

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogy, polyphony and heteroglossia:

Dialogism: According to Mikhail Bakhtin 'understanding' is a dialogic process. Every word that has been in the process to be decoded is reciprocated by listening mind with its own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial the understanding will be; otherwise the understanding will be sketchy and incomplete. For instance, in decoding a new word, the listening mind cannot facilitate in adequate numbers these answering words, for which the meaning would always be incomplete. Therefore, a simultaneous and a parallel process is a key to 'understanding' the meaning of words. In his own words, 'every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering words that it anticipates. The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's directions. . . it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response'. This inevitable relation between words and answering-word in 'understanding' meaning is referred to by Bakhtin as Dialogism.

Polyphony: (poly—many; phon—sound,voice) the dialogic nature of language has provided ample opportunities to exploit it for multidimensional voice in many genres particularly in novels. Dostoevsky has experimented in to a great extent in his novels; for which the characters in his novels are not 'subordinated to the character's objectified images' nor does it serve as a 'mouthpiece for the author's voice', instead his hero appears 'whose voice is constructed exactly like the voice of the author himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's world usually is'. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds alongside the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally voices of other characters. There is always a plurality of valid-consciousness in his novels. The characters are not only the creation of the author but at the same time, the multidimensional nature of their voices allows each of them to be defined in relation to the other characters and situations. This multiple voice permits multiple meanings to be decoded unlike

any monologic novel where characters express the desire and expectation of the author, which according to Bakhtin, is an important characteristic of polyphonic novel.

Heteroglossia: Bakhtin defined heteroglossia as linguistic energy which allows the presence or co-existence of two or more viewpoints in a text or other artistic works. It emerges from the belief that any language stratifies into many voices: ‘social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, and generic languages, language of generation and age groups, tendentious languages, language of the authorities, the various circles and passing fashions’. He gives an example of an illiterate peasant, who speaks Church Slavonic to God, speaks to his family in their own peculiar dialect, sings song in yet a third, and attempts to emulate officious high class dialect when he dictates petitions to the local government. And in every case language is ‘shot through with intentions and accents’, and hence, there are no neutral words. Even the most unremarkable statement possesses a taste, whether of a profession, a party, a generation, a place or a time. To Bakhtin words do not exist until they are spoken, and that moment they are printed with the signature of the speaker.

Bakhtin viewed that modern novel as a literary genre best suited for the exploitation of heteroglossia. The linguistic energy of the novel was seen in its expression of the conflict between voices through their adscription to different elements in the novels discourse. In examination of the English comic novels, particularly the works of Charles Dickens, Bakhtin noticed the parody of ‘common tongue’ and the language of parliament or high-class banquets, using concealed language to create humor. The frequent shift from his authorial narrative voice into a formalized, almost epic tone while describing an unremarkable bureaucrat; his intent was to parody the self-importance and vainglory of the bureaucrat’s position.

Bakhtin identifies a specific type of discourse, the ‘authoritative discourse’, which demands to be assimilated by the reader or listener. This type of discourse—scientific theory, religious dogma—is viewed as past, finished, hierarchically superior, and therefore demands ‘unconditional allegiance’ rather than accepting interpretation. The role of the novel, according to Bakhtin, is to draw the authoritative into question, and to allow that which was once considered to be

conflicted and open to interpretation. In effect, novels not only function through heteroglossia, but must promote it.

D. H. Lawrence's Pan in America

Lawrence in this essay, invoking the image of nature-God- Pan, emphasized on the affinity between man and nature. It is more necessary to co-exist and reciprocate with nature than to conquer and master it. Man, climbing in the ladder of science and technology, begins to regard nature as opportunities to be exploited for the benefit and welfare of them. This change in perception, where man instead of thinking themselves as a part of nature, regard it as subordinate, has rapidly pulled itself to a mechanized and individual world. It has such lure in the present time that we prefer to live among the machine than to live among the living. Earlier people lived a life of close proximity with nature. They could develop a unique relation with nature. Whether it was a 'weird psychic connection' or 'telepathy', it helped them to survive in the struggle for existence. Lawrence observed this unique relation in the ritual performed by the ancient hunters. A hunter succeeds not by accident, nor even chiefly by looking for signs, but primarily by a psychic attraction,(performed through primitive ritual) which enables him to find his quarry and to aim with a pure, spellbound volition. If there is no flaw in his abstracted huntsman's will, he cannot miss. Arrow or bullet, it flies like a movement of pure will, straight to the spot. And the deer, once she has let her quivering alertness be overmastered or stilled by the hunter's subtle, hypnotic, following spell, she cannot escape.

