Ministry of Education and Scientific Research

University of 20th August 1955, Skikda Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of Foreign Languages

Pedagogical Manuscript

Module : American Literature

Level: Master I

Lecturer : Dr. Benhenda Zeyneb (MCB)

Academic Year: 2023/2024

Course Description:

This course is designed for Master's level students (Master 1) and aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of American literature within the framework of Postmodernism. Throughout this course, Students shall examine the various genres and prominent figures associated with this literary movement, with a particular focus on fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. The main objectives of the course include discerning the distinctions between Postmodernism and Modernism, gaining a deep understanding of its defining features, and engaging with key concepts and theorists, such as Baudrillard's simulacra/simulacrum, Umberto Eco's irony, Jameson's consumerism, and David Harvey's time compression. Additionally, students will investigate the defining characteristics of Postmodernism, explore the role of irony and pastiche, and apply their knowledge to an in-depth analysis of Thomas Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49." Similarly, the course encompasses an examination of Metafiction, Eco-criticism, and Black feminism within the context of American literature. By the end of this course, students will have cultivated a nuanced understanding of Postmodernism and its implications for literary genres in American literature.

The Course Objectives:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Grasp the defining Features of Postmodernism.
- Engage with Key Concepts and Theorists by applying these concepts to literary analysis and by analyzing their impact on shaping the Postmodern literary works.
- Utilize acquired knowledge of Postmodernism to conduct an in-depth analysis of the selected works
- Analyze the characteristics and the significance of metafiction, eccocriticism, and Black feminism within the context of Postmodernism.

The Syllabus:

FIRST SEMESTER

Unit 1: Introduction to Postmodernism

Lesson 1: The Aims and Distinctions of Postmodernism

- Clarifying the demarcations between Postmodernism and Modernism.
- Elucidating the key features of Postmodernism.
- Irony/ Pastiche

Lesson 2 : Exploring Key Figures and Concepts in Postmodernism

- Interpreting Baudrillard's simulacra/simulacrum
- Unpacking Umberto Eco's irony
- Analyzing Jameson's consumerism
- Scrutinizing David Harvey's time compression

Lesson 3: important terms in Postmodernism.

Lesson 4 : Application and Analysis of "The Crying of Lot 49"

- Comprehensive overview of the novel
- Unraveling the themes of paranoia within the text
- Examining the notion of hyper-reality in the text.
- Delving into the themes of identity and consumerism.

Unit 2: Metafiction

Lesson 5: Defining Metafiction (According to Mark Currie and Patricia Waugh)

Lesson 6: Modes of Metafiction and Narcissistic Narratives (In accordance with Linda Hutcheon)

Lesson 7: Application and Critical Examination within Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*

Lesson 8: Application and Analysis within John Gardner's *Grendel*

SECOND SEMESTER

Unit 3: Eco-criticism

Lesson 9: Introduction to Eco-criticism

- Eco-criticism in the Context of American Literature

Lesson 10: The Animal Question

Lesson 11: the representation of Animals in culture.

Lesson 12: Application and Thematic Exploration within American Literature (*The Temple of My Familiar* by Alice Walker)

Unit 4: Black Feminism

Lesson 13: Introduction to Black Feminism

Lesson 14: Difference between Feminism and Black feminism

Lesson 15: Key figures and ideas in Black feminism

The course syllabus may be subject to adjustments as deemed necessary to align with the learning pace and students' engagement throughout the semester. Supplementary readings and assignments will be assigned as required to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of each topic.

First Semester

Unit I: Introduction to Postmodernism

Lesson 1: Introduction to postmodernism

What is Postmodernism?

Postmodernism is, perhaps, the most problematic concept in cultural criticism mainly because it resists a formal and a totalizing definition. In ***Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel*** (2002), Bran Nicol explains that this difficulty in understanding the concept primarily lies in the difficulty faced when reading it **object.** This object is **unstable** because it keeps changing according to the context in which the concept is being discussed (Nicol, 1). Nicol also argues that Postmodernism is hard to define for the reason that it is often defined in relation **to what is contemporary,** which makes the concept **continuously liable to change.** Another difficulty which might be posed is reading Postmodernism in relation to modernism mainly because of the use of prefix "**post**''.

In this regard, Paul Smethurst (2000) in ***The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary fiction***, raises the controversy between cultural critics whether to identify postmodernism as a continuation or as a break to its predecessor. Smethurst concludes the discussion by arguing that Postmodernism is a **continuation of modernism, but it is, at the same time, a break from it with a purpose of transforming it and taking it to new directions (**Smethurst, 2)**.** Therefore, it can be read as both a continuation and as a break. He contends that postmodernism "rather than a decisive break with modernism, [it] is a re-engagement and a reworking of all that might be considered modern, and at the same time, it is engagement with the material condition of postmodernity" (ibid). What Smethurst is trying to explain in his book can be simply summarized as the following. By deducing that there is no decisive break between the movements, he emphasizes the shift that postmodernism takes from modernism. The first shift he contemplates is the shift in the indicators of time and space. He argues that in modernism, there is " a sense of the shrinking globe, the rise and fall of imperialist geographies, the centrality of science and technology and a corresponding fear of a lesser humanity" (ibid). Time here, according to Smethurst, is predominately, though not exclusively future-oriented, and space is predominantly abstract. He further argues that even in high modernism the artistic representation reflects the material changes in the real world with the intention to comment on or transform it (3). Postmodernism, on the other hand, is "haunted by the specter of self-consciousness and the idea that the representations of a world more likely form the world rather than taking their form from it (see precession of simulacra). Indeed, in postmodernism there is a sense of the loss of the real in a time dominated by invisible and falsifiable information. Postmodernism is constituted in the cyber space and transmitted through electronic media, therefore, leading to the emergence of the "new real" world of simulacra.

Postmodernism can be read as **cultural mode of awareness informed by the conviction that nothing in life is natural or given (identity, history, value system, reality…).** This reading suggests that everything is **constructed, mediated**, and **put there for a reason**. Here we can sense that in postmodernism there is a growing consciousness of cultural persuasion. For that reason, we can safely assume that the majority of postmodern works or genres came to exist either to question or to react against this cultural persuasion. For instance, post-colonial and African American literature writes back to the colonizer in attempt to subvert the identity of the 'other' which is constructed as a result of internalizing the colonizer's definition. This identity is ununified, frail, fragmented, inauthentic, and sometimes hybrid. The realization that this identity is constructed and mediated by the definer for the purpose to subjugate, to keep inferior, and to control the self of the 'Other' is soon followed by a violent response in postcolonial and African-American texts in attempt to redefine themselves, reassert their culture, and reintegrate their own history. Realizing that our identity, life, reality, history, and system of values are all constructed lead us to question the way with which the definer injects these cultural, ideological, and social constructions in the mind of the 'Other'. In fact, postmodernism raises the awareness that our life is constructed mainly through Mass Media, Discourse and Ideology.

This awareness is usually expressed through the use of **irony. Irony** is the non literal use of language which involves subversion of the intended meaning of words by their actual meaning. There exist two types of Irony: verbal and structural irony. The former occurs when what is said is not what it is meant while the latter occurs when what is said is undermined by the context in which it was said. Accordingly, in postmodernism, irony is an **attitude which mirrors the fact that there is nothing as fixed meaning. The latter is pregnant with other new meanings and can be altered subtly to something quite different by modulation of tone or context.**

In postmodernist works, there is a heightened degree of **self-consciousness** indicating that our experience of reality has changed. As a matter of fact, reality in postmodernism is not something we can take for granted. It is constructed, and therefore, should be suspected and questioned. Reality in postmodern time is altered because of two things: Mass Media and global capitalist economy. These two changed our perception of the real as reality is no longer authentic but constructed, mediated and transmitted to the subjects.

Another factor that altered the postmodern perception of reality is the cyber space. This virtual space caused our separation from the real since people are moved from dealing with tangible materials like machines to process information. This information is liable to falsification. For instance, if we take money as an example the paper is tangible and actual whereas the amount is symbolic. In the digital age, both the paper and the amount become symbolic. This separation from the real resulted in

psychopatholical problems like **paranoia, schizophrenia, and narcissism** which become major themes in postmodern art and fiction, and they are more powerfully expressed in dystopian novels.

Previously, technology could produce copies of things (pictures, videos, voice recorders…) which are viewed as copies of the real. To put it differently, they are versions of the real. In the cyber age, however, **the difference between the original and the copy is eliminated**. This process is what Baudriallard calls **simulation** (see the second lecture). Baudriallard describes this form of reality which operates most powerfully in mass media as **Hyperreality.**

Lesson 2: Exploring Key Figures and Concepts in Postmodernism

I. Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable (1985) by Umberto Eco :

Umberto Eco defines Postmodernism by its **intertexuality** and **ironic tendency.** He contends that preachers of postmodernism believe that everything has been said and done before which makes it very difficult for anyone to be original. He argues that « the avant-garde can go no further » (Eco, 111). Indeed, Eco explains that the avant-garde , which he describes as a metahistorical category that tries to destroy and abolish the past, reached a point where it recognized the impossiblity of challenging what is categorized as the conventional past. Therefore, it was replaced by a strong awareness and a tendency to **revist the past.** This process of revisiting the past should not be innocent, Eco further explains. Rather, it should be revisited with **irony.**

Irony is the central mode of consiousness of post modernism and one of the main forms of its literary expression. The postmodern sense of the impossibility of originality gave way to relentless quotings, so postmodern plot could be identified in the form of quotation of other plots. The only way for post modern authors and artists to be noticed is to be ironic.

II. The Precession of Simulacra by Jean Baudriallard:

According to Baudriallard, Postmodern communication technologies like the TV and the internet flood the world with self generating, self-mirroring images and experiences. These new communication technologies influenced the postmodern culture in the way they changed people's perception of reality, identity, and truth. In the cyber age, unlike in modern time, the innovation in communication technologies work primarily on a virtual space and have an invisible form of power which facilitate the transmission of a specific ideologies and information to the society. Therefore, these innovations are not tangible and, hence, are liable to falsification. These communication innovations like the internet work on creating a microcosm of reality. But, this miniature of the real or the representation of reality became so real that it is no longer possible to distinguish it from reality. This inability to distinguish between reality and simulation is what Baudriallard calls **hyperreality.** Therefore**,** hyperreality is a condition where **"it is no longer really the real because no imaginary envelops it anymore"** (Baudrillard, 91) .

According to its dictionary meaning, to simulate means to feign, to pretend, and to imitate. It is the opposite of dissimulate which means pretend not to have something. Baudrillard explains the difference between the two: the former implies presence and the latter implies absence. However, in the postmodern condition, Baudriallard argues that simulation is not pretention or imitation; rather, it is reality. To illustrate his point, he provided the example of illness. Baudriallard explains that the one who pretends to be ill can sit all day in bed to feign his illness, but the simulator will produce signs of illness which makes it difficult for us to distinguish whether he is real ill or feigning illness. Here we understand that simulation threatens the difference between true and false, the real and the imaginary. Simulation, henceforth, can be simply defined as "the **loss of the link between the real and its representation".** Going back to TV and mass media, the TV became an indispensable medium in the postmodern society because, like internet, it transmits reality. Take, for instance, the example of reality shows, movies, and TV shows. These shows supposedly pretend to reflect reality, but, as a matter of fact, they **simulate** rather than **imitate or feign** reality. This form of representation is called **simulacra.** According to baudriallard, simulacrum **is a copy or a representation of someone or something you can relate to.**

Baudriallard also explains that when it comes to simulation and simulacra, it is no longer a question of imitation; rather, it is a question of substitution of the real by the signs of the real. This does not mean that the postmodern world is artificial and not real because the artifice is a copy which requires "reality" to refer to. In postmodern world, the reference is eliminated as we are unable to draw distinction between the real and the artifice.

There are three orders of simulacra:

1. In the pre-modern period, simulacrum or the image acts as a counterfeit (illusion): for instance, realist paintings or fiction pretend to reflect reality while in truth they provide an illusionary representation of the real. They recreate reality using very specific details from the real world only to create a counterfeit version of the real
2. After the industrial revolution, and specifically in modern era, the image presented a faithful copy to reality mainly because of the immergence of technologies like the camera which produces reflections of the real. Here modern paintings and fiction, for example, using modern techniques like stream of consciousness were able to portray a faithful copy of reality. For instance, The Waste Land offered a real panoramic portrayal of the world in the post-war era.

3. In Postmodern time, the representation precedes and determines the real mainly because the simulacrum or the image became so real to the point it cannot be considered a reflection. In literature, you can take the example of postmodern dystopian novels which offer a worst-case scenario about what might happen in the future. These novels do not reflect reality; rather they inform and determine reality.

Accordingly, the precession of simulacra, as Baudriallard calls it, means that the supposedly real no longer precedes its reflection or its replication. Instead, it is preceded with simulacrum which now informs the real. The absence of the supposed real to which the simulacrum refers creates a condition that we call hyper reality. For example, consider this excerpt from the Dellilo's White Noise:

Heinrich says:

It's going to rain tonight.

It's raining now, I said

The radio said tonight.

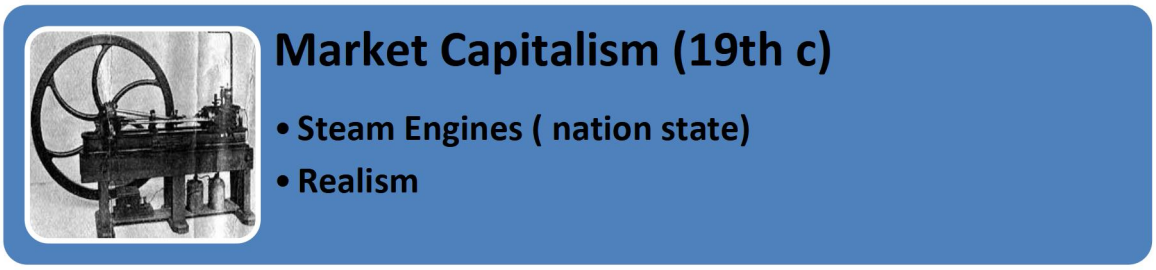
Here the father is convinced that what the radio says is the truth or the reality although it is raining at that moment outside. He refuses to accept the fact that it is raining only because the Radio had already determined what is real, which is raining at night. This example demonstrates clearly how people's life, reality, culture, and ideology are all determined by the simulacrum which informs and determines what is real. Facebook can offer another excellent example about the precession of simulacra and hyper reality. Normally Facebook was created as a microcosm of the real world on the virtual space in order to facilitate communication between people; however, in a postmodern society, it quickly grew to become an independent virtual space which determines people's ideas, perceptions, and even way of life. People nowadays became so addicted to Facebook to the point they were immersed in a parallel virtual world without being aware that it is only a counterfeit copy of reality. Same goes for other type of social networks and mass media.

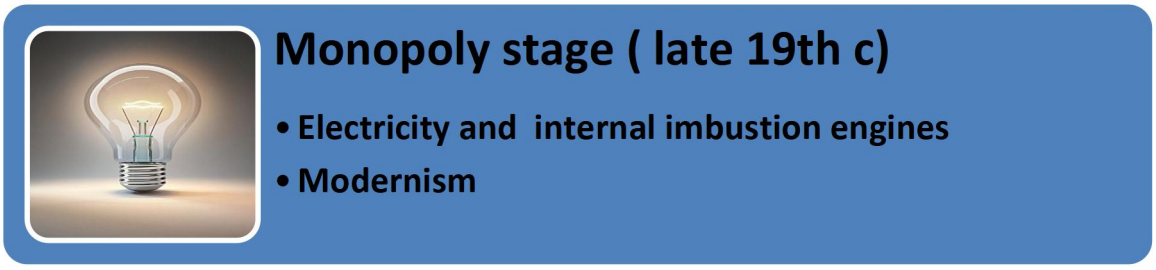
To conclude, Baudrillard explains that when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. Postmodern authors were aware of this alteration in the perception of what is real; hence, they expressed it in their fiction. Nostalgia is usually expressed through:

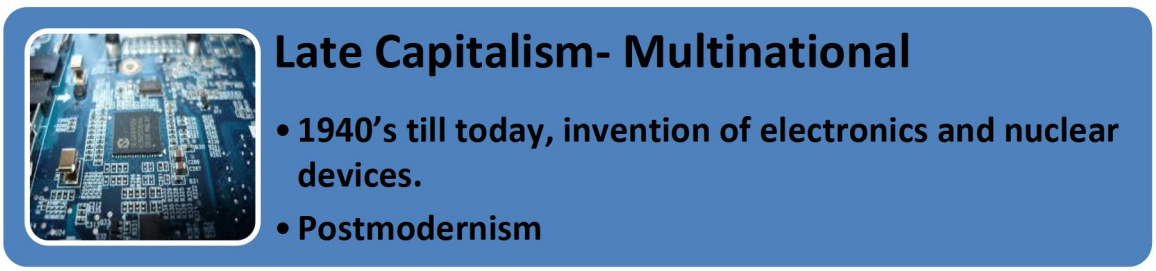
- A proliferation of myths of origins and signs of reality, of second hand truths, objectivity, and authenticity.
- There is an escalation of truth or the true lived experience, a resurrection of the figurative where the object and the substance have disappeared.
- There is a panic-striken production of the real and the referential

III. CONSUMERISM IN POSTMODERN CULTURE:

In The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Frederick Jameson argues that there are three fundamental phases in Capitalism: Market Capitalism, Monopoly Stage, and Multinational Capitalism. He contends that Postmodernism as a cultural movement coincides with the third phase of Multinational capitalism since both appeared in the late 1950's. He insists that this phase is the purest form of capitalism. Jameson explains that tin the previous era, there was an excitement with machinery, acceleration of the future, and a celebration of motor car inventions. However, in the postmodern era, there was a reliance on new form of technology that, unlike machinery, it possesses no visual power. Indeed, the TV and other types of Mass media excreted more ideological power on people which was more efficient and effective on different cultural and ideological levels.







