

## E23G Twentieth Century Literary Theory to Saussure

This course seeks to introduce students to some of the most important modern developments in the field of literary theory that do not reflect the impact which Saussure's critique of traditional referential theories of language has come to have upon literary criticism. A selection of readings representative of several theoretical schools (for example, Marxism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Russian Formalism, Reader-response and Archetypal criticism) will be discussed with the goal of a) situating these various schools with respect to the four 'poles' of literary criticism (author, text, reader, reality), and b) stressing the particular importance of the factors of race, class and gender in the criticism of literary texts. Special consideration will be paid to how writers and scholars associated with what some have come to call the first great 'wave' of West Indian literature and social and political thought (Lamming, Harris, Walcott, Fanon, *et. al.*) as well as African writers, critics and/or theorists (e.g. Achebe, Ngugi, Soyinka, *et. al.*) may be situated with regard to these 'metropolitan' (*i.e.* European) schools of criticism. Students will be encouraged to apply the paradigms discussed in their own critical writings.

**Meeting times:** We meet twice per week (**Mon 5-7** and **Thurs 2-4**) for one and a half hours at a time. I will lecture for most of the first session each week and for part of the second. The remainder of the latter session will be devoted to tutorial presentations and discussion.

**Assessment:** tutorial presentations and general class participation 10%  
one term paper (suggested length 2,500 words) 30%  
final examination 60%

***NB: Students are forewarned that a) essays must be written according to the guidelines set out the Faculty pamphlet on essay writing (which is itself a useful summary of the MLA Handbook): 'SLOPPY' WORK WILL BE PENALISED; b) unit regulations now decree that students must pass at least one question in the exam in order to pass the course.***

## READING SCHEDULE

*Students are reminded that whereas the **primary readings** listed below are **absolutely essential**, the **secondary and further readings** are just that: they are **suggested readings only** that are designed to provide necessary background and needed clarification. It is entirely up to you whether you choose to read them or not. You may find them especially useful, however, when it comes to writing term papers or*

preparing for the exam. A copy of all **primary readings** may be found in the E23G folder in the library. All the **suggested readings** are to be found in the Library, unless otherwise indicated.

### Useful Background Readings On Reserve in the Library:

Terry Eagleton <u>Literary Theory: an Introduction</u>
Raman Selden <u>A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory</u>
Ann Jefferson & David Robey <u>Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction</u>
Peter Barry <u>Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory</u>
Steven Lynn <u>Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory</u>
Raman Selden <u>Practising Theory and Reading Literature: an Introduction</u>
Bill Ashcroft, <i>et. al.</i> <u>The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures</u>

### Anthologies on Reserve in the Library:

Hazard Adams, ed. <u>Critical Theory Since Plato</u>
Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, eds. <u>Critical Theory Since 1965</u>
Charles Kaplan, ed. <u>Criticism: the Major Statements</u>
Raman Selden, ed. <u>The Theory of Criticism: a Reader</u>
Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, eds. <u>Modern Literary Theory: a Reader</u>
Rick Rylance, ed. <u>Debating Texts: Readings in Twentieth Century Literary Theory and Method.</u>
K.M. Newton, ed. <u>Twentieth Century Literary Theory: a Reader</u>
Bill Ashcroft, <i>et. al.</i> , eds. <u>The Post-colonial Studies Reader</u>
Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. <u>Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: a Reader</u>

## Reading Schedule

### **WEEK ONE: Introduction**

**Session One** the importance of consciously understanding what exactly it is we do as literary critics (*'theorising interpretation'*); using a sample text to elicit some of the ways in which we unconsciously set about 'criticising' texts; the general aims of this course; M.H. Abrams' 4 poles of critical theory (author [expressive], text [objective], reader [pragmatic], reality [mimetic]).

- Primary Readings:** 1) Cary Nelson “Problematizing Interpretation: Some Opening Questions”  
2) M.H. Abrams “Orientation of Critical Theories”

**Session Two** Roman Jakobson’s complementary model of linguistic communication (message, addresser, addressee, context, etc); Selden’s application of this model to literature; R.S. Crane’s view that ‘*the answers you get depend upon the questions you ask of the text*’: the variety of critical approaches as so many ‘templates’ which, when imposed upon the raw material of the text, produce different but equally valid interpretations.

