

Chapter 1 : Marxist Criticism Questions and Answers - blog.quintoapp.com

*The major American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson outlined a dialectical theory of literary criticism in his *Marxism and Form* (), drawing on Hegelian categories such as the notion of totality and the connection of abstract and concrete. Such criticism recognizes the need to see its objects of analysis within a broad historical context.*

Equally, the subsequent history of Marxist aesthetics has hardly comprised the cumulative unfolding of a coherent perspective. Rather, it has emerged, aptly, as a series of responses to concrete political exigencies. While these responses have sometimes collided at various theoretical planes, they achieve a dynamic and expansive coherence rather than the static coherence of a closed, finished system through both a general overlap of political motivation and the persistent reworking of a core of predispositions about literature and art deriving from Marx and Engels themselves. The aesthetic corollary of this is that literature can only be understood in the fullness of its relations with ideology, class, and economic substructure. Language itself, as Marx said in *The German Ideology: Part One*, must be understood not as a self-sufficient system but as social practice GI, 51. If, as Marx said, human beings produce themselves through labor, artistic production can be viewed as a branch of production in general. This has sometimes gone hand in hand with prescriptions for literature as an ideological ancillary to the aims and results of political revolution. His works, translated into all the major European languages, exerted enormous influence and made a particularly striking impression on Georgi Plekhanov, who introduced his work to Russia, as well as on Lenin and Trotsky. Another star in the firmament of early Marxist theory was the Prussian-born Franz Mehring. A one-time follower of Ferdinand Lassalle, Mehring became an outstanding Marxist historian and aesthete who, along with Rosa Luxemburg and others, founded the German Communist Party in 1918. His writings included the first authoritative biography of Marx, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, and *The Lessing-Legend*, which both applied Marxist categories to the analysis of major German literary figures and brought these within the reach of working-class readers. Mehring attempted to situate Marxist aesthetics, and Marxist thought in general, in necessary relation to the German classical philosophy and aesthetics which had preceded it. This elicited censure from such figures as Paul Reimann and F. There is much in Mehring which might justify such a response. One of the central questions he confronts is: German Marxist theory found a further advocate in Karl Kautsky, whose preeminence endured till around 1900. He developed the thesis that the major monotheistic religions arose in nations bound by a nomadic way of life; they had not developed the industry or art necessary to construct the localized human images of deities which facilitated polytheism. Ironically, these more backward cultures could make a leap beyond polytheism to a higher form of religion whose progress was retarded in more advanced societies. His writings include *Socialism and the Political Struggle* and *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, as well as his highly influential *Art and Social Life* and some shorter pieces such as *The Role of the Individual in History*. In the last of these he argues that the role of gifted individuals, such as Napoleon, in history has been exaggerated. Hence particular trends in art or literature do not depend exclusively on certain individuals for their expression; if the trend is sufficiently profound, it will compensate the premature death of one individual by giving rise to other talents who might embody it. The depth of a literary trend is determined by its significance for the class whose tastes it expresses, and by the social role of that class. Plekhanov refuses to approach this question by abstractly asserting the priority of one or the other. If Bucher were right, the Marxist explanation would be turned upside down. As against Bucher, Plekhanov, following Herbert Spencer, maintains that play is a dramatization and imitation of labor or useful activity. Hence utilitarian activity precedes play and is what determines its content. One of the most striking figures in the Marxist canon was Rosa Luxemburg. Born into a Jewish business background in Poland, she migrated to Germany where she joined the Social Democratic Party, rising to a lofty prominence until her assassination in 1918. Her most renowned contribution was *The Accumulation of Capital*. Centrally concerned with the reasons behind the stagnation and lack of development of Marxist theory, she was also anxious to preserve an aesthetic dimension for art, a recalcitrance to what she saw as reductive analysis. The starting points of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, she affirmed, were not reactionary. She urged that a working-class culture could not be produced within a