Jameson defines Postmodernism as the “force field in which very cultural impulses- what Raymond Williams has usefully termed ‘ residual’ and ‘ emergent’ forms of cultural production- must make their way” (Jameson 22). Postmodernism is “not a style but rather a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features”(ibid).

Cultural dominants are prevalent cultural forms, ideas, or values that characterize a particular historical period. These cultural dominants are often shaped by the economic and social structures of the time. Jameson is interested in understanding how cultural production reflects and interacts with the larger socio-economic conditions. Jeamson argues that the socio-economical structure of a society is reflected in a society's cultural forms.

In this era, literary works are less interested with the subject of alienation and anxiety. Rather,

there is a great emphasis, especially in American literary production, on the dominant experience of drugs and schizophrenia (25). This shift in cultural pathology can be characterized as on in which alienation of the subject is replaced with the latter’s fragmentation” (ibid). Also, there is a great interest in paraliterature (tv, movies, ...) , a material that postmodern authors can incorporate in their literary substances rather than quoting it.

Furthermore, Jameson describes the postmodern Capitalist society as a Mass media society and a consumerist society because there was a great emphasis on consumption other than production. From his description, we can safely deduce the interconnectedness of Mass media and the culture of consumption.

Robert G. Dunn explains that the consumer culture is “An inevitable consequence of the ever-rising consumption requirements of a developing capitalist economy” (Dunn, 5). Consumer culture “represents an unprecedented interpenetration of economic and cultural forces, an intertwining of the logic of growing markets with the new cultural logics of advanced communications, information technologies, and entertainment industries” (ibid). Consumerism is a dominant social phenomenon which primates every aspect in life in postmodern and contemporary era.

In this period, there was a great obsession with consumption mainly because of two reasons: it is the systematic requirement of capitalist production, and it represents, subjectively, power, status, luxury, and pleasure to the consumer. Dunn argues that in this period, the object of

consumption is in itself increasingly became culture itself. Similarly, Baudrillard claims that the object of consumption is not so much tangible products as coded cultural meanings .This means that the product of consumption has more cultural significance.

Consumerism is generally regarded as a positive value in contemporary societies, and it plays an important part in the constitution of identity. According to Smart, “I shop therefore I am” becomes the slogan of the growing global world. Looking at consumer magazines, trawling through shopping malls as well as subsequent processes of selection, choices, and purchase of particular goods and services, are widely considered to be a source of pleasure and contentment in postmodern consumer societies (Smart, 2010, 148). Participation in consumer activity is represented as a means of achieving a sense of social inclusion and of producing beneficial therapeutic effects on individuals by offering a temporary escape from the stresses and anxieties of a capitalist society. Hence, one may suggest that individuals are conditioned so as to believe that consumerism improves the consumer‘s mood, and provides him with comfort, amusement and consolation.

Likewise, T. Frank (1998) remarks that participation in consumer activity can enable consumers to feel cool‘, and allows them to escape the routines, insecurities and more restrained values pertinent to their workplaces by immersing themselves in the non-stop carnival‘of consumerism (232) In spite of the fact that consumer commodities offer some pleasure, their ability to deliver pleasurable experiences diminishes over time. The pleasure expected by marketing proves to be illusionary, fleeting and temporal. Consumers attempt to make purchases that seemingly promise to convert their fantasy into reality, but they quickly fall to disillusionment (Smart, 2010, 147).

Dunn explains in his book that mass media contributed significantly in injecting this culture of consumption in the consciousness of people at that time. This explains why Pynchon associates the TV with wine and Alcohols to demonstrate the powerful hypnotizing effect that TV exerts on people. Dunn contends that because of TV and other forms of Mass media, “forms of amusement, entertainment, and even art are commodified and marketized” (Dunn, 7). This represents “culturalization of the commodity, whereby goods and services are inscribed in calculated ways with significance and a set of rules” (ibid).

In fact, when the subject is overwhelmed by the overabundance of media information, his life becomes meaningless. This idea is put forward by Jean Baudrillard (1994) who stresses the ―radical loss of meaning resulting from the proliferation of information through the

media (Baudrillard, 1994, 80). In line with this, he states: We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning. . . Information is directly destructive of meaning and signification or it neutralizes them. The loss of meaning is directly linked to the dissolving, dissuasive action of information, the media and the mass media (Baudrillard, 1994, 79 81).

Television transmits all information in an immediate and urgent manner that transforms the globe into a global village, influencing its inhabitants simultaneously. Indeed, television is a vivid manifestation of Harvey‘s concept of ―space-time compression (Harvey, 1990, 243) that points to the simultaneity of events by condensing the temporal and spatial parameters of the globe through technological devices. Since television maintains the simultaneity of events and locks the viewer into the present moment that is the moment of watching attentively. Television goes beyond its existence as a mere device, it has become a social phenomenon that colonizes and controls people‘s minds through encouraging consumer culture. Henceforth, the identity of postmodern subjects is structured, controlled, and mediated for different social, cultural, and even political reasons.

TV and other forms of mass media are used to keep people hypnotized and immersed in momentary moments of gratifications. However, once this moments of gratifications end, the postmodern subject becomes frustrated and disappointed which makes him more and more trying to live in an endless temporary moments of gratifications and pleasure. This allows us to safely assume that the identity of these subjects is not unfied rather constructed, frail, fragmented, and manipulated by Mass media. Their identity is performed and enacted rather than acquired. This explains why characters in Crying of Lot 49 suffer from schizophrenia and other psychopatplogical problems. Their continuous attempt to identify themselves with what they see in movies and reality shows creates cloned identities rather than authentic ones. They try to imitate people they watch and their way of life as a way to fill the void and the meaningless they experience in their life and identities. This goes with Frederick Jameson’s claim about how postmodern consumer subjects have no identity. However, the moment that these characters realize that their identities are fake, they immediately start to suffer from paranoia and schizophrenia because of their inability to cope with reality. This is why some characters in the novel cling to their paranoia as a way to make sense of their being and existence.

Lesson 3: Important Terms in Postmodernism

1. Chaos Theory:

“Susan Strehle (1992) believes that changes in physics inspire changes in fiction since both inhabit the same planet (8). Thereupon, one may argue that science exerts an influence upon the dynamics of time in postmodernism. Chaos theory is a case in point. It has developed in mathematics and physics to clarify physical systems, but it also resonates in the field of humanities. It aims at explaining the complexity, non-linearity, disorder and chaotic behavior in the universe. Gordon E. Slethaug (2001) points out how postmodern writers have incorporated Chaos theory as a metaphor for disorder and randomness, either by creating chaotic structure or by thematizing explicitly Chaos theory in the plot (8). Hereupon, one may suggest that the influence of chaos theory is prominent in the spatialization of time that postmodern writers employ as a subversive technique to defy chronology and thus to create chaos in the narrative. John Barth (1995) is one of the postmodern writers whose use of metaphors based on Chaos theory is both explicit and effective. In referring to the influence of chaos theory on his writing, Barth remarks that, ―like Claude Lévi-Strauss‘s structuralism and René Thom‘s catastrophe theory, chaos theory is an idea too rich, a metaphor too powerful‖ (284). In his short story collection, John Barth experiments with chaotic structures that are simultaneously random and ordered. For example, the reader discerns his subversive attitude towards chronology through his construction of the chapter titles. The first chapter is called ―The End: An Introduction‖. It suggests two contradictory but related situations: the retirement of one from his career and the interview for someone to get the vacant position. It also points to the end of teaching for the professor and the beginning of his new life in retirement. From these instances, 12 one notices the simultaneous juxtaposition of opposite ideas (the end and beginning of career) that generates chaos and rupture in the narrative.” (10-11)

2. Time-Space Compression:

It is true that postmodernism definitively departs from the Aristotelian mimesis of reality, but the reader still notices that the postmodernist text echoes the pluralistic and anarchistic climate of advanced industrial culture. It seems worthwhile to foreground the role of technological innovations in the shaping of time in postmodernism. Certainly, the palpable changes that occur in transportation, telecommunication and information technologies have

been helping in constructing a global space where information can virtually circulate without any delay. To put it another way, the temporal gap between remote places is reduced due to the instantaneous ways of communication; again, the sending and receiving in correspondence are almost simultaneous. Thus, the planet becomes a simultaneous unity. In this respect, Heise (1997) contends that these technological changes contribute to ―the enormous speed-up in the existential rhythm of individuals as well as societies over the last three or four decades‖ (21). Nevertheless, not only does globalization represent a simultaneous unity by breaking down spatial and temporal barriers but it equally represents a process of diversification through creating new shapes of barriers, that of class and race In The Condition of Postmodernity (1990), Harvey articulates the term "time-space compression', that is inherent in the capitalist system, to indicate how technological innovations condensed the spatial and temporal distances of the globe (243).

Likewise, he points out that the history of capitalism is characterized by a speed up in the pace of life and evaporation of spatial barriers (ibid). He goes further to state that the driving force of the capitalist system is to overcome distance through speed. Indeed, the increasing speed at which one produces, distributes and consumes commodities is the central factor in the capitalist economy. Moreover, Harvey claims that the experience of the present becomes an overarching label of the contemporary world. In his discussion of time–space compression, Harvey figures out that the speed of telecommunications and other technological means produces a compression of time horizons ―to the point that the present is all there‖ (240). By focusing on the instantaneous coexistence of events and on the importance of the present time, one may argue that Harvey indirectly confirms that the postmodern age is the age of the spatialization of time (12-13)

Lesson 4: Application and Analysis of *The Crying of Lot 49 by* Thomas Pynchon.

I. Biography of the author:

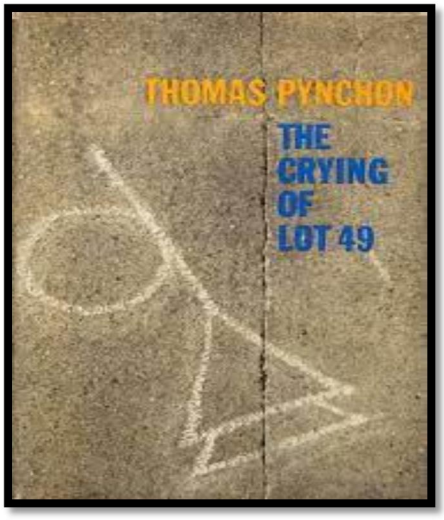
Thomas Pynchon, born on May 8, 1937, in Glen Cove, New York, is an American novelist known for his complex and innovative works that often defy traditional narrative conventions. Pynchon is notoriously private, and his reluctance to engage with the media has added an air of mystery to his persona. He studied engineering physics at Cornell University, where he also became involved in writing and editing for the Cornell Writer literary magazine.

After completing his studies, Pynchon worked briefly in the aerospace industry, a period that influenced his debut novel, "V." (1963). Following this, he gained widespread recognition with his second novel, "The Crying of Lot 49" (1966), a work that exemplifies his exploration of postmodern themes.

Pynchon's later novels include "Gravity's Rainbow" (1973), which won the National Book Award for Fiction, and "Mason & Dixon" (1997), known for its historical and stylistic complexity. His other notable works include "Vineland" (1990), "Against the Day" (2006), and "Inherent Vice" (2009).

Thomas Pynchon's contribution to postmodern literature lies in his ability to capture the complexities of contemporary existence, blending history, science, and culture into narratives that challenge traditional literary norms. His work continues to be a subject of scholarly exploration, inviting readers to grapple with the intricacies of postmodern thought through his inventive storytelling.

II. Overview about the novel:



The Crying of Lot 49" is a novel by Thomas Pynchon that follows the protagonist, Oedipa Maas, as she unravels a mysterious and complex conspiracy. Oedipa, a California housewife, becomes the executor of her ex-lover Pierce Inverarity's will. As she delves into her duties, she stumbles upon a series of cryptic symbols and signs that hint at a vast underground network known as Trystero.

Oedipa's investigation takes her on a surreal journey filled with bizarre encounters, including encounters with a secret postal system, a muted trumpet player, and a play titled "The Courier's Tragedy." As she navigates this increasingly confusing landscape, she grapples with the uncertainty of whether the Trystero is a genuine subversive organization or a figment of her imagination.

The novel weaves a complex tapestry of interconnected events, blurring the boundaries between reality and illusion. The quest for understanding the Trystero becomes a metaphor for the elusive nature of truth and the challenges of interpreting the world in a postmodern context.

III. Unraveling the themes of paranoia within the text:

Pynchon's novel is a postmodern narrative which reflects uncertainty, inconsistency, and pluralism through the use of postmodern features like apocryphal history, trans-world identity, anachronism (chronological inconsistency of some arrangement, jusxtaposition of people and events), non linearity, schizophrenic depiction of the world, paranoid search of connection and meanings, conspiracy theory, heterotopias, alternative worlds and alternative reality, loss of integrity, metaphictionality, and intertextuality.

The novel narrates the story of Oedipa Mass who is named by her dead boyfriend, Pierce Inverary, to execute his will. In attempt to execute the will, she finds herself involved in a labyrinthine retracing of the history of two postal systems: the Tristero and the real life Thurn and Taxis. Her attempt to unravel the secret of the tristero and to establish connections between some random and mysterious event and between people she accidently meets causes her to weaver between believing and unbelieving. This leads her to experience relative, uncertain, and multilayered realities which place her in constant state of doubts. As readers, like Oedipa, we cannot decide whether all things she sees or the people she meets are real or mere hallucinations. It is never clear to her or to the reader. Pynchon injects this sense of doubt within the reader at the very beginning of the novel with Dr. Hilarious mysterious 3 a.m call. This call confirms our doubt about Oedipa's psychological state of mind. She and her husband, like the majority of the characters, suffer from paranoia, and they live in a constant doubt, fear, and uncertainty.

However, the roots of paranoia for both characters are different. Mucho Mass is paranoid mainly because he witnessed the sharp opposition between what is seemingly real and what is truly real. Mucho is a typical prototype of a postmodern American man who is possessed by

the magic of what he sees in TV. He is a faithful copy of what he sees on TV and stands as a perfect example of Baudriallard's precession of simulacrum. However, his 5 years work at the lot was like a shell chock. He encounters a different version of reality that is directly opposed to what he perceives as reality. But, unlike Oedipa, Mucho finds solace in the L.C.D medication. The L.C. D medication causes the suspension of the characters' consciousness as it allows them to keep living in a simulated feigned reality. This simulated reality is considered as temporary escape from the disconnectedness and the complexities of the real. The L.C.D exerts the same impact on the characters' minds as sugar, TV, and alcohol. These three, though different as concepts, share the same effect on the characters as they cause them to remain in a hyperreal and a simulated state. Unlike her husband, Oedipa refuses to take the treatment mainly because she believes it is a part of a larger scale conspiracy. She becomes paranoid as she tries to make meaning of disconnected event and people in a disintegrated world , a world where she lost her integrity and her sense of being. Therefore, for Oedipa, paranoia is more of a therapy than a psychopathological disease. Indeed, Oedipa initiates a journey to bring meaningful explication to the chaos that surrounds her and pushes her toward insanity.

