**HISTORICAL TERMS**

**Englishness:** 17th Cent = inconsistent, untrustworthy, no aristocracy

18th Cent, London cosmopolitan commercial center = Parliament rather than monarchy, family, culture, nation, cast against otherness (of the Continent, of the Colonies), grounded on the notion of identity and ethnicity; mongrelism (Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Norms) its characteristic

19th Cent with eugenetics, biological basis, race = potent political concept of the Empire, better at governing others, the civilizing mission

20th Cent large migrations from the Caribbean, India and Africa to England, identity as identification. **Britishness** replaces Englishness in a multicultural context.

**Americanness:** the concept changes from the frame of **American exceptionalism** (the myth of thefirt revolutionary, first democratic, first free land in the world, the myth of the American dream, the land of all possibilities, of happiness and infinite opportunities, the myth of the best and most powerful county in the world where anyone can “make it”, become President) to **American transnational multiculturalism** (a country in relation, whose definition depends on how it is being defined by others, on its plurivocality, multiple languages, numerous cultures, the ideal of a country that negotiates among its constituencies.

**CRITICAL APPROACHES**

*Psychoanalytic Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of the

psychological desires, needs, and conflicts of its characters (or of its author)?

*Marxist Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of capitalism and/or classism? Does this representation support or undermine these oppressive socioeconomic ideologies?

*Feminist Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of patriarchal norms and values? Does this representation support or undermine these oppressive socioeconomic ideologies?

*New Criticism*—Is the text a great work of literature? That is, does it have both organic unity and a theme of universal significance?

*Reader-Response Criticism*—How do readers make meaning as they read the text, and what is the relationship between the meaning they make and the text?

*Structuralist Criticism*—What is the underlying structural system (archetypal, modal, narratological) by which we make sense of the text? What is the grammar of the text, the functions of its characters and actions?

*Deconstructive Criticism*—What do we learn about the ideologies operating in the text by analyzing the text’s self-contradictions?

*New Historicism*—How does the text participate in the interpretation of history? What role does the text play in the circulation of discourses prevalent in the culture from which the work emerged?

*Cultural Criticism*—In regard to the comparison between popular and high culture, what cultural work does the text perform? How does the text transmit and transform the ideologies that support or undermine the sociopolitical power structure at the time the text was produced and over the course of its reception?

*Lesbian/Gay/Queer Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of sexuality? Does it support or undermine heterosexism? How does the text illustrate the inadequacy of our

traditional way of thinking about sexuality?

*African American Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of race and racial difference? Does this representation support or undermine racist ideologies?

*Postcolonial Criticism*—How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of cultural difference (the ways in which race, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity)? Does this representation support or undermine colonialist ideologies?

**CRITICAL TERMS**

**Culture (Stephen Greenblatt)**: What kinds of behavior, models of practice does a literary work enforce? Why might readers find this work compelling at a particular time and place? Are differences between my values and those implicit in the work? Upon what social contract dies the work depend? Whose freedom of thought might be constrained by this work? Cultural analysis needs to reconstruct the situation in which the work was produced, consider both text and context. Cultural criticism must interpret the magic of Prospero as well as the accents of Caliban and the shades of Sycorax in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and seek the relations between their cultures and the culture of the interpreter.

**Representation** (**W. J. T. Mitchell)**: The foundational concept in aesthetics, the theory of the arts, in semiotics, the theory of signs, and in political theory. Representation is always *of* something/someone, *by* someone, *to* someone; in addition there could also be the maker of the representation, the one who decides what stands for something. These four agents are connected together by axes of representation and axes of communication. Representation is an extremely elastic notion: something can stand for something by means of a social agreement. Aristotle lists three kinds of representation, by object, by manner, by means. The means of literary representation is language, which can be used in many manners (drama, narration, description) to achieve different effects (laughter, pity, scorn, admiration) and represent all sorts of things. Semiotics differentiates among icon (stressing resemblance, mimesis, imitation), symbol (arbitrary, like language, letters, words) and index (indicates proximity, relation, like a footprint). A written text may symbolically represent an action, and indexically represent its author. Representation can never be completely divorced from political and ideological questions. The object of representation in romance is the ideal world, in the novel it is factual everyday society; expressionism posits an unrepresentable essence (God, the soul, etc) and its aesthetic object becomes something instead of representing something; formalism emphasizes the means and manner and the object may even disappear; Modernism is often described as a style that has grown out of representation: literature is about itself, poems are about language; Postmodernism is characterized by hyper-representation, reality itself is experiences as an endless network of representations, categories such as the real, the thing itself, the authentic become themselves representations. The problem with representation may be summarized by reversing the traditional slogan of the American Revolution, “no taxation without representation”: no representation without taxation. Every representation costs, in the form of lost immediacy, presence or truth, in the form of a gap between intention and realization, original and copy, life and death. The gap is precisely what literature fills. **Ideology (J. Kavanagh)** designates a **system of representation** through which individuals of different class, race, sex, etc. are worked into a particular lived relation to a socio-historical project. Ideological analysis studies the ways in which those lived relations and systems of representations are constituted, transformed, interpellated (L. Althusser) and affiliated (E. Said) with various specific political programs. Literary and cultural texts constitute a society’s ideological practice and literary and cultural criticism an activity that either submits to or attempts to transform the political effects of such practice.