Like Wordsworths, Lawrence too believed that every object in nature is permeated by a spirit, whether it is a tree, stone, or hill, river or little stream or waterfall, or salmon in the fall. Man can be master and complete in himself, only by assuming the living powers of each of them. In the course of time as human begins to climb on the ladder of civilization, he could realize that all things were related by certain laws. The moment he learnt it, he began to make engines that would do the works of his body. So, instead of concentrating upon his quarry, or upon the living things which made his universe, he concentrated upon the engines or instruments which should intervene between him and the living universe, and give him mastery. Once a thing is conquered, it is lost. Its relation to the conqueror has collapsed because sound relation can be built on co-existence or assimilation and not on domination. Therefore, it is 'better to be a hunter in the woods of Pan, than it is to be a clerk in a city store. The hunter hungered, labored, and suffered tortures of fatigue. But at least he lived in a ceaseless living relation to his surrounding universe.'

It is, thus, Pan becomes a principle, one which constitutes the very idea of freedom and fetter-free environment where no constraints impinge upon the very condition of existence. He is, in other words, arguing for a form of life that does not subject itself to mechanized formats, but rather, opens up to engage with vast possibilities of living that a sustained involvement with environment facilitates.

Lawrence's reaction to the portrayal of nature (pan) in Literature

Lawrence was always critical of the way nature is displayed in literature. Wordsworth sought to engage with Pan in terms of what nature suggested and offered for human conduct and action. Walt Whitman too presents nature as a benevolent agency. This ethos that seeks to understand nature in an all-encompassing role is what Lawrence asks questions of. Lawrence feels that there is a shift in focus, and the association of Pan with nature does not quite justify the way it should be done. Western culture has often been taken to represent a quiet and innocuous nature, but Pan is not to be seen or understood only in terms of its supposed calm and quiet aspects; for Pan has the aggressive side too. The multiple dimensions of nature cannot be appreciated by just the idea of the picturesque and calm that Pan is conventionally associated with, but the ignored side of mythical figure must be brought to bear on the proper understanding of nature and the human response to it. Therefore, he said, 'Walt is Pan, but all Pan is not Walt'.

Psychoanalysis and Feminism

Juliet Mitchell

Psychoanalysis and Feminism is a book written by Mitchell in 1974. Mitchell postulates her theory of feminism in a different light in this text. According to her, gender discrimination is not a social or cultural construct only as was thought till then. Because every society or culture, how progressive they may be in its appearance, bears that discrimination. Equality has never been achieved even in the best of an educated or civilized society. Women face suppression and exploitation. The perception of women as second sex or inferior to man is ingrained in the very psychology of each person. For which a gross discrimination or injustice done to women appears to be a normal process or reality in the position of women in the society. This ideological belief regarding the status of women, which is known as patriarchy, prevents establishing equality between men and women. Therefore, construction of femaleness is a psycho-ideological construct rather than a socio or cultural construct. Juliet Mitchell, in this book, stressed the need of a psychoanalytical approach to understand the dynamics of the society in portraying the women. In

short, Mitchell's book advocates the importance of using psychoanalysis to help understand the transmission of sexual difference within 'ideology'.

Historicity of Text/ Texuality of History

Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose

Historicity of Text refers to the recognition of multiple sources in the study of literature. It means to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing. Instead of looking at texts as specially produced cultural items, for which others were seen to have served as the *background*, 'historicity of text' argued for an alternative mode of reading which focused on a given period in history by examining all kinds of texts, including those marginalized conventionally, and then drew out marks of that culture that lay embedded within such formations. Thus traditional view regarding history as record of facts came to be revised, as historical texts came to be subjected to scrutiny in the same way as literature was.

Texuality of History, on the other hand, refers the impossibility of finding a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question. Past is always imagined through the eyes of the writers.

