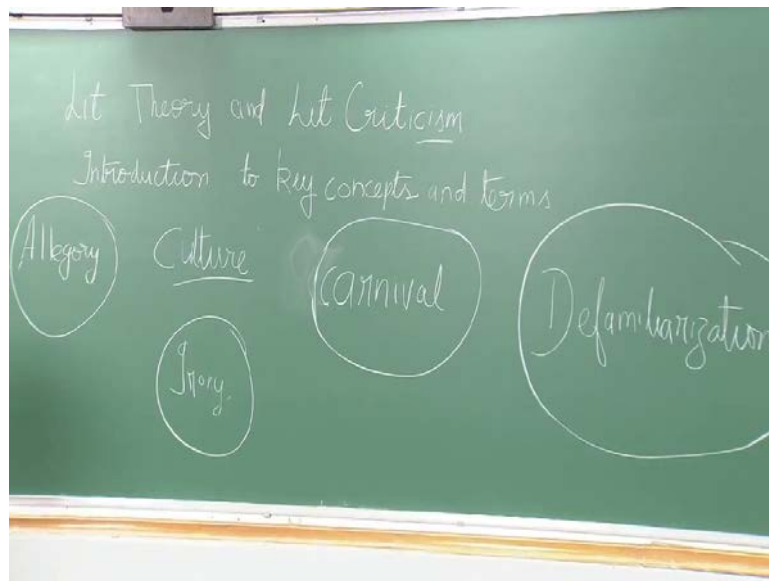


Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture – 2
Key Terms and Concepts-1

Welcome. In today's lecture, I will introduce you to certain influential theories and concepts in literature and culture studies, and that is what our course is all about. As we go deep into the course, you will need to familiarize yourself with the knowledge of certain specific terms and concepts. My attempt here is to make complex literary terms and terminologies more accessible to you.

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So, here you can see on the board; I have written certain specific terms in balloons and circles. This is not all that we are going to do; there will be much more. But look at the range and the variety of terms that you will encounter in this course. So, allegory, culture, irony, carnival, defamiliarization – these are the critical terms that you will be coming across frequently, repeatedly in this course. And therefore, we felt that, it is a highly appropriate that you become familiar with them at this stage itself. So, we will begin with allegory. An allegory – etymologically, it is derived from the Greek word – agora; that is to speak otherwise. It is a narrative, which could be in prose or verse in

which the agents and actions are sometimes the... And sometimes even the settings are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the primary level of signification; and at the same time to communicate a second correlated order of signification. So, there are two levels of understanding.

An idea – Plato uses the cave allegory in the republic written in 360 BC to exemplify the limits of human perception. So, an allegory can be historical as well as political; in which, the characters and actions allegorise historical characters and events. For example, Thomas More's Utopia published in 1516; and John Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel published in 1618. These are representative of ideas in which the literal characters represent concepts; and the plot allegorises and abstract doctrine or thesis. Again John Bunyan's and his – The Pilgrim's Progress published in 1678 is a very popular allegory. Again we also have Aesop's Fables in 610 BC that allegorise the human predicament in terms of animal narratives.

One of the most famous and popular allegory is Everyman, which is an anonymously written work in the form of a morality play. The Pilgrim's Progress is also a moral allegory. Again Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene combines moral, religious, historical and political allegory in a verse form. One of the most well-known and well-loved allegories of all times is Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, which is an allegorical satire directed mainly against political, philosophical and scientific conditions of that age. George Orwell's Animal Farm is an allegorical satire on Stalin's Moscow. Most of us are here familiar with George Orwell's Animal Farm. And this was Orwell's attack on then socialist Russia. So, let us take a look at how his characters allegorise what was happening in Soviet Union.

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George Orwell Animal Farm (1945)

"I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of enmity towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade. All the habits of Man are evil. And, above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.

Here is a passage from George Orwell's *Animal Farm* published in 1945 – I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of enmity towards man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that, in fighting against man, we must not come to resemble him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. No animal must ever live in a house or sleep in a bed or wear clothes or drink alcohol or smoke tobacco or touch money or engage in trade. All the habits of man are evil. And above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal. So, that is socialists Russia for your socialism in Russia for you.