bourgeois economic framework, and that the workers could only advance if they created for themselves the necessary intellectual weapons in their struggle for liberation. Luxemburg believed that Marx provided much more than was directly essential for practically conducting the class war and that the theoretical fruits of his system could only be realized more gradually. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin " occupied a central role not only in the revolution of but also in the unfolding of Marxist aesthetics toward a more politically interventionist stance. Such a view overlooks both the context in which the essay was conceived and its actual arguments. Written shortly after the general strike of October , it belongs to a politically volatile period in which the work of revolution was far from complete, as Lenin emphasizes: Lenin also points out that in bourgeois society the writer cherishes but an illusory freedom: It can be seen from the foregoing that the early debates on art during and after the revolutionary period in Russia focused on questions such as the degree of party control over the arts, the stance toward the bourgeois cultural legacy, and the imperative to clarify the connections between the political and the aesthetic. A related question was the possibility of creating a proletarian culture. The other major protagonist in the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky " , played a crucial role in these debates. The literary debates were far from academic: It can and must protect and help it, but can only lead it indirectly. In the same work, Trotsky addresses the question of whether proletarian culture is possible. Trotsky maintains that certain great writers, such as Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe , appeal to us precisely because they transcend the limitations of their class outlook. Throughout his comments on aesthetics, Trotsky seems to travel a fine line between granting art a certain autonomy while viewing it as serving, in a highly mediated fashion, an important social function. The call to create a proletarian culture was the originating theme of Proletkult, a left-wing group of artists and writers whose foremost ideologist was A. This group, opposed by the Bolshevik leadership, insisted on art as a weapon in class struggle and rejected all bourgeois art. The Formalists, focusing on artistic forms and techniques on the basis of linguistic studies, had arisen in pre-revolutionary Russia but now saw their opposition to traditional art as a political gesture, allying them somewhat with the revolution. All of these groups were attacked by the most prominent Soviet theoreticians, such as Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin " , Anatoly Lunacharsky " , and Voronsky , who decried the attempt to break completely with the past and what they saw as a reductive denial of the social and cognitive aspects of art. Valentin Voloshinov Bakhtin later attempted to harmonize the two sides of the debate, viz. For example, an individual character might enshrine an entire complex of historical forces. Socialist realists, moreover, view reality from the viewpoint of the proletariat. Brecht adds that realist art battles false views of reality, thereby facilitating correct views. The action on stage must also implicitly point to other, alternative versions of itself. Mention should also be made of the Italian Marxist theorist and political activist Antonio Gramsci " , whose main contribution to Marxism is widely thought to lie in his elaboration of the notion of hegemony. Autonomous revolutionary potential on the part of the proletariat could only be realized, argued Gramsci, through political and intellectual autonomy. A mass movement alone was insufficient: Gramsci wrote some thirty-four notebooks while in prison, ranging from literary topics such as Dante and Pirandello to philosophical and political themes. Later critics have continued to reinterpret and develop the insights of Marx and Engels. In general, these theorists saw modern mass culture as regimented and reduced to a commercial dimension; and they saw art as embodying a unique critical distance from this social and political world. Modern works are reproduced for mass consumption, and are effectively copies which relate to no original form. However, this new status of art, thought Benjamin, also gave it a revived political and subversive potential. Subsequent Marxist cultural and literary theory, such as that of Louis Althusser , Lucien Goldmann, and Pierre Macherey , turned away from Hegel and was heavily influenced by the structuralist movements of the earlier twentieth century, which stressed the role of larger signifying systems and institutional structures over individual agency and intention. Goldmann rejected the Romantic"humanist notion of individual creativity and held that texts are productions of larger mental structures representing the mentality of particular social classes. In this way, a critique of ideology could emerge through the literary text. Williams rejected a simplistic explanation of culture as the efflux of material conditions, but stressed the contribution of cultural forms to economic and political development. In this work Williams undertook a critical review of earlier Marxist theories and offered his own analyses of fundamental Marxist notions such as ideology, hegemony,

base and superstructure. His own cultural materialism as set forth here attempts to integrate Marxist conceptions of language and literature. Keywords examines the history of fundamental concepts and categories. TIF The major American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson outlined a dialectical theory of literary criticism in his *Marxism and Form*, drawing on Hegelian categories such as the notion of totality and the connection of abstract and concrete. Such criticism recognizes the need to see its objects of analysis within a broad historical context, acknowledges its own history and perspective, and seeks the profound inner form of a literary text. In Britain, Terry Eagleton has outlined the categories of a Marxist analysis of literature, and has persistently rearticulated the terms of communication, as well as the differences, between Marxism and much of modern literary theory. We can now undertake a closer examination of two Marxist critics whose ideas have been highly influential: Progress Publishers, , pp. Hereafter cited as MCP. Progress Publishers, , p. Volume I ; rpt. Lawrence and Wishart, , p. Hereafter cited as Capital. Foreign Languages Press, , p. Hereafter cited as CPE. Penguin, , p. Hereafter cited as OF. Oriole Editions, , pp. Lenin, *On Literature and Art* Moscow: Hereafter citations from this volume are given in the text. Russell and Russell, , p. Hereafter citations are given in the text. *Art and Revolution* London: New Park Publications, , pp. *Writings in Aesthetics and Criticism* New York: McKay, , pp. International Publishers, , p. New Left Books, , p. Hereafter cited as WB. *An Introduction* Oxford and Minnesota: Hereafter cited as LT.

Chapter 2 : Marxist literary criticism - Infogalactic: the planetary knowledge core

Marxist literary criticism is a loose term describing literary criticism based on socialist and dialectic theories. Marxist criticism views literary works as reflections of the social institutions from which they originate.

Marxist literary criticism Save Marxist literary criticism is a loose term describing literary criticism based on socialist and dialectic theories. Marxist criticism views literary works as reflections of the social institutions from which they originate. In fact, most Marxist critics who were writing in what could chronologically be specified as the early period of Marxist literary criticism subscribed to what has come to be called "Vulgar Marxism. Therefore, literary texts are a reflection of the economic Base rather than "the social institutions from which they originate" for all social institutions, or, more precisely human social relationships, are in the final analysis determined by the economic Base. According to Marxists, even literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author. The English literary critic and cultural theorist, Terry Eagleton, defines Marxist criticism this way: Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and, meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the product of a particular history. It also includes analyzing the class constructs demonstrated in the literature. Further, another of the ends of Marxist criticism is to analyze the narrative of class struggle in a given text. Marxism aims to revolutionize the concept of work through creating a classless society built on control and ownership of the means of production. In such a society, the means of production the Base in the architectural metaphor Marx uses to analyze and describe the structure of any given society in written human history are possessed in common by all people rather than being owned by an elite ruling class. Marx believed that Economic Determinism, Dialectical Materialism and Class Struggle were the three principles that explained his theories. Though Marx does attribute a teleological function to the economic, he is no determinist. As he and Engels write in *The Communist Manifesto*, the class struggle in its capitalist phase could well end "in the common ruin of the contending classes,"[2] and as Terry Eagleton argues in *Why Marx Was Right*, "Capitalism can be used to build socialism, but there is no sense in which the whole historical process is secretly labouring towards this goal" [3] The Bourgeoisie Dominant class who control and own the means of production and Proletariat Subordinate class: The bourgeoisie is already quite well aware of its position and power in the capitalist paradigm. As individuals, workers know that they are being exploited in order to produce surplus value value produced by the worker that is appropriated by the capitalists; however, the working class must realize that they are being exploited not only as individuals but as a class. It is upon this realization that the working class reaches class consciousness. Marx believed that all past history is a struggle between hostile and competing economic classes in state of change. Marx and Friedrich Engels collaborated to produce a range of publications based on capitalism, class struggles and socialist movements. These theories and ideologies can be found within three published works:

