CHAPTER TEN

TRI-HIERARCHIZATION IN CULTURAL ANALYSIS
A STUDY IN CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF CRITICISM
I. Introduction: Moving with Tri-Hierarchization, beyond Foucault

After having traced how one can move into the Foucauldian *episteme* through attempts at tripartition of domains of structuration of thought into mentality, materiality and physicality in the first section of the thesis, and how Foucault takes up this possible tripartition and gives it a concrete form as well as a political articulation in the next two sections, in this last section of the dissertation, I propose to move 'beyond' Foucault, and trace how this tripartite politicization, or what I have termed as 'tri-hierarchization', operates in *epistememes* which lie chronologically (or epistemologically) exterior to Foucauldian thought. In the first chapter of this section, that is the current one, I look into political forms of criticism that operate in the second half of the twentieth century, and see how the basic tripartition of domains of hierarchization takes the form of race, class and gender in our times.

While I have discussed this correspondence of race, class and gender to the tripartition of mentality, materiality and physicality, preliminarily in the first chapter, I suppose it needs some clarification here too. It can be observed how the fundamental contradiction of racial politics is not the body, because though in certain cases, the hierarchy might correspond to the colour of the skin, in many others, like the racism against East Europeans or Jews in Western Europe, that against the Irish in Britain, or the communal and caste contradictions in India, physical differences do not exist. With some amount of generalization, one might notice that the primary contradiction in such cases always involves religion, culture, language, ethnicity, and levels of knowledge or 'civilization' achieved. It is always a disparity in this 'mental' cultural domain of knowledge that constructs the hierarchies of race, be it a disgust for people adhering to other religions and a desire to convert them, or a consciousness of the ‘inferior’ status in knowledge of a particular civilization or culture and the desire to simply ostracize or to control and civilize them, or a mutual antipathy amongst people adhering to different languages, cultural norms, etc. The race is a hierarchy emanating primarily from the domain of mentality. Class is of course straightforwardly about disparities in material possession of wealth, and for gender, in spite of the cultural constructs and the disparate economic conditions that accompany it, the fundamental contradiction is surely of the physical difference of sex. Though I do not attempt to reduce these three highly complex hierarchical domains to the overdetermination of one contradiction, that the ‘basic’ contradictions for the three are mentality, materiality and physicality, respectively, will hopefully be appreciated, and now I can move on to a discussion of the same. To do this, I do not, however, move straightaway into theorizations on politics in these three domains, but discuss first some of the important formulations of the Frankfurt School, because the Critical Theory formulated by this school can be seen as a precursor of the later modes of criticism that include a study of race, class and gender.
II. The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School

a. Foucault and the Frankfurt School

The Frankfurt School flourished in Frankfurt in the 1930s and in the USA after that, with Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1978) as its proponents. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), though not belonging to the group, is often included in its fold because he also wrote in the same place and period on similar issues. Besides, Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), is also considered a 'second generation' member of the School. These thinkers, who collectively formed what is called 'Critical Theory', mainly show how a true political understanding of reality can only come from an augmentation of Marxist thought with insights on the superstructure. Besides, it also analyses the dialectics of Vernunft and Herrschaft, reason and domination, much like Foucault’s pouvoir-savoir. The Frankfurt School draws its inspiration from Max Weber (1864-1920), who rejected the Durkheimian sociological practice of studying anonymous ‘social facts’ from a purely positivist stance, and also said that the optimistic appraisal of reason’s power to liberate humanity from prejudice is just another myth that hides its agenda of repression and domination. It would be worthwhile to note how Foucault credits this school, in a 1983 interview, with having attended the fundamental question of modern philosophy:

I would say that...modern philosophy (that is of the 19th and 20th centuries) derives in great part from the Kantian question, “Was ist Aufklärung?” [What is Enlightenment?] ... Now in Germany this question “What is the history of reason, of rational forms in Europe?” did not appear so much in the history of science but in the current of thought which runs from Max Weber to Critical Theory... From Max Weber to Habermas.