- Primary Readings:** 1) Roman Jakobson “Linguistics and Poetics” (brief extract)  
2) Raman Selden “Introduction” to A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory  
3) R.S. Crane “The Multiplicity of Critical Languages”

## WEEKS 2 AND 3: TEXT-ORIENTED APPROACHES

### WEEK TWO

#### *New Criticism*

**Session One** This is an extremely useful model that permits close textual analyses of individual poems. Severing literature from historical, ethical and biographical contexts in order to focus on form; T.S. Eliot’s influential (and anti-Romantic) notions of i) good poetry as consisting less in the expression of than an escape from the personality of the poet and ii) the ‘*objective correlative*’ (good poetry expresses feeling indirectly through the description of things); the focus on the text-in-itself; ‘*logical core/structure*’ versus ‘*local texture*’ (Ransom); the ‘*intentional*’ and the ‘*affective*’ fallacies (Wimsatt and Beardsley); the ‘*heresy of paraphrase*’ (Brooks).

- Primary Readings:** 1) John Crowe Ransom “Criticism as Pure Speculation”  
2) Cleanth Brooks “The Formalist Critic”

**Session Two** Practical application: using “The Canonization” to a) identify ‘logical core’ as opposed to ‘texture’ and b) show that *paradox* and *tension* are intrinsic to poetry, to wit, that the chief property of poetry consists in *coherence*, that is, the harmonisation or reconciliation of conflicting meanings; the post-colonial critique of ‘*art for art’s sake*’.

- Primary Readings:** 1) John Donne “The Canonization”  
2) Cleanth Brooks “The Language of Paradox”

### 3) Omafume F. Onoge “The Crisis of Consciousness in Modern African Literature”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) David Robey “Anglo-American New Criticism” (in Jefferson and Robey, eds. Modern Literary Theory)

**Further Reading:** 1) T.S. Eliot “Hamlet and his Problems” (in Kaplan, ed. Criticism)  
 2) Wimsatt and Beardsley “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” (in Adams, ed. Critical Theory Since Plato)  
 3) Cleanth Brooks “The Heresy of Paraphrase” (in his The Well-Wrought Urn)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. Define the meaning of the following key New Critical terms: “logical core/structure”; “local texture”; the “intentional” and the “affective fallacies”; the “heresy of paraphrase”; “paradox”; “coherence”.

2. What are some of the most important objections that might be made to a purely ‘objective’ approach to literary criticism such as that recommended by the New Critics?

## WEEK THREE

### *Archetypal Criticism I*

**Session One:** This is an approach which does not favour the study of literary works (of any genre) in isolation from each other. Rather, it underlines their necessary inter-connectedness; form as a) derived from other forms, not content and b) the primary determinant of meaning; the fundamental meaning of all fictions (i.e. their thematic content) consists in ‘pre-generic plot structures’ or ‘mythoi’: we understand a particular story when we have identified the type of plot structure (tragedy, comedy, etc.) of which the story is an exemplification; within the European context, the recurrence of these narrative forms is largely derived from the corpus of Classical and Judaeo-Christian literature; where these forms occur universally, they may speak to the existence of certain mental properties common to all humans.

**Primary Reading:** Northrop Frye “The Archetypes of Literature”

**Session Two** Practical applications: applying Frye’s model to a canonical European text and comparing and contrasting the qualities shared by both European and African epics; in both cases, the goal is to demonstrate Frye’s argument for the (universal) existence of certain narrative forms by which the individual author’s will/intention is necessarily determined; Achebe’s argument that such a critical outlook is dangerously universalist and detracts from the task of coming to grips with the specificity of non-European artforms.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Northrop Frye “Literature in Context: Milton’s Lycidas”  
 2) *Either* Homer Iliad and/or Odyssey or Virgil The Aeneid

- 3) Anon. Sundiata: an Epic of Ancient Mali
- 4) Charles Larson “Heroic Ethnocentrism: the Idea of Universality in Literature”
- 5) Chinua Achebe “Colonialist Criticism”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Ian Balfour “Anatomy as Criticism” (to be provided)  
2) Hayden White “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” (in Adams and Searle, eds. Critical Theory Since 1965): pp.396-7

**Further Reading:** Northrop Frye Anatomy of Criticism

*Tutorial topics:*

1. Compare and contrast a Roman or Greek epic such as The Aeneid or The Odyssey with Sundiata in order to show both a) the ways in which they share features that might be described as epic and b) the ways in which they are different from each other (i.e. what is specifically African about Sundiata and vice versa?).