Chapter 3 : Marxist Criticism

Marxist literary criticism is becoming increasingly important in Europe as a whole, and interest in the subject is rapidly growing in this country. In this book, Dr. Eagleton analyses the major issues that the subject presents, discussing the writing of Marx and Engels themselves and the work of such critics as Plekhanov, Trotsky, Lenin, Lukacs, Goldmann, Caudwell, Benjamin and Brecht.

Michael Delahoyde Marxism Karl Marx was primarily a theorist and historian less the evil pinko commie demon that McCarthyism fretted about. After examining social organization in a scientific way thereby creating a methodology for social science: Whereas Freud saw "sexual energy" to be the motivating factor behind human endeavor and Nabokov seemed to feel artistic impulse was the real factor, Marx thought that "historical materialism" was the ultimate driving force, a notion involving the distribution of resources, gain, production, and such matters. The supposedly "natural" political evolution involved and would in the future involve "feudalism" leading to "bourgeois capitalism" leading to "socialism" and finally to "utopian communism. Marx theorized that when profits are not reinvested in the workers but in creating more factories, the workers will grow poorer and poorer until no short-term patching is possible or successful. At a crisis point, revolt will lead to a restructuring of the system. For a political system to be considered communist, the underclasses must own the means of production--not the government nor the police force. Therefore, aside from certain first-century Christian communities and other temporary communes, communism has not yet really existed. The Soviet Union was actually state-run capitalism. Marx is known also for saying that "Religion is the opiate of the people," so he was somewhat aware of the problem that Lenin later dwelt on. Lenin was convinced that workers remain largely unaware of their own oppression since they are convinced by the state to be selfless. One might point to many "opiates of the people" under most political systems--diversions that prevent real consideration of trying to change unjust economic conditions. Marxist Criticism According to Marxists, and to other scholars in fact, literature reflects those social institutions out of which it emerges and is itself a social institution with a particular ideological function. Literature reflects class struggle and materialism: The Marxist critic simply is a careful reader or viewer who keeps in mind issues of power and money, and any of the following kinds of questions: How do characters overcome oppression? In what ways does the work serve as propaganda for the status quo; or does it try to undermine it? What does the work say about oppression; or are social conflicts ignored or blamed elsewhere? Does the work propose some form of utopian vision as a solution to the problems encountered in the work? Works Consulted Abrams, M. Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature. Writing About Literature with Critical Theory. Murfin, Ross, and Supryia M.

Chapter 4 : Marxist Literary Criticism by Ethan Ling on Prezi

Home $\hat{\epsilon}$ *Literary Criticism* $\hat{\epsilon}$ *Marxism and Literary Theory*. *Marxism and Literary Theory* By Nasrullah Mambrol on April 12, $\hat{\epsilon}$ (7). *Marxism is a materialist philosophy which tried to interpret the world based on the concrete, natural world around us and the society we live in.*

He served as an altar boy at a local Carmelite convent where he was responsible for escorting novice nuns taking their vows, a role referred to in the title of his memoir *The Gatekeeper*. At Wadham, Eagleton ran a well-known seminar on Marxist literary theory which, in the s, metamorphosed into the radical pressure group Oxford English Limited and its journal *News from Nowhere: Journal of the Oxford English Faculty Opposition*, to which he contributed several pieces. Career[edit] He began his literary studies with the 19th and 20th centuries, then conformed to the stringent academic Marxism of the s. In the s, he became involved with the left-wing Catholic group *Slant*, authoring a number of theological articles including *A Marxist Interpretation of Benediction*, as well as a book *Towards a New Left Theology*. Leavis and his tutor Raymond Williams to Pierre Macherey. This earliest response to *Theory* is critical and substantive with Eagleton supplying a dense web of categories for "a materialist criticism" which situates the author as well as the text in the general mode of production, the literary mode of production and particular ideologies. In Chapter 4 he gives a thorough overview of one theme in the English context - "organicist concepts of society" or "community" - as worked by petty-bourgeois Victorian writers, from George Eliot to D. Lawrence, and how this determines textual form in each instance. In the process, he demonstrates what is the thesis of the book: *Theory* is always presented as if it is unstained by point of view and is neutral, but in fact it is impossible to avoid having a political perspective. He has been a regular contributor to the *London Review of Books*. Looking back, Eagleton evaluates its achievements and failures, and proposes new directions needing to be pursued. He considers that among the great achievements of *Theory* were the expansion of objects of study to include gender, sexuality, popular culture, post-colonialism, etc. It is virtue and politics and how they may be realized, among other things, that Eagleton offers as new avenues needing to be explored by cultural studies. And that is the link to his previous work, *Literary Theory*, which proposed that all theory is ultimately political. After *Theory* fleshes out this political aspect, tied to ethics, growing out of the fact that humans exist in neediness and dependency on others, their freedom bounded by the common fact of death. Dawkins, Hitchens and the New Atheism[edit] Eagleton has become a vocal critic of what has been called the New Atheism. Eagleton further writes, "Nor does [Dawkins] understand that because God is transcendent of us which is another way of saying that he did not have to bring us about, he is free of any neurotic need for us and wants simply to be allowed to love us. This is not only grotesquely false; it is also a device to outflank any more reflective kind of faith by implying that it belongs to the coterie and not to the mass. The huge numbers of believers who hold something like the theology I outlined above can thus be conveniently lumped with rednecks who murder abortionists and malign homosexuals. Is belief in Richard Dawkins necessary for salvation? Introducing his first lecture with an admission of ignorance of both theology and science, Eagleton goes on to affirm: *Reflections on the God Debate*. Eagleton is pessimistic as to whether this distraction can be ended. Its icon is the impeccably Tory, slavishly conformist Beckham. The Reds are no longer the Bolsheviks. Nobody serious about political change can shirk the fact that the game has to be abolished. And any political outfit that tried it on would have about as much chance of power as the chief executive of BP has in taking over from Oprah Winfrey. Please try to keep recent events in historical perspective and add more content related to non-recent events. What can we do to raise the price of them doing this? Not letting them travel. Deportation $\hat{\epsilon}$ further down the road. Discriminatory stuff, until it hurts the whole community and they start getting tough with their children Eagleton went on to write that Martin Amis had learned more from his father $\hat{\epsilon}$ whom Eagleton described as a reactionary "racist, anti-Semitic boor, a drink-sodden, self-hating reviler of women, gays and liberals" $\hat{\epsilon}$ than merely "how to turn a shapely phrase. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a commentator for *The Independent*, wrote an article [25] about the affair, to which Amis responded via open letter, calling Eagleton "an ideological relict Howard wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*, noting that for a supposed