Dr. Hilarious at first seems to deceive Oedipa by inducing hallucinations and increasing paranoia in her mind. Oedipa's herself started to doubt his motives as she thinks that he is part of a larger conspiracy which aims to make her part of some scientific experiment. However, as the novel proceeds, we understand that Dr. Hilarius works as Sigmund Freud, believing that Paranoia is the only defence mechanism which protects people's unity of being in a disintegrated, ununified, and unreal world. Dr. Hilarius chooses to " remain in relative paranoia "where at least [he] know[s] who [he is] and who the others are". He advises Oedipa to cherish her fantasies "whatever it is, hold it dear, for when you lose it, you go over by that much to the others. You begin to cease to be" Therefore, Paranoia can be associated with what Freud calls psychosis of defence.

According to Freud, Paranoia is attributed to the psychological and mental disorder that affects one's objective grasp of things" (freud,1938, 105). He divides paranoia into four types:

1. **Megalomania :** it refers to a psychological condition characterized by an individual's delusional and exaggerated sense of their own importance, power, wealth, or abilities. Freud, a pioneering figure in psychoanalysis, explored megalomania as a form of narcissistic personality disorder.

In Freud's conceptualization, megalomania is associated with an inflated ego and a grandiose self-perception. Individuals experiencing megalomania may harbor delusions of superiority, omnipotence, or exceptional qualities that set them apart from others. This psychological state often involves a disconnect from reality, as individuals with megalomania may construct a self-image that does not align with objective assessments of their capabilities or achievements

2. **Mania of persecution:** It is a category within paranoia, a psychological disorder characterized by irrational and persistent feelings of being persecuted, harassed, or conspired against by others. This type of paranoia involves a profound and unwarranted belief that external forces are actively working to harm, control, or undermine the individual.

3. **Erotomania :**

It is a psychiatric disorder characterized by a delusional belief that someone, usually of higher social status, is deeply in love with the individual experiencing the delusion. In essence, individuals with erotomania hold a fixed, false belief that someone, often a public figure or someone unattainable, is romantically obsessed with them.

4. **Mania of jealousy:** his type of paranoia involves an irrational and persistent belief that one's romantic partner is unfaithful or that they harbor intense romantic feelings for someone else. Individuals experiencing the mania of jealousy are consumed by unfounded suspicions and fears related to the fidelity of their partner.

The novel demonstrates the second category of mania of persecution. Freud explains that the desire to demand interconnectedness from events of life is general and natural intellectual function of an individual’s mind. However, when these connections cannot be traced, the intellectual function constructs an alternative one either in the form of dreams, phobias or delusions. This explains exactly the postmodern condition. Yet, if this process of fabrication moves beyond logical extreme it changes to paranoia.

Hence, paranoia is an effort to spot invisible order behind visible pattern of events. The paranoid often feel delusional grandeur or suffers from feeling of being persecuted.

From the very beginning, Odipa is presented as highly perceptive character inclined to trace back various events in search of some shrouded implications and significance. She sees revelations in ordinary things that she comes across like “ printed circuit of transistor radio or

the free way of narcisso" even the hairspray can that accidently propels around the bathroom in the hotel.

In the Crying of Lot, paranoia is a means of survival and a defense strategy against acknowledging the fact that one most probably gone crazy.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, oedipa is the one who wishes to fabricate what she sees and hallucinate about. Her desire to find answers is raised by certain incidents yet it is she who feels the urge to accomplish the task. Eventually, Oedipa cannot bear that nothing is connected. This creates a sense of menace and she feels intimidated by the absence of connective signs "all the walls were blank. She could not say why, exactly but felt threatened by this absence of even marginal try at communication on latrines are known for."

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, we have a collective paranoia shared by almost all characters. There is always "we" and "they" and whether there is a conspiracy aimed at everyone. Oedipa like Hilaruis doubts that everything is a set up, but she moves on to establish a world of her own.

Oedipa experiences a postmodern sense of dislocation as there is no whole unfragmented version of reality. Hence, she tries to create an alternative mode of being and existence.

IV. Examining the notions of hyper-reality and consumerism in the text:

The Crying of Lot 49 serves as a reflection of the intricate web of delusion and disintegration prevalent in the postmodern era. The characters within the narrative stand as archetypes of individuals mesmerized by the influence of "the dead greenish eye," an emblem of the overpowering sway of Mass Media that permeates every facet of their existence. During this period, the dominance of Mass Media surpassed the cognitive capacity to distinguish between reality and fantasy. People, entranced by the allure of mass media, began replicating everything they encountered, blurring the lines between the real and the imaginary. This phenomenon gave rise to a simulacrum, a constructed imitation that dictated how individuals should present themselves or behave to gain acceptance in the postmodern societal landscape.

Pynchon skillfully conveys this mesmerizing influence through the evocative use of wine imagery. At the novel's outset, following her return from the "Tupperware party," Oedipa Oedipa **"stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work".** The broken TV, fixated on Oedipa, symbolizes its manipulation of her cognitive faculties and

rationality. The wine imagery employed in this context becomes a poignant metaphor for Oedipa's endeavor to nourish her delusions and navigate the disintegration surrounding her. Thus, the character turns to wine as a means to sustain a simulated state, immersing herself in fantasy as a coping mechanism to evade the fragmented reality that envelops her.
Similarly, Metzger stands as the best example of how people's psyche's are immersed in simulation. As a former actor, he endorses the ideals of the perfect simulacrum in terms of his character and of his appearance.

That night the lawyer Metzger showed up. He turned out to be so goodlooking that Oedipa thought at first They, somebody up there, were putting her on. It had to be an actor… she looked around him for reflectors, microphones, camera cabling, but there was only himself and a *debonair bottle of French Beaujolais*, which he claimed to've smuggled last year into California, this rollicking lawbreaker, past the frontier guards

Likewise, Metzger serves as a prime illustration of how individuals' psyches become engulfed in simulation. A former actor, he wholeheartedly embraces the pursuit of the perfect simulacrum, meticulously curating both his character and appearance. Despite his current role as a lawyer, Metzger remains ensconced in the Hollywood aura, lingering in the shadows of his past role as baby Igor. When encountered by Oedipa, he materializes holding bottles of wine, a seemingly innocuous gesture that, upon closer inspection, unveils Metz;

ger's veiled motives of manipulation and deceit. The presence of wine in this scenario underscores his adept use of it as a tool to captivate Oedipa, perpetuating a state of mesmerization and subtly exerting control over her perceptions.

Oedipa refilled her wine glass. They lay now, staring at the screen, flanks just lightly touching. There came from the TV set a terrific explosion. "Mines!" cried Metzger, covering his head and rolling away from her. "Daddy," blubbered the Metzger in the tube, "I'm scared." The inside of the midget sub was chaotic, the dog galloping to and fro scattering saliva that mingled with the spray from a leak in the bulkhead, which the father was now plugging with his shirt. "One thing we can do," announced the father, "go to the bottom, try to get under the net.

Refilling the wine glass during TV watching accentuates the profound connection between the two activities, as both exert a similar influence on Oedipa's cognitive state. As long as her glass remains filled, Oedipa becomes immersed in a realm of delusion and mesmerization. However, once the wine is depleted, Oedipa abruptly snaps out of this trance, embarking on a questioning inquiry into the potential hidden agendas behind the broadcasted movie. This immediate transition to paranoia aligns with the notion discussed in the previous lecture – that paranoia operates as a self-defense mechanism safeguarding the individual's mind from disintegration.

The parallel between wine consumption and mass media consumption becomes evident as both act akin to LCD, serving to keep intellectual cognitive abilities under a form of hypnosis. In this context, both wine and mass media contribute to a collective loss of focus on the interconnectedness of everything. Consequently, the cohesive fabric of reality begins to unravel, and the notion of "ceasing to be" emerges as individuals succumb to the fragmented and disintegrated state induced by these influences

In this instance, Metzger emerges as the quintessential archetype of an individual immersed in a state of hyperreality. His fixation on the character of Baby Igor reaches such an extreme that he severs the connection between his authentic identity and the simulacrum of Baby Igor. The situation described in this quote mirrors the dynamics of a virtual reality (VR) experience, illustrating how an individual can be so profoundly influenced by a simulated image that the boundary between reality and representation becomes blurred.

Metzger's obsession exemplifies a hyperreal condition, where the lines between the genuine self and the constructed persona of Baby Igor are indistinguishably fused. This phenomenon resonates with the immersive nature of virtual reality, where the simulated environment can engender a profound impact on an individual's perception, leading to a challenging differentiation between what is real and what is merely a representation. Metzger's narrative becomes a compelling metaphor for the consequences of hyperreality, illuminating the potential loss of identity in the face of an overwhelming and all-encompassing simulated experience.

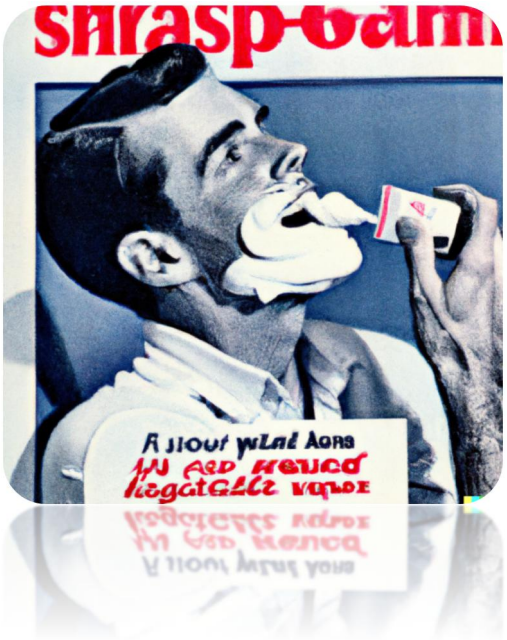
In the novel, Thomas Pynchon exposes the various strategies employed by manufacturers and producers in the postmodern era to leverage Mass Media as a powerful tool for enticing

people to purchase their manufactured goods and commodities. The television and radio broadcasts serve as conduits for disseminating signals of consumption, actively encouraging individuals to adopt specific items merely to emulate the simulacrum presented.

Pynchon illustrates how Mass Media becomes a potent force in shaping consumer behavior by creating a persuasive narrative around certain products. The broadcasts, through visual and auditory stimuli, not only showcase the desirability of particular items but also construct a simulacrum that suggests a heightened social or personal status associated with their consumption. This simulated image becomes a template for individuals, urging them to replicate the portrayed lifestyle through the acquisition of specific goods.

Mucho shaved his upper lip every morning three times with, three times against the grain to remove any remotest breath of a moustache, new blades he drew blood invariably but kept at it; bought all natural-shoulder suits, then went to a tailor to have the lapels made yet more abnormally narrow, on his hair used only water, combing it like Jack Lemmon to throw them further off.

Certainly, Mucho clearly endeavors to emulate the style of actor Jack Lemmon, both in his choice of attire and his grooming habits, particularly in the way he combs his hair. Jack Lemmon, as an actor, serves as the quintessential archetype for men to imitate during that era. Mucho's commitment to a clean-shaven look, leaving no trace of facial hair, reflects the pervasive influence of consumer ideology prevalent during that period.



Yet at least he had believed in the cars. Maybe to excess: how could he not, seeing people poorer than him come in, Negro, Mexican, cracker, a parade seven days a week, bringing the most godawful of trade-ins: motorized, metal extensions of themselves, of their families and what their whole lives must be like, out there so naked for anybody, a stranger like himself, to look at, frame cockeyed, rusty underneath, fender repainted in a shade just off enough to depress the value.

In the lecture of consumerism, we discussed the idea of how the items of consumption became cultural signs through which we can identify ourselves. 'I consume therefore I am' and 'what I buy defines me' became the most poignant and prevailing slogans of the postmodern era. Within the novel, the characters meticulously select their purchases to mirror the identity they wish to convey to society, often emulating the image of a particular actor or public figure featured on television. Mucho, for instance, views cars as more than just vehicles—they become metallic extensions of individuals, preserving the echoes of people's memories.

Unit II: Metafiction

Lesson 5: Defining Metafiction (According to Mark Currie and Patricia Waugh)

I. What is Metafiction :

The term Metafiction was first coined by William H Gass in 1970 to describe a set of **fiction about fiction itself**. In other words, fiction that talks about fiction as its main subject. What is distinguished about this type of fiction is its **self-consciousness**, **selfawareness, self knowledge, and its ironic self distance**. According to Patricia Waugh, unlike the realist novels which manifest the struggle of individuals to be assimilated within the society, and unlike novels of modernism which exposes the individual's struggle for personal autonomy through opposing social institutions and conventions, the process that usually ends in the individual's alienation, Postmodern writers faced problem because the power structures of the contemporary society are more diverse, concealed, and mystified. Hence, writers of metafiction afound the solution by turning ***in-ward to examine relation between the work of fiction and the social realms.***

Patricia Waugh explains that the term Metafiction is an elastic term which can include wide range of novels. **It is not a genre** in itself, but it is a function inherent in all novels. The term is not new, and its practice is as old as the novel itself. Patricia Waugh also contends that in the beginning of 1960's, there was a growing cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience in the world which led to the emergence of terms like Metapolitics, meta-theatre, and meta-language. Metafiction, peruses these questions through its formal self-exploration drawing on the traditional metaphor of **"the world as a book".** Indeed, the postmodern conviction that individuals occupy **"roles"** rather than" **selves"** foregrounds the belief that the study of characters in a novel may offer useful understanding about subjectivity outside the novels. Henceforth, if our knowledge about the world is mediated and constructed by language, then the work of fiction (which is a language construct) becomes a useful model for learning about construction of reality itself. To put it simply, through metafiction, writers were able to explore the fictionality and the constructed nature of our reality through **expressing the uncertainty that fiction can describe or represent the world.** According to Waugh, in fiction we can only represent **the discourse of the world.** Patricia Waugh defines Metafiction as "a ***term given to fictional writing which selfconsiously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality".*** These works of fiction

provide a critique of their own methods of construction, examine the fundamental structure of narrative fiction, and explore the fictionality of the work outside the literary text.

Mark Curry ,in the introduction of his book **Metafiction,** explaines that Metafiction can be also defined as " **a borderline discourse, as a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes that border its subject"**. Metafiction may concern itself with:

1. Particular conventions of the novel in order to display the process of their construction.
2. It can be a parody (comment or retells a story)
3. It can create alternative linguistic structure or fiction which imply old forms by encouraging the reader to draw on his/her knowledge of traditional literary conventions when struggling to construct a meaning for new text.

II. The Characteristics of Metafiction:

- **Self-consiousness:**

It is the consciousness of the text of its own artificiality. In other words, it is when the work of fiction is conscious of its own style and methods of construction. Also, self-consiousness can be expressed through the narrator's or the character's (the one who narrate the story) consiousness of themselves being part of a fiction. Note these examples:

" These Characters I create never exist outside my own mind"(84-5)

" Fiction is woven to all… I find this new reality more valid" (86-7)

These examples which are taken from John Fowls' **The French Lieutenant Woman**, clearly express the consciousness of the author or the narrator of the fictionality of the story. In Joseph Conrad's **the Heart of Darkness**, Marlowe is a dramatized narrator, a kind of surrogate author grappling with his ability as a story teller and with the ability of words to communicate his experience.

- **Self-reflexivity and self referentiality:**

It is when the work of fiction refers to itself and reflects on itself. It is when the work of fiction offers criticism and commentaries about its conventions and construction. Through

self-reflexivity and referentiality, Metafiction dramatizes the boundary between criticism and fiction. This can be achieved in different ways:

a) Allowing the novel to develop self commentaty that gives it critical self consciousness. This means commenting on the style and the conventions of work of fiction.

b) Illusion breaking and authorial intervention (usually through frame breaking)

c) Dramatizing external communication between author and reader (addressing the reader directly)

d) Surrogate reader which is common in fiction as a detective figure or any similar dramatized interpreter whose role is to make sense of intelligible events or to grapple with a mystery. Self referentiality in metafiction consists partly in rejecting the conventions of realism, traditional forms, principle of unity, and transparent use of representational language.

- **Intertextuality:**

According to Mark Curry, metafictional narratives signify their artificiality by obtrusive reference to traditional forms and borrow their thematic and structural principle from other narratives. For instance, in **the Crying of Lot 49**, there is an allusion to the quest novel. The use of intertextual references in metafiction is usally used to express or to comment on the extratextual reference of the novel to real life.

- **Parody:**

Metafictional narratives tend to defamiliraize structure of traditional generes like realism and historical romances by setting counter techniques to undermine the Godlike monologicauthor, closue of final ending, and definitive interpretations. Linda Hutcheon, in her **Narcissistic Narratives**, defines parody as a process of defamiliraization of older forms in order to trigger the reader's attention and pave the way for his active involvement within the narrative. She explains that "**The laying bare of literary devices in metafiction brings to the reader's attention those formal elements of which, through over-familiarization, he has become unaware. Through his recognition of the backgrounded material, new demands for attention and active involvement are brought to bear on the act of reading.**" (Hutcheon, 24)

- **Dialogism**

The novel assimilate variety of discourses (representations of speech and other forms of narratives like diaries, memoires, conventional registers, legal records, documents..) These discourses always, to some extent, relativize each other's authority. These language discourses express the dialogic potential of the metafictional novel which simply works on making this potential explicit.

