

Literatura de Língua Inglesa V

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Aula 1

LITERARY THEORY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

META

Explain the process of institutionalization of Cultural Studies as an academic field and its implications in literary studies.

OBJETIVO

To present the main tendencies of Cultural Studies and to relate them to the literary studies, especially with literary theory.

PRERREQUISITO

Notions about the historicity of the concept of literature;
Notions of the process of formation and institutionalization of Literary History and literary theory as disciplines that have in Literature its object of study.
Notions of the relationship between Literary History and literature teaching.

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INTRODUÇÃO

The relation between the literary theory and Cultural Studies is much closer than one might think. The academic and commercial success of Cultural Studies, in editorial as well as cinematographic terms and of varied scientific or cultural events, made it possible for this recently established field of study to achieve relevant media exposure, due to the political engagement of the academic projects undertaken by its main leading figures, the “founding fathers”, at least in its early years of existence.

On the other hand, the attention dispensed by professors of literature, during the 1990s, towards objects of study that were not always strictly “literary”, i.e., advertisement, manifestations of popular or mass cultures, and the treatment of the literary text as a cultural practice among others, were not well received by those of a more traditional or conservative stance, to whom such innovations posed a threat to both the integrity and autonomy of literary studies, in general, and the literary theory in particular, as an academic discipline.

Returning to our initial assertion of the first paragraph of this introduction, a relation between the literary theory and Cultural Studies can be verified by two very significant facts:

1) The academic affiliation of the two central figures from whose works came out the new discipline, Raymond Williams (1921-1988) and Richard Hoggart (1918- 2014), has its origins in the literary studies; 2) The primary motivation for Cultural Studies in England was to advance a critique of English, i.e., the teaching of English Literature, as it was carried out in the interwar universities, under the supervision of critic and professor Frank Raymond Leavis (1895-1978), one of the most committed defenders of “new criticism” and the concept of “close reading”, an analytical and structuralist reading of the literary text.

However, one cannot say that Cultural Studies is an academic discipline, which came to replace literary theory in the field of literary studies, as it has been suggested by the adoption of Cultural Studies as a research object by many post-graduation courses, including in Brazil, initially interested in Literature. Such a shift occurred sometimes because of a change in theoretical perspective and at other times by mere academic fad. Furthermore, one cannot restrain the **interdisciplinary dialogue (1)** between Cultural Studies and literary theory, since the limits of the former as a fledgling academic discipline are hard to delineate, even by its “founding fathers”.

Stuart Hall (1932-2014), for example, affirms that Cultural Studies can be taken as an intellectual space of convergence between displaced academic traditions, such as Sociology, Anthropology and Literary Criticism (HALL, 2004: 21). Cevalco (2003, p. 73), in turn, says that Cultural Studies, as an interdisciplinary project, situates itself in the amalgam of four disciplines:

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Communication, History, Sociology and, most importantly, English, i.e., English Literature.

From English, according to the aforementioned author, the new discipline inherited the interest in the text and textuality, including popular forms of culture. It also superseded the Language/Literature paradigm that used to characterize it. From this new perspective, the concept of Literature was reconsidered, culminating in the expansion of the canon list, which made room for female, black and homosexual writers. As for History, the emphasis rested upon the school of Edward P. Thompson (1924-1993), that is, the history “from below”, based on oral history and popular memory. From media came the interest in studying the relations between mass media and society, and lastly from Sociology the newly founded discipline drew inspiration to study ethnography and the “subcultures”.

It is worth observing that such theoretical debts of Cultural Studies are not restricted to the “founding fathers” or the abovementioned disciplines, for they encompass intellectuals such as Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), Louis Althusser (1918-1990) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984), among others, not to mention some disputes over institutional territory as well as study objects, which present themselves as less of an epistemological debate than a political clash. Let us see how it all started.

THE CONSTITUTION OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

The process of institutionalization of English Literature as an academic discipline, in England, is very clarifying as to the constitution of literary theory as a hegemonic discipline in the field of literary studies, and the ideological character it assumed in certain historical moments. According to Eagleton (1983), the English Literature, as a liberal and humanizing activity, could be used, in the end of the 19th century, as a powerful antidote to religious fanaticism and ideological extremism, since, by addressing “universal human values” not “historical trivialities” – such as civil wars, the oppression inflicted upon women and the exploitation of the working classes –, it could make people forget about such issues and replace them with the contemplation of elevated truths and eternal beauties. In this respect, it could be compared to a new form of religion, for it would reach the people without the trouble of teaching them the classics, since English Literature was written in their mother tongue:

Like religion, literature works primarily by emotion and experience, and so was admirable well-fitted to carry through the ideological task which religion left off. Indeed by our own time literature has become effectively identical with the opposite of analytical thought and conceptual enquiry:

whereas scientists, philosophers and political theorists are saddled with drably discursive pursuits, students of literature occupy the more prized territory of feeling and experience (EAGLETON, 1983, p. 28-29).

