

LITERARY THEORY for DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Special material for Lectureship Exams

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Only for Paid Courses

ASSIGNMENT 1

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.

2. 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.