"anti-semitic homophobe", it was peculiar that the only guests at the Howard-Amis nuptials were either Jewish or gay. Our four great friends who witnessed our wedding were three Jews and one homosexual. But he seems to be a rather lethal combination of a Roman Catholic and a Marxist He strikes me as like a spitting cobra: The prolificness, the self-plagiarism, the snappy, highly consumable prose and, of course, the sales figures: Eagleton is quite right to assert that we can never go back to a state of pre-Theory innocence about the transparency of language or the ideological neutrality of interpretation But like all fashions it was bound to have a limited life of novelty and vitality, and we are now living through its decadence without any clear indication of what will supersede it. Theory has, in short, become boringly predictable to many people who were once enthusiastic about it, and that After Theory is most interesting when its focus is furthest from its nominal subject is perhaps evidence that Terry Eagleton is now bored by it too. Eagleton has two other sons by his first marriage, which ended in after ten years. A Memoir Sweet Violence:

Chapter 5 : Literary Theory | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Marxist literary criticism 1. *Marxist Literary Criticism* 2. *Historical Context* – began with Karl Marx, 19th century German philosopher best known for *Das Kapital* (), the seminal work of the communist movement. – Marx was also the first Marxist literary critic, writing critical essays in th.

It is opposed to idealist philosophy which conceptualizes a spiritual world elsewhere that influences and controls the material world. Basic Principles According to Marxism, society progresses through the struggle between opposing forces. It is this struggle between opposing classes that result in social transformation. History progresses through this class struggle. Class struggle originates out of the exploitation of one class by another throughout history. During the feudal period the tension was between the feudal lords and the peasants, and in the Industrial age the struggle was between the capitalist class the bourgeoisie and the industrial working class the proletariat. Classes have common interests. In a capitalist system the proletariat is always in conflict with the capitalist class. This confrontation, according to Marx, will finally result in replacing the system by socialism. Another important concept used by Marx was the dialectic which was originally developed by the 18th century German philosopher Hegel. Hegel was an idealist philosopher who used this term to refer to the process of emergence of new ideas through the confrontation of opposing ideas. He believed that the world is governed by thought and material existence is the expression of an immaterial spiritual essence. But Marx used the Same concept to interpret the progress of the material world. Marx argued that all mental ideological systems are products of real social and economic existence. For example, the legal system reflects the interests of the dominant class in particular historical periods rather than the manifestation of divine reason. Marxist dialectic can be understood as the science of the general and abstract laws of development of nature, society and thoughts. It considers the universe as an integral whole in which things are interdependent, rather than a mixture of things isolated from each other. All things contain within themselves internal dialectical contradictions, which are the primary cause of motion, change and development in the world. Dialectical materialism was an effective tool in the hands of Marxists, in revealing the secrets behind the social processes and their future course of development. One of the fundamental concepts of classical Marxist thought is the concept of base and superstructure which refers to the relationship between the material means of production and the cultural world of art and ideas. It is essentially a symbolic concept which employed the structure of a building to explain this relationship. The foundation or the base stands for the socio-economic relations and the mode of production and the superstructure stands for art, law, politics, religion and, above all, ideology. Broadly speaking it refers to the idea that culture is governed by historical conditions and the relations of dominance and subordination prevalent in a particular society. Morality, religion, art and philosophy are seen as echoes of real life processes. Take the case of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand which address the life of the untouchables, coolies and ordinary workers struggling for their rights and self esteem. It is true that they can be traced back to the class conflict prevalent in the Indian society M. Vasudevan Nair , a noted Malayalam novelist wrote about the breaking up of the feudal tharavads in Kerala. But in the final analysis his stories reveal the filtering of the bourgeois modernity in Kerala society and how it enters into a conflictual relationship with the values of feudalism. Thus traces of this connection can be identified in various forms of cultural production. Socialist Realism Socialist Realism took shape as the official aesthetic principle of the new communist society. It was mainly informed by the 19th century aesthetics and revolutionary politics. Raymond Williams identifies three principles as the founding principles of Socialist realism. Narodnost refers to the popular simplicity of the work of art. Marx, in *Paris Manuscripts* , refers to the alienation that originates out of the separation of the mental and manual in the capitalist society. Earlier under feudalism the workers engaged in cottage industries produced various items on their own, all activities related to the production happening at the same place under the supervision of the same people. But under capitalism the workers lost control over their products they were engaged in the production of various parts and were alienated from their own work. The concept Narodnost reiterates this quality of popular art which is accessible to the masses and wanted to restore their lost wholeness of being. Klassovost refers to the