2. To what exactly does Achebe refer when he speaks of the dangers of universalism and ethnocentrism? Do you agree that similar dangers are inherent in a critical approach such as Frye’s?

## WEEKS 4, 5, 6, 7 AND 8: AUTHOR-ORIENTED APPROACHES

### WEEK FOUR

#### *Intention, the Writer and Tradition*

**Session One** The author’s intention as synonymous with the meaning of his or her work; the priority of locating the author’s conscious intention as expressed in the work above all else (Hirsch); Tradition: the relationship between the individual writer and his predecessors (Eliot); the ‘*anxiety of influence*’: (male) writers as existing in a relationship akin to that of ‘*Oedipal*’ conflict with their predecessors; artistic creation as a *misreading* of the work of one’s predecessors (Bloom).

- Primary Readings:** 1) E.D. Hirsch “Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics”  
2) T.S. Eliot “Tradition and the Individual Talent”  
3) Harold Bloom “Poetry, Revisionism and Repression”

**Further Reading:** 1) E.D. Hirsch “Objective Interpretation” (in Adams, ed. Critical Theory Since Plato)  
2) ---. Validity in Interpretation  
3) Matthew Arnold “The Study of Poetry” (in his Essays in Criticism)  
4) Harold Bloom The Anxiety of Influence  
5) ---. A Map for Misreading

**Session Two** Rethinking Tradition within the colonial context in general and the West Indian in particular.

- Primary Readings:** 1) Edward ‘Kamau’ Brathwaite “Sir Galahad and the Islands”  
2) ---. “Roots”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Edward 'Kamau' Brathwaite Roots *passim*  
2) Nadi Edwards "Migrating Theories: Arnoldian Transformations in West Indian Criticism" (to be provided)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. How does Hirsch respond to the New Critics' opposition to what they call the 'intentional fallacy'?

2. What do you understand by the terms 'anxiety of influence' and 'misreading'?

3. How does Brathwaite 'misread' Eliot's pronouncements on the relationship between the writer and Tradition?

## **W E E K F I V E**

### ***Anglo-American Feminism***

**Session One** Woman as reader of male-authored fiction; woman as writer (*gynocriticism*); the establishment of a female canon or tradition.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Elaine Showalter "Towards a Feminist Poetics"  
2) Elaine Showalter "A Tradition of Our Own"

**Session Two** the '*anxiety of authorship*' experienced by female authors; a practical application of these theories: Gilbert and Gubar on Wuthering Heights.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar "Infection in the Sentence: the Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship"  
2) Emily Brönte Wuthering Heights  
3) Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar "Extract on Wuthering Heights"

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Toril Moi "Feminist Literary Criticism" (in Jefferson and Robey, eds. Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction)  
2) ---. Sexual/Textual Politics  
3) K.K. Ruthven Feminist Literary Studies: an Introduction

**Further Reading:** 1) Elaine Showalter "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (in her The New Feminist Criticism)  
2) ---. A Literature of Their Own  
3) Gilbert and Gubar The Madwoman in the Attic  
4) Annette Kolodny "A Map of Misreading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts" (in Showalter's The New Feminist Criticism)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. What does Showalter mean by the term '*gynocriticism*' and to what approach does she oppose it? To what extent are her pronouncements upon the establishment of a female tradition indebted to Eliot's comments on the Great Tradition.

2. Would you agree that Gilbert and Gubar 'misread' Bloom in much the same way that Brathwaite 'misreads' Eliot? If so, how?

