

LITERARY THEORY for DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Special material for Lectureship Exams

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Only for Paid Courses

ASSIGNMENT 1

Russian Formalism

Introduction to Russian Formalism

- Emerged in the 1910s and 1920s in Russia.
- One of the major Formalist approaches. ADD DEFINITION AND EXPLAIN
- Key groups Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOYAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language).
- Later, Prague Linguistic Society EXPAND
- Aimed to make literary studies more scientific by focusing on the form and structure of literature rather than its content.

Major Theorists

- Viktor Shklovsky ADD VERY SHORT INTRO & MENTION WORKS
 - Known for the concept of "defamiliarization" (ostranenie), which means presenting common things in an unfamiliar or strange way to make the audience see them differently.
 - Shklovsky's analysis of Tolstoy's use of 'defamiliarization' to make readers reevaluate their perceptions of everyday objects.
- Roman Jakobson ADD VERY SHORT INTRO & MENTION WORKS
 - Developed the idea of the literary function and the concept of "poetic function," which focuses on the message for its own sake.
 - Jakobson's analysis of sound patterns in poetry.
- Yuri Tynianov
 - Emphasized the dynamic interaction between the elements of the literary system.
 - Analysis of genre evolution over time.
- Boris Eikhenbaum
 - Advocated for the study of the "literariness" of texts.
 - Research on the rhythm and meter in Russian poetry.

Key Concepts

- Defamiliarization
 - Making the familiar strange to enhance perception. EXPLAIN
 - Tolstoy's narrative techniques in "War and Peace."
- Literariness
 - The distinguishing feature of texts that makes them literary. EXPLAIN
 - Focuses on form, language, and techniques over content or message.
- Foregrounding
 - Highlighting certain aspects of the text through linguistic and formal techniques. EXPLAIN
 - Use of poetic devices like alliteration and rhyme.

Relation to Other Formalist Schools

- New Criticism
 - Like Russian Formalism, New Criticism focused on close reading and textual analysis.
 - Difference New Critics were based in the Anglo-American tradition and were less rigid in their focus on form.
- Prague Linguistic Circle
 - Influenced by Russian Formalism but extended its ideas, incorporating the social functions of literary elements.
- Futurism EXPAND
- Bakhtin School EXPAND

Relation to Structuralism

- Structuralism, emerging later, was heavily influenced by Russian Formalism.
 - Saussure's Linguistics
- Provided a basis for structuralist ideas and semiotics.
 - Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss applied Saussurean principles to literature and anthropology.
 - Focused on underlying structures rather than isolated elements.
 - Claude Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of myths.

Impact

- Russian Formalism laid the groundwork for various 20th-century literary theories.
- Its emphasis on form and structure remains influential in contemporary literary studies, giving importance to literary form and devices.

Criticism

- Some argue it ignored social and historical contexts, while others see its rigorous scientific approach as a foundational strength.

I.A. Richards' contributions to literary criticism

Introduction

- Practical Criticism (later New Criticism)
 - Emerged in the early 20th century.
 - Focused on close reading and detailed textual analysis.
 - Rejected historical and biographical context in favour of examining the text itself.
- I.A. Richards
 - Full name Ivor Armstrong Richards. ADD VERY SHORT BIO
 - A leading figure in the New Criticism movement.
 - Known for his innovative approach to literary analysis.

Major Books and Ideas of I.A. Richards

- "Principles of Literary Criticism" (1924)
 - Emphasized the need for a scientific approach to literature.
 - Introduced the concept of "close reading." EXPLAIN
 - Examined the psychological effects of reading literature.
- "Practical Criticism" (1929)
 - Based on classroom experiments with Cambridge students.
 - Highlighted common reading errors and misinterpretations.
 - Focused on the objective study of texts without reliance on external context.
 - The phrase "Practical Criticism" was borrowed from Coleridge.
 - Introduced four kinds of meaning. EXPLAIN
- "The Meaning of Meaning" (1923, with C.K. Ogden)
 - Explored language and semantics.
 - Introduced the triadic theory of semiotics (symbol, referent, and thought or reference).
- "Science and Poetry" (1926)
 - Examined the relationship between scientific and poetic thought.
 - Proposed that poetry provides valuable insights into human experience.

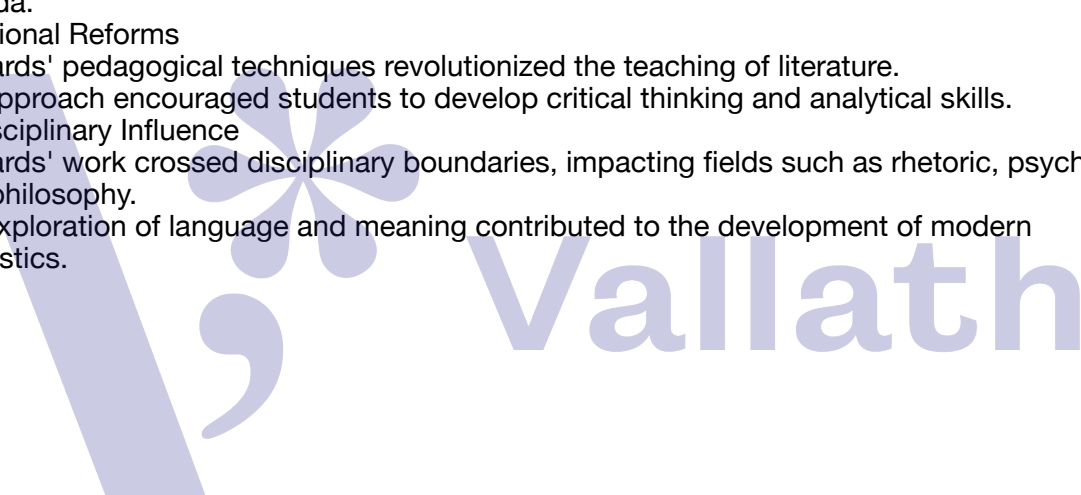
Ideas and Contributions

- Close Reading
 - Advocated for detailed analysis of texts.
 - Encouraged readers to focus on the words, structure, and meaning within the text itself.
- Value of Poetry

