

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture - 10 B
Marxism and Marxist Literary Criticism

Hello and welcome back to the course on Literary Theory and Literary Criticism, this is module 2 of the lecture on a Marxist Literary Criticism. Now, to quickly recap in our previous module in the previous lecture, we looked at some of the basic Marxism terminologies and concepts. And we have also looked at some of the two major divisive strands of looking at Marxist literary criticism, we looked at the angelskin model, as well as taking a brief look at the Leninist model of Marxist literary criticism.

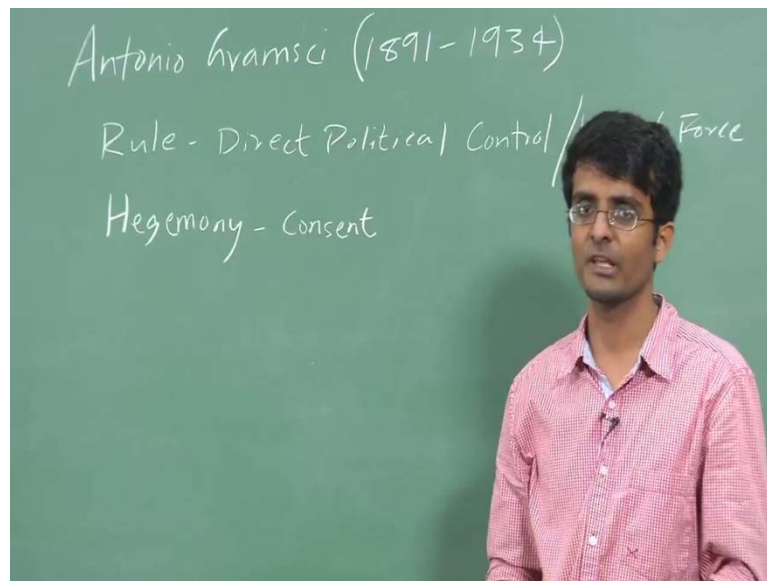
We will continue the lecture today, starting with the discussion of a critical and crucial Marxian term ideology. Now, an ideology represents a set of ideas and attitudes, an ideology is basically a system with its own logic of representations, which might be constituted of such things as images, math's, ideas or concepts, etcetera. And this is endowed with an historical role at the heart of any given society.

Now, these values and assumptions are usually rather very implicit and often go unrecognized. But, it nevertheless permeates all of our cultural manifestations at any given time, in this context we should also look at some other crucial Marxian terms, such as state power and state control which was given to us by a critique Marxian critique known as Louis Althusser.

Now, state power is maintained by what Althusser terms a repressive structures, which are basically institutions run by the state, such as a law courts, prisons, the police force an army, etcetera. Basically it represents a lot of these entities which operate by external force and are capable of coercing you into submitting to what the state wants. However, Althusser tells us that the power of the state is also maintained rather Satilla much more ((Refer Time: 02:20)) much more Satilla bay by securing the consent by securing the internal consent of it is citizens.

And this is done using what Althusser calls ideological structures or ideological state, ideological apprentices. Now, these state ideological apprentices are comprised of such groupings as political parties, educational institutions, such as schools, the media, the church, the family and in even art, including literature which are together capable of fostering an ideology that is sympathetic to what the state, expects out of it is citizens. Now, closely related to this notion is the idea of hegemony, which was given to us by the prominent Italian Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci.

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Gramsci as you can see here from the blackboard lived between 1891 and 1934 and he gave us the crucial distinction between, what is rule and hegemony. So, rule is something that signifies direct political control, which even legitimizes the use of force in order to make the particular, because of particular society subscribed to what it is people should be engaging with. Hegemony on the other hand is something that is related to the idea of the generation of consent.

For example, to give an example, even though for example, in a village community even though a woman is technically free to wear any kind of clothing that she wants, any form of modern or western attire is usually frowned down upon now. Even if you wear something like that, considering that you are living in a democratic society, the state will not exercise its rule, it will not implement its force and force you to wear you know particular dress code.

However for example, the idea that you are supposed to wear a saree when you go to a college or go to a school to teach is so ingrained within you and you consent to wearing a saree without really questioning its validity. And this is precisely, what hegemony represents, thus while rule denotes implies direct political control using force, where necessary.