Therefore, it was by no accident that institutionalization of English as a discipline took place at first outside the walls of the universities, in vocational courses and institutes designed for the popular classes. Its ascension progressed along with the timid admittance of women into higher education institutions and the slow access by male individuals from the working classes to what became known as “the poor man’s classic” education.

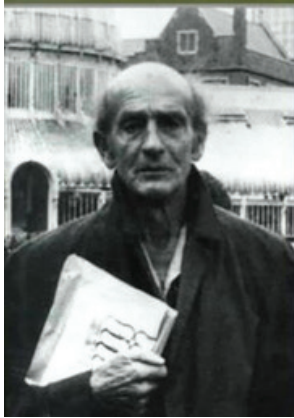
In the beginning of the 20th century, the new discipline took on a clearly political function, since, with the advent of World War I, when the hegemony of the British capitalism was threatened by the United States and Germany, it started to serve a project of reconstruction of Britain’s national identity, by promoting authors such as William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and John Milton (1608-1674) as the main representatives of a utopian, organic and egalitarian tradition of the English society. On the other hand, this political function worked as a justification for the adoption of English into the two main universities of England: Oxford and Cambridge.

The main proponents of the discipline, as the already mentioned F.R. Leavis and I. A. Richards (1893-1979), descended from the petty provincial bourgeoisie about whom they wrote in their studies and articles published in the journal **Scrutiny (2)**, to turn English into a respectable discipline by attempting to do away with its image of the “poor man’s classic education”, i.e., a subject matter intended solely for women, working class students and “third world” countries.

The strategies employed by the *Scrutiny* consisted of “practical criticism” and close reading. The former rejected all elements that were external to the literary text, since the reader, by virtue of the structure of the work, would be able to judge its greatness without having to take into consideration its ideas and historical context. The latter, in turn, insisted on the internal structure of the work, that is, the “words on the page”, without taking into consideration the contexts within which it was produced. In this sense, it fostered the illusion that any piece of literary speech could be understood in isolation. As Eagleton (1983) puts it, it was a rectification of the literary work, studied as an object in itself. Such understanding would triumph with the ascension of New Criticism:

Like *Scrutiny*, in other words, New Criticism was the ideology of an uprooted, defensive intelligentsia who reinvented in literature what they could not locate in reality. Poetry was the new religion, a nostalgic haven from the alienations of industrial capitalism. The poem itself was as opaque to rational enquiry as the Almighty himself: it existed as a self-enclosed object, mysteriously intact in its own unique being (EAGLETON, 1983, p. 51).

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F. R. Leavis critic and professor of English of great acclaim. He founded along with his wife, Q.D. Leavis, the journal *Scrutiny*, and was responsible for consolidating the English language as an academic discipline in the University of Cambridge.

Ivor Armstrong Richards (February 26th 1893, Sandbach, Cheshire — September 1979, Cambridge) was an English influential literary critic and rhetorician. His works, especially *The Meaning of Meaning*, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Practical Criticism* and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, the latter is among the founding documents of New Criticism, whose majority of its eminent members were students of Richards. Since New Criticism, at least in English speaking countries, is frequently taken as the beginning of modern literary criticism, Richards is one of the founders of the contemporary study of literature in English.



The “new critics”, in breaking away from the notion of Literature based on great men, typical of a biographical tradition of Literary History, insisted that the author’s intentions were not relevant for the interpretation of his texts, and that the reader’s emotional responses should not be mistaken for the meaning of a poem, for the latter is public and objective, since it was inscribed on the very language of the literary text. Thus, New Criticism, according to its basic assumptions, defended both by the English from the *Scrutiny* and the American theoreticians, was grounded on irrationalist criticism associated, on the one hand, to a sort of religious dogma and, on the other, a right-wing policy, for the irrelevance conferred upon the historical conditions of the work made literary scholars – consciously or unconsciously – ignore various pressing social issues of their day, such as the exploitation of the working classes and the oppression of women, not to mention the plight of black immigrants from British former colonies.