Foregrounding

Jan Mukarovsky

Foregrounding is a technique of CONSCIOUS writing. It draws attention of the readers to certain facts by a conscious effort of the writer. For instance, an everyday reality can be foregrounded if it is defamiliarised ,i.e. to make similar things seem unfamiliar. In other words, it is the deautomatization of an act.

Language of poetry, essay, journalistic writings can have the effects of foregrounding.

Russian Formalism and its impact on literature

Terry Eagleton viewed Russian Formalism, which started in 1917 and flourished throughout the 1920s, had significant contribution to the formulation of definition or nature of literature. According to Russian Formalist literature represents an 'organised violence committed on ordinary speech'. Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech for which there is a disproportion between the signifiers and signified. The texture, rhythm and resonance of the works of a literature are in excess of their abstractable meaning.

Formalist regards literature neither a vehicle for ideas, a reflection of social reality nor as the incarnation of some transcendental truth: it is viewed to be a material fact, whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. Because it is made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of an author's mind. Far from

seeing form as the expression of content, they stood the relationship on its head. Content was merely the *motivation* of form.

Moreover, Formalists see literary work as a more or less arbitrary assemblage of devices—sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative techniques. Under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, turned on its head.. It was language ‘made strange’; because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also suddenly made unfamiliar. Literature, by forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, refreshes these habitual responses and renders objects more ‘perceptible’.

To sum up, the Russian formalist is one of the first theories to define literature meaningfully. Before its emergence, the definition was limited to whether it is fact or fiction. For the first time it embraced many other areas to discuss the nature of literature.

T.S. Eliot’s idea of impersonality

In his essay ‘Tradition and Individual talent’, Eliot expressed his idea of impersonality as a process of ‘continual surrender’ of the poet in order to allow the liberty to varied feelings of the poet to enter into new combination. The importance of self-surrender or escape from the personality of the poet is immense, as the tradition of the great poetry shows that, the greatness of the poetry lies not in the intensity of the emotion rather, at the intensity of the artistic process. For that matter it is imperative to separate the ‘suffering mind’ of the poet from the ‘creative mind’. Since this separation will allow the free play of varied and different emotion of the writer without the intervention of his personal suffering, which will, in turn, will allow conforming to consciousness of the past. Failing this separation would make one’s writing completely personal and hence will be less relevant in regard to its influence on the number of people and the period of time. Therefore, the urge of the idea of impersonality of Eliot is to make the poet a medium; not a subject. Like a catalyst the role of the poet should be limited in helping to form a new kind of emotion, without leaving any trace of the poet’s experience. However, in another article on W.B.Yeats, Eliot contradicts his own ideas by saying that expression of personality in the works

may not be always a sign of immaturity. It is so when the expression of personality is not limited within the orbit of personal experience, rather, moves beyond it to include a general truth. Therefore, in spite of his expression of personality, Yeats poetry remains as one of the greatest poetry by virtue of its ability to speak out a general truth.

Eliot and Romantic theory of poetry

The idea of impersonality in poetry thwarts the very basic of theory of romantic poetry. Romantic theory which believes poetry as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotion recollected in tranquility’, supposes poetry as a deliberate process of a person when he was full with emotion and passion. However, Eliot ideas show that poetry is not the outcome of a deliberate and spontaneous process. In the creation of it there is should be a conscious attempt to separate one ‘suffering mind’ from the ‘creative mind’. In other words, Eliot view holds that poetry is not the turning loose of emotion, rather an escape from it. The personal emotion of the poet has little to do with the creation of poetry since the emotion of poetry is impersonal which has its life in the poem itself and not in the history of the poet. Therefore, what is more required is not the recollection in tranquility, rather a consciousness of not only the present but of the present moment of the past.

Objective correlative

Eliot defined the concept of 'objective correlative' in his essay 'Hamlet and His Problems' as a way of expressing emotion in the form art by finding an objective correlative. In other words, it is a set of objects, a situation, and a chain of events which correlates a particular emotion in such a way that when these external facts are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. It works as a set formula for that particular emotion for all intent and purpose. For example, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated by a skillful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions. Similarly, the words of Macbeth on hearing the death of his wife are acute equivalent of his emotional condition.