**Structure (John Carlos Rowe)**: The term structure replaces the term form as our culture shifted from industrial economy to information economy, from material to immaterial values. Basic binaries, such as nature-culture, sound-sense, private-public, are less important than the system, the structure. Roland Barthes in “The Structural Activity” defines structure as a simulacrum of the object—a directed, interested simulacrum which makes something new appear, by virtue of adding intellect to the object , adding anthropological value to the object. Thus the significance of structure is ideological, since it makes objects intelligible through human, cultural, historical interpretation. Structure is thus temporal. Stucture becomes the referent for the ultimate human product—a representation that can be distinguished thoroughly from any natural use. The ability of that representation or structure to explain other systems of organization becomes it sole warrant, its use being nothing other than the exchange among systems of information that it facilitates. Structure thus becomes the medium for such exchanges in an economy no longer concerned with natural use. Language is the perfect site for such a transformation, because the use of words is their exchange or communication. Structure is a key term of postmodernity because it openly acknowledges its claim for scientific rigor as well as its fabricated character.

**Structuralism:**

**Structural linguistics** (**F. de Saussure**) looks for the ways in which the rules of language function, the way in which words are in relation to one another; words are not simply referential; they are also signs (signifier+signified) and their relationship is arbitrary. We would have a different image of snow if we spoke Inuit. Language structures human experience.

**Structural anthropology** (**C. Lèvi-Strauss**) seeks to show the structural similarities among apparently different myths in different cultures.

**Semiotics** applies **structuralist** insights to sign systems—linguistic and non-linguistic. Semiotics expands the signifier to include objects, sounds, images, etc. Of three kinds of signs (index, icon and symbol) only the symbol is object of interpretation.

**Structuralist literary analysis**:

**Structure****of****literary genres**: **Northrop Frye**’s theory of myths looking for archetypes and related classification of fiction into modes (myth, romance, mimesis, irony).

**Structure****of narrative -** the identification of structures is employed to address larger questions about literary meaning, for example:

For **Greimas** the advancement of plot involves the transfer of a quality or an object from one actant to another. The structure of fiction is like the structure of language: subject-verb-object. Plot types vary from stories of quest, of communication or both.

**Todorov** draws a comparison between the units of narrative (characters, propositions, sequences) and the units of language (nouns, verbs, sentences, paragraphs). The grammar of narrative he proposes is based on the categorization of the propositions identified.

**Genette** identifies 3 levels that work together: story (events), narrative (words on page), narration (the act of telling the story). They interact by 3 qualities: tense (time), mood (perspective) and voice (narrator).

**Poststructuralism** (**Jonathan Culler)** argues that what we call the structure of literature is actually the structure of the system of interpretation we bring to it. Culler identifies the following conventions: Distance and impersonality (what assumptions do we make as we realize we are reading a fictional work?); Naturalization (what do we assume as we realize we are hearing the voice of the narrator and as we decode certain symbols?); The rule of significance (what do we assume as soon as we identify a specific problem addressed by the text?); The rule of metaphorical coherence (what do we assume in making the two components of a metaphor consistent with the context of the work?); The rule of thematic unity (what expectations do we have in relation to a unified point in the work?). Culler aims to show how the structural system operates within our culture, that our understanding of literature is based on the interpretive strategies we bring to the text. In a poststructuralist mode, Culler invites us not only to see the structures of consciousness that allow us to create meanings about the text and the world, but also to examine interpretation in its own making and ask the question: what is the structure that makes my interpretation possible?

**Race (Kwame Anthony Appiah)**: Race is conceptually wrong. It is a construction that should be dismantled. But race has produced lynchings in the USA, the Apartheid regime in South Africa and the Nazi holocaust in Europe. So long as it continues to be a preoccupation, as racism is not over, we need to talk about race. Like witches when talking about the Inquisition: we no longer believe in witches, but real women were killed, persecuted, burnt because of the construction of the concept witch.

**Ethnicity (Werner Sollors)**: Ethnicity ethnos people in general and other people. Spread with the construction of nationalisms. Creates the illusion of a group’s natural uniqueness and existence from time immemorial. Ethnicity rests on the boundary which is constructed as an attempt to override the fact that all human beings are human. It is a great comparative tool, but it can also be the worst essentialist tool of inquiry upon which fundamentalist nationalisms are built.

**Gendersex**

Because of the impossibility to keep nature, biology, and culture separate, it is better to keep together the concepts of sexual difference and of gender (a term introduced in the 1970s to counter biological determinism), as a reminder that the socio-cultural construction of roles is related to body differences, not as its direct and univocal expression but in terms of their dialogical relationship. To schematize, we could say that gender (masculinity and femininity) is the business facts of sex (male and female), its nominal value (M. Jehlen). To be more accurate, we need to always keep in mind that gender “is what gender does”, that it is expressed through **performances** (J. Butler) as well as that gender is always in relation to its others, gender *and* class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, ideology, etc. **Intersectionality** (Crenshaw) is what makes gender inquiry productive.