As we can notice, the establishment of English Literature as an academic discipline, at the same time that it functioned as an ideological weapon, ascending to power at the expense of a war nationalism under the patronage of an English governing class whose sense of identity had been shaken, it also represented a consecration of the “scientific” character of a knowledge once considered inferior, since it had been intended for the

lowly classes, due to their economic situation, ethnicity and gender, and now was being elevated to an academic status, thanks to the development of the literary theory, which provided the necessary theoretical bases for its adoption into the curricula of Cambridge and Oxford universities.

THE “FOUNDING FATHERS” OF CULTURAL STUDIES

As it occurs with the constitution process of any academic discipline, there is always much controversy as to the personages and circumstances from which the discipline was constituted and that contributed for its institutionalization in university curricula. The case of Cultural Studies is no exception. According to Culler (1999), the emergence of Cultural Studies is related to a double origin: a French one and an English one.

The French source would be the structuralism of the 1960s, which treated culture as a series of practices whose rules or conventions should be described. In this respect, a pioneering work can be found in *Mythologies* (1957), by Roland Barthes (1915-1980), in which the author undertakes a brief reading of various cultural activities, from wrestling to advertisements for automobiles and detergents. For Barthes, it was necessary to demystify the idea that culture is something natural and to insist on the fact that every cultural practice is historically constituted.

The English source, in his view, would be related to the Marxist Literary Theory of British origin, represented by the works of Raymond Williams, especially in his 1957 book *Culture and Society*, and that by Richard Hoggart (1918-2014), which sought to rescue and explore working-class popular culture in *The Uses of Literacy*.

Stuart Hall, on the other hand, although recognizing certain theoretical debts to some French intellectuals, affirms that the origins of Cultural Studies can be traced back to three books: *The Making of the English Working Class*, by E. P. Thompson, and the other two by Williams and Hoggart already mentioned. Regardless of the possible academic field dispute that permeates such a discussion, even because the constitution of an academic discipline takes place in a much more complex way than merely by works or authors that somehow provided the basic elements for the new discipline, the constitution of Cultural Studies involved various social agents and institutions not always visible in historical panoramas or in the memoirs written by their own “founding fathers”. In this lesson, we will briefly outline the main names that relate to the formation of Cultural Studies, especially those which, being in England at the time of its constitution, had a more evident participation in this process.

Richard Hoggart (1918-2014) began his academic career in an extramural department of the University of Hull, working for five years with

Williams and Thompson for a left-wing organization dedicated to worker education, the Worker's Educational Association – WEA.

According to Cevasco (2003: 62), night schools for workers were a tradition already established in England even before World War II, reaching a time of expansion in the 1950s, when WEA had ninety thousand students enrolled. It is very probable that his experience as a teacher, along with his political militancy - which can be seen in his participation in the Italian campaign - served as the basis for the production of his most important work, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), by which he became one of the Founding Fathers of Cultural Studies, despite his various articles on popular culture and education in Britain.

Initially influenced, like Williams, by Leavis and the *Scrutiny*, Hoggart, among the “founding fathers”, was the only one not to have maintained a privileged theoretical dialogue with Marxism, his political commitments being considered “liberal” by Mattelart and Neveu (2004). In this way, he claims a humanist affiliation, inscribed on the studies of Literature and Civilization, although he has contributed to its redefinition, rejecting its elitist tradition. In his analysis of *The Uses of Literacy*, his distrust of the industrialization of culture makes his approach to popular cultural practices anchor itself in this belief, which is why the problematic distinction between “mass culture” - imposed to the people - and “popular culture” - cultural expression of the people - appears in his work.

In *The Uses of Literacy*, the central object is the impact of mass culture on the cultural traditions of the working class, which would be destroyed by the poor quality of the new manifestations. For Cevasco (2003: 21), “his attention to the procedures of the popular press, the cinema and the customs of everyday life makes his book one of the first examples of the kind of research that would become the hallmark of Cultural Studies.

In 1964, Hoggart founded the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies of the Department of English at the University of Birmingham, which he directed until 1968. The CCCS (Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies) was the first institutional space of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline. From Birmingham came the first teachers and students of the new discipline, which was gradually instituted in universities in several countries, including Brazil.