Hegemony is basically concerned with the generation of consent and hegemony as defined by Raymond Williams, implies that social processes are basically organized by a specific and dominant meanings, values or beliefs of some particular kind which can be generalized as a world view or a particular class outlook. Hegemony thus becomes an internalized form of social control, which can make certain views seem very natural.

Like in the example of the saree that we just looked at, so it can make certain views seem very natural or invisible. So, that they heartily seem like views at all and they just appear as the natural way that things just are. Now, what Althusser and Gramsci have given us here are basically they are offering for us ways of bypassing, the best superstructure model of economic determinism that we looked at in the previous class.

And this can be easily achieved without really abandoning any of the original classic Marxian perspective. And thus their views represent what can be understood as a bit of revisionist Marxism, which is basically a repackaging of the same basic concepts. But, making them more flexible and this can perhaps be seen as a response to the times considering that the 60s, you know in the world over or perhaps you know countries and cultures like the United Kingdom or the USA was basically a period of a lot of free spirited thinking, liberalism and counter culture.

Thus by making Marxism more flexible and acceptable an appearing less dogmatic to the liberal radicals of the time, these revised Marxist theorists, basically ensured that Marxism was also not rejected as another rigid set of thoughts. Now, as you can imagine Marxism has been originally and classically oppose to psychoanalytic explanations, on the charge that psychoanalysis is basically something that isolates individuals from their social set of conditions and the structures in which they exist.

We understood in the module on psychoanalytic criticism, how at least Freudian psychoanalysis is basically seen as a very personalized form of psychoanalysis, which is

basically rather quite too significant degree, not really concerned with what is happening with society or other external such factors.

However, the Marxist critic Fredric Jameson has attempted a brilliant reconciliation of these two, he is tried to reconcile psychoanalysis with the process of with an analytical methods of Marxism. Essentially, what Jameson offers here is political extensions of basic psychoanalytic concepts, like the unconscious and repression terms that we have looked at in the module on psychoanalytic criticism.

Literature in Jameson's view often tries to repress historical truth. But, a careful mode of analysis can often reveal it is underlying ideology which is to say an analogous to basically a close reading that can reveal it is underlying unconscious. Therefore to quickly recap, Marxian critics make a distinction between the overt and the covert content of a literary work, which is more or less similar to that of the process adopted, deployed by a psychoanalytic critique.

And what they then do is to relate the covert subject matter of the literary work to basic Marxian themes, such as class struggle, the transition through historical stages, etcetera. To give you an example, the class conflict in a story, in a drama like Shakespeare's kinglier might be read as something that is really just about the conflict of class interest between the two rising classes, the rising class of the burjuvazi and the falling class of the feudal overlords.

Now, you can also perhaps relate this to an ecocritical reading of the same play and see how these Marxian to, these two critical approaches, read basically the same text in radically and completely different lights. A Marxists critic also relates the context of a work to the social class of the person who authored the work itself. In such cases what we do is, to achieve an assumption is made which is again very similar to that of the process deployed by the psychoanalytic critics.

And the assumption here is that, the author is basically either unaware of what he or she is saying or revealing in the text or it is or does not really care to admit it. The Marxist method also tries to explain the nature of even all literary journalists, in terms of the social period which produced it. For example, we have a work like the rise of the novel which was written by Iron Watt and the work basically relates the growth of the novel in

the 19th century to the expansion of the phenomena of the expansion of the middle classes during the very same period.

Now, Iron Watt here in this work makes the argument that the novel basically speaks for this particular class, this emerging middle class. While for instance, the ancient tragedies might have spoken for the monarchy in perhaps the, you know renaissance times or the ballad would have spoken for the rural working class. Another prominent Marxist method Marxist practice is to relate the work itself to the social assumptions of the times in which it is consumed rather than, the times in which it is produced.

Now, this is a strategy which is particularly used in a later variant of a Marxist criticism known as a cultural materialism. Now with we will now attempt a basic like Marxist reading of a literary text, the text that we will choose for analyses now is going to be Elliott Krieger's work which is a Marxist study of Shakespeare's comedies, which is published in 1979. Now, for the purposes of this lecture we will be attempting an analysis of Shakespeare famous play the Twelfth Night alternatively titled or what you will.