commitment of the writer to the interests of the working class. For example, Balzac, a supporter of Bourbon dynasty, provides a penetrating account of the French society than all the historians. He argued that literature must become an instrument of the party. In the congress of Soviet Writers, Socialist Realism was accepted as the official aesthetic principle of Soviet Union. It was accepted as a dogma by communists all over the world. As a result, a direct cause-effect relationship between literature and economics was assumed, with all writers seen as trapped within the intellectual limit of their class position. One of the examples of this rigid Marxist literary criticism is *Illusion and Reality* by Christopher Caudwell. The Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukacs represented this type of political orthodoxy. Lukacs considered the 19th century realist fiction as a model and believed that a realist work must reveal the underlying pattern of contradictions in a social order. His debate with Bertolt Brecht on the whole questions of realism and expressionism discussed in detail the importance of form and the concept of form in Marxist criticism. The debate was handed over to the Formalists who developed new directions in the development of Marxist criticism. Further developments in Marxist Aesthetics Marxist criticism flourished outside the official line in various European countries. Russian Formalism emerged as a new perspective informed by Marxism in the 1920s. It was disbanded by the Communist party as it did not conform to the official theoretical perspective of the party. *Four Essays*, edited by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J Reis. One of the members of this group, Mikhail Bakhtin remained in Soviet Union and continued his critical practice. His concept of Dialogism affirmed plurality and variety. It was an argument against the hegemony of absolute authorial control. He affirmed the need to take others and otherness into account. In one sense, it was an argument against the increasing homogenization of cultural and political life in Soviet Union. Many others belonging to the same perspective went into exile and continued their work abroad. It was the beginning of a new form of Marxist criticism. In Germany the Frankfurt School of Marxist aesthetics was founded in 1923 as a political research institute attached to the University of Frankfurt. Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were some of the important figures attached with this school. They tried to combine aspects of Formalism with the theories of Marx and Freud. They produced for the first time studies on mass culture and communication and their role in social reproduction and domination. The Frankfurt School also generated one of the first models of a critical cultural studies that analyzes the processes of cultural production and political economy, the politics of cultural texts, and audience reception and use of cultural artifacts. Marxist scholars like Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht considered art as a social production. A revolutionary artist should not uncritically accept the existing forces of artistic production, but should develop and revolutionize those forces. It helps in the creation of new social relations between artist and audience. In this process, authors, readers and spectators become collaborators. Bertolt Brecht, a close friend of Benjamin, developed the concept of Epic Theatre which dismantled the traditional naturalistic theatre and produced a new kind of theatre altering the functional relations between stage and audience, text and producer, and producer and actor. Bourgeois theatre is based on illusionism. The audience is the passive consumer. The play does not stimulate them to think constructively. According to Brecht this is based on the assumption that the world is fixed, given and unchangeable and the duty of art is to provide escapist entertainment. The technique is to alienate the spectators from the performance and to prevent them from emotionally identifying with the play. It presents the familiar experience in unfamiliar light forcing the audience to question the attitudes which was considered to be natural and unchanging. He employed techniques like back projection, song choreography cutting and disrupting the action rather than blending it smoothly. The French Marxist thinker, Louis Althusser further developed the Marxist approach through the introduction of various concepts like overdetermination, Ideology etc. Overdetermination refers to an effect which arises from various causes rather than from a single factor. This concept undercuts simplistic notions of one to one correspondence between base and superstructure. Ideology is another term modified by Althusser. The civil society spreads ideology through the law, textbooks, religious rituals and norms so that the people imbibe them even without their knowledge. The RSA includes law courts, prison, police, army etc and the ISA include political parties, schools, media, churches, family, art etc. Althusser imported structuralism to Marxism. In his view, society is a structural whole which consists of relatively autonomous levels: The founder of Italian communist Party, Antonio Gramsci was a politician, political theorist, linguist and

philosopher. Known as an original thinker among Marxist scholars, Gramsci introduced the concepts like Hegemony and the Subaltern. Hegemony is the domination of particular section of the society by the powerful classes. Most often it works through consent rather than by power. It is the moral and intellectual leadership of the upper class in a particular society. The term subaltern was originally used by Gramsci as a collective description for a variety of different and exploited groups who lack class consciousness. But now it is being used to represent all marginalized sections like Dalits, women, minorities etc. An influential figure among the New Left was Raymond Williams. His writings on politics, culture, the mass media and literature are a significant contribution to the Marxist critique of culture and the arts. Williams was interested in the relationship between language, literature and society. Cultural materialism gives us different perspectives based on what we choose to suppress or reveal in reading from the past. Cultural Materialism argues that culture is a constitutive social progress which actively creates different ways of life. Similarly creation of meaning is viewed as a practical material activity which cannot be consigned to a secondary level. Another important concept in Williams thought is Structures of feeling.

Chapter 6 : Marxism and Literary Criticism by Terry Eagleton - Paperback - University of California Press

Marxist Literary Criticism is a type of criticism dealing with the role of social class and ideology and how they reflect or challenge the social order. Instead of finding hidden meaning, Marxist Critics view texts as material products to be understood in broader, historical terms.