## **WEEK SIX**

### ***Freudian Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Criticism I***

**Session One** The *reality principle* versus the *pleasure principle*; the concept of 'repression'; Freud's 2 models of the 'psyche': a) 'conscious', 'unconscious' and 'preconscious' b) 'ego', 'id' and 'superego'; the 'Oedipus complex'; dreams as the 'royal road to the unconscious': the 'dream-work' -- 'condensation' and 'displacement'; 'instincts'; the 'drives'; 'libido'; 'neurosis'; 'symptom'.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Sigmund Freud "The Structure of the Unconscious"  
 2) ---. "The Theory of Dreams"  
 3) ---. "The Oedipus Complex"  
 4) ---. "The Origins of Culture"

**Session Two** Applying Freud's model of the psyche to literature: the literary work as the author's *day-dream*, that is, as his or her imaginary wish-fulfilment (literature as akin to neurosis, i.e. symptomatic of an unfulfilled wish); practical application of Freudian psychoanalysis to the work of Edgar Allan Poe.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Sigmund Freud "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming"  
 2) Marie Bonaparte "Selections from The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: a Psycho-analytic Interpretation"  
 3) ---. "The Black Cat"

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Sigmund Freud Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis  
 2) Terry Eagleton "Psychoanalysis" (in his Literary Theory: an Introduction)  
 3) Elizabeth Wright "Modern Psychoanalytic Criticism" (in Jefferson and Robey, eds. Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction)  
 4) ---. Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory and Practice

**Further Reading:** 1) Sigmund Freud New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis

*Tutorial topics:*

1. Discuss the central importance of a) Freud's distinction between the 'reality' and the 'pleasure' principles and b) his notion of 'repression' to both his earlier and his later models of the 'psyche'.

2. In what ways do dreams constitute the 'royal road to the unconscious'? (Be sure to discuss the mechanisms in the so-called 'dreamwork' which Freud terms 'condensation' and 'displacement')

3. Discuss the relationship which exists in Freud's view between the literary work and its writer. How is this different from Hirsch's conception of authorial intention? How useful in this respect are Freud's notions of 'condensation' and 'displacement'?

## **WEEK SEVEN**

### ***Jungian Analytical Psychology: Archetypal Criticism II***

**Session One** Jung's model of the psyche: the 'collective unconscious';

‘archetypes’; ‘myth’; ‘animus’ and ‘anima’; the ‘shadow’; ‘individuation’.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Carl Jung “The Collective Unconscious and Archetypes”  
2) ---. “The Psychological Function of Archetypes”  
3) ---. “The Principal Archetypes”

**Session Two** The distinction between a Freudian and a Jungian approach to literary criticism: literature as having its origin not in the personal unconscious but in the collective unconscious to which the author is party; practical application: the quest to identify archetypal motifs in a novel by D.H. Lawrence.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Carl Jung “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry”  
2) Evelyn Hinz and John Teunissen “Culture and the Humanities: the Archetypal Approach”  
3) D.H. Lawrence Lady Chatterley’s Lover  
4) Evelyn Hinz and John Teunissen “War, Love and Industrialism: the Ares/Aphrodite/Hephaestus Complex in Lady Chatterley’s Lover”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Andrew Samuels, *et. al.* “Archetype, Myth, *Numinosum*” (in Richard Sugg, ed. Jungian Literary Criticism)  
2) Elizabeth Wright “Archetypal Criticism: Jung and the Collective Unconscious” (in her Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory and Practice)

**Further Reading:** 1) Carl Jung Man and his Symbols

*Tutorial topics:*

1. What do you understand by Jung’s terms: the ‘collective unconscious’; ‘archetypes’; ‘myth’; ‘individuation’?

2. Exactly how is Jung’s approach to literary criticism different from Freud’s?

## **WEEK EIGHT**

### ***Psychoanalysis/Analytical Psychology and Race***

**Session One** Fanon’s fusion of the theories of Freud and Jung in an effort to understand not only the European’s hatred of the negro but also the non-European’s pathological dislike of him/herself; the split psyche (*‘divided self’*) that results from internalising negative stereotypes of the non-European which exist in the collective unconscious of the European by reading certain canonical texts; Derek Walcott’s divided self and the poetic quest for wholeness (individuation); Wilson Harris’ cross-cultural mythopoetics: the resemblance between the world views of Harris and Jung; the difference between Harris’ notion of tradition and Eliot’s; .

