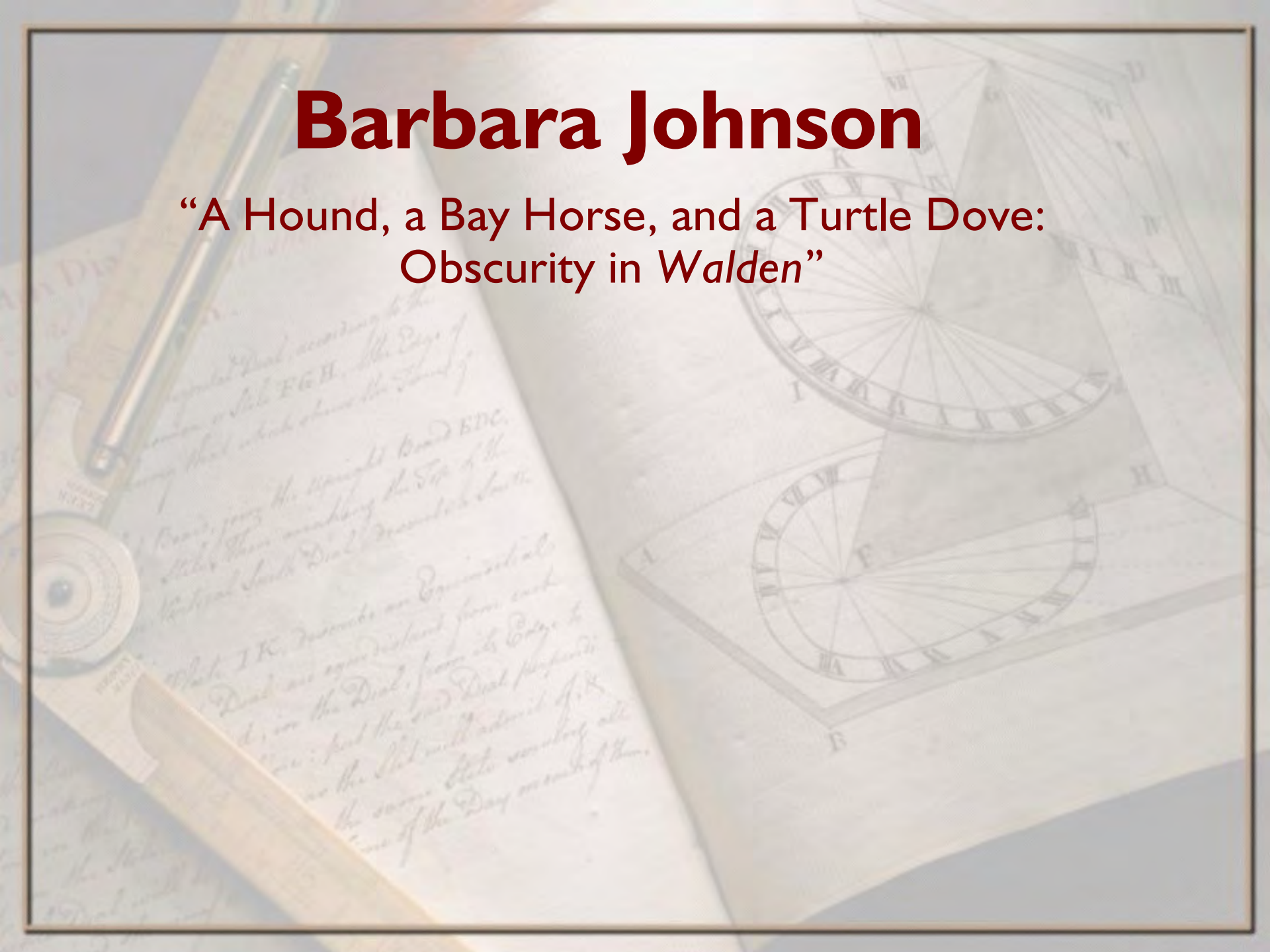
Paul de Man

“Semiology and Rhetoric”

- ★ Paul de Man represents the literary deconstruction wing of poststructuralism, which unravels binary hierarchies and reveals the indeterminacy of meaning within literary texts.
- ★ De Man aligns semiology with the formal grammar of literature and rhetoric with the figurative, persuasive tropes of literature. He argues that literary texts deconstruct themselves because literary writing pushes the contradiction and conflict between the rhetorical and semiological within itself to the extreme.