It makes the theory way more accessible that way. Eagleton writes splendidly, considering especially that Marxism in itself is not an easy subject to tackle. He definitely does a good I have some preconceived notions regarding books on theory, and there are things that I simply cannot help expecting from them. He definitely does a good job of it. But essays overlap each other without reserve; hardly does one concept settle in your brain that another begins and it becomes hard to reconcile them. This book seems to be rushed as if the writer had a word count in mind to meet. Anyway! One of the central concepts of Marxist literary theory, and which deeply interested me, is that of art being a construct contingent on prevailing social conditions. It seems actually elementary considering the base-superstructure dichotomy: That ideology, in turn, is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class-relations are experienced, legitimized and perpetuated. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity—by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production. This debate runs through the length of the book, taking on different forms as it proceeds, but never reaching a definite conclusion. A definite conclusion might not even be possible nor is it needed. The charm of the book lies in its numerous opinions and points of view. On one hand, literature can be seen as the reification of prevailing ideologies and, on the other hand, it defines and moulds these ideologies as it explores them. One is that literature is nothing but ideology in a certain artistic form—that works of literature are just expressions of the ideologies of their time! The opposite case seizes on the fact that so much literature challenges the ideology it confronts, and makes this part of the definition of literary art itself. Authentic art, as Ernst Fischer argues in his significantly entitled *Art Against Ideology*, always transcends the ideological limits of its time, yielding us insight into the realities which ideology hides from view. Art must not simply reflect reality as it finds it but must also provide the necessary correctives. It should be a social commentary instead of being simply a social product. The book ends with a discussion on Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht. All in all, I am not sure whether this book will be useful to the beginner though it has many interesting arguments in it. Marxist theory, inarguably, is not something you can understand overnight.

Chapter 7 : Marxist literary criticism - Wikipedia

Eagleton's introduction to Marxism and literary criticism was completely readable, and lacked the problematic pretensions often associated with literary criticism. This is not to say that the work lacks intricacy or depth, merely that it strives to be a clear explanation of the various strands of criticism.

Literary and Cultural Theory 1. What Is Literary Theory? Literary theory refers to any principles derived from internal analysis of literary texts or from knowledge external to the text that can be applied in multiple interpretive situations. All critical practice regarding literature depends on an underlying structure of ideas in at least two ways: Critics that explain the climactic drowning of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* as a suicide generally call upon a supporting architecture of feminist and gender theory. The structure of ideas that enables criticism of a literary work may or may not be acknowledged by the critic, and the status of literary theory within the academic discipline of literary studies continues to evolve. Literary theory and the formal practice of literary interpretation runs a parallel but less well known course with the history of philosophy and is evident in the historical record at least as far back as Plato. Modern literary theory gradually emerges in Europe during the nineteenth century. In one of the earliest developments of literary theory, German "higher criticism" subjected biblical texts to a radical historicizing that broke with traditional scriptural interpretation. This dispute was taken up anew by the French theorist Roland Barthes in his famous declaration of the "Death of the Author. Attention to the etymology of the term "theory," from the Greek "theoria," alerts us to the partial nature of theoretical approaches to literature. This is precisely what literary theory offers, though specific theories often claim to present a complete system for understanding literature. The current state of theory is such that there are many overlapping areas of influence, and older schools of theory, though no longer enjoying their previous eminence, continue to exert an influence on the whole. The once widely-held conviction an implicit theory that literature is a repository of all that is meaningful and ennobling in the human experience, a view championed by the Leavis School in Britain, may no longer be acknowledged by name but remains an essential justification for the current structure of American universities and liberal arts curricula. The moment of "Deconstruction" may have passed, but its emphasis on the indeterminacy of signs that we are unable to establish exclusively what a word means when used in a given situation and thus of texts, remains significant. Many critics may not embrace the label "feminist," but the premise that gender is a social construct, one of theoretical feminisms distinguishing insights, is now axiomatic in a number of theoretical perspectives. While literary theory has always implied or directly expressed a conception of the world outside the text, in the twentieth century three movements—"Marxist theory" of the Frankfurt School, "Feminism," and "Postmodernism"—have opened the field of literary studies into a broader area of inquiry. Marxist approaches to literature require an understanding of the primary economic and social bases of culture since Marxist aesthetic theory sees the work of art as a product, directly or indirectly, of the base structure of society. Feminist thought and practice analyzes the production of literature and literary representation within the framework that includes all social and cultural formations as they pertain to the role of women in history. Postmodern thought consists of both aesthetic and epistemological strands. Postmodernism in art has included a move toward non-referential, non-linear, abstract forms; a heightened degree of self-referentiality; and the collapse of categories and conventions that had traditionally governed art. Postmodern thought has led to the serious questioning of the so-called metanarratives of history, science, philosophy, and economic and sexual reproduction. Under postmodernity, all knowledge comes to be seen as "constructed" within historical self-contained systems of understanding. Marxist, feminist, and postmodern thought have brought about the incorporation of all human discourses that is, interlocking fields of language and knowledge as a subject matter for analysis by the literary theorist. Using the various poststructuralist and postmodern theories that often draw on disciplines other than the literary—linguistic, anthropological, psychoanalytic, and philosophical—for their primary insights, literary theory has become an interdisciplinary body of cultural theory. Taking as its premise that human societies and knowledge consist of texts in one form or another, cultural theory for better or worse is now applied to the varieties of texts, ambitiously undertaking to become