- In Principles of Literary Criticism, Richards defines a poet is one who can order his experiences and connect his disconnected impulses into “a single ordered response”. Language has to be used in a special “emotive” way so that the poet's experiences can be stimulated in the mind of the reader.
- Contrast with Affective fallacy
- BASIC English
 - Stands for British American Scientific International and Commercial English.
 - A controlled language based on standard English, but with a greatly simplified vocabulary and grammar. EXPLAIN
- Based on the ideas of The Meaning of Meaning and introduced in CK Ogden's 1930 book Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar.

Influence on Later Critics

- Literary Criticism and Language
 - Richards' methods became foundational for later New Critics, such as Cleanth Brooks and John Crowe Ransom.
 - Paved the way for structuralism and deconstruction in the mid-20th century.
 - His ideas about language and semantics influenced figures like Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida.
- Educational Reforms
 - Richards' pedagogical techniques revolutionized the teaching of literature.
 - His approach encouraged students to develop critical thinking and analytical skills.
- Interdisciplinary Influence
 - Richards' work crossed disciplinary boundaries, impacting fields such as rhetoric, psychology, and philosophy.
 - His exploration of language and meaning contributed to the development of modern linguistics.



ASSIGNMENT 2

Ferdinand de Saussure's Contributions to Structuralism

Introduction

- Introduction to Ferdinand de Saussure ADD YEARS, ETC
 - Ferdinand de Saussure was a Swiss linguist whose ideas laid the foundation for a scientific approach in the study of language and modern linguistics.
 - Often regarded as the father of modern linguistics, Saussure's teachings and posthumously published work, *Course in General Linguistics*, revolutionized the field. Here he advocated the focus on the structures of language rather than the historical development, i.e., synchronic study rather than diachronic study.
 - His insights contributed significantly to the development of structuralism, a theoretical framework that influenced various disciplines, including literary theory, anthropology, and sociology. EXPLAIN
- Introduction to Structuralism
 - Structuralism is an intellectual movement that focuses on understanding the underlying structures that shape human culture, language, and thought.
 - It posits that every element of human culture is part of a larger, overarching system of relationships. GIVE EXAMPLES
 - Key structuralist thinkers, beyond Saussure, include Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology and Roland Barthes in literary theory.

Definitions and Concepts

INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF BINARY OPPOSITIONS

- Sign, Signifier, and Signified
 - Saussure introduced the concept of the linguistic sign, which consists of two parts the signifier (the form of a word or expression) and the signified (the concept it represents).
 - The word "tree" (signifier) invokes the mental image of a tree (signified). GIVE EXAMPLES OF SYMBOLS FROM LITERATURE
- Arbitrariness of the Sign
 - One of Saussure's key contributions is the idea that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. EXPLAIN
 - There is no inherent connection between a word and its meaning; the association is based on social conventions. EXPLAIN WITH CULTURAL EXAMPLES
- Langue and Parole
 - Saussure distinguished between langue (the overall system or structure of language) and parole (individual speech acts or the use of language in practice).
 - Langue represents the abstract, systemic rules of a language, while parole is the concrete manifestation of these rules in communication.
- Synchronic vs. Diachronic Analysis
 - Saussure introduced the distinction between synchronic (at a particular point in time) and diachronic (through time) analyses of language. GIVE EXAMPLES
 - Synchronic analysis focuses on language in its current state, while diachronic analysis studies its historical development and changes. GIVE EXAMPLES
- Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic
 - Saussure emphasized two types of relationships in language paradigmatic (substitutional) and syntagmatic (combinatorial). GIVE EXAMPLES
 - Paradigmatic relations involve elements that can be substituted for each other (e.g., cat, dog, horse), whereas syntagmatic relations involve elements that combine to form larger units of meaning. GIVE EXAMPLES OF WORDS IN A SENTENCE
- Speech and Writing EXPLAIN AND CONNECT WITH DERRIDA

Conclusion

- Impact on Linguistics
 - Saussure's ideas established structural linguistics, which prioritizes the study of underlying systems over historical evolution. INTRODUCE BARTHES AAND LEVI STRAUSS
 - His concepts laid the groundwork for later linguistic theories, such as Noam Chomsky's generative grammar.

- Impact on Literary Theory
 - Structuralism impacted literary theory by proposing that texts, like languages, have underlying structures that can be analyzed for deeper meaning.
 - Roland Barthes applied structuralist ideas to literature, suggesting that narratives have common structures and meanings that are not evident on the surface. MENTION MYTHOLOGIES
 - Structuralism led to new approaches in textual analysis, emphasizing the role of language and structure in shaping meaning. INTRODUCE SEMIOTICS, MYTH CRITICISM (a myth cannot be interpreted in isolation but only has meaning within an entire cultural system or structure of myth)
- Legacy and Influence
 - Saussure's structuralism has influenced various fields beyond linguistics, fostering interdisciplinary approaches to the study of human culture and society. BARTHES
 - His ideas continue to be a cornerstone in semiotics and literary theory, leading to Poststructuralism. EXPLAIN