Now, before we go into the play itself I will quickly run you through the bit of the plot that we need to be familiar with, before we can attempt a Marxist reading of the play itself. Now, the play centers on the love between a duke his name is Orsino, the love between duke Orsino and the lady of his dreams, lady Olivia. Now, we understand in the play that the duke comes and expresses his love to her.

And; however, she rejects him at first claiming that she is in a period of mourning, she has just lost her father and because she is in mourning, she cannot reciprocate or she is not interested in focusing attention on the duke's advances to her. However, we understand during the course of the play that she the lady Olivia, she subsequently falls in love with a character known as Viola. Now, Viola is actually a noble woman who is just temporarily disguised as a man and she is pretending to be a man and she is in the service of the duke as his servant.

Now, lady Olivia the first lady we talked about is also loved by her steward, who is seen as a very strict and upright character, who goes by the name of Malvolio. And to top it all the lady has an uncle Sir Toby, who tricks Malvolio this up ride character into believing that his love towards lady Olivia is reciprocated by the lady herself, just for the

sake of it. Now, a popular understanding a popular critique of this play tells us that the play presents various extremes of self indulgence.

For instance, we have the duke's character, the duke orsinos who has extreme fantasies of a romantic love and this is complemented by sir Toby self abandonment to physical exercise and physical pleasures and physical appetites. Now, both these are contrasted when we studied the play with the extreme Puritanism and extreme resistance to pleasure as seen in the character of malvolio.

And the play is popularly understood as advocating or recommending a balance between a decorum. And a balance and decorum which these basic two extremes represent and these extremes are seen as something that need to be avoided and that is solely when you avoid these two extremes of Puritanism and celebration an abandonment that true fulfillment becomes possible. However, what such a reading does is to basically to undermine or ignore the question of class that figures, so prominently within the play as a Marxist critique would argue and point out.

So, even when everything is neatly tied down in the end and it gives us a nice new a moral message to take home, the play largely just ignores the fact that the class determines to a great extent the way in which the certain set of characters are allowed to operate and even think. For instance, we understand from through a Marxian reading that the aristocratic characters suffer no particular will effects whatsoever in the play.

Whereas, the fate of somebody puritan character like malvolio is much, much worse, thus a Marxist critic would point out that only in the play only a very privileged social class a very privileged aristocratic social class has accessed to any kinds of the indulgence, the morality of intelligence. And as Krieger himself points out the members of the rural class find their identities through excessive indulgences in a appetite.

Each of the members of the aristocratic class in the play has a very private secondary world to which they completely retreat to for sir Toby, this secondary world is represented by the unfettered world that he reaches by celebrating in wine and drinking wine. Olivia someone who will seen as protecting herself from the needs of others, from all kinds of other externally considerations by retreating into a very private world of bereavement, she claims that she's in bereaving, she is bereaving the death of her father.

And therefore, she should be given enough space to be not disturbed by the rest of the people. And even the duke Orsino is seen as retreating into a holy private and subjective world of love and obsession. Thus in each of their private and secondary worlds each of these aristocratic characters becomes a non-functioning part in a community. But, once on their own self-king, now ironically interestingly we all are who is basically an aristocratic figure also tries to retreat into one of these second worlds.

However, this sort of a luxury is something that is denied to her, because even though she is originally aristocratic, is even though she actually aristocratic, the disguise that she adopts, we understand that she has nice guy he is pretending to be a man and she assumes the role of servant to the duke Orsino. So, this is very disguise that she adopts enables her to choose a temporary and non-aristocratic status.

And thus she is forced to become an object within the secondary worlds of Orsino, Olivia, Sir Toby, etcetera which is to say that she becomes someone who is assumed to be freely available for the use and manipulation by all the aristocratic characters within the play. Thus for the Marxist critic, the play demonstrates the enormous gulf that exists between the masters and servants. And basically manifest something of the state of mind that is characteristic of each representative class within the play.

The very Marxist feature of this essay is the way it introduces the notion of social class into interpretations of the play itself. Even though very little is indeed said about the in the essay about the specifications of the precise historical movement in which the play was written. And rather very subtle and original reading is woven around a close reading is woven around the generalized notions of social class and conflict class privilege and aspiration towards what we would perhaps in today's circumstances call an aspiration towards a upward social mobility.

And with that example we conclude the second part of this module on Marxist literary criticism. For further reading you can consult the list of text that is attached at the end of the lecture.

Thank you very much for joining me, see you in next class.