Bricolage is a very popular literary concept, which we often come across when we do postmodernism. So, what is bricolage? The bricolage as a term was popularized by the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, who lived from 1908 to 2009. And his seminal work on myth is *La Pensee Sauvage*; that is, the primitive mind published in 1962. For Levi-Strauss, myth is a supreme example of bricolage since it is constructed out of whatever limited material one has at hand. In other words, a bricoleur should know how to think with the existing material and come up with something of his or her own. Bricolage has gained popularity in the production of music videos, science fiction; and also, it is an integral part of a popular culture and subculture. For example, with every successive generation, artists use the best material possible for the products. Consider H. G. Wells –

The War of the Worlds, which was published in 1895, which is a sort of anticipates the idea of attack by the Martians on Britain since Britain was the global superpower at that time. But, now, we have all kinds of versions of War of the Worlds in popular culture and specifically in films. And every time, the setting changes, but the idea remains the same.

Carnival is a term associated with the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, who uses it to suggest a defines of any official closure or the authority of a single fix sense of any kind. The term is also used to expose the violence, falsehood and invention of official institutions and practices. The idea is that, during carnival time, official life comes to a temporary halt and an inversion of high and low takes place. This provides for a subversion of sensibility and encourages question, contest; and it leads to a denial of closure, which in turn leads to defines of authority, a faith of indeterminacy, and a reversal of hierarchies. Now, if you look at the street scene in a Bertolt Brecht's Galileo, you will come across several instances of carnival, which is a carnival in the truest sense of the word, where high and low come together and discuss that, after all, it is the earth that revolves around the sun and not vice-versa. So, scientific teachings are discussed on the streets. The fishermen, the Nobel people – they all discuss this concept, this idea, this breakthrough in science. And what we see is a subversion of sensibility and a kind of defines of authority. So, that is what carnival is all about.

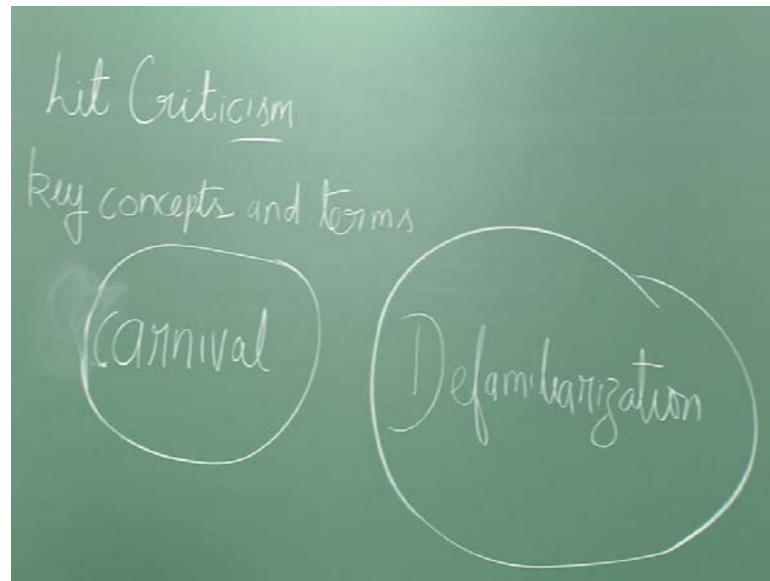
Another example of carnival is Dostoevsky's short story Bobok. Death of the Author associated with the French structuralist Roland Barthes. So, for the postulators of Death of the Author, language and conventions of texts inclusive of pictures and music – they become something to play with; so Roland Barthes and particularly. And also Michel Foucault deposit that authorial or authors intentions should no more be trusted than realism. Attention to meaning intended by an author while reading a text is an example of the logo-centric privileging of a particular set of meanings. Barthes applied the tools of linguistic and psychoanalysis to social phenomena and uncovered a complex sign language working to establish the myths by which the media-saturated affluent world lived.

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“I am at the barber’s, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover a young negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me; that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.”

In one of his essays in *Mythologies* published in 1957, Barthes observes and I sight Barthes here – I am at the barber’s, and copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me; that France is a great empire that, all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. So, you see the intended meaning is there; but, then Barthes is also free to provide us with his own interpretation. So, therefore, the concept – Death of the Author. Now, see there is no fixed meaning to a text, to a work of art.