- **Story within story,** Mise en abyme, chineese box: this is a a technique used by the writers of metafiction though which the author can comment indirectly on the fictionality of the literary work. The story integrated within the narrative often work as a miniature of the process of how the work of fiction comments and reflects on other literary works of fiction.By doing so, the author installs a mirror through which the text can look at the fictionality of itself.

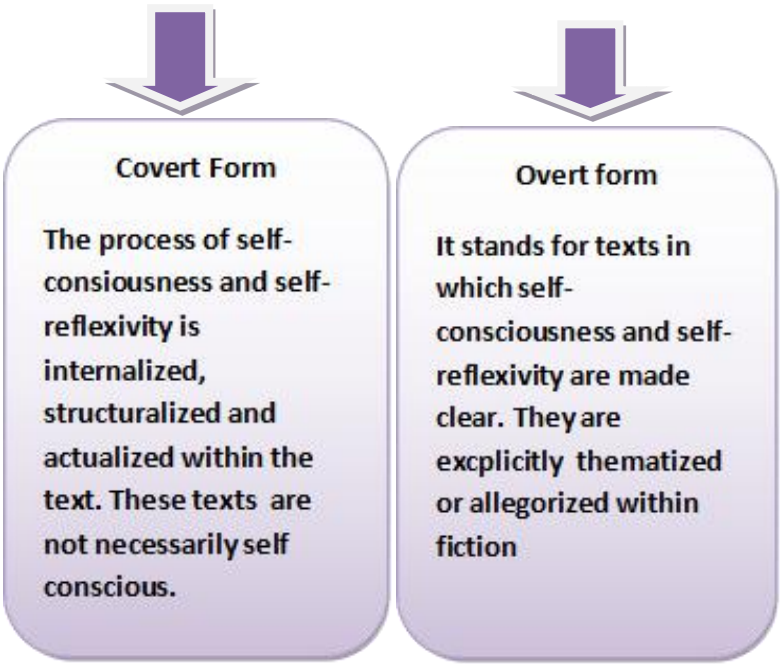
- **Play:** The concept of play, particularly linguistic play, is central to metafiction and enriches its experimental nature. linguistic play serves to challenge the reader's assumptions about language as a stable, transparent medium. It foregrounds the idea that words are tools of creation, inherently artificial, and open to manipulation. This reinforces the metafictional theme of exploring the constructed nature of all storytelling. Linguistic play can include playfulne with structure and form, play with narrative convention and play with language. The latter is significant asit can be used as a powerful tool of subverion.

Lesson 6: Modes of Metafiction and Narcissistic Narratives (In accordance with Linda Hutcheon)

Linda Hutcheon does not use the term "Narcissistic "in a negative sense since the text is what is being described not the author. She prefers to use other terms other than introspective, introverted, and self conscious. Instead, she tends to use the terms self-reflexive, self informing, self referential, and auto-representational.

Linda Hutcheon explains that modern writers urge the reader to examine the distinction between 'life' and ' art', a separation that proves impossible. Hutcheon contends that reading and writing belong to the process of ' life' and ' art'. It is this realization that constitutes one side of the metafitctional paradox for the reader. To put it in simpler terms, Hutcheon illustrates that the reader of metafiction is forced to acknowledge the **artifice of ' art' of what he is reading** while expli**cit demands are made upon him as a co-creator of meaning for intellectual and affective responses comparable to his life experiences.**

Linda Hutcheon explains that there are two modes of metafictional novels: the narrative and the linguistic mode. The narrative mode (digesis) stands for how texts are self-aware and self-conscious of their own narrative process. These texts either implicitly or explicitly comment, or criticize, their own narrative process. The linguistic mode refers to how texts are linguistically self reflective demonstrating both the power and the limitation of language. Each mode can be divided to two forms:



I. **Overt form of metafiction**:

1. **The narrative mode:** self-consciousness takes form of explicit thematizations through plot allegory, narrative metaphors, and commentary on narration. In this form of metafiction, the reader is explicitly made aware of his participation in a fictional universe. This can be done through explicit commentaries on the narrative process or by directly explaining to the reader that what they are reading is only fiction.
2. **The linguistic mode:** the text explicitly demonstrates how language serves in building the imaginative world. Also, it directly comments on language either by celebrating its existence and power or by criticizing its inefficiency and inability to establish communication.

II. Covert form of metafiction:

1. The narrative mode: WE HAVE 4 DIFFERENT SUB-GENERES OF METAFICTION

A. **The detective story**: it is a story based on a general pattern of a puzzle or an enigma. The literary form itself is very conscious. Certain conventions of the detective novel and other older genres are parodied for a certain end. (the elements of the detective novel according to Linda hutcheon are found in the 3rd lecture)

B. **FANTASY**: this genre is used in metafiction because of its ability to force the reader to create fictive and imaginative world. Unlike in overt forms of metafiction where the text explicitly presents itself as a text, fictivness in fantacy is axiomatic and creates a new-self significant world. The reader, while reading fantasy, he indirectly realizes that what he is reading is only imagination and not reality. Thus, he recognizes the fictiveness of the text.

C. **Game Structure**: writers of metafiction tend to use game model or structure du jeu in their narratives. Hutcheon explains that "In their fiction, the concept of codes, or of rules, known and followed in the acts of writing and reading (and which become ends unto themselves) can be found." (Hutcheon, 33). For example, we have the basketball game structure in "Robert Coover's The **Universal Baseball Association, Inc**. J. Henry Waugh, Prop. to Sollers' chess board **in Drame** to Sanguineti's more explicit dice shooting by the reader in order to arrange the 111 parts of Il giuoco dell'oca. In the latter instance, the reader's work and pleasure in combining and creating unities

and making meaning through the gratuitous codes of the dice game are intended" (ibid) to allow the reader to enjoy the same creative processes as those in which the writer had originally indulged.

D. **Erotic model:** All fictional texts attempt to tantalize, to seduce the reader. As Roland Barthes has suggested in both S/Z and the more recent Le Plaisir du texte, they also seek to escape the desired possession. The essentially erotic relationship of text and reader or of writer and reader is one of the overtly thematized subjects of John Barth's Chimera. (ibid). for instance, Hélène Cixous' **Tombe** presents the act of writing as an erotic activity- sperm as ink, phallus as pen, sheets as paper, bed (lit) as book (livre). (The actual basis, however, of this narrative structure turns out to be a linguistic play- le lierre: l'hier, lit/erre, lit/hier.) (ibid).

2. The Linguistic mode of covert form:

We have **a covertly linguistic variety** like riddles, jokes, puns, anagrams and other word or linguistic games used by the writer to direct the reader's attention to language itself and to its potential duplicity of meaning. Indeed, language can both convey and conceal meaning.

Lesson 7: Application and Critical Examination within Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*

Metafiction, within the literary realm, epitomizes a self-conscious narrative technique wherein the author purposefully draws attention to the artificiality of the narrative. It is a literary discourse about the act of storytelling itself, requiring readers to engage in a heightened awareness of the fictional construct and the narrative's inherent self-awareness. The Crying of Lot 49 offers us with the best example of metafiction. In this lecture, students will endeavour in critical reading and analysis of the novel with lens of metafiction.

The following quotes are discussed with students with details in class. Students are encouraged to share their critical analysis and original ideas together .

Element of metafiction:

Side commentaries:

The author or the narrator is commenting on the events or on the characters' deeds and sayings:

"**and when the cars were swept out you had to look at the actual residue of these lives, and there was no way of telling what things had been truly refused (when so little he supposed came by that out of fear most of it had to be taken and kept) and what had simply (perhaps tragically) been lost:"**

"I didn't wake you up, did I," he began, dry. "You sound so frightened. How are the pills, not working?" "I'm not taking them," she said. "You feel threatened by them?" "I don't know what's inside them." "You don't believe that they're only tranquilizers." "Do I trust you?" **She didn't, and what he said next explained why not**. "We still need a hundred-and-fourth for the bridge." Chuckled aridly.

Self Consciousness:

Spanish exile Remedios Varo: in the central painting of a triptych, titled "Bordando el Manto Terrestre," were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other

buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world. Oedipa, perverse, had stood in front of the painting and cried. No one had noticed; she wore dark green bubble shades. For a moment she'd wondered if the seal around her sockets were bubble shades. For a moment she'd wondered if the seal around her sockets were tight enough to allow the tears simply to go on and fill up the entire lens space and never dry. She could carry the sadness of the moment with her that way forever, see the world refracted through those tears, those specific tears, as if indices as yet unfound varied in important ways from cry to cry.

'she had looked down at her feet and known, then, because of a painting, that what she stood on had only been woven together a couple thousand miles away in her own tower, was only by accident known as Mexico, and so Pierce had taken her away from nothing, there'd been no escape. What did she so desire escape from? Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. Having no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works, how to measure its field strength, count its lines of force, she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery, or go mad, or marry a disk jockey. If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else?

Different layers of meaning

Oedipa skipped into the bathroom, which happened also to have a walk-in closet, quickly undressed and began putting on as much as she could of the clothing she'd brought with her: six pairs of panties in assorted colors, girdle, three pairs of nylons, three brassieres, two pairs stretch slacks, four half-slips, one black 16 of nylons, three brassieres, two pairs stretch slacks, four half-slips, one black sheath, two summer dresses, half dozen A-line skirts, three sweaters, two blouses, quilted wrapper, baby blue peignoir and old Orlon muu-muu. Bracelets then, scatterpins, earrings, a pendant. It all seemed to take hours to put on and she could hardly walk when she was finished. She made the mistake of looking at herself in the full-length mirror, saw a beach ball with feet, and laughed so violently she fell over.

The can, hissing malignantly, bounced off the toilet and whizzed by Metzger's right ear, missing by maybe a quarter of an inch. Metzger hit the deck and cowered with Oedipa as the can continued its high-speed caroming; from the other room came a slow, deep crescendo of naval bombardment, machine-gun, howitzer and small-arms fire, screams and chopped-off prayers of dying infantry. She looked up past his eyelids, into the staring ceiling light, her field of vision cut across by wild, flashing overflights of the can, whose pressure seemed inexhaustible. She was scared but nowhere near sober. The can knew where it was going, she sensed, or something fast enough, God or a digital machine, might have computed in advance the complex web of its travel; but she wasn't fast enough, and knew only that it might hit them at any moment, at whatever clip it was doing, a hundred miles an hour

Story within Story:

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* exemplifies a recursive and self-referential narrative structure through its use of embedded plays, games, and puzzles. These elements compel readers to engage in an interpretative process that mirrors the protagonist Oedipa Maas's quest for meaning. The play *The Courier's Tragedy*, for instance, not only advances the plot but also operates as a meta-commentary on the elusive nature of truth and the interpretive challenges posed by layers of encoded meaning. Similarly, the cryptic Tristero system and its symbols evoke a sense of conspiratorial depth that may or may not exist, encouraging readers to question the reliability of the narrative and their perceptions. This recursive design blurs the

line between fiction and reality, inviting introspection on the act of reading as a participatory and interpretive experience. Pynchon's multilayered approach mirrors the complexities of modern communication, marked by fragmented information and subjective interpretation, and underscores the futility yet necessity of searching for coherence in a chaotic world.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, The Courier's Tragedy mirrors Shakespeare's Hamlet through its shared themes of revenge, conspiracy, and the search for truth within a morally ambiguous world. Like Hamlet, the play-within-a-novel is rife with familial betrayal, political intrigue, and cryptic revelations, serving as a distorted microcosm of Oedipa Maas's overarching quest for understanding. Both works use their protagonists to probe the reliability of narrative and the elusive nature of truth, underscoring the destabilizing effects of uncovering hidden machinations. The play's violent absurdity and exaggerated theatricality parody Hamlet's gravitas, while also reflecting postmodern skepticism of traditional structures of meaning and authority. This intertextuality reinforces The Crying of Lot 49's broader commentary on interpretation and communication, as Oedipa's encounter with The Courier's Tragedy becomes another layer of recursive mystery that echoes Hamlet's use of "The Mousetrap" to reveal hidden truths, albeit in a more fragmented and enigmatic form.

Self- Reflexive:

Angelo takes out a quill, parchment and ink, explaining to the audience but not to the good guys, who are still ignorant of recent developments, that to forestall an invasion from Faggio, he must assure Gennaro with all haste of his good intentions. As he scribbles he lets drop a few disordered and cryptic remarks about the ink he's using, implying it's a very special fluid indeed. Like: This pitchy brew in France is "encre" hight; In this might dire Squamuglia ape the Gaul, For "anchor" it has ris'n, from deeps untold.

Angelo's monologue in The Courier's Tragedy exemplifies Pynchon's metafictional and self-reflexive narrative style, inviting the audience to consider the constructed nature of texts and the processes of their interpretation. The scene foregrounds its own artifice as Angelo breaks the fourth wall, addressing the audience rather than the characters, which draws attention to the act of storytelling itself. His cryptic remarks about the "pitchy brew" of ink, layered with puns on "encre" (French for ink) and "anchor," emphasize the medium of writing—both within the fictional world of the play and as a metaphor for the novel's broader exploration of encoded communication.

By referencing ink as a “very special fluid” and invoking its metaphorical depth (“ris’n, from deeps untold”), the monologue becomes a commentary on the act of creating and interpreting texts. This self-awareness extends to the audience’s role in decoding the text, paralleling Oedipa Maas’s own engagement with the cryptic Tristero system. The invocation of France and “Squamuglia ape the Gaul” adds a satirical element, critiquing imitation and derivation, while also reflecting on the iterative nature of literary creation and the instability of meaning in language.

The passage’s recursive focus on ink—the substance enabling the play to exist—functions as a meta-commentary on the tools of narrative production, reminding readers of the artificiality and layered construction of the story. Angelo’s actions and words blur the boundaries between the fictional play, the broader narrative of the novel, and the real world of its readers, encapsulating The Crying of Lot 49’s postmodern preoccupation with metafiction and self-reflexivity.

“You came to talk about the play,” he said. “Let me discourage you. It was written to entertain people. Like horror movies. It isn’t literature, it doesn’t mean anything. Wharfinger was no Shakespeare.” “Who was he?” she said. “Who was Shakespeare. It was a long time ago.”

he character’s dialogue seems to reflect a view that the play, and perhaps art in general, serves more as a form of entertainment than as something with deeper meaning or literary value. This dismissal of Wharfinger (the playwright) in comparison to Shakespeare challenges traditional notions of artistic merit and suggests a view that writing is simply for amusement, not for profound reflection.

The phrase "it doesn't mean anything" could imply that the work doesn't aspire to have significance beyond being a product of entertainment, drawing attention to the fact that meaning and literary value are subjective and sometimes imposed by critics or the audience. The mention of Shakespeare, a towering figure in literature, serves as a benchmark, but the narrator challenges the conventional reverence for literary "greatness" and the idea that art must have enduring significance to be valuable.

this exchange may point to the act of storytelling itself—questioning whether works of fiction need to adhere to certain standards or whether their merit lies in their entertainment value. By highlighting the difference between popular entertainment (like horror movies) and "serious" literature, it subtly critiques the expectations placed upon art and invites the reader to consider fiction as a self-aware creation rather than a passive reflection of the world.

The dialogue encourages reflection on how works of fiction are categorized and valued, making the reader aware of the constructed nature of literary hierarchies and the fluid boundaries between "literature" and "entertainment."

“Was it written in as a stage direction? All those people, so obviously in on something. Or was that one of your touches?” “That was my own,” Driblette told her, “that, and actually bringing the three assassins onstage in the fourth act. Wharfinger didn’t show them at all, you know.” “Why did you? Had you heard about them somewhere else?” “You don’t understand,” getting mad. “You guys, you’re like Puritans are 42 about the Bible. So hung up with words, words. You know where that play exists, not in that file cabinet, not in any paperback you’re looking for, but—” a hand emerged from the veil of shower-steam to indicate his suspended head —“in here. That’s what I’m for. To give the spirit flesh.

The passage you’ve provided reflects a moment of metafiction, where the characters discuss the relationship between the "spirit" of a play (or text) and its physical manifestation. Driblette is revealing his role as a creator or interpreter of the play, suggesting that his additions, like the stage direction and bringing the assassins onstage, are his own contributions that breathe life into the work. The phrase "that’s what I’m for. To give the spirit flesh" underscores the tension between the abstract concepts or intentions of a text (the "spirit") and its concrete representation (the "flesh").