the preeminent model of inquiry into the human condition. Literary theory is a site of theories: The other schools of literary theory, to varying degrees, embrace a postmodern view of language and reality that calls into serious question the objective referent of literary studies. The following categories are certainly not exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive, but they represent the major trends in literary theory of this century. Traditional Literary Criticism Academic literary criticism prior to the rise of "New Criticism" in the United States tended to practice traditional literary history: Literary biography was and still is an important interpretive method in and out of the academy; versions of moral criticism, not unlike the Leavis School in Britain, and aesthetic e. Perhaps the key unifying feature of traditional literary criticism was the consensus within the academy as to the both the literary canon that is, the books all educated persons should read and the aims and purposes of literature. What literature was, and why we read literature, and what we read, were questions that subsequent movements in literary theory were to raise. Formalism and New Criticism "Formalism" is, as the name implies, an interpretive approach that emphasizes literary form and the study of literary devices within the text. The work of the Formalists had a general impact on later developments in "Structuralism" and other theories of narrative. The Formalists placed great importance on the literariness of texts, those qualities that distinguished the literary from other kinds of writing. Neither author nor context was essential for the Formalists; it was the narrative that spoke, the "hero-function," for example, that had meaning. Form was the content. A plot device or narrative strategy was examined for how it functioned and compared to how it had functioned in other literary works. The Formalist adage that the purpose of literature was "to make the stones stonier" nicely expresses their notion of literariness. Literary language, partly by calling attention to itself as language, estranged the reader from the familiar and made fresh the experience of daily life. The "New Criticism," so designated as to indicate a break with traditional methods, was a product of the American university in the 30s and 40s. Eliot, though not explicitly associated with the movement, expressed a similar critical-aesthetic philosophy in his essays on John Donne and the metaphysical poets, writers who Eliot believed experienced a complete integration of thought and feeling. Wimsatt placed a similar focus on the metaphysical poets and poetry in general, a genre well suited to New Critical practice. Perhaps the enduring legacy of "New Criticism" can be found in the college classroom, in which the verbal texture of the poem on the page remains a primary object of literary study. Marxism and Critical Theory Marxist literary theories tend to focus on the representation of class conflict as well as the reinforcement of class distinctions through the medium of literature. Marxist theorists use traditional techniques of literary analysis but subordinate aesthetic concerns to the final social and political meanings of literature. Marxist theorist often champion authors sympathetic to the working classes and authors whose work challenges economic equalities found in capitalist societies. In keeping with the totalizing spirit of Marxism, literary theories arising from the Marxist paradigm have not only sought new ways of understanding the relationship between economic production and literature, but all cultural production as well. Marxist analyses of society and history have had a profound effect on literary theory and practical criticism, most notably in the development of "New Historicism" and "Cultural Materialism. Walter Benjamin broke new ground in his work in his study of aesthetics and the reproduction of the work of art. The Frankfurt School of philosophers, including most notably Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse"after their emigration to the United States"played a key role in introducing Marxist assessments of culture into the mainstream of American academic life. These thinkers became associated with what is known as "Critical theory," one of the constituent components of which was a critique of the instrumental use of reason in advanced capitalist culture. Eagleton is known both as a Marxist theorist and as a popularizer of theory by means of his widely read overview, *Literary Theory*. Lentricchia likewise became influential through his account of trends in theory, *After the New Criticism*. Jameson is a more diverse theorist, known both for his impact on Marxist theories of culture and for his position as one of the leading figures in theoretical postmodernism. Structuralism and Poststructuralism Like the "New Criticism," "Structuralism" sought to bring to literary studies a set of objective criteria for analysis and a new intellectual rigor. Like Plato, Saussure regarded the signifier words, marks, symbols as arbitrary and unrelated to the concept, the signified, to which it referred. Within the way a particular society uses language and signs, meaning was constituted by a system of

"differences" between units of the language. Particular meanings were of less interest than the underlying structures of signification that made meaning itself possible, often expressed as an emphasis on "langue" rather than "parole." Greimas, Gerard Genette, and Barthes. The philosopher Roland Barthes proved to be a key figure on the divide between "Structuralism" and "Poststructuralism." The most important theorist of "Deconstruction," Jacques Derrida, has asserted, "There is no getting outside text," indicating a kind of free play of signification in which no fixed, stable meaning is possible. Other tendencies in the moment after "Deconstruction" that share some of the intellectual tendencies of "Poststructuralism" would include the "Reader response" theories of Stanley Fish, Jane Tompkins, and Wolfgang Iser. Lacanian psychoanalysis, an updating of the work of Sigmund Freud, extends "Poststructuralism" to the human subject with further consequences for literary theory. According to Lacan, the fixed, stable self is a Romantic fiction; like the text in "Deconstruction," the self is a decentered mass of traces left by our encounter with signs, visual symbols, language, etc. Barthes applies these currents of thought in his famous declaration of the "death" of the Author: Foucault played a critical role in the development of the postmodern perspective that knowledge is constructed in concrete historical situations in the form of discourse; knowledge is not communicated by discourse but is discourse itself, can only be encountered textually. Following Nietzsche, Foucault performs what he calls "genealogies," attempts at deconstructing the unacknowledged operation of power and knowledge to reveal the ideologies that make domination of one group by another seem "natural." New Historicism and Cultural Materialism "New Historicism," a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt, designates a body of theoretical and interpretive practices that began largely with the study of early modern literature in the United States. According to "New Historicism," the circulation of literary and non-literary texts produces relations of social power within a culture. New Historicist thought differs from traditional historicism in literary studies in several crucial ways. According to "New Historicism," we can only know the textual history of the past because it is "embedded," a key term, in the textuality of the present and its concerns. Text and context are less clearly distinct in New Historicist practice. Traditional separations of literary and non-literary texts, "great" literature and popular literature, are also fundamentally challenged. For the "New Historicist," all acts of expression are embedded in the material conditions of a culture. Texts are examined with an eye for how they reveal the economic and social realities, especially as they produce ideology and represent power or subversion. Louis Montrose, another major innovator and exponent of "New Historicism," describes a fundamental axiom of the movement as an intellectual belief in "the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. The translation of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on carnival coincided with the rise of the "New Historicism" and "Cultural Materialism" and left a legacy in work of other theorists of influence like Peter Stallybrass and Jonathan Dollimore. In its period of ascendancy during the 1980s, "New Historicism" drew criticism from the political left for its depiction of counter-cultural expression as always co-opted by the dominant discourses. However, "New Historicism" continues to exercise a major influence in the humanities and in the extended conception of literary studies. Ethnic Studies and Postcolonial Criticism "Ethnic Studies," sometimes referred to as "Minority Studies," has an obvious historical relationship with "Postcolonial Criticism" in that Euro-American imperialism and colonization in the last four centuries, whether external empire or internal slavery has been directed at recognizable ethnic groups: Though the two fields are increasingly finding points of intersection—the work of bell hooks, for example—and are both activist intellectual enterprises, "Ethnic Studies" and "Postcolonial Criticism" have significant differences in their history and ideas. Dubois, we find an early attempt to theorize the position of African-Americans within dominant white culture through his concept of "double consciousness," a dual identity including both "American" and "Negro." Afro-Caribbean and African writers—Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe—have made significant early contributions to the theory and practice of ethnic criticism that explores the traditions, sometimes suppressed or underground, of ethnic literary activity while providing a critique of representations of ethnic identity as found within the majority culture. Ethnic and minority literary theory emphasizes the relationship of cultural identity to individual identity in historical circumstances of overt racial oppression. More recently, scholars and writers such as Henry Louis Gates, Toni Morrison, and Kwame Anthony Appiah have brought attention to the problems inherent in applying theoretical models derived from