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Let us go on to discuss now defamiliarization. This is something that you will be coming across very frequently in this course. So, the term originates with the Russian formalists particularly with the theories of Viktor Shklovsky, who lived between 1893 to 1984. The critic believed that, the function of art is to challenge habituation and encourage things to the individual perception. However, the notion of making familiar things is strange by using poetry's power was first presented by Aristotle in his poetics in 332 BC. In *Biographia Literaria* published in 1817, Coleridge defines the concept of strangeness as a central effect in romantic poetry. Coleridge demonstrates this in his poem – *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* published in 1834.

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- He holds him with his glittering eye—
- The Wedding-Guest stood still,
- And listens like a three years' child:
- The Mariner hath his will.
- The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
- He cannot choose but hear;
- And thus spake on that ancient man,
- The bright-eyed Mariner.
- 'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
- Merrily did we drop
- Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top

He holds him with his glittering eye; the wedding guests stood still; and listens like a three year's child; the Mariner hath his will; the wedding guest sat on a stone; he cannot choose but hear; and thus spake on that ancient man; the bright eyed Mariner; the ship was cheered, the harbour cleared; merrily did we drop; below the kirk, below the hill, below that lighthouse top. Now, the poem is a supreme example of familiar becoming unfamiliar. So, the idea of defamiliarization at work here.

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Intertextuality

The term intertextuality has itself been borrowed and transformed many times since it was coined by poststructuralist scholar Julia Kristeva in 1969, where she synthesized Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotics with Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism – irony; in Greek language, it means dissimulation. It is a device, which critics and writers find useful to inject subversion, satire or scepticism. So, these are the key terms here – the keywords here; so irony, privileges, subversion, satire or scepticism. Plato's republic makes a reference to the term to suggest a sly underhanded way of getting ones way around. In the platonic dialogues, Socrates plays the role of a dodger. Also, you must be familiar with Shakespeare's use of verbal and dramatic irony in plays such as Romeo and Juliet; and Othello and Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet famously says – tomorrow, I will be a grave man. Again, in Sophocles's Oedipus, Oedipus promises the citizens to punish the murderer of the previous king not knowing the fact that, it is he who is the murderer.

Irony has gained a high stature as a literary device over the last few centuries. Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal published in 1729 is regarded as one of the most brilliantly written ironic text. In 1894, Thomas Hardy published the collection of short stories – Life's Little Ironies. We can also find oblique quality or tone of irony in the works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Voltaire, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Samuel Butler, Thomas Mann, Kafka, Ellen Wong, James Joyce and Henry James for their dry observation of human beings and human condition. Irony thus draws attention to ones foibles, weaknesses, shortcomings; and aims to purify, reform and refine.

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Pastiche

Pastiche – so the term pastiche is generally associated with the postmodernist scholar Fredric Jameson. And he distinguishes between parody and pastiche. Both rely according to Jameson, on imitation of earlier texture objects. In parody, there is an impulse to ridicule by exaggerating the distance of the original text from normal discourse. The postmodern however, no longer considers the notion of normal language. Pastiche is blank parody in which there is no single model followed; no single impulse such as ridicule, and no sense of a distance from any form. Postmodern architecture for example, borrows elements from various earlier periods of architecture and puts them in juxtaposition, where there is no single stable reference.

For postmodernists, hybridisation – a radical intertextuality, mixing John and conventions – all these dissolve boundaries between high and low art between the serious and ludicrous. John thus become explicitly unstable especially in text such as Nabokov – Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, which mixes up a poem with a literary critical analysis and political thriller. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* published in 1969, which uses history textbook to tell a love story and exploits the John's poetry and psychoanalytic case study. Again, A. S. Byatt's *Possession* – a romance published in 1990 mixes history, myth, literature, mystery, romance and adventure. And a film like... Consider a film like Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, which dissolves the borders between gangster drama, black comedy and love story.

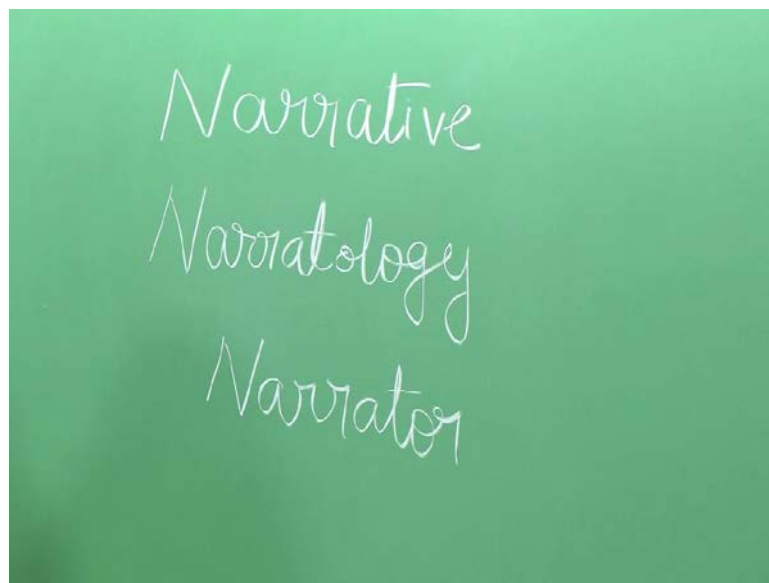
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Simulation

We move on to discuss simulation. It was Plato who argued that, painters, actors, dramatist and so on – all produce representations or imitations of the real world. This way of thinking has given rise to a hierarchical opposition between the real and the copy. The postmodern however, challenges such hierarchies and shows how the set of values associated with these oppositions can be questioned. Even nature in this postmodern reversal is subjected to change; and the representation can be more real than the real. Consider film such as *The Truman Show*, *The Matrix*, etcetera, that demonstrate a postmodern fascination with the technologies of virtual reality.

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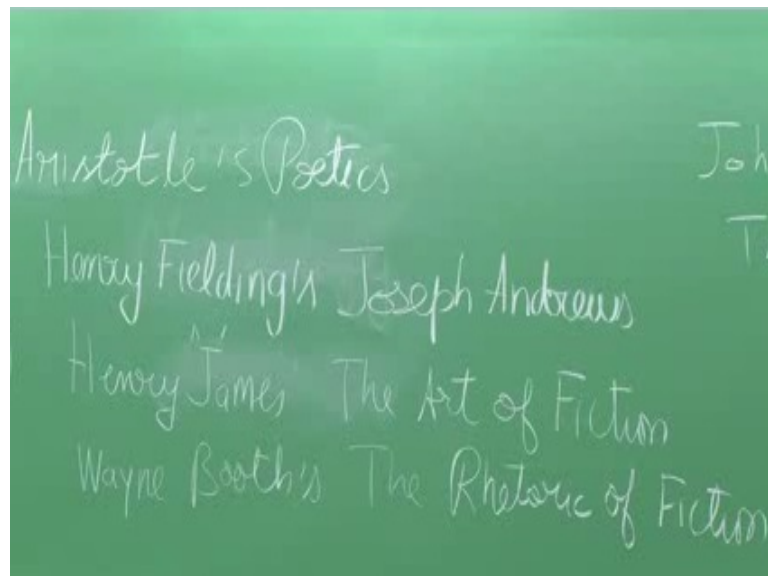


The next term is narrative. What is a narrative? We all understand narrative as a story with that told in prose or verse. For example, we understand Homer's the *Odyssey* as a narrative although it is told in the form of a verse. So, what is a narrative? Narrative can be told in prose or verse; it involves events, it involves characters; and what the characters say or do. Some literary forms such as the novel and short story particularly in prose, and the epic and the so-called romance in verse are narratives that are told by a narrator. So, let me tell you what Roland Barthes says in an introduction to the structural analysis of narratives published in 1965. And here I quote him – narratives may incorporate articulator language spoken or written, pictures, gestures. It is present in myth, legend, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, painting, cinema. The history of the narrative begins with the history of mankind. How important narrative is to our survival, to our history, to our civilization.

Now, contemporary narrative aesthetics owes much to the theories of Gerard Genette. His contribution to the understanding of the narrative and narrative aesthetics of time are particularly significant. Gerard Genette explains time as arranged in a narrative. And according to him, it may deviate slightly or ((Refer Time: 22:32)) from the time of actual life or his story time. So, time is important for Genette. He gives examples from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which can be read as a novel that runs – which we know that, it is a novel that runs into hundreds of pages; but, essentially describes one day in the life of its protagonist. And who is the protagonist? Stephen Dedalus. And what day is that? June 16, 1904. So, a novel running into hundreds of pages; and what does it... The time period of that novel is just a day – one day in the life of its hero. *Ulysses* as you know is a novel set in Dublin and is constructed as a modern parallel to Homer's *the Odyssey*. And the events of the novel parallel the major events in *Odysseus* journey home. Genette examines the aesthetics of narrative time under three categories: order, duration and frequency.

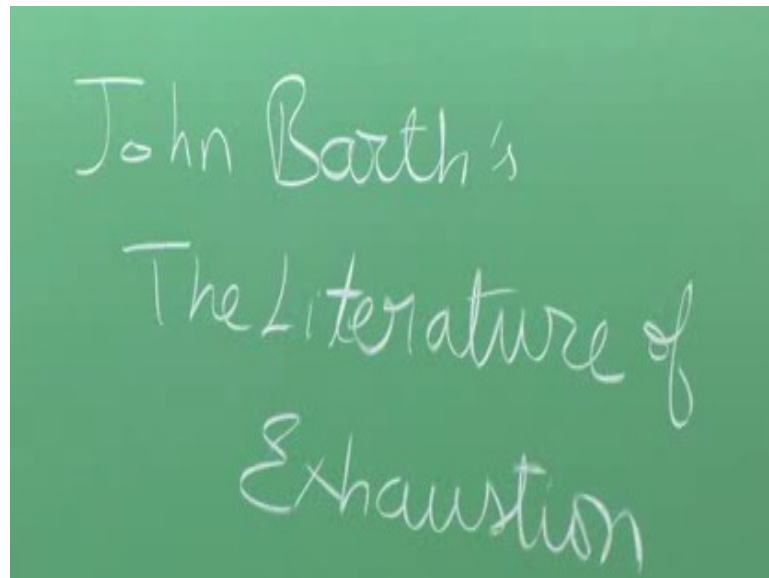
Now, let us go on to the concept of narratology, which is often attributed to the Russian writer, Russian thinker – Todorov. He coined the word in 1969. And the word narratology – the term narratology specifically deals with types of narrators; the identification of structural elements and the diverse modes of combination recurrent narrative devices, and the analysis of the kinds of discourses by which a narrative gets told. Here is a timeline for you to consider and the development of the narrative.

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So, we all know Aristotle's Poetics. Aristotle was the first writer to talk about a story having a beginning, a middle, and an end in his book – poetics that appeared in 335 BC. Now, in 1742, Henry Fielding in his preface to Joseph Andrews defines fictional narrative as the comic epic in prose. Henry James is another key writer, who has given a lot of thought to what makes a narrative. He is one of the most preeminent literary critics as well. So, he explains his theory of prose narrative in his art of fiction preface. For James, it is always how a story is told, that was important; the way a story is narrated, which is important. We are also indebted to Wayne Booth – The Rhetoric of Fiction published in 1961.

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And then, John Barth gave us the seminal term – literature of exhaustion, where he opines that, traditional narrative resources have been used up; therefore, the term literature of exhaustion given to us by John Barth in 1967. The publication of narratology, introduction to the theory of narrative by Mieke Bal; Bal here explores the aspects of narrative techniques, methods, their transmission and reception.

Let us talk about the concept of unreliable narrator. We often come across a narrator, who tells us a story. I think of the four narrators in Rashomon by Kurosawa. And also, the Keven Spacey character in Usual Suspects by Bryan Singer. So, we get to see a narrator, who gives us a story, but he cannot be trusted after all. So, who is an unreliable narrator. And why do writers or even the screenwriters – why do they like to employ this

character, this device of unreliable narrator? So, the point of using an unreliable narrator is to reveal an interesting gap between appearance and reality. Things are not always what they appear as; and to show how human beings distort or conceal reality. This need not be a conscious or mischievous intention on their part. An unreliable narrators narrative is a kind of confession. But, it is generally riddled with devious self justification and a special pleading. And only at the very end, thus he arrive at an understanding of himself.

So, a very good example of using writers, using an unreliable narrator is Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. James here uses the frame within frame structure, which is used for the narrator to tell his gruesome tale to a company of guests. James uses the journal of a governess to tell the story of a struggle to save two young children from the demonic influence of the eerie apparitions of two former servants in that household. The reason he did not specify details of the ghosts' evil deeds was because he wanted readers to supply their own vision of terror. In contemporary literature, Stevens, the English Butler in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is an example of unreliable narrator. Steven often suppresses his own passions and beliefs to such an extent that the readers cannot take anything he says at face value.