However, in the case of Hamlet, there is an absence of objective correlative. The character Hamlet is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. Though Hamlet's disgust is occasioned by his mother, yet his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it. His disgust envelops and exceeds her and, hence, within him is a feeling which he cannot objectify it. Therefore, the very nature of the problem is too complex to have any objective equivalence. And this leads to the bafflement and prolongation of the creator to figure out his emotion up to the conclusion without that success. Hence, Hamlet is less artistic than Macbeth and most of his important plays.

Aristotle's views on the significance of plot in a tragedy

Aristotle laid great emphasis on the significance of plot in his definition of tragedy. Though there are six components that consists a tragedy, he views plot to be more important than character, diction, thought, spectacle and melody. In fact, he defined tragedy as the imitation of action--an action which should be serious in nature; complex in structure; poetic in language and should be orchestrated in such a way that it would lead to the purgation of emotion at the end of the play. By action Aristotle meant neither the person nor the quality of his work, he meant what a person does. All human happiness and misery takes the form of action. Therefore, the object of imitation is not the character, but the action and the action is represented through a fable or plot. If the

action leads to the development of a well-organized plot, the end and purpose of the tragedy is achieved, it will have no other purpose to be achieved. On the other hand, if the action leads to the development of character and fails to bring the desired tragic effect through the plot, then such imitation of action is no longer any requirement for tragedy. The purpose of the playwrights is not to portray the characters; characters are included for the sake of action only. In his own words, 'the most beautiful colours laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and- white sketch of a portrait'. So, he will prefer a plot without character (Black-and-white portrait) to a play which has rich characterization but no tragic effect (coloured portrait without order). Other components of the tragedy—thought, diction, melody and spectacle are more or less pleasurable accessories and embellishment to the play. The spectacle, which is less artistic, has least to do with the art of poetry since tragic effect can be obtained without a spectacle i.e. public performance and actors. Moreover, the Spectacle is a business more of a costumier than that of a poet. Therefore, metaphorically speaking, the relation between plot and other components are defined as life and soul of a man on the one hand and the other components of the body on the other. Soul is the vitality in a human being; only flesh and bloods cannot make a complete being.

The tragic effect of a tragedy also lies in its munificent synthesis of complex plot, appropriate use of peripety and discovery .Failure would subsequently affect the tragic effect. Seen from this perspective the success of the play like Macbeth and Oedipus is due to the adequate conglomeration of these aspects. It is the artistic efficiency in making plot that make these plays great. The actions should not be simple enough to be predicted, there should always be a point of reversal and discovery. It is a combination of many unexpected events, for which reasons the end lies in golden uncertainty. What Macbeth or Oedipus had turned out to be at the end is due to the complete reversal of the expectation, which neither the protagonist nor the audience could figure out exactly. It not only retains the attention of the audience, but also unfolds the magnificence of the action. Similarly, in the skillful craftsmanship of plot may also lead to discovery of hidden facts. The letter of the messenger in Oedipus not only reverses the actions but also led to the discovery of a hidden fact.

The greatest importance, however, lies in its purgation of emotion from the minds of the audience. A rich plot would certainly lead to the storage of the varied emotion in audience and

burdened with them. However, the playwrights try to relieve them from that burden as well as purify them. And this can only be done through the orchestration of action sequence in an artistic manner. So, a good plot has the healing power too.

In fact, among all the components it is the plot which is enriched with lot of properties. It has action, reversal of action, error of judgment, discovery and purgation. No other components possess this endowment as much as the plot possess. Therefore, the poet requires more skill, inventive and imaginative capacity in construction of plot than in the execution of the other components.

The Small Voice of History

In his “the Small Voice of History” Ranajit Guha rereads and recreates the history in order to show that the history (or in any history book) is never an authentic documentation of facts. Facts and figures in a History are always coloured by dominant ideologies of contemporary period. In most of the cases, Guha observes, it is not only the colouring but also a kind of suppression. It is the ideology of Statism that had been occupying the central space; pushing others to the periphery. This tradition—statism in History—began with the emergence of history writing in Italy. It is believed that a good citizen and a good monarch must be well-versed in the socio-political history of the time. In other words, history largely meant the rules, regulation, norms,

values and events that were associated with the governing of the state. So, Machiavelli believed that “historical study and the study of statecraft should have been essentially the same”.