In metafiction, the narrative often draws attention to its own construction, challenging the boundary between fiction and reality. Here, Driblette’s frustration with the characters' focus on words points to a deeper philosophical reflection: the true essence of a story or play isn’t confined to the physical manifestation of the script (like the words on the page or the file cabinet) but exists in the interaction between the creator, the audience, and the performance itself.

This kind of self-awareness invites readers or viewers to reflect on the nature of storytelling, creation, and interpretation, which is a hallmark of metafictional works.

The words, who cares? They’re rote noises to hold line bashes with, to get past the bone barriers around an actor’s memory, right? But the reality is in this head. Mine. I’m the projector at the planetarium, all the closed little universe visible in the circle of that stage is coming out of my mouth, eyes, sometimes other orifices also.”

You could fall in love with me, you can talk to my shrink, you can hide a tape recorder in my bedroom, see what I talk about from wherever I am when I sleep. You want to do that? You can put together clues, develop a thesis, or several, about why characters reacted to the Trystero possibility the way they did, why the assassins came on, why the black costumes. You could waste your life that way and never touch the truth. Wharfinger supplied words and a yarn. I gave them life. That's it." He fell silent. The shower splashe

In this passage, Driblette continues his exploration of the tension between the written text (the words) and the living, breathing performance. He dismisses the significance of words as "rote noises" that merely serve to facilitate the process of acting, using them as a tool to help actors recall lines or ideas. The real essence, he argues, comes from his "head," the source of the deeper, more profound creative energy. This reinforces the idea that the "spirit" of a play or story is not confined to the written text but exists in the mind of the creator, in the performer's interpretation, and in the dynamic act of creation itself.

The metaphor of Driblette as a "projector at the planetarium" further emphasizes his view of himself as the source of all meaning and reality in the play. The "closed little universe" visible on the stage is not merely a physical or textual construct but a projection of his mind, his personal creative energy.

The line about hiding a tape recorder and "putting together clues" evokes a more critical and analytical approach to understanding the work, which contrasts with Driblette's own more visceral, embodied engagement with it. He suggests that no amount of analysis will uncover the "truth" of the work, implying that the essence of creativity can't be reduced to intellectual dissection. Wharfinger may have provided the basic structure (the "words" and "yarn"), but Driblette is the one who imbues it with life, emphasizing the distinction between a mere script and the performance or interpretation that gives it meaning.

This passage exemplifies a central idea in metafiction: the process of storytelling is not a static thing that can be neatly interpreted or analyzed through clues, but a dynamic, living interaction between the creator and the audience. It points to the complexity of artistic creation and the role of the artist in bringing that creation to life, often in ways that transcend the literal words of the text.

Lesson 8: Application and Analysis within John Gardner's *Grendel*

1. Biography of John Gardner: John Gardner (1933-1982):

John Champlin Gardner Jr. was born on July 21, 1933, in Batavia, New York, USA. He was an influential figure in American literature, known for his work as a novelist, essayist, and educator. Gardner earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington University in St. Louis in 1955. He later completed a Master's degree at the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop.

Gardner's writing career was diverse, encompassing novels, essays, and works of literary criticism. His best-known novels include *Grendel* (1971), a retelling of the Beowulf legend from the perspective of the monster Grendel, and *October Light* (1976), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

2. Plot Synopsis:

Grendel is a novel by John Gardner, published in 1971. It is a philosophical and existential retelling of the Beowulf epic, focusing on the character Grendel, who is traditionally portrayed as a monstrous antagonist in the original poem. Gardner's novel provides a sympathetic and introspective exploration of Grendel's inner thoughts and struggles.

Grendel is an eponymic novel entitled after Grendel, the central character around whom the flow of events evolves. The community of the Danes considers him a monster that should be exterminated; while, on his part, Grendel attempts to be part of Hrothgar's people but his effort is faced with extreme and violent rejection. The monster’s discerning observation of the world of humans made of him a sharp critic of their way of life and way of thinking. At a given point, Grendel develops an admiration for the ‘shaper’ whom he considers a master in the art of words. The shaper is an old blind man who writes poetry in praise of the king; but at the same time, Grendel despises the illusionary nature of his poetry. Grendel has a multitude of concerns for which he finds no answer; concerns relating to the mechanisms that rule the human world and the ambiguity of their truths. In his quest, he visits the dragon that exerts a great influence upon his development. Grendel's anti-heroic nature is a major issue in the novel, raising the question of the truth about heroism. He himself rejects any notion of heroism, especially the kind performed by Unferth, his antagonist and the figure that represents the conventional hero. Throughout the twelve years of Grendel’s war against the

Danes, he observes and exposes the defects that the humans are unaware of. His end comes in the form of execution at the hands of an unknown "hero"; a death that Grendel sees not as defeat but a demonstration of the deceptive nature of man and the illusionary values he glorifies.

The story, narrated from Grendel's perspective, foregrounds a labyrinth of issues that are often neglected and repressed. It invites the reader to experience, along with Grendel, a different way of perceiving the 'essence' of things. Grendel's sensitivity exposes various questions and paradoxes, in what can be described as deceptive, gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere. It is tricky, for it has a positive role rather than a negative one; it aims at raising awareness.

Thus, the pick of the monster, Grendel, as first person point of view is a postmodern technique that Gardner utilizes as a metafictional artistic manipulation and a rejection of the realist's notion in their narratives of the all-knowing god voice. Gardner grants his anti-hero the gift of criticism, which makes of him a self-conscious creature that surpasses the consciousness of ordinary human beings. For that metafiction and the anti-heroic status are deceptive in that they allude to negativity but in fact they aim at challenging the conventions held as unchangeable and flawless. Humans, to him, tend to adopt what is already thought of and not to reasonably investigate those settled values.

In Grendel's case the word "monster" is mainly related to his killings and violent behavior towards humans. Despite his massive urge for blood, Grendel has qualities that enable his classification as human. The act of thinking and the act of conversing are undeniably human traits which make of Grendel a creature not different from man. Language acts as a fundamental bridge that escorts man from "animal kingdom to human kingdom". In The Open: Man and Animal, Giorgio Agamben (2002) states: "if [language] is taken away, the difference between man and animal vanishes"(36). This is how Grendel perceives himself, he declares: " I found I understand them: it was my own language, but spoken in a strange way"(Gardner,15). Besides that, language plays an important role in the transmission of the thoughtful views that Grendel often projects

Grendel as an outsider observes and studies the human world and it constitutions without being involved. In this way, Grendel's isolation reinforces his mental activity and double his consciousness so he perceives beyond the superficiality that controls life around him.

Metafictional elements in Grendel:

The Novel of ***Grendel*** falls under the category of Overt Metafiction as it overtly criticizes the function and the effectiveness of language as a medium of communication and identification. Language as mentioned earlier is the only decisive line on which the binary between the realm of animals and the realm of humans is established. ***Grendel***, as a narrator, explicitly criticizes this langue commenting on its power to create history.

1. **Self Consciousness:**

. I observe myself observing
what I observe. It startles me. "Then I am not that which observes!" I am
lack. *Alack!* No thread, no frailest hair between myself and the universal
clutter! I listen to the underground river. I have never seen it.
Talking, talking, spinning a skin, a skin . . .

"kill another one, and all the others would detach themselves
from the killer as neatly as blood clotting, and they'd consider the case and
they'd either excuse him, for some reason, or else send him out to the forest to
live by stealing from their outlying pens like a wounded fox. At times I
would try to befriend the exile, at other times I would try to ignore him, but
they were treacherous. In the end, I had to eat them."

"I was safe

in my tree, and the men who fought were nothing to me, except of course that

they talked in something akin to my language, which meant that we were,

incredibly, related."

- **The novel is replete with aside commentaries** (highlighted in blue in Ebook)

Frame breaking technique! This technique is generally spotted when Grendel breaks into the midhall : **"eventually they'd all fall asleep on each other like lizards, I steal a cow".** Usually Grendel observes what happens in the Hall from a tree, but sometimes he sneaks

inside which can be read as a frame breaking technique since the Hall stands for Poetry, a construction surrounded with ‘outlying pens’

2. **Self-reflexiveness**:

It is the most important element of metafiction in this novel. The narrator comments on the songs of the Harper which stands for poetry in general, and more specifically Epic poetry. He comments on the way with which the poet or the Harper bewitches the minds of his audience with his beautiful rhymed language of poetry. He also criticizes the genre of Epic poetry of being a mere illusion based on pure lies. Henceforth, the word ‘ outlying pens” can be read in both ways:

> **As a “pen” a symbol of language and “out**- lying”, which criticizes the authenticity of this language.

Here are some examples which will be discussed in details in class:

> Then the wars began, and the war songs, and the weapon making. If the songs were true, as I suppose at least one or two of them were, there had always been wars, and what I'd seen was merely a period of mutual exhaustion

> I'd be watching a meadhall from high in a tree, night-birds singing in the limbs below me, the moon's face hidden in a tower of clouds, and nothing would be stirring except leaves moving in the light spring breeze and, down by the pigpens, two men walking with their battle-axes and their dogs. Inside the hall I would hear the Shaper telling of the glorious deeds of dead kings--how they'd split certain heads, snuck away with certain precious swords and necklaces--his harp mimicking the rush of swords, clanging boldly with the noble speeches, sighing behind the heroes' dying words. Whenever he stopped, thinking up formulas for what to say next, the people would all shout and thump each other and drink to the Shaper's long life.

> The silence expanded. People coughed. As if all by itself, then, the harp made a curious run of sounds, almost words, and then a moment later, arresting as a voice from a hollow tree, the harper began to chant:

What was he? The man had changed the world, had torn up the past by its thick, gnarled roots and had transmuted it, and they, who knew the truth, remembered it his way--and so did

I listened, huddled in the darkness, tormented, mistrustful. I knew them, had watched them; yet the things he said seemed true. He sent to far kingdoms for woodsmen, carpenters, metalsmiths, goldsmiths--also carters, victualers, clothiers to attend to the workmen--and for weeks their uproar filled the days and nights. I watched from the vines and boulders of the giants' ruin, two miles off. Then word went out to the races of men that Hrothgar's hall was finished. He gave it its name. From neighboring realms and from across the sea came men to the great celebration. The harper sang

He told how the earth was first built, long ago: said that the greatest of gods made the world, every wonder-bright plain and the turning seas, and set out as signs of his victory the sun and moon, great lamps for light to land dwellers, kingdom torches, and adorned the fields with all colors and shapes, made limbs and leaves and gave life to the every creature that moves on land.

Second Semester

Unit III: Ecocriticism

Lesson 9: Eco-criticism in the Context of American Literature

What is Ecocriticism?

Nature has captivated humanity since the dawn of our existence. Our ancestors, surrounded by the natural world, quickly realized that their survival depended on it. Through their intelligence, humans learned to harness and transform nature, though its complexity remained beyond full comprehension. This is why the concept of 'Nature' appears not only in literature but also in various forms of artistic expression, including music, painting, and sculpture. Aristotle was neither the first nor the last to explore the wonders and mysteries of nature—the unknown aspects that have intrigued philosophers and writers for centuries, who have sought to understand or portray them. The fascination with nature has been so profound that it has appeared in literary works across different historical periods. In the 19th century, nature became a central theme in literature

Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship. Nature writing predominated even before the advent of ecocriticism and gained traction in different eras, such as Romanticism and Gothic literature. While it is true that Romanticism, Gothic literature, and ecocriticism all address nature, each does so from a different perspective.

What is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines literature and language from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism considers modes of production and economic class in its analysis of texts, ecocriticism adopts an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty, 1996).

While most literary theory typically examines the relationship between writers, texts, and society—where "the world" is often synonymous with the social sphere—ecocriticism expands the concept of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere.

The term "ecocriticism" was likely first coined by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” By ecocriticism, Rueckert referred to "the application of ecology and ecological concepts in the study of literature." Other terms currently used in this field include ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies, though most scholars prefer the term ecocriticism.

Regardless of the term used, most ecocritical works share a common motivation: we have reached a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's essential life-support systems. It is crucial to raise awareness about these problems and seek solutions to them.

- **How can we then contribute to environmental restoration?**

  The answer lies in recognizing that many of the current environmental issues are largely of our own making—essentially a by-product of culture. As historian Donald Worster explains:

  > "We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function, but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding."

- **How do they contribute to that understanding, and who are the contributors?**

  Anthropologists: They have long studied the connection between culture and geography. Their research on primal cultures, in particular, can offer insights into the value systems and rituals that have enabled these societies to live sustainably, allowing us to compare them to our contemporary systems and ways of life.

  Psychology: Traditionally, psychology has ignored nature in its theories of the human mind. However, some contemporary psychologists are exploring the link between environmental conditions and mental health, with some arguing that the modern estrangement from nature is the root cause of many social and psychological issues.

  Philosophy: Subfields such as environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology have emerged to understand and critique the root causes of environmental degradation. These disciplines aim to formulate alternative views of

existence, offering ethical and conceptual foundations for establishing right relations with the Earth.

Theology: Theologians are also recognizing that environmental issues are deeply connected to religious thought.

1. Some Judeo-Christian theologians seek biblical precedents for responsible stewardship of the Earth.
2. Others re-envision God as immanent within creation, viewing the Earth itself as sacred.
3. Still others turn to ancient Earth Goddess worship, Eastern religious traditions, and Native American teachings, all of which contain valuable wisdom about nature and spirituality.

- **Some of the key themes and topics in Ecocriticism include:**

- Environmental justice and the equal distribution of environmental harms and benefits.
- Climate change and the impacts on ecosystem and human communities.
- The role of literature in shaping cultural attitudes toward nature and the environment.
- The relationship between humans and non-human nature, and the ethics of our interaction with other species.
- The representation of landscapes, ecosystems, and natural processes in literature.

- **Giving voice to the minority:**

Ecocriticism has provided a platform for marginalized and underrepresented communities to express their environment concerns and engage with issues of environmental justice. This has allowed minorities to take advantage of ecocriticism in a number of ways:

1. Giving voice to environmental concerns: Ecocriticism has provided a space for minorities to share their environmental concerns and perspectives. This has allowed them to bring attention to issues that may be overlooked by mainstream environmental discourse.

2. Fostering environmental justice: Ecocriticism has emphasized the need for environmental justice and the unequal distribution of environmental harms and benefits. This allowed minorities to advocate for fair and more equitable environmental policies.
3. Highlighting cultural perspectives: Ecocriticism recognizes the importance of cultural perspectives in shaping our relationship with the environment. This has allowed minorities to highlight the role that cultural traditions and practices play in shaping their environmental attitudes and behaviors.
4. Challenging dominant environmental discourses: Ecocriticism has provided a platform for minorities to challenge dominant environmental discourses and narratives. This has allowed them to question assumptions about the natural world and our relationship with it.
5. Encouraging community engagement: Ecocriticism emphasizes the importance of community engagement and the need or collaborative approaches to environmental issues. This allowed minorities to come together and work towards shared environmental goals.

Overall, ecocriticism has allowed minorities to take advantage of literary and cultural studies to explore environmental issues and engage with broader environmental debates. It has provided a space for them to voice their concerns, advocate for environmental justice, and challenge dominant environmental discourses.

Lesson 10: The Animal Question

“The animal question” has been central to Western thought and philosophy since the publication of Aristotle‟s History of Animals (350 BC) in which he establishes an intellectual conceptualization of species hierarchy, what is later called the Great Chain of Being. By placing Animals in a lower rank than God and humans, Aristotle justifies human‟s dominion over the lower animals (5-7). Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that Aristotle does not consider humans as a different entity, or being, in comparison to animals. In his view, humans are only rational animals solely possessing the faculty of memory and instruction as well as the power of recollection (6).

However, Over the years, an indivisible line between both categories has been dogmatically established by René Descartes based on the animal‟s lack of the faculty of mind and conscious thought. Unlike humans (rational souls), animals are mere non-sentient automata denied self-consciousness and thought (Harrison, 220). In addition, since feeling is included within the scope of the faculty of thinking, animals are incapable of experiencing any kind of pain or pleasure (222).

