Translation Theory
LES Membership Forum
June 30, 2008
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Translation Theory is the theoretical engine of Translation Studies, which examines the process and products of interlingual translation in all its aspects. As such, it borrows freely from other theoretical traditions.

In the following I offer only some brief suggestions to those seeking to get their feet wet rather than go for total immersion.

Subject Headings:
LC: Translating and Interpreting. (Does not single out theory. Keyword searches in WorldCat of this heading in the descriptor search together with theory will sometimes yield relevant results, with “theory” belonging to a different subject heading.
MLA: Translation Theory (MLA does offer this heading)

(Very) Selected Bibliography.

This collection, arranged in chronological order, includes most seminal essays in the field. Venuti’s introduction has a useful section addressing “What is a translation Theory?” My recommended sampling of its essays illustrating a few different approaches follows:

Philosophical approaches:
Most cited by other scholars: Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”
Is translation really possible? W.V.O. Quine, “Meaning and Translation.”
Hermeneutics. George Steiner, “The Hermeneutic Motion.”
Translation as recodification. William Frawley, “Prolegomenon to a Theory of Translation”

Polysystems Theory – Descriptive Translation Studies
Itamar Even-Zohar. “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem.”
Andre Lefevere, “Mother Courage’s Cucumbers: Text, system and refraction in a theory of literature.”

Postcolonial Theory

Skopos Theory – the idea that works should be translated according to the purpose of the translation. Hans J. Vermeer. “Skopos and Commission in Translational Action.”

Reader-response criticism maintains that the interpretive activities of readers, rather than the author’s intention or the text’s structure, explain a text’s significance and aesthetic value. The modern versions include psychological and theoretical accounts of the reader’s activity and sociohistorical accounts of a text’s interpretations or an author’s reception.

(excerpted from The Online John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism)

Keywords: reader-response approach, reception theory, aesthetic experience, interpretative communities, women readers (or other specific groups of readers)

Bibliography


Fish, Stanley.  Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities.  Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.


Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a method or practice of reading developed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida to uncover that which is forgotten, hidden or repressed in texts. It thus interrogates key concepts in the philosophical tradition, and questions the dualisms or binary oppositions that undergird Western thought (presence/absence, nature/culture, speech/writing, etc). In literary studies, deconstructionists do not seek to find a single meaning for a work or works, but rather uncover the multiplicity of meanings, often unacknowledged and even contradictory, that exist in literary texts. Yet they do not attempt to reconcile those meanings into a single, coherent structure. Instead, they explore how those meanings are ultimately irreconcilable and proliferate in ways that call into question received assumptions or “truths.”

Keywords: Derrida, Jacques; Deconstruction; Deconstructionism; Deconstructionist Approach, Poststructuralism; Semiotics; Trace; Supplement; Aporia (irreconcilable conundrum in interpretation)

Selected Works by Jacques Derrida


Works on Deconstruction in Literary Criticism


Prepared by David D. Oberhelman, Oklahoma State University Library, doberhelman@okstate.edu
Psychoanalytic Criticism

Psychoanalytic criticism takes the techniques of psychoanalysis as initially developed by Sigmund Freud and applies them in an examination of literature.

For our purposes, analysis tends to be either about the author, the reader, the characters in the text, or the formal aspects of the work. For example, one can analyze a work to reveal the mind of the author, explore how a reader creates meaning, or explain the actions and motivations of characters in a work. Based on Lacan’s famous dictum “the unconscious is structured like language,” psychoanalytic critics also apply their techniques to examine the formal aspects of literature.

Below are some places to help you provide reference on psychoanalytic criticism. It is more of a starting point than an attempt at comprehensiveness.

Key terms: the self; the gaze; the Oedipus complex; desire; drives; projection; sublimation, fetish; uncanny; (return of) the repressed.

Key figures associated with psychoanalysis
Sigmund Freud; Carl Jung; Jacques Lacan; Slavoj Zizek; Melanie Klein; Ernest Jones; Simon Lesser; Julia Kristeva

Library of Congress Subject Headings
Psychoanalysis and Literature
Psychoanalysis

MLA
Scholarly Approach – Psychoanalytic approach (3097 hits)

Selective Bibliography of Works

For quick reference
   When answering reference questions about psychoanalytic criticism, I point students first to the entry entitled "Psychological and Psychoanalytic Criticism" (p. 256-262. In five pages, Abrams provides an overview of this school of criticism without overwhelming the student (or at least it simplifies the concept enough for a student to get started).

   In three sections, entitled 1. Traditional Freudian Criticism; 2. Reconceptualizing Freud; 3. The Post-Lacanians. Combined, these sections provide a historical overview of psychoanalytic criticism, noting major players and movements within psychoanalysis. Each section ends with an excellent bibliography or primary texts.
Psychoanalytic Criticism

For lengthier explanations
Contains a chapter on psychoanalytic criticism giving equal weight to Freud and Lacan. Also provides sample psychoanalytic literary analyses of works of fiction.

Devotes an entire chapter to Psychoanalysis (p. 151-193) and makes Freud and Lacan understandable to the uninitiated. The latter part of the chapter, beginning on p.179, shows how their works operate in psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Concise summary of psychoanalytic literary criticism and some suggestions for its future applications.

For advanced readers
A good entry into the works and analysis of Freud.

Provides an introduction to the works of Lacan. Chapter one on the mirror stage and chapter five on the agency of the letter are good representatives of Lacan interpreting the oedipal stage and the relations of the unconscious to the ego.

Provides detailed analysis and examples of psychoanalysis and its effects on different schools of criticism. Contains chapters devoted to the works of Freud, Klein, Jung, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Zizek.

Zizek, an influential thinker in his own right, demonstrates how psychoanalysis can be used to gain insights into pop culture productions like Hitchcock films.

Electronic Resources & Bibliographies
Contains the full text of 26 journals in psychoanalysis, 56 classic psychoanalytic books, and all 24 volumes of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.
(Subscriber database, but searching for entries is free.)

This bibliography has a chapter dedicated to psychoanalysis. The essays introducing that year’s work are usually eight to ten pages long and provide the researcher with information about the current scholarship in psychoanalytic criticism. (Subscriber database)