**Primary Readings:** 1) Frantz Fanon “Extract from ‘The Negro and Psychopathology’”



- 2) William Shakespeare Othello
- 3) Derek Walcott “The Muse of History”

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- 4) ---. Selected Poetry
- 5) Ken Ramchand “The Personal Odyssey of Derek Walcott”
- 6) Wilson Harris “Tradition and the West Indian Novel”
- 7) ---. “The Writer and Society”
- 8) Wilson Harris The Palace of the Peacock
- 9) ---. “Judgement and Dream”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) David Cauter Fanon  
 2) Michael Gilkes “Introduction” to Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel  
 3) Mark Williams and Alan Riach “Reading Wilson Harris” (in Hena Maes-Jelinek, ed. Wilson Harris: the Uncompromising Imagination)

**Further Reading:** 1) Frantz Fanon Black Skin White Masks  
 2) Wilson Harris Tradition, the Writer and Society *passim*  
 3) ---. Explorations *passim*  
 4) ---. The Cross-cultural Imagination  
 5) ---. “The Limbo Gateway” (in Ashcroft *et. al.* The Post-colonial Studies Reader)  
 6) Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anne Rutherford “Fossil and Psyche” (in Ashcroft *et. al.* The Post-colonial Studies Reader)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. Identify some of the negative stereotypes of the negro perpetuated in /by Othello.

2. Through close reference to Walcott’s “The Muse of History” and Ramchand’s “The Personal Odyssey of Derek Walcott”, discuss the ways in which poetry may be cathartic for someone such as Walcott whose divided self is the product of the region’s turbulent history.

3. Discuss some of the analogies which may be drawn between the view of the psyche advanced by Analytical Psychology and Harris’ view of his own identity as a West Indian writer. (Discuss in this respect what exactly Harris means by ‘tradition’ and ‘society’ and how his use of these terms differs from others’ uses of these terms).

## **Session Two *Psychoanalytic Criticism II***

Reading fictional characters as if they are real human beings whose relationships are necessarily determined by the unconscious forces described by Freud (and Jung); e.g. the Freudian version of mimesis: literature as exemplifying the pivotal albeit unconscious role played by the Oedipus Complex in the course of the psychic maturation of (male) human beings; practical application: Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Sophocles Oedipus Rex  
 2) Shakespeare Hamlet  
 3) Sigmund Freud “Extract from The Interpretation of Dreams”  
 4) Ernest Jones “Hamlet and Oedipus”

## WEEK NINE

### *Marxism*

**Session One** Hegel's 'idealist' and 'dialectical' view of History; Marx's 'materialist' inversion of Hegel's model of History; the 'Base/Superstructure' model; the *stages of history*; the 'economic mode of production'; the 'means' or 'forces of production'; the 'social relations of production'; the 'contradiction' between the means and the social relations of production; 'class'; 'determination'; the (dominant) 'ideology'; 'false consciousness'; 'class conflict' and 'revolution'.

- Primary Readings:** 1) G.W.F. Hegel "History as the Self-Realization of Spirit"  
 2) Karl Marx "The Economic Sources of Consciousness"  
 3) ---. "From The German Ideology"  
 4) ---. "From the 'Preface' to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy"  
 5) ---. "Social Reality as Class Struggle"

**Session Two** Applying Marx's model of society to the study of literature: 'Vulgar Marxism' and 'Hegelian Marxism'; Lukács' notion of 'typicality' and 'reflection'; the similarities and the differences between the Platonic notion of mimesis and Lukács'; representing typical characters whose persons capture the essence of the 'contradiction' peculiar to a particular stage of history; the influence of the author's class consciousness upon his/her capacity to faithfully reproduce the 'real conditions of existence'; 'Realism' versus non-Realism; Lukács' tradition of realist writers; practical application: a Marxist criticism of Shakespeare's plays.