Following the lead of Descartes, Martin Heidegger (1971) and Emmanuel Levinas (1990) have re-enforced the dogmatic anthropocentrism in western philosophy. They both deny animals any kind of transcendence due to their inability to speak and to form meaningful relations with others which constitute the essence of human subjectivity (Calarco, 33). Martin Heidegger provides us with an additional dimension to the dogmatic anthropocentricism. He distinguishes between humans and animals, not in terms of their ability to reason, but in terms of their relationship to the world. In The Nature of Language, Heidegger contends that unlike the world-forming human, animals are “poor in the world” (Heidegger, 107). They are not poor in the sense of hierarchy but in the sense of deprivation. Indeed, Heidegger explains, animals are deprived of a world because they do not inquire about their environs. In other words, they do not ask questions about it. However, they are not without interaction and engagement with their surroundings. Similarly, Levinas distinguishes between both categories based on their relationship with others. To put it simply, the being of the animal is a struggle

for life and persistence. In other words, its aim of being is being in itself. However, what matters most for humans is not being itself rather than the life and the being of others (Levinas, 50). In fact, this kind of anthropocentric ideology and human exceptionalism have dominated a large fraction of the work done in continental philosophy. It de emphasizes the animal being and existence while subduing it to secondary status after humans. Undeniably, the above-mentioned theorists agree that the animal is a creature with no ability to reason, to have language, to respond or to create. Thus, possessing the power of language, Man devises a machine that allows him to keep his sovereignty over animals and other minority groups. This anthropological machine, as Giorgio Agamben calls it, is at work with our culture and functions by means of exclusion and inclusion (Agamben, 37). In simpler words, the machine works to keep inside those animals with human features like slaves and barbarians while excluding those who are not fit to be humans like women and Jews (ibid). Thus, the animal, human or non-human, is a creature that is made inferior and subjugated.

Lesson 11: The representation of Animals in culture

Over recent years, the works of Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Deleuze, and Guattarihave brought increased attention to the cultural analysis of the representation of animals (Gerard, 136). In other words, these theorists focus more on deconstructing the indivisible line of demarcation between both categories and on investigating the significance of animals to issues like human subjectivity, difference, and otherness. Moreover, theorists working in this vein argue that the human being is deeply historical and it emerges from "a complex series of relations" (historical, cultural, economic and even linguistic ones) and that the nature of human being cannot be understood outside these relations (Calarco, 31). In simpler words, they re-figure the human being as only a node in a complex network of relations. Yet, Derrida along with other anti-humanist 2 theorists are not interested in dismantling the line of Demarcation between humans and animals simply because such difference does exist in reality. Instead, they aim at complicating and emphasizing this difference (Calarco, 47). Derrida also stresses that the traditional binary opposition is charged with ethical implications and power-relations. In other words, both categories do not live in peaceful co-existence rather with a violent hierarchy. This means that one category has to rule over and to dominate the other (35). Moreover, by examining the status of animals and animality and how they figure in the constitution of Man , we can understand the logic behind other kinds of opposition like man/women, master/slave, and colonizer / colonized (Calarco, 36). In his last seminars, particularly "The Animal That Therefore I am" (1977) and "The Beast and the Sovereign" (2001-2002), Derrida argues that Man is a living creature who granted himself the right to possess language with which to speak of the Animal in a single voice; and with which to pose himself as the Sovereign over it (Derrida, 400).

Derrida defines the Animal4 as "an immense group, a single fundamentally homogenous set that man has the right to designate as the other or the opposite" (408). In other words, the man gave himself the right to coral all other living beings under the concept of the Animal other. In fact, Derrida forges the word "Animot" 5 to designate everything which man does not consider as his fellow brother (400). Subsequently, Animot is a "porte-manteau" or a chimerical word (410).

Likewise, the chimera is a hybrid monster whose mother, Echidine, refers to both a treacherous woman and a viper. This strongly suggests that women and animals are put on the same hierarchy, if not considered the same. Moreover, Derrida argues that this chimerical word comprises not only different species of animals but also women, slaves, children, and all minority groups (33). These categories are powerless mainly because they are deprived of language and response. In a similar fashion, Michel Foucault (2013) adds „the insane" to the category of the Animal. In Madness and Civilization, he explains that in the eighteenth century "madness borrowed its face from the mask of the beast" (Foucault, 72).

At that time, the insane was regarded as an animal because of his ability to endure, his eccentric behavior and his lack of reason. Thus, a brutal treatment is required to tame the deranged man. Foucault contends that this kind of animality is harshly tamed, not to raise the inhuman or the bestial to the state of humanity, but to restore man to what was instinctively and purely animal within him (Foucault, 75). Furthermore, In "L'animal donc Je Suis," Derrida explains that the power to name was solely granted to man in order to assert his sovereignty, power, and loneliness (386). Subsequently, the Animal's lack of language denies it access to the symbolic stage which requires an acquisition of linguistic signifiers. This means that the slave, the woman, the insane, and the animal cannot be developed into full subjects. Derrida adds that this is not what makes these categories sad. Rather, it is the fact of being named and of receiving one's name (389). For example, the slaves in the United States of America were deprived of their names. Instead, they were granted the names of their owners along with letters or numbers to distinguish them like Paul. D, Sixo, and Paul. A (characters in *Beloved*). By doing this, the masters deny their slaves any kind of familial or communal bonds to facilitate controlling them. It is this kind of power that makes Man the Sovereign over the Animal or the Beast.

In fact, Steve Baker (2001) insists in Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation that the Western culture uses animal imagery to draw on ideas, not about animals themselves, but concerning culture in general and human identity in particular (Baker, xxxv). For this reason, Baker focuses in this book on the symbolic use of animals in cultural history because he believes that animals are far from being a reality. Instead, they are a construction and a representation. The cultural history that Baker investigates is built on polarities or binary oppositions in which man and animals figure in opposite poles. Clearly, as

discussed earlier, the White man is the one possessing the power, which is knowledge, to structure the image of the archetypal animal other.

Generally, the meanings we assign to animals are manipulated in favor of the representing group. Baker judges most of these meanings as stereotypes which "are able to operate as . . . a coherent body of knowledge" which "a given society assumes as a reality" (28). Baker defines stereotypes as "an oversimplified mental image" of a person, an institution or a culture (29). Certainly, animals are metaphorically indispensable for such mental representation. In Baker‟s account, there are two different ways of using animal imagery: as metonymy and as a metaphor. The first designates the representation of the self which is generally idealized and used as a symbol of order, good values, and morals. Such animals are generally used as agents of social beings and change. Baker attributes the name of the theriomorphic image to this kind of representation which is certainly a positive one. (108). In fact, this animal imagery is generally used in propaganda and political elections in favor of the category in power.

Contrary to the metonymic representation of animals, the second strategy is particularly used in the characterization of "the others" through animal imagery to metaphorically convey their sense of distance, inferiority, difference and strangeness (ibid). In other words, metaphoric representations of animals are used negatively to describe the other, the beast and the brute and they take therianthropic form (ibid). Baker defines the latter as "the casting of a hated or a despised human into the image of animal" which is an effective means of stereotyping, objectifying and dehumanizing them(113).

To better explain, one may draw on an example from Toni Morrison‟s God Help the Child. The author uses a therianthropic form of animal imagery, that of a panther, to metaphorically describe the protagonist as a symbol of a luring, exotic, and a wild commodified animal through the lens of the White people. However, she uses the theriomorphic form of the same animal imagery to metonymically depict Bride as a powerful, an independent and a strong African-American woman. Using both forms of animal imagery, the author manages to reflect the mental representation of African American women by the White people and how these women manage to subvert the same images to metonymically represent themselves as idealistic and free. But, Baker contends that the past offers no reliable guide to the meaning of animal imagery or symbols in the present (27).

He acknowledges that these meanings are constituted historically but this will mean nothing in their interpretation in the present state of things. In fact, he argues that these meanings should be interpreted synchronically, in ignorance of their origins either historical or mythical. Instead, he encourages the readers to focus more on the complex systematicity of these images and that they should be read in the present. Agreeably, Baker‟s argument is based on a solid ground and should be adopted in interpreting any kind of symbols and images particularly in modern as well as post-modern texts. However, I believe that the origin of these signs and images is of crucial significance and one cannot interpret an image while divorcing it from its original meaning. By saying this, I do not mean that these meanings should be taken straightforwardly. Instead, knowing their historical or mythical meaning is very useful in knowing the ways that modern/post-modern artists and authors use in giving these images another dimension. In other words, how these authors restructure animal imagery, usually taken straightforwardly, and manipulate it in the present space of representation to reflect the present state of things.

Lesson 12: Application and Thematic Exploration within American Literature

- ***The Temple of My Familiar*** **by Alice Walker**

One of the most significant female African-American writers working today – as a novelist, poet, short story writer, journalist, and activist – what distinguishes Walker from her peers are the themes she focuses on.

Alice Walker's *The Temple Of My Familia*r published in 1989, joins her contemporaries in the effort of deconstructing history in a way that creates space for the stories that form the history of black people in the United States.

Alice Walker weaves the rhetorical device of storytelling, deeply rooted in African American folk culture, into the very fabric of her novel. At the core of the narrative structure, Walker positions a feminine ancestral figure—the goddess archetype. Lissie Lyles, this ancestral presence, becomes the focal point around which the novel's framework revolves. Through Lissie, the ancestral storyteller, Walker unfolds the tales of her numerous past lives, alternating between human and animal incarnations. By delving into the recollections of these diverse experiences, Walker utilizes the dream-like quality of memory to transport readers back to the origins of culture and civilization. This narrative strategy serves as an attempt to elucidate the injustices inflicted by modern societies worldwide, employing the power of ancestral memory to explore the roots of societal wrongs.

Alice Walker undertakes the task of restoring balance and fostering peaceful coexistence between humanity and the natural world within her narrative. Central to this endeavor is the character of Miss Lissie, a conduit through which Walker illustrates the transformative potential of dreams and the pursuit of harmony with nature.

Miss Lissie, an elderly Black woman, bears the weight of multiple memories from her previous incarnations—a timeless goddess reincarnated as both a woman and a man, a lion, and even a white male. Across these varied lifetimes, she retains the ability to recall vivid details of her past experiences. Notably, some memories, dating back to epochs so distant, are referred to by Miss Lissie as "dream memories."

Walker employs Miss Lissie's character to demonstrate the profound role dreams play in uncovering hidden truths. These dreams become a key to unlocking the mysteries of existence and, in turn, contribute to the restoration of a genuine harmony with the natural world. Through Miss Lissie's unique ability to reincarnate successively, Walker crafts a character who embodies the cyclical nature of life and the interconnectedness of all living beings. Miss Lissie's "dream memories" serve as a bridge between the past and the present, allowing readers to explore the depths of history and the enduring quest for equilibrium between humanity and nature.

In one of her dream memories, Lizzie recounts an encounter with cousins whose identity remains initially veiled. Through her vivid descriptions, readers gradually discern that these mysterious relatives are, in fact, gorillas. Lizzie portrays them as formidable beings—towering in size compared to her diminutive form, characterized by black hair, substantial teeth, flat black faces, and eyes that emanate both piercing intelligence and gentle warmth (95).

These gorilla cousins coexist harmoniously, sharing a profound bond as they live, care for one another, and express affection toward humans. In stark contrast, the human counterparts live in isolation, struggling to care for their offspring. Unable to nurture their own children, they entrust them to the care of the gorilla cousins. Lizzie observes with fascination the unity and interconnectedness among the gorillas, perceiving them as instructors imparting essential lessons on familial bonds to their human counterparts.

Through her interactions with these gorilla cousins, Lizzie undergoes a transformative process of identity construction. She sees in them not only caregivers for human offspring but also symbols of unity and family. Lizzie, inspired by their harmonious existence, begins to shape her identity as a nurturing figure. The act of holding a little gorilla cousin under her chin becomes a source of profound joy, echoing a sentiment shared by the parents who delight in this unique means of bonding (95).

n this dream memory, Walker weaves a rich tapestry of symbolism and connection, using the gorilla cousins as a metaphorical guide for Lizzie's understanding of family, unity, and the essence of nurturing. Through the lens of this dream, Lizzie discovers the profound significance of familial bonds and embraces the role of a caregiver, shaping her identity in harmony with the teachings of her gorilla cousins.

- **Ecocriticism in the temple of My familia chapter 2 : Lissie Dream p132-134**

This chapter in the book explores the facets of Ecocriticism, commencing with a dream memory recounted by Miss Lissie. In this dream, she envisions an imaginary familiar that embodies characteristics of a bird, a fish, and a reptile—"part bird…part fish…part reptile" (132). Walker introduces these elements of nature through the representation of different animals, symbolizing air, water, and earth.

Lissie perceives her peculiar pet as imbued with humor, realizing that the bird, in its attempt to establish a connection with a white man, yearns for freedom. Despite this understanding, she inadvertently confines her familiar in a metal washtub, reflecting on the detrimental impact on their relationship: "I next imprisoned my beautiful little familiar under a metal washtub" (133). Recognizing the destruction caused by the cage, Lissie observes that the familiar, despite being hers, is deprived of the comfort of its natural habitat.

> To her surprise, the little creature breaks through the metal cage and liberates itself, flying away happily with unutilized wings. The familiar's joy in being with the women becomes evident: "It did not try to run as I put this white bowl on top of it" (133). Abandoned by her familiar, Lissie comes to the profound realization that freedom is a fundamental need for women, even evident in the actions of this tiny creature, her familiar

In this chapter, Alice Walker vividly portrays characters intimately connected with nature and animals. The ecocentric relationships within the narrative are evident, highlighting a contrast with the disruptive nature of the white men. Lissie, driven by a natural inclination to love and care for animals, becomes aware of her inadvertent role in disrupting the harmony between herself and her familiar. She reflects on the consequences of her actions, acknowledging her responsibility for the oppression of her familiar: "I paid little attention to the coldness or the snow and did not even think how cruel and torturous for it this would be."

As Lissie comprehends the familiar's quest for freedom, she realizes the destructive impact of her actions on their relationship: "For I understood quite well by now that all of this activity on the familiar’s part was about freedom, and that by my actions I was destroying our relationship." Despite this awareness, she chooses to imprison the familiar in a cage to facilitate her conversations with the white men. This decision marks the beginning of the destruction of harmony between humans and animals, a consequence of Lissie embracing the concept of ownership—a Western notion that disrupts the natural balance. Walker's narrative

underscores the complex dynamics between humans, nature, and the consequences of adopting foreign concepts in the characters' lives.

- **Eccocritical Reading of Zora Neale Hurston’s ‘Sweat’:**

In this lecture, students are requested to analyze Zora Neale Hurston's work in terms of animal imagery and how the author plays on the dynamic nature of animal imagery. Specifically, students should explore how animal imagery is used subversively to challenge the traditional binary opposition between the beast and the sovereign. Indeed, by aligning herself with the snake, Delia becomes self-empowered and manages to inject her patriarchal husband with the venom of the snake. This research problem invites an examination of how Hurston’s use of animal imagery subverts traditional gender roles and challenges the power dynamics within the text.

Read the following text and Answer question:

1. Extract the different animal imagery that are mentioned in the text.
2. Extract the main metaphor traced in the text.
3. How can you interpret Delia's fear of the snake?
4. Explain the dynamic through which the snake becomes a source of power for Delia.
5. Relate what you have studied about Steve Baker's representation of animals with this short story. How does his idea contribute to deducing the meaning of the text?

a new audience, one composed of people, especially women, far more ready than her contemporaries to accept the complex wisdom of this woman who refused to be "tragically colored." For Hurston, that refusal entailed not a denial of her race, but a joyful affirmation of infinite possibility in the scope of her own life.

Sweat

It was eleven o'clock of a Spring night in Florida. It was Sunday. Any other night, Delia Jones would have been in bed for two hours by this time. But she was a washwoman, and Monday morning meant a great deal to her. So she collected the soiled clothes on Saturday when she returned the clean things. Sunday night after church, she sorted them and put the white things to soak. It saved her almost a half day's start. A great hamper in the bedroom held the clothes that she brought home. It was so much neater than a number of bundles lying around.

She squatted in the kitchen floor beside the great pile of clothes, sorting them into small heaps according to color, and humming a song in a mournful key, but wondering through it all where Sykes, her husband, had gone with her horse and buckboard.

Just then something long, round, limp and black fell upon her shoulders and slithered to the floor beside her. A great terror took hold of her. It softened her knees and dried her mouth so that it was a full minute before she could cry out or move. Then she saw that it was the big bull whip her husband liked to carry when he drove.

She lifted her eyes to the door and saw him standing there bent over with laughter at her fright. She screamed at him.

"Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me—looks just like a snake, an' you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes."

"Course Ah knowed it! That's how come Ah done it." He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. "If you such a big fool dat you got to have a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah don't keer how bad Ah skeer you."