Like Machiavelli, Ranajit Guha believes that the relation between history and statecraft still exists to the detriment of the other factors. Though Monarchy was substituted by bourgeoisie and, then, by a democratic system, yet the tradition of history writing never changed. In this democratic system of government too, history became the voice of the dominant ideologies only. One important reason for it is that the study of History can have hegemonic interest for the rulers. Because it can justify their ideologies as natural and authentic, for which their authority remain intact. As a result, the subaltern voices remain hidden and unheard in the history. History, therefore, according to Guha, champions the cause of the dominant classes at the cost of the rest of the people. In other words, history which appears to be true and complete picture of the past is actually a partial and incomplete account of that period.

Ranajit Guha, looking back to the Indian History, finds that it is too covered by same fault. For instance, in an historical account of Bengal during the colonial period, it was written that the British philanthropic mission of healthcare and awareness programme did not have its desired effect always. Because, according to some authentic account, the local Brahmin priests’ influence was dominant among over common people. So, common people went to the Brahmin priest seeking remedy of their diseases instead of going to the doctors. From one perspective, this account is true but from a close, it seems that, it is a never a true account because given that account it is assumed by the readers that the Brahmin priests and the common people must be on agreement. Otherwise the common people would easily be persuaded by the British healthcare mission. However, the knowledge would be a false one because everybody, who like, Ranjit Guha, makes a first-hand study of the events will find that the relation between the priest and common people was not one of an agreement rather it is domination. So, the cause of the failure of the British health-care mission lies somewhere else which the history failed to explore.

Ranajit Guha also observes that P. Sundarayya’s Telengana People’s Struggle and Its Lesson is not an authentic account of the struggle because it does not pay any importance to the small voices. The voices of women are not properly assessed here. The participation as well as expectations in the struggle is not examined from the women point of view; rather it is

commented through a male narrative. In most of the time, the ‘undertone of harassment’ and the ‘note of pain’ is ignored.

Therefore, Guha calls for the re-writing of the history in order to do justice to the past. In the case of Telengana, a re-writing of history, Guha believes, will challenge the univocity of statist discourse which will destroy the hierchization which privileges one particular set of contradictions as principal or dominant and will regard the need for its solution as prior to or more urgent to all other causes. Secondly, a re-writing would reverse the dichotomy of agency/instrument which is so much essential for authentication. Lastly, but importantly, once a small voice is given the voice, the whole tradition of history writing would change since it will not be further possible to ignore their voices.

To conclude, historiography in India as well as in the world is basically a ideological supremacy of a particular class over other ideology. That’s why; small voices are always sandwiched between the big voices. It is now time to re-read history looking for the hidden or to recreate history in a new fashion demanding attention from both voices.

What is literature ?

In the essay, “What is Lterature” Terry Eagleton defines literature from the perspective of Russian Formalist theory. Starting with the common notion that imagination is the bedrock of literature, Eagleton explains the inadequacy and limitation of such concept to define literature properly. If imagination or fictious nature of writing is the only characteristics of literature, then a large body of writing which is presently recognized as literature would be left outside.

Eagleton then defines it as a kind of writing which, in the words of Roman Jakobson, represents an ‘organised violence committed on ordinary speech’. Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech. For instance when the poet writes-‘though still unravished bride of quietness’-we understand that there is a disproportion between the signifiers and signified, which is a characteristics of literariness. However, a militant, polemical group of critics challenge this quasi-mystical symbolist doctrine and believed

that literature was not pseudo-religion or psychology or sociology but a particular organization of language. It had its own specific laws, structures and devices, which were to be studied in themselves rather than reduced to something else. They believed that literary work is more or less arbitrary assemblage of devices—sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative techniques etc. because all these literary devices have ‘estranging’ or ‘defamiliarising’ effect on the readers.

In other words, what was specific to literary language, what distinguished it from other forms of discourse, was that it ‘deformed’ ordinary language in various ways. Under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, and turned on its head. It was language ‘made strange’ and because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also made unfamiliar. In the routines of everyday speech, our perceptions of and responses to reality become stale, blunted or automatized. Literature, by forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, refreshes these habitual responses and renders objects more perceptible. The poetry of Gerard Manly Hopkins might provide a particularly graphic example of this.

To conclude, Eagleton defines literature as any kind of writings which with the help of defamiliarisation of language refreshes the habitual responses of the readers and renders objects more perceptible.