- Primary Readings:** 1) Georg Lukács "Historical Truth in Fiction"  
 2) ---. "Extract from The Historical Novel on Shakespeare"

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Robert Tucker "Introduction" to The Marx/Engels Reader  
 2) Terry Eagleton Chapter 1 of his Marxism and Literary Criticism (a somewhat simplistic account)  
 3) Tony Bennett Formalism and Marxism

**Further Reading:** 1) Karl Marx "The German Ideology" (in Tucker, ed. The Marx/Engels Reader)  
 2) ---. "The Communist Manifesto" (in Tucker, ed. The Marx/Engels Reader)  
 3) Friedrich Engels "Letters on Historical Materialism" (in Tucker, ed. The Marx/Engels Reader)  
 4) Georg Lukács "Art and Objective Truth" (in his Writer and Critic)  
 5) ---. The Historical Novel  
 6) ---. "The Ideology of Modernism" (in David Lodge, ed. Twentieth Century Literary Theory)

### *Tutorial topics:*

1. Discuss what a Marxist might understand by the following terms: 'materialism'; the 'economic mode of production'; a 'stage of history'; the 'dialectical development of history'; the 'forces' and

*the 'social relations of production'; 'ideology'; the 'dominant ideology'; 'literature'.*

2. Give a brief account of the ways in which Marxist critics have sought to apply the Base/superstructure model to the criticism of literary texts.

3. What exactly does Lukács mean when he asserts that the best writers have traditionally been those 'realists' who have sought to capture the 'typicality' of the people who inhabit a particular stage of history?

## **WEEK TEN**

### ***Marxism and Race***

**Session One** Anti-negro racism as a function of European imperialism, colonialism and slavery; slavery was 'necessitated' by economic circumstances in the colonies; racism was an ideology used to justify brutal exploitation; racism, therefore, as ultimately determined by economic factors; the inevitable impact of these historical facts and their legacy of racial stratification and discrimination upon the consciousness and, thus, the writings of the West Indian and African writer: those who cannot see through it possess 'false consciousness' and exist in a state of mystification ('Uncle Toms') while those who understand the cause of racism in this way possess revolutionary insight and the desire to awaken the consciousness of their fellows.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Oliver Cromwell Cox "Race Relations--its Meaning, Beginning and Progress"  
2) George Lamming "Politics and Culture"  
3) Ngugi Wa Thiong'o "The Writer and his Past"  
4) ---. "Literature and Society"

**Session Two** Practical application: reading a novel by George Lamming from the point of view afforded by a Marxist model of racism.

**Primary Readings:** 1) George Lamming In the Castle of My Skin  
2) Ngugi Wa Thiong'o "George Lamming's In the Castle of my Skin"

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Eric Williams "The Origin of Negro Slavery" (in his Capitalism and Slavery)  
2) Samuel Yeboah "'Ideology of Racism--the Origin of Racial Prejudice'" (in his The Ideology of Racism)

**Further Reading:** 1) Aimé Césaire "From The Discourse on Colonialism" in Chrisman and Williams, eds. Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory  
2) George Lamming Conversations: Essays, Addresses and Interviews (*passim*)  
3) Ngugi Wa Thiong'o Homecoming (*passim*)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. Explain the following statement: "Anti-negro racism is a function of colonialism".

2. Guide your colleagues through Ngugi's reading of In the Castle of My Skin, showing how Ngugi's

*interpretation is shaped at each step along the way by a Marxist explication of both racism and racial stratification in the former European colonies.*

## WEEKS 11 AND 12: READER-ORIENTED APPROACHES

### WEEK ELEVEN

#### *The 'Pragmatic' orientation: Committed Literature*

**Session One:** Existentialism: 'essence' versus 'existence'; the ethical 'responsibility' of the writer towards his audience: his/her duty to do all in his or her power to materially better the world by raising the consciousness of his reader, given that there is no divine plan to the universe.

**Primary Readings:** Jean-Paul Sartre "Why Write?" (in Kaplan, ed. Criticism)

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Jean-Paul Sartre Existentialism and Humanism  
2) Albert Camus The Myth of Sisyphus  
3) Robert Solomon "Introduction" to Phenomenology and Existentialism

**Session Two:** Committed literature within the colonial context: how West Indian and African writers/theorists have viewed their responsibility towards their audiences; the necessarily 'committed' nature of all cultural practices within the colonial and the post-colonial context; recapturing a denied and denigrated heritage; practical application: the poetry of Edward 'Kamau' Brathwaite.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Frantz Fanon "On National Culture"  
2) Aimé Césaire "The Responsibility of the Artist"  
3) Edward 'Kamau' Brathwaite "Timehri"  
4) ---. The Arrivants