"You aint got no business doing it. Gawd knows it's a sin. Some day Ah'm gointuh drop dead from some of yo' foolishness. 'Nother thing, where you been wid mah rig? Ah feeds dat pony. He aint fuh you to be drivin' wid no bull whip."

"You sho is one aggravatin' nigger woman!" he declared and stepped into the room. She resumed her work and did not answer him at once. "Ah done tole you time and again to keep them white folks' clothes outa dis house."

He picked up the whip and glared down at her. Delia went on with her work. She went out into the yard and returned with a galvanized tub and set it on the washbench. She saw that Sykes had kicked all of the clothes together again, and now stood in her way truculently, his whole manner hoping, *praying*, for an argument. But she walked calmly around him and commenced to re-sort the things.

"Next time, Ah'm gointer kick 'em outdoors," he threatened as he struck a match along the leg of his corduroy breeches.

Delia never looked up from her work, and her thin, stooped shoulders sagged further.

"Ah aint for no fuss t'night Sykes. Ah just come from taking sacrament at the church house."

He snorted scornfully. "Yeah, you just come from de church house on a Sunday night, but heah you is gone to work on them clothes. You ain't nothing but a hypocrite. One of them amen-corner Christians—sing, whoop, and shout; then come home and wash white folks clothes on the Sabbath."

He stepped roughly upon the whitest pile of things, kicking them helter-skelter as he crossed the room. His wife gave a little scream of dismay, and quickly gathered them together again.

"Sykes, you quit grindin' dirt into these clothes! How can Ah git through by Sat'day if Ah don't start on Sunday?"

"Ah don't keer if you never git through. Anyhow, Ah done promised Gawd and a couple of other men, Ah aint gointer have it in mah house. Don't gimme no lip neither, else Ah'll throw 'em out and put mah fist up side yo' head to boot."

Delia's habitual meekness seemed to slip from her shoulders like a blown scarf. She was on her feet; her poor little body, her bare knuckly hands bravely defying the strapping hulk before her.

"Looka heah, Sykes, you done gone too fur. Ah been married to you fur fifteen years, and Ah been takin' in washin' fur fifteen years. Sweat, sweat, sweat! Work and sweat, cry and sweat, pray and sweat!"

"What's that got to do with me?" he asked brutally.

"What's it got to do with you, Sykes? Mah tub of suds is filled yo' belly with vittles more times than yo' hands is filled it. Mah sweat is done paid for this house and Ah reckon Ah kin keep on sweatin' in it."

She seized the iron skillet from the stove and struck a defensive pose, which act surprised him greatly, coming from her. It cowed him and he did not strike her as he usually did.

"Naw you won't," she panted, "that ole snaggle-toothed black woman you runnin' with aint comin' heah to pile up on *mah* sweat and blood. You aint paid for nothin' on this place, and Ah'm gointer stay right heah till Ah'm toted out foot foremost."

"Well, you better quit gittin' me riled up, else they'll be totin' you out sooner than you expect. Ah'm so tired of you Ah don't know whut to do. Gawd! how Ah hates skinny wimmen!"

A little awed by this new Delia, he sidled out of the door and slammed the back gate after him. He did not say where he had gone, but she knew too well. She knew very well that he would not return until nearly daybreak also. Her work over, she went on to bed but not to sleep at once. Things had come to a pretty pass!

She lay awake, gazing upon the debris that cluttered their matrimonial trail. Not an image left standing along the way. Anything like flowers had long ago been drowned in the salty stream that had been pressed from her heart. Her tears, her sweat, her blood. She had brought love to the union and he had brought a longing after the flesh. Two months after the wedding, he had given her the first brutal beating. She had the memory of his numerous trips to Orlando with all of his wages when he had returned to her penniless, even before the first year had passed. She was young and soft then, but now she thought of her knotty, muscled limbs, her harsh knuckly hands, and drew herself up into an unhappy little ball in the middle of the big feather bed. Too late now to hope for love, even if it were not Bertha it

would be someone else. This case differed from the others only in that she was bolder than the others. Too late for everything except her little home. She had built it for her old days, and planted one by one the trees and flowers there. It was lovely to her, lovely.

Somehow, before sleep came, she found herself saying aloud: "Oh well, whatever goes over the Devil's back, is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Sykes, like everybody else, is gointer reap his sowing." After that she was able to build a spiritual earthworks against her husband. His shells could no longer reach her. *Amen.* She went to sleep and slept until he announced his presence in bed by kicking her feet and rudely snatching the covers away.

"Gimme some kivah heah, an' git yo' damn foots over on yo' own side! Ah oughter mash you in yo' mouf fuh drawing dat skillet on me."

Delia went clear to the rail without answering him. A triumphant indifference to all that he was or did.

The week was as full of work for Delia as all other weeks, and Saturday found her behind her little pony, collecting and delivering clothes.

It was a hot, hot day near the end of July. The village men on Joe Clarke's porch even chewed cane listlessly. They did not hurl the cane-knots[1] as usual. They let them dribble over the edge of the porch. Even conversation had collapsed under the heat.

"Heah come Delia Jones," Jim Merchant said, as the shaggy pony came 'round the bend of the road toward them. The rusty buckboard was heaped with baskets of crisp, clean laundry.

"Yep," Joe Lindsay agreed. "Hot or col', rain or shine, jes ez reg'lar ez de weeks roll roun' Delia carries 'em an' fetches 'em on Sat'day."

"She better if she wanter eat," said Moss. "Syke Jones aint wuth de shot an' powder hit would tek tuh kill 'em. Not to *huh* he aint."

"He sho' aint," Walter Thomas chimed in. "It's too bad, too, cause she wuz a right pritty lil trick when he got huh. Ah'd uh mah'ied huh mahseff if he hadnter beat me to it."

Delia nodded briefly at the men as she drove past.

"Too much knockin' will ruin *any* 'oman. He done beat huh 'nough tuh kill three women, let 'lone change they looks," said Elijah Moseley. "How Syke kin stommuck dat big black greasy Mogul he's layin' roun' wid, gits me. Ah swear dat eight-rock[2] couldn't kiss a sardine can Ah done thowed out de back do' 'way las' yeah."

"Aw, she's fat, thass how come. He's allus been crazy 'bout fat women," put in Merchant. "He'd a' been tied up wid one long time ago if he could a' found one tuh have him. Did Ah tell yuh 'bout him come sidlin' roun' *mah* wife—bringin' her a basket uh peecans outa his yard fuh a present? Yeah, mah wife! She tol' him tuh take 'em right straight back home, cause Delia works so hard ovah dat washtub she reckon everything on de place taste lak sweat an' soapsuds. Ah jus' wisht Ah'd a' caught 'im 'roun' dere! Ah'd a' made his hips ketch on fiah down dat shell road."

"Ah know he done it, too. Ah sees 'im grinnin' at every 'oman dat passes," Walter Thomas said. "But even so, he useter eat some mighty big hunks uh humble pie tuh git dat lil' 'oman he got. She wuz ez pritty ez a speckled pup!

1. The indigestible part of the sugarcane stalk.

2. The eight ball in pool, i.e., black.

Dat wuz fifteen yeahs ago. He useter be so skeered uh losin' huh, she could make him do some parts of a husband's duty. Dey never wuz de same in de mind."

"There oughter be a law about him," said Lindsay. "He aint fit tuh carry guts tuh a bear."

Clarke spoke for the first time. "Taint no law on earth dat kin make a man be decent if it aint in 'im. There's plenty men dat takes a wife lak dey do a joint uh sugar-cane. It's round, juicy an' sweet when dey gits it. But dey squeeze an' grind, squeeze an' grind an' wring tell dey wring every drop uh pleasure dat's in 'em out. When dey's satisfied dat dey is wrung dry, dey treats 'em jes lak dey do a cane-chew. Dey thows 'em away. Dey knows whut dey is doin' while dey is at it, an' hates theirselves fuh it but they keeps on hangin' after huh tell she's empty. Den dey hates huh fuh bein' a cane-chew an' in de way."

"We oughter take Syke an' dat stray 'oman uh his'n down in Lake Howell swamp an' lay on de rawhide till they cain't say Lawd a' mussy. He allus wuz uh ovahbearin' niggah, but since dat white 'oman from up north done teached 'im how to run a automobile, he done got too biggety to live—an' we oughter kill 'im," Old Man Anderson advised.

A grunt of approval went around the porch. But the heat was melting their civic virtue and Elijah Moseley began to bait Joe Clarke.

"Come on, Joe, git a melon outa dere an' slice it up for yo' customers. We'se all sufferin' wid de heat. De bear's done got *me!*"

"Thass right, Joe, a watermelon is jes' whut Ah needs tuh cure de eppizudicks,"[3] Walter Thomas joined forces with Moseley. "Come on dere, Joe. We all is steady customers an' you aint set us up in a long time. Ah chooses dat long, bowlegged Floridy favorite."

"A god, an' be dough. You all gimme twenty cents and slice way," Clarke retorted. "Ah needs a col' slice m'self. Heah, everybody chip in. Ah'll lend y'll mah meat knife."

The money was quickly subscribed and the huge melon brought forth. At that moment, Sykes and Bertha arrived. A determined silence fell on the porch and the melon was put away again.

Merchant snapped down the blade of his jackknife and moved toward the store door.

"Come on in, Joe, an' gimme a slab uh sow belly an' uh pound uh coffee—almost fuhgot 'twas Sat'day. Got to git on home." Most of the men left also.

Just then Delia drove past on her way home, as Sykes was ordering magnificently for Bertha. It pleased him for Delia to see.

"Git whutsoever yo' heart desires, Honey. Wait a minute, Joe. Give huh two botles uh strawberry soda-water, uh quart uh parched ground-peas, an' a block uh chewin' gum."

With all this they left the store, with Sykes reminding Bertha that this was his town and she could have it if she wanted it.

The men returned soon after they left, and held their watermelon feast.

"Where did Syke Jones git da 'oman from nohow?" Lindsay asked.

"Ovah Apopka.[4] Guess dey musta been cleanin' out de town when she lef'. She don't look lak a thing but a hunk uh liver wid hair on it."

"Well, she sho' kin squall," Dave Carter contributed. "When she gits ready

3. I.e., epizootic; any fast-spreading disease.
4. A town in Florida some ten miles from Hurston's birthplace, Eatonville.

tuh laff, she jes' opens huh mouf an' latches it back tuh de las' notch. No ole grandpa alligator down in Lake Bell ain't got nothin' on huh."

Bertha had been in town three months now. Sykes was still paying her room rent at Della Lewis'—the only house in town that would have taken her in. Sykes took her frequently to Winter Park to "stomps."[5] He still assured her that he was the swellest man in the state.

"Sho' you kin have dat lil' ole house soon's Ah kin git dat 'oman outa dere. Everything b'longs tuh me an' you sho' kin have it. Ah sho' 'bominates uh skinny 'oman. Lawdy, you sho' is got one portly shape on you! You kin git *anything* you wants. Dis is *mah* town an' you sho' kin have it."

Delia's work-worn knees crawled over the earth in Gethsemane[6] and up the rocks of Calvary many, many times during these months. She avoided the villagers and meeting places in her efforts to be blind and deaf. But Bertha nullified this to a degree, by coming to Delia's house to call Sykes out to her at the gate.

Delia and Sykes fought all the time now with no peaceful interludes. They slept and ate in silence. Two or three times Delia had attempted a timid friendliness, but she was repulsed each time. It was plain that the breaches must remain agape.

The sun had burned July to August. The heat streamed down like a million hot arrows, smiting all things living upon the earth. Grass withered, leaves browned, snakes went blind in shedding and men and dogs went mad. Dog days!

Delia came home one day and found Sykes there before her. She wondered, but started to go on into the house without speaking, even though he was standing in the kitchen door and she must either stoop under his arm or ask him to move. He made no room for her. She noticed a soap box beside the steps, but paid no particular attention to it, knowing that he must have brought it there. As she was stooping to pass under his outstretched arm, he suddenly pushed her backward, laughingly.

"Look in de box dere Delia, Ah done brung yuh somethin'!"

She nearly fell upon the box in her stumbling, and when she saw what it held, she all but fainted outright.

"Syke! Syke, mah Gawd! You take dat rattlesnake 'way from heah! You *gottuh*. Oh, Jesus, have mussy!"

"Ah aint gut tuh do nuthin' uh de kin'—fact is Ah aint got tuh do nothin' but die. Taint no use uh you puttin' on airs makin' out lak you skeered uh dat snake—he's gointer stay right heah tell he die. He wouldn't bite me cause Ah knows how tuh handle 'im. Nohow he wouldn't risk breakin' out his fangs 'gin *yo*' skinny laigs."

"Naw, now Syke, don't keep dat thing 'roun' heah tuh skeer me tuh death. You knows Ah'm even feared uh earth worms. Thass de biggest snake Ah evah did see. Kill 'im Syke, please."

"Doan ast me tuh do nothin' fuh yuh. Goin' 'roun' tryin' tuh be so damn asterperious.[7] Naw, Ah aint gonna kill it. Ah think uh damn sight mo' uh

5. Raucous dance parties.
6. The garden outside Jerusalem that was the scene of Jesus' agony and arrest (Matthew 26.36–57).
7. I.e., astorperious; haughty (possibly a fusion of *Astor*, the name of a wealthy family, and *imperious*, or arrogant).

him dan you! Dat's a nice snake an' anybody doan lak 'im kin jes' hit de grit."

The village soon heard that Sykes had the snake, and came to see and ask questions.

"How de hen-fire did you ketch dat six-foot rattler, Syke?" Thomas asked.

"He's full uh frogs so he caint hardly move, thass how Ah eased up on 'm. But Ah'm a snake charmer an' knows how tuh handle 'em. Shux, dat aint nothin'. Ah could ketch one eve'y day if Ah so wanted tuh."

"Whut he needs is a heavy hick'ry club leaned real heavy on his head. Dat's de bes' way tuh charm a rattlesnake."

"Naw, Walt, y'll jes' don't understand dese diamon' backs lak Ah do," said Sykes in a superior tone of voice.

The village agreed with Walter, but the snake stayed on. His box remained by the kitchen door with its screen wire covering. Two or three days later it had digested its meal of frogs and literally came to life. It rattled at every movement in the kitchen or the yard. One day as Delia came down the kitchen steps she saw his chalky-white fangs curved like scimitars hung in the wire meshes. This time she did not run away with averted eyes as usual. She stood for a long time in the doorway in a red fury that grew bloodier for every second that she regarded the creature that was her torment.

That night she broached the subject as soon as Sykes sat down to the table.

"Syke, Ah wants you tuh take dat snake 'way fum heah. You done starved me an' Ah put up widcher, you done beat me an Ah took dat, but you done kilt all mah insides bringin' dat varmint heah."

Sykes poured out a saucer full of coffee and drank it deliberately before he answered her.

"A whole lot Ah keer 'bout how you feels inside uh out. Dat snake aint goin' no damn wheah till Ah gits ready fuh 'im tuh go. So fur as beatin' is concerned, yuh aint took near all dat you gointer take ef yuh stay 'roun' *me*."

Delia pushed back her plate and got up from the table. "Ah hates you, Sykes," she said calmly. "Ah hates you tuh de same degree dat Ah useter love yuh. Ah done took an' took till mah belly is full up tuh mah neck. Dat's de reason Ah got mah letter fum de church an' moved mah membership tuh Woodbridge—so Ah don't haftuh take no sacrament wid yuh. Ah don't wan-tuh see yuh 'roun' me atall. Lay 'roun' wid dat 'oman all yuh wants tuh, but gwan 'way fum me an' mah house. Ah hates yuh lak uh suck-egg dog."[8]

Sykes almost let the huge wad of corn bread and collard greens he was chewing fall out of his mouth in amazement. He had a hard time whipping himself up to the proper fury to try to answer Delia.

"Well, Ah'm glad you does hate me. Ah'm sho' tiahed uh you hangin' ontuh me. Ah don't want yuh. Look at yuh stringey ole neck! Yo' rawbony laigs an' arms is enough tuh cut uh man tuh death. You looks jes' lak de devvul's doll-baby tuh *me*. You cain't hate me no worse dan Ah hates you. Ah been hatin' *you* fuh years."

"Yo' ole black hide don't look lak nothin' tuh me, but uh passle uh wrinkled up rubber, wid yo' big ole yeahs flappin' on each side lak uh paih uh buzzard wings. Don't think Ah'm gointuh be run 'way fum mah house neither. Ah'm

8. A dog that steals chicken eggs.

goin' tuh de white folks about *you*, mah young man, de very nex' time you lay yo' han's on me. Mah cup is done run ovah."[9] Delia said this with no signs of fear and Sykes departed from the house, threatening her, but made not the slightest move to carry out any of them.