Barbara Johnson

“A Hound, a Bay Horse, and a Turtle Dove:
Obscurity in *Walden*”





New Historicism and Cultural Studies

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Poststructuralism

Theory Redux

- ★ As previously discussed, poststructuralism seeks the destruction of codes, systems, and structures in order to find a place for the writer, the reader, and the meaning of the text in reaction to structuralism's reductive and totalizing classification.
- ★ Lacanian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and the New Historicism and cultural criticism are versions of poststructuralism.

Poststructuralism

Literary Criticism Redux

- ★ Analyze the fluctuating and shifting, non-essential and non-substantial, destabiliz-ed/-ing and performative subject-positions of the characters with respect to the various discursive networks to which they are subject(ed).
- ★ Analyze the paradoxes and the play, the contradictions and the shifts, the undecidability and the aporia of meaning within the text.
- ★ Meaning and “Truth” are suspected, debunked, dispelled, questioned, destabilized, contingent and situated rather than transcendent and absolute.

From Deconstruction to New Historicism and Cultural Criticism

★ While deconstruction reveals the ideological contradictions of the text through both the necessarily free play of language and the inevitably self-deconstructing binary oppositions, New Historicism focuses on the ideological conflicts of the text through discontinuous, discursive history and Cultural Criticism examines the deconstructed high/low cultural binary in order to advocate for the oppressed.

New Historicism

Theory

★ Unlike traditional historical study, New Historicism does not believe objective analysis of linear, causal, progressive history is possible; rather history is a discontinuous narrative--filled with competing discourses and ideologies--that is interpreted by the current culture to fulfill ideological needs.

New Historicism

Literary Criticism

- ★ New Historicism interprets the the literary text as a cultural artifact that embodies the conflicted discourses and opposing ideologies of its time. The critic not only incorporates into her analysis the documented conversations of the time but also exposes their ideological concerns--as well as her own position within history.

Cultural Criticism

Theory

★ Akin to the poststructuralist version of Marxism as represented by Louis Althusser, cultural criticism examines the underlying ideology of culture. Unlike classical Marxism which is interested in the conflict between the capitalists and the proletariat, cultural studies focuses on the tension between high/superior and low/inferior culture, an opposition blurred by popular culture, and uses Marxism, feminism, and other political theories to advocate for the oppressed.

Cultural Studies

Literary Criticism

- ★ Cultural criticism examines the enculturated behavior and value systems as well as the social structures and social understanding invoked by the literary work in not only its characters but also its readers; and it often looks at the experience of the culturally marginalized.

New Historicist and Cultural Theorists

- ★ Michel Foucault: New Historicism
- ★ Stephen Greenblatt: New Historicism
- ★ Clifford Geertz: Cultural Studies
- ★ Stuart Hall: Cultural Studies

Michel Foucault

“What Is an Author?”

- ★ Michel Foucault represents the New Historical wing of poststructuralism, which examines discontinuous history and subjective power politics.
- ★ After structuralism focused on structure at the expense of authors, Foucault reintegrates the author into literary studies, but with this caveat: the author is a function of discourse.

Stephen Greenblatt

"The Circulation of Social Energy"

★ In defining a “poetics of culture,” argues that individual author and individual are no longer the center of attention; instead the work of literature reflects a cultural transaction, the circulation of cultural capital.

Clifford Geertz

"Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture"

★ While a thin description of culture merely records data, a thick description imagines, interprets, and analyzes the significant, public, symbolic lives of a culture.

Stuart Hall

"Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms"

- ★ While the structuralist paradigm of cultural studies follows Levi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology and emphasize the abstract categories of thought underpinning the unified structure that is culture, the culturalist paradigm analyzes the discourse(s) of the culture as historical and class struggle.