As one of the founding fathers of Cultural Studies, Richard Hoggart published *The Uses of Literacy*, his best-known book in 1957, and was Professor of Modern English Literature at the University of Birmingham in England, where he founded, in 1964, the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, of which he was director until 1968.

For many the central figure of Cultural Studies, Raymond Williams (1921-1988) is the author of *Culture and Society*, published in 1958, a sort of genealogy of the concept of culture in industrial society, from the romantic to George Orwell (1903-1950), including authors such as Leavis and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). According to Mattelart and Neveu (2004: 46-47), their concept of “structures of feeling”, which establishes the relation between the notions, practices and cultural forms and the systems of perception and sensitivity that express and crystallize, was elaborated in dialogue with the works of Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970). The problem outlined in *Culture and Society* unfolds in *The Long Revolution* (1961), a work that emphasizes the role of education and communication systems in the dynamics of social change, contributing to the construction of a democratic reform program of cultural institutions.

Williams, the son of a railroad worker from a Welsh village (Llanfihangel Crucorney), studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he joined the British Communist Party, earning his master’s degree in 1946. After teaching for the aforementioned adult education program (WEA), he became a professor of dramaturgy at Cambridge University, where he had been a student and disciple of Leavis. Retired only in 1983, he had a long academic career, writing several articles, theoretical books and a novel.

For Cevalco (2003: 109), amid the effervescence of importing French, Italian, and German ideas, mainly through the intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, the only original British theoretical position took shape in the work of Raymond Williams. Drawing on a British tradition of thinking about the quality of life of a society through a discussion of culture, Williams, in his first major work, *Culture and Society*, criticizes this abstract and absolute view of culture, disconnected from the social context that produces it, thus establishing the theoretical instruments of what is conventionally termed “cultural materialism,” which can be described as an attempt to take to ultimate consequences the legacy of Karl Marx (1818-1883) as to the thinking of culture as a material activity of a society.

In addition to a major theorist, Williams was a tireless political activist, engaging in discussions about democratic media control in a socialist pro-

gram. He has always been attentive and critical of the process of consolidation and development of Cultural Studies, stating at a conference held in 1986 at NorthEast London Polytechnic that Cultural Studies, i.e, the change of perspective in the teaching of Arts and Literature and its relationship with History and the Contemporary Society, did not arise from his 1958 book, but from Adult Education - WEA - (apud CEVASCO, 2003, 61).



Raymond Williams was an academic, critic, and Welsh novelist. His writings on politics, culture, literature, and mass culture reflected his Marxist thinking. He was an influential figure within the New Left and cultural theory in general. More than 750,000 copies of his books were sold only in the UK.

Edward Palmer Thompson (1924-1993), during World War II, also engaged in the struggle against the fascist government of Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), studied at Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, and joined the British Communist Party, forming in 1946 a group of historical Marxist studies with intellectuals like Eric Hobsbawm (1917- 2012), among others. He lectured at the University of Leeds for the WEA and was a professor at Warwick University from 1965 to 1971, giving sporadic courses at American universities. He served as an anti-nuclear pacifist in the 1980s, and from 1988 until the end of his life he taught at the University of Manchester, Kingston University, Canada, and at Rutgers University.

Like Williams and Hall, Thompson was a member of the New Left Review, founded in 1960 in response to the 1956 crisis marked by a “break in faith in the Soviet Union” - the revelations that Soviet Minister Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) made at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Stalinist atrocities and the invasion of Hungary - and the disintegration of the British Communist Party (CEVASCO, 2003: 82-83).

In his own words, his main concern throughout his career was to address what he considered a silence in Marx: “a silence in the domain of what anthropologists call ‘the value system’. A silence regarding cultural and moral mediations “(apud MTELART and NEVEU, 2004: 46).

According to the authors cited above, Thompson’s work can be described as the option for a history centered on the life and enduring practices of the popular classes. His best known work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 1963, is now a classic of Marxist historiography.



Edward Palmer Thompson (February 3, 1924, Oxford - August 28, 1993, Worcester) was a British historian of the theoretical Marxist conception and is considered by many to be the best English historian of the twentieth century. During World War II he fought in Italy against the fascist government led by Benito Mussolini. He studied at the Corpus Christi College (Cambridge), where he joined the British Communist Party. In 1946, he formed a group of Marxist historical studies along with Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, Rodney Hilton, Dona Torr, among others.