That night he did not return at all, and the next day being Sunday, Delia was glad she did not have to quarrel before she hitched up her pony and drove the four miles to Woodbridge.

She stayed to the night service—"love feast"—which was very warm and full of spirit. In the emotional winds her domestic trials were borne far and wide so that she sang as she drove homeward,

> "Jurden[1] water, black an' col'
> Chills de body, not de soul
> An' Ah wantah cross Jurden in uh calm time."

She came from the barn to the kitchen door and stopped.

"Whut's de mattah, ol' satan, you aint kickin' up yo' racket?" She addressed the snake's box. Complete silence. She went on into the house with a new hope in its birth struggles. Perhaps her threat to go to the white folks had frightened Sykes! Perhaps he was sorry! Fifteen years of misery and suppression had brought Delia to the place where she would hope *anything* that looked towards a way over or through her wall of inhibitions.

She felt in the match safe behind the stove at once for a match. There was only one there.

"Dat niggah wouldn't fetch nothin' heah tuh save his rotten neck, but he kin run thew whut Ah brings quick enough. Now he donc toted off nigh on tuh haff uh box uh matches. He done had dat 'oman heah in mah house, too."

Nobody but a woman could tell how she knew this even before she struck the match. But she did and it put her into a new fury.

Presently she brought in the tubs to put the white things to soak. This time she decided she need not bring the hamper out of the bedroom; she would go in there and do the sorting. She picked up the pot-bellied lamp and went in. The room was small and the hamper stood hard by the foot of the white iron bed. She could sit and reach through the bedposts—resting as she worked.

"Ah wantah cross Jurden in uh calm time." She was singing again. The mood of the "love feast" had returned. She threw back the lid of the basket almost gaily. Then, moved by both horror and terror, she sprang back toward the door. *There lay the snake in the basket!* He moved sluggishly at first, but even as she turned round and round, jumped up and down in an insanity of fear, he began to stir vigorously. She saw him pouring his awful beauty from the basket upon the bed, then she seized the lamp and ran as fast as she could to the kitchen. The wind from the open door blew out the light and the darkness added to her terror. She sped to the darkness of the yard, slamming the door after her before she thought to set down the lamp. She did not feel safe even on the ground, so she climbed up in the hay barn.

There for an hour or more she lay sprawled upon the hay a gibbering wreck.

9. "My cup runneth over," Psalm 23.5.
1. The river Jordan, mentioned in the Bible, signifies deliverance.

Finally she grew quiet, and after that, coherent thought. With this, stalked through her a cold, bloody rage. Hours of this. A period of introspection, a space of retrospection, then a mixture of both. Out of this an awful calm.

"Well, Ah done de bes' Ah could. If things aint right, Gawd knows taint mah fault."

She went to sleep—a twitch sleep—and woke up to a faint gray sky. There was a loud hollow sound below. She peered out. Sykes was at the wood-pile, demolishing a wire-covered box.

He hurried to the kitchen door, but hung outside there some minutes before he entered, and stood some minutes more inside before he closed it after him.

The gray in the sky was spreading. Delia descended without fear now, and crouched beneath the low bedroom window. The drawn shade shut out the dawn, shut in the night. But the thin walls held back no sound.

"Dat ol' scratch[2] is woke up now!" She mused at the tremendous whirr inside, which every woodsman knows, is one of the sound illusions. The rattler is a ventriloquist. His whirr sounds to the right, to the left, straight ahead, behind, close under foot—everywhere but where it is. Woe to him who guesses wrong unless he is prepared to hold up his end of the argument! Sometimes he strikes without rattling at all.

Inside, Sykes heard nothing until he knocked a pot lid off the stove while trying to reach the match safe in the dark. He had emptied his pockets at Bertha's.

The snake seemed to wake up under the stove and Sykes made a quick leap into the bedroom. In spite of the gin he had had, his head was clearing now.

"Mah Gawd!" he chattered, "ef Ah could on'y strack uh light!"

The rattling ceased for a moment as he stood paralyzed. He waited. It seemed that the snake waited also.

"Oh, fuh de light! Ah thought he'd be too sick"—Sykes was muttering to himself when the whirr began again, closer, right underfoot this time. Long before this, Sykes' ability to think had been flattened down to primitive instinct and he leaped—onto the bed.

Outside Delia heard a cry that might have come from a maddened chimpanzee, a stricken gorilla. All the terror, all the horror, all the rage that man possibly could express, without a recognizable human sound.

A tremendous stir inside there, another series of animal screams, the intermittent whirr of the reptile. The shade torn violently down from the window, letting in the red dawn, a huge brown hand seizing the window stick, great dull blows upon the wooden floor punctuating the gibberish of sound long after the rattle of the snake had abruptly subsided. All this Delia could see and hear from her place beneath the window, and it made her ill. She crept over to the four-o'clocks and stretched herself on the cool earth to recover.

She lay there. "Delia, Delia!" She could hear Sykes calling in a most despairing tone as one who expected no answer. The sun crept on up, and he called. Delia could not move—her legs were gone flabby. She never moved, he called, and the sun kept rising.

"Mah Gawd!" She heard him moan, "Mah Gawd fum Heben!" She heard

2. A nickname of the devil; here refers to the serpent.

him stumbling about and got up from her flower-bed. The sun was growing warm. As she approached the door she heard him call out hopefully, "Delia, is dat you Ah heah?"

She saw him on his hands and knees as soon as she reached the door. He crept an inch or two toward her—all that he was able, and she saw his horribly swollen neck and his one open eye shining with hope. A surge of pity too strong to support bore her away from that eye that must, could not, fail to see the tubs. He would see the lamp. Orlando with its doctors was too far. She could scarcely reach the Chinaberry tree, where she waited in the growing heat while inside she knew the cold river was creeping up and up to extinguish that eye which must know by now that she knew.

1926

Unit VI: Black Feminism

Lesson 12: Introduction to Black Feminism

In *Black Feminit Thought*, Patricia Collins explains that Black women intellectuals have established a crucial analytical foundation for a unique perspective on identity, community, and society, thereby creating a multifaceted intellectual tradition among African-American women. While there are notable differences within this tradition—periods when Black women's voices were loud and others when a more subdued approach was necessary—a key feature of the work of Maria W. Stewart and her successors is the thematic continuity in their ideas.

Despite the existence of such a rich intellectual tradition, it has remained largely unnoticed until now. In 1905, Fannie Barrier Williams expressed concern that the "colored girl" was neither recognized nor believed in, trapped under the label of a "problem," and overshadowed by that very problem. Why, then, are African-American women and their ideas still largely ignored?

This erasure of Black women's intellectual contributions is not accidental or harmless. By suppressing the knowledge of oppressed groups, dominant forces can more easily maintain control, as the apparent lack of opposition gives the impression that marginalized groups passively accept their own victimization. The invisibility of Black women, and their ideas, both within the U.S. and globally, has been central to perpetuating social inequalities. Black women reclaiming and constructing their own knowledge often highlight the political suppression of their work. For instance, several contributors to Heidi Mirza's volume on Black British feminism discuss their own silencing in the UK, while South African businesswoman Danisa Baloyi shares her shock at the minimal representation of Black South African women in U.S. scholarship.

Despite this suppression, U.S. Black women have continued to engage in intellectual endeavors and ensure their ideas matter. Figures like Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune, Toni Morrison, and Barbara Smith, among many others, have fought for their voices to be heard. African women writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and Ellen Kuzwayo have similarly raised critical issues impacting Black African women. Like Maria W. Stewart's work, and that of other Black

women across the globe, African-American intellectual efforts have focused on fostering activism.

The interplay between oppression and activism—the tension between the suppression of African-American women's ideas and their intellectual activism—defines U.S. Black feminist thought. **Recognizing this dialectical relationship is essential for understanding how U.S. Black feminist thought is deeply rooted in a political context that has persistently challenged its very existence.**

African-American women's oppression has been shaped by three interconnected dimensions: economic, political, and ideological. The economic aspect involves the exploitation of Black women's labor, which has been crucial to U.S. capitalism. The long-standing marginalization of Black women in service occupations, symbolized by the "iron pots and kettles," reflects this exploitation. Black women's survival, often through grueling labor, has left little room for intellectual pursuits, as seen in the hardships faced by enslaved and "free" Black women in the South, and in the ongoing economic struggles of those in U.S. inner cities.

The political dimension involves the denial of rights and privileges to Black women, such as voting restrictions, exclusion from public office, and unequal treatment in the justice system. The educational system has also reinforced this political subordination, denying literacy to slaves and providing inadequate schooling for Black women.

The ideological dimension refers to the racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women, which justify their oppression. These images, such as mammies and welfare mothers, perpetuate negative portrayals of Black women in popular culture. Together, these **dimensions form a system of control that suppresses Black women's ideas and reinforces elite White male interests, limiting their roles in intellectual and social institutions.**

Developing Black Feminist Thought:

Contemporary U.S. Black women intellectuals are dedicated to reclaiming and redefining the subjugated knowledge produced by African-American women. Their work challenges traditional academic definitions of intellectualism, seeking to include non-academic voices and marginalized contributions. Central to this intellectual movement is the effort to

recover Black feminist intellectual traditions, which have often been overlooked or suppressed, and to reframe the entire dialectic of oppression and activism.

Reclaiming these traditions involves discovering and reinterpreting the works of Black women thinkers, many of whom have been underrepresented or forgotten. Scholars like Marilyn Richardson and Alice Walker have worked to revive the writings of historical figures such as Maria Stewart and Zora Neale Hurston. Additionally, the scholarship on Black lesbian history, through figures like Audre Lorde, highlights the complexity and diversity within Black feminist thought. These efforts aim to preserve the intellectual contributions of Black women, particularly those from subgroups often silenced in mainstream narratives.

Black feminist thought also challenges the traditional academic notion of "intellectual." Intellectual work is not limited to academia or those with formal education. Figures like Sojourner Truth, who was illiterate, are considered intellectuals for their contributions to social and political thought. This broadens the definition of intellectualism to include a wide range of contributions, including music, activism, and art.

Black feminist thought recognizes that intellectual work can occur outside traditional institutional settings, with examples like the music of Black women blues singers and hip-hop artists offering significant contributions. Artists and activists, like Sister Souljah, are also integral to Black feminist theory, despite being dismissed in academic circles. The challenge remains to bridge the gap between traditional scholarship and these alternative intellectual forms, recognizing the intellectual contributions of Black women across various social locations.

Ultimately, developing Black feminist thought requires an inclusive approach that values both academic scholarship and grassroots intellectual traditions. This work encompasses a broad spectrum of Black women’s experiences, from mothers in the community to political activists and artists, and asserts that intellectualism is not confined to elite institutions but is a lived experience shaped by struggle and resistance.

Lesson 13: The Difference Between Feminism and Black Feminism

Feminism and Black feminism, both rooted in the pursuit of justice and equality, represent distinct yet interconnected movements within the broader struggle for women's rights. While feminism seeks to address gender-based disparities, Black feminism delves deeper, acknowledging and addressing the intersections of race, gender, and other forms of oppression. This lecture explores the nuanced differences between feminism and Black feminism, highlighting the historical contexts, principles, and activism that characterize each movement.

The origins of feminism can be traced back to the women's rights movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. Traditionally led by white women, this movement sought to dismantle patriarchal structures and address gender-based discrimination. However, critiques emerged, pointing to the movement's Eurocentric focus and its failure to adequately address the unique struggles faced by women of color.

In response to these limitations, Black feminism emerged, drawing from the historical struggles of Black women during slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power Movement. Black feminists recognized that the experiences of Black women were distinct, as they faced the compounded effects of racism and sexism. The movement sought not only gender equality but also the dismantling of racial hierarchies and systemic racism.

A fundamental difference between both movements lies in the principle of intersectionality. While mainstream feminism acknowledges the concept of intersectionality, Black feminism places it at the forefront. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience overlapping forms of oppression based on race, gender, class, and other factors. Black feminism emphasizes the need to consider these factors simultaneously to understand the unique experiences of Black women.

Feminism often center on its historical exclusion of women from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. In contrast, Black feminism actively challenges this erasure and advocates for a more inclusive movement. It emphasizes the diversity of women's experiences, urging mainstream feminism to recognize and address the specific concerns of women of color.

While feminism has made significant strides in advocating for women's rights, Black feminism offers a critical lens. It critiques mainstream feminism for its historical exclusion of Black women, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and intersectional approach. Black feminists call for a movement that addresses the unique struggles faced by women of color, challenging racial biases within the feminist discourse.

- **The Objectification of Black Women as the Other:**

Barbara Christian, a Black feminist critic, argues that the objectification of Black women as "the Other" has been a foundational element in the racial, gender, and class-based oppression of African-American women. This objectification is sustained through binary thinking, where oppositions like white/black, male/female, and culture/nature define identities in terms of difference and opposition. In this framework, one side of the binary is often dehumanized and objectified, while the other is elevated. For example, Black women have been portrayed as less rational, more emotional, and closer to nature, which justifies their subjugation.

Objectification, as described by social theorists like Dona Richards, is a necessary process for domination, where one group is reduced to an object, to be manipulated and controlled. This concept aligns with historical practices, such as slavery and colonialism, where Black people were viewed as less human, reinforcing structures of exploitation. Feminist scholarship similarly links the objectification of women to their identification with nature, contributing to their conquest by men.

Black women in the U.S. have long been subject to objectification, especially in roles like domestic workers. The dehumanizing treatment they faced—such as being called "girls" or treated as invisible—illustrates the ways objectification manifests. As "objects," Black women's realities and identities are defined by others, stripping them of autonomy and subjectivity.

Binary thinking, with its oppositional definitions, creates hierarchical relationships, where one side is dominant and the other subordinate. For Black women, this position in the inferior half of various binaries (e.g., emotional vs. rational, opinion vs. fact) has been a key aspect of their oppression. The portrayal of Black women as sexually exploitable or intellectually inferior is an example of how objectification intertwines with race, gender, and class-based domination.

Despite the deeply entrenched nature of these systems, Black women have consistently resisted this objectification. Through everyday acts of resistance, especially within domestic

work, they have fought to assert their humanity and define their own identities. The dynamic and evolving images of Black women offer a lens through which to examine how these systems of control are maintained and challenged, especially in a global context where images of Black women are increasingly commodified.

Lesson 14: Key Figures and Ideas in Black feminism

- **Zora Neale Hurston's "how it feels to be colored me":**

It is an autobiographical essay by Zora Neale Hurston, where she reflects on her identity as an African American woman. In the essay, Hurston recounts her childhood in Eatonville, Florida, an all-Black town, and describes how she did not initially realize her racial difference. However, upon leaving Eatonville and encountering the broader world, Hurston becomes aware of her colored identity.

Hurston embraces her identity with a sense of pride and individuality, refusing to let her race define her. She expresses a vibrant and resilient spirit, emphasizing her uniqueness rather than focusing on the societal perceptions of race. Hurston suggests that she does not feel oppressed by her racial identity; instead, she celebrates her individuality and the richness of her experiences.

The essay touches on themes of self-discovery, cultural pride, and resilience, offering a personal perspective on the complexities of racial identity. Hurston's narrative challenges conventional notions of racial victimhood and invites readers to consider the multifaceted nature of identity beyond societal expectations.

- **bell Hooks: Black looks: Race and Representation (1992)**

At the heart of hooks' exploration is the concept of the "Black Look," a discerning gaze that she directs towards the often problematic representations of blackness. In a society permeated by racial hierarchies, hooks investigates how media and cultural narratives perpetuate stereotypes, distort realities, and contribute to the marginalization of black individuals.

One of the central tenets of "Black Looks" is hooks' commitment to intersectionality—the understanding that race, gender, and other forms of identity intersect to shape experiences. She critiques the historical erasure of black women from discussions around race and gender, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and nuanced feminist perspective that recognizes the unique struggles faced by black women.

Moreover, in her exploration, hooks delves into the historical legacies of colonialism and imperialism, arguing that these structures significantly influence contemporary

representations of blackness. She unveils the deep-seated impact of historical oppressions on the construction of racial identity and scrutinizes the enduring consequences of colonial narratives.

While dissecting negative representations, hooks also emphasizes the importance of empowering portrayals of black individuals. She advocates for positive representations that reflect the diversity, agency, and humanity of black people. In doing so, hooks invites readers to engage in resistance against dominant narratives that perpetuate racial stereotypes.

In addition, Engaging with visual culture—photography, film, and television—hooks illustrates how these mediums contribute to the construction of racialized identities. She explores the impact of visual media on self-perception and societal attitudes, calling for a critical examination of the ways in which images shape our understanding of race.

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