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Aimé Césaire "From The Discourse on Colonialism" (in Chrisman and Williams, eds. Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory)  
2) Ashcroft *et al.* The Empire Writes Back

**Further Reading:** 1) Wole Soyinka "The Writer in a Modern African State"(in Per Wästberg, ed. The Writer in Modern Africa)  
2) George Lamming "The Negro Writer and his World" (in Conversations: Essays, Addresses and Interviews)  
3) ---. The Pleasures of Exile passim  
4) Chinua Achebe "The Novelist as Teacher" (in his Hopes and Impediments)  
5) Edward Brathwaite "History, the Caribbean Writer and X/Self" (in Davis and Maes-Jelinek, eds. Crisis and Creativity in the New Literatures in English)

*Tutorial topics:*

1. What do you understand by Sartre's notion of 'responsibility' and by the term 'committed literature'?

2. Discuss with particular reference to the case of Brathwaite some of the ways in which the work of the Post-Colonial writer has performed to be committed.

## **WEEK TWELVE**

### ***Reception Theory / Reader-response Criticism***

**Session One** Objectivity versus subjectivity in literary criticism: the indispensable role of the reader; the reader as anything but a passive consumer of meaning; there is no such thing as an objectively-existing (literary) text in that, without the personal and active involvement of the reader, no text could ‘mean’ (Fish); ‘*literary competence*’; the existence of ‘*interpretative communities*’ which determine how different groups of readers interpret the same text differently; criticism as a question of ‘*filling in the blanks*’: the ‘*literary work*’ as a function of the intersection of the directions given by the ‘*text*’, on the one hand, and the ‘*subjective inclinations*’ which the reader brings to bear upon the text, on the other (Iser).

**Primary Readings:** 1) David Bleich “The Subjective Character of Literary Interpretation”  
 2) Stanley Fish “Interpreting the Variorum”  
 3) Wolfgang Iser “Indeterminacy and the Reader’s Response”

**Session Two** Practical Application underlining the process by which the reader is actively responsible for the formation of meaning at the most elementary stages of the process of reading.

**Primary Readings:** 1) Stanley Fish “Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics” (especially [but not only] the first few pages)  
 2) Wolfgang Iser “The Role of the Reader in Fielding’s Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones”

**Secondary Readings:** 1) Ian Maclean “Reading and Interpretation” (in Jefferson and Robey, eds. Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction)  
 2) Terry Eagleton “Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory” (in his Literary Theory: an Introduction)  
 3) Elizabeth Freund The Return of the Reader: Reader-response Criticism  
 4) Robert Holub Reception Theory: a Critical Introduction  
 5) Jane Tompkins “Introduction” to her Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism

**Further Reading:** 1) David Bleich Subjective Criticism  
 2) Stanley Fish “Is there a Text in this Class?” (in Adams and Searle, eds. Critical Theory Since 1965)  
 3) ---. Is There a Text in this Class?  
 4) Wolfgang Iser “The Reading Process” (in Tompkins, ed. Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism)  
 5) ---. The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response

### *Tutorial topic:*

*1. Using the last two essays by Fish and Iser as a practical guide, choose and make available to the rest of the class one poem. Use the poem in order to demonstrate for the benefit of your colleagues the ways in which a) criticism is at every stage an entirely or largely subjective process that can go in any number of different directions depending upon the ‘angle’ chosen by and the interests of the critic, and b) criticism is akin to a game of ‘filling in the blanks’.*

**Essay Questions**

**Deadline:** Thursday 27 February, 1997.

**Suggested Length:** 2,500 - 3,000 words.

Answer **One** (1) of the following questions:

*Either*

1. Through close reference to the writings of any/all of the New Critics which you have read, discuss the most important critical **techniques** which they recommend and the main **arguments** which they advance in their own defence.

*Or*

2. Choose a significant canonical poem and criticise it from the point(s) of view suggested by Ransom and/or Brooks.

*Or*

3. Through close reference to the essay "The Archetypes of Literature" and/or The Anatomy of Criticism, discuss what you understand by Frye's statement in the former that the "unity of a work of art . . . has not been produced solely by the unconditioned will of the artist".