Although only eight years younger than Thompson, the Jamaican intellectual Stuart Hall (1932- 2014) belongs to a generation that did not participate in World War II. In spite of his outstanding political militancy – he was the first editor of the *New Left Review* –, his scholarly production only came to prominence in the 1970s when he went on to direct CCCS at Birminham University.

He left Jamaica in 1951 and studied Letters at the University of Oxford, where he became involved with nationalist militants of colonized nations and the Marxist left, without joining the Communist Party. In 1957, he took up a teaching post at a secondary school in Brixton, a London borough, and in 1961, he lectured on media and film at the University of London. According to Mattelart and Neveu (2004: 59), Hall is not the author of reference books, unlike the other “founding fathers”, but of a large number of articles, playing a scientific entrepreneur role in Birminham. A scholar of various manifestations of popular culture, from the gossip of the press to the **Rastafarian (4)** and **punk (5)** movement, Hall is concerned with the systematization of the theory within Cultural Studies, involving a range that goes from the legacies of Marxism to the theoretical loans from postmodernism or deconstruction. In 1979, Hall joined the “Open University” (*Universidade Aberta, ou a distância*).

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Stuart Hall (1932- 2014) was a cultural theorist who worked in the United Kingdom. He contributed key works for the study of culture and the media, as well as for political debate. He replaced Hoggart in 1968 in the direction of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham and, like Thompson and Williams, was one of the founders of the *New Left Review* of the New Left

Expansion and crisis of Cultural Studies

Fifty years after the publication of Hoggart's book, the academic and editorial success of Cultural Studies was astounding. In 2002, for example, an Internet search engine registered more than two million five hundred thousand different references from such an expression (MATTELART and NEVEU, 2004: 127). Its scientific visibility, however, both in the English-speaking world and in other countries, coincides with the circulation, from 1972 onwards, of the "working papers" (mimeographed articles, forming a kind of handmade magazine), texts that were later compiled in books and make up the best of the CCCS team's production. Much of the production of this time deals with young "subcultures": "rastas", "mods", "skinheads", "rockers", etc. Emphasis was placed on how, under structural pressure, young people develop selection tactics in their identitary potential.

Also in the late 1970s, the 1978 *Women's Take Issue* was launched by the CCCS Women's Studies Group. According to Mattelart and Neveu (2004, p. 69), the valuation of gender studies owes a lot to the empirical work that shows the differences in consumption and appreciation between men and women concerning television or cultural goods. With the 1982 compilation *The Empire Strikes Back*, attention turned to the racism issues raised by the situation of immigrant communities in large cities. The question of reception in the media, the problem of disintegration and pluralization of identities, the inheritance and crisis of theoretical Marxism in the studies of the CCCS, in short, the whole trajectory of Cultural Studies points to two paths. If, on the one hand, the rapid pace of publications and the emergence of new departments, on both sides of the Atlantic, indicate the internationalization of the discipline, on the other hand, the ease with which such novelties are adopted can be interpreted as the loss of the contestatory identity of the discipline, as well as its theoretical and academic rigor. Commenting on this situation, Cevalco (2003: 155-156) writes:

With this expansion comes the benefits of a more numerous production, which ensures the continuity of the conversation of cultural studies. However, this conversation, as Williams taught, bears the mark of his time. It is a time when commodification haunts all efforts, even those who want to make opposition, such as cultural studies.

The marks of time, in the case of Cultural Studies, is the loss of the link between theoretical work and political work, that is, the departure from the discipline of its Marxist foundation, of cultural materialism, as Williams, one of its founding fathers ". According to the author mentioned above, in Brazil, the official date of the institutional recognition of Cultural Studies is 1998, the year in which the Brazilian Association of Comparative Literature, ABRALIC, chose for its biennial congress the theme "Comparative

Literature = Cultural Studies?”. However, already in 1997, the ABRAPUI (Brazilian Association of University Teachers of English), in a SENAPULLI (National Seminar of University Professors of English Language Literature) held in Atibaia, São Paulo, had as its theme the relationship between “Literature and Cultural Studies “. Its popularization in Brazilian academic circles can be seen by the number of postgraduate programs, which previously focused on literary studies, and nowadays dedicated themselves to Cultural Studies.

On the other hand, when the degree of commodification of life causes “cultural diversity” to mean only the plurality of the supply of products and services in a globalized market, the failure of the political mobilizations against globalization ended up affecting the work of the researchers, presenting them with new paths and new possibilities for articulation between theoretical work and a social commitment. Mattelart and Neveu (2004: 198) present three suggestions for the renovation of Cultural Studies: 1) to restore its link with the “cultural materialism” explored by Thompson and Williams; 2) to break away from all post-academicisms, accepting the challenges of breaking with theoretical models and routinized objects; 3) To open up to new lines and disciplinary boundaries that the evolution of the world and the academic territories provide. It remains to be seen how this crisis of Cultural Studies affects literary studies.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Cultural Studies project is to understand the functioning of culture, especially in the modern world, that is, how cultural practices and manifestations are produced and how cultural identities are constructed and organized for individuals and groups in a world of heterogeneous communities, state power, media industry, and multinational corporations. Thus, Cultural Studies includes and encompasses literary studies, as they analyze Literature as a cultural practice among others. From this statement comes a fundamental problem: to what extent do literary studies gain or lose with the arrival of Cultural Studies?

To a certain extent, Cultural Studies appeared as an application of literary analysis techniques from literary theory to other cultural materials, treating the most varied cultural manifestations as “texts” to be read and interpreted. In this perspective, literary studies are gaining, since, by studying Literature as a significant practice among others, and examining the cultural roles with which Literature has been invested in the course of history, the new discipline can intensify the study of literary works as an **intertextual (6)** and complex phenomenon.

According to Culler (1999), the relations between literary studies and Cultural Studies can be grouped into two topics: 1) the question of literary

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canons; 2) the appropriate methods for the analysis of cultural objects. As for the first question, while Cultural Studies can amplify the Western canon, which is markedly European, white and sexist, including authors and authors of postcolonial countries, on the other hand, it can popularize analyses and encourage the study of movies, TV soap operas and other products of “mass culture”, to the detriment of literary works. Before criticizing or deconstructing the canon, you must know it.

With regards to the second question, there is always a great risk in discarding some methods which, although outdated in some respects, represent an academic rigor characteristic of literary theory, especially in its formalist version, in the name of a freedom of approach which, very often, are only content-centered, in the worst sense of the term. It is not uncommon, for example, to see scientific papers that, by analyzing literary texts with the supposed paradigm of Cultural Studies, which, at this point, covers almost everything that lies between heaven and earth, present them only as social symptoms of issues of gender, ethnicity, or identity, without any analytical work on how such representations are constructed, or how such effects are produced.

We should not close ourselves to the novelties that emerge every day in the academic world, yet we should not receive them passively, or uncritically. There are many contributions of Cultural Studies to literary studies, just as the theoretical instrumentalities provided by literary theory for cultural criticism are very consistent. If literary studies should not close itself in a discipline that has already shown its lag in relation to contemporary cultural manifestations, Cultural Studies cannot ignore its theoretical presuppositions, otherwise it will fall into academic discredit because of the irrelevance of the results of its research.



RESUMO

In this lesson, you learned a little about the contemporary debate of literary studies. The Theory of Literature, which reached its academic heyday in the 1940s with the editorial success of the Wellek and Warren manual, remained hegemonic as a discipline of literary studies until the late 1980s, when it began to be questioned by new theoretical perspectives and, especially, the “boom” of Cultural Studies in the 1990s.

You also had the opportunity to observe how the constitution of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline is closely related to literary theory. In the case of English universities, where the former was first institutionalized, the new discipline arose from a questioning of “English”, that is, English

Literature, which had reached academic prestige along with literary theory in the rest of Europe and the United States, between the 1930s and 1940s. Such questioning began to appear even in the late 1950s, with the books of Williams and Hoggart, who were once English students in Cambridge.

The first institutional space of the new discipline was the University of Birmingham, where Hoggart founded the Center for the Study of Contemporary Culture (CCCS) in 1964. Under the direction of Hall, from the 1970s onwards, the CCCS formed a large part of the professors and advocates of Cultural Studies in the rest of Europe and the United States, achieving a degree of popularity and academic success in the 1990s that pose a threat to many of the postgraduate departments in literary studies that saw their main study object being appropriated by new cultural approaches.

The main trends in Cultural Studies are: the study of popular cultures and cultural industry, involving communication media; the young “subcultures” of the big cities; the issues of gender and ethnicity; the fragmentation of identities and cultural production and reception in an ideologically ‘globalized’ world. Such tendencies affected literary studies, and especially literary theory, in two main aspects: the construction and redefinition of the literary canon and the appropriate theoretical method and foundation for the analysis of cultural objects.