Euro-centric paradigms that is, structures of thought to minority works of literature while at the same time exploring new interpretive strategies for understanding the vernacular common speech traditions of racial groups that have been historically marginalized by dominant cultures. Said argues that the concept of "the Orient" was produced by the "imaginative geography" of Western scholarship and has been instrumental in the colonization and domination of non-Western societies. Moreover, theorists like Homi K. The work of Gayatri C. Spivak has focused attention on the question of who speaks for the colonial "Other" and the relation of the ownership of discourse and representation to the development of the postcolonial subjectivity. Like feminist and ethnic theory, "Postcolonial Criticism" pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourse. In this respect, "Postcolonial Criticism" is activist and adversarial in its basic aims. Postcolonial theory has brought fresh perspectives to the role of colonial peoples—their wealth, labor, and culture—in the development of modern European nation states. While "Postcolonial Criticism" emerged in the historical moment following the collapse of the modern colonial empires, the increasing globalization of culture, including the neo-colonialism of multinational capitalism, suggests a continued relevance for this field of inquiry. Gender Studies and Queer Theory Gender theory came to the forefront of the theoretical scene first as feminist theory but has subsequently come to include the investigation of all gender and sexual categories and identities. Feminist gender theory followed slightly behind the reemergence of political feminism in the United States and Western Europe during the s. These causes converged with early literary feminist practice, characterized by Elaine Showalter as "gynocriticism," which emphasized the study and canonical inclusion of works by female authors as well as the depiction of women in male-authored canonical texts. Feminist gender theory is postmodern in that it challenges the paradigms and intellectual premises of western thought, but also takes an activist stance by proposing frequent interventions and alternative epistemological positions meant to change the social order.

Chapter 8 : Marxist Criticism // Purdue Writing Lab

Marxist Literary Theory, or Criticism, is based upon the ideologies and theories of Karl Marx. This theory examines a text based upon its who it benefits (in regard to class, society, and social.

When printing this page, you must include the entire legal notice. This material may not be published, reproduced, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed without permission. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our terms and conditions of fair use. Marxist Criticism s-present Summary: This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy. Whom Does It Benefit? Based on the theories of Karl Marx and so influenced by philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel , this school concerns itself with class differences, economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of the capitalist system: Theorists working in the Marxist tradition, therefore, are interested in answering the overarching question, whom does it [the work, the effort, the policy, the road, etc. Marxist critics are also interested in how the lower or working classes are oppressed - in everyday life and in literature. The Material Dialectic The Marxist school follows a process of thinking called the material dialectic. This belief system maintains that " Marx asserts that " This cycle of contradiction, tension, and revolution must continue: The Revolution The continuing conflict between the classes will lead to upheaval and revolution by oppressed peoples and form the groundwork for a new order of society and economics where capitalism is abolished. According to Marx, the revolution will be led by the working class others think peasants will lead the uprising under the guidance of intellectuals. Once the elite and middle class are overthrown, the intellectuals will compose an equal society where everyone owns everything socialism - not to be confused with Soviet or Maoist Communism. Though a staggering number of different nuances exist within this school of literary theory, Marxist critics generally work in areas covered by the following questions. What is the social class of the author? Which class does the work claim to represent? What values does it reinforce? What values does it subvert? What conflict can be seen between the values the work champions and those it portrays? What social classes do the characters represent? How do characters from different classes interact or conflict? Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

Chapter 9 : The Marxist perspective of literary analysis by marxistperspect - Infogram

The Marxist perspective of literary analysis. As the name suggests, Karl Marx, () in collaboration with Friedrich Engels was the inspiration for the ideology behind this species of literary criticism. Karl Marx was primarily an ideologist who believed that the main reason behind confli.