Hence, literary scholars have been faced with two impasses: (1) if, on the one hand, it is important to expand a traditional and ideologically closed canon, which for the most part includes male, white, and European authors, on the other, one cannot question or deconstruct such a canon, in favor of other cultural practices and manifestations, without knowing it, that is, without studying it. 2) If the analyzes of aspects related to issues of popular or mass cultures are extremely relevant as well as ethnicity, gender and other social problems in literary works, it is necessary not to reduce the literary text to a symptomatic document of such questions, by making better use of the theoretical instruments provided by literary theory in such approaches, not forgetting that there are other documents, cultural practices and manifestations, in which these issues can be better explored.

Nowadays, literary studies are undergoing a redefinition of both their theoretical assumptions and their object of study, and it is necessary for literary scholars to critically borrow from other disciplines, new or traditional, in order to cast new glances at old and canonized objects, making it possible for the study of Literature to contribute in some way to better think about the problems of the world.



ATIVIDADES

Write a short text (at most two pages), using 12-point font size, Times New Roman, and 1.5 line spacing with the following title:

“Literary Studies and Cultural Studies: dialogues, confrontations and perspectives”

ACTIVITY COMMENT

This activity aims at building a text-synthesis of the main points addressed in this lesson, in order to explain the process of constitution of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline, its main trends and its dialogues and conflicts with literary studies. Throughout its argumentation, it seeks to make explicit the constitution of English Literature as academic knowledge, the contribution of the “founding fathers” to Cultural Studies and the process of expansion and crisis of the new discipline.



PRÓXIMA AULA

Next, you will be introduced to Gender Studies. You will learn about its origin and development as well as the main concepts used within this field.

GLOSSARY

(1) Interdisciplinary: the integration of two or more curricular components in the construction of knowledge. Interdisciplinarity emerges as one of the answers to the need for an epistemological reconciliation, a process necessary due to the fragmentation of knowledge that occurred with the industrial revolution and the need for specialized labor. The interdisciplinarity sought to reconcile the concepts belonging to the different areas of knowledge in order to promote advances such as the production of new knowledge or even new sub-areas (Source: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdisciplinaridade>).

(2) Scrutiny: name of the journal that Leavis and his wife founded in 1932 and directed to its last issue in 1953. It is from such a journal

that the Leavis group and its associates will claim for Literature the role of safeguarding the “universal” in a world in crisis. For Eagleton (1983, 34), whatever has been the success or failure of the journal, the truth is that English scholars are today “leavists”, whether they know it or not, irremediably influenced by this historical intervention.

(4) Rastafari: A religious movement that emerged in the 1930s in Jamaica, which preaches the return of blacks to the homeland of their ancestors, Africa. This movement proclaims Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, as the earthly representation of Jah (something that the Abrahamic religions call God). This term comes from a contracted form of Jehovah found in Psalm 68: 4 in the King James Bible version, and the promised Messiah is part of the sacred trinity. The name Rastafari has its origin in Ras (prince or head) Tafari Makonnen, the name of Haile Selassie I before its coronation (source: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari>).

(5) Punk: Punk culture consists of the styles that possess certain characteristics common to those so called punk, as for example the do-it-yourself principle, the interest by crude and aggressive appearance, the simplicity, the nihilistic sarcasm, the subversion of culture and anarchist thought. Among the punk cultural elements are: musical style, fashion, design, plastic arts, cinema, poetry, and also behavior (including or not defined ethical and political principles), linguistic expressions, symbols and other codes of communication. From the late 1960s the concept of punk culture acquired new meaning with the expression Punk Movement, which began to be used to define its transformation into an urban tribe, replacing a broad and unclear conception of the individual and a fundamentally cultural attitude by the concept of a social movement proper: the acceptance by the individual of a supposed ideology, behavior and posture shared by all members of the punk movement or gang or branch/sub-movement to which it belongs (source: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk>).

(6) Intertextual: of intertextuality, that is, “dialogue” between texts. This dialogue presupposes a very wide and complex cultural universe, since it implies the identification and recognition of references to works or to more or less known excerpts. Depending on the situation, intertextuality has different functions that depend on the texts / contexts in which it is inserted. Obviously, the phenomenon of intertextuality is linked to the “knowledge of the world”, which must be shared, that is, common to the producer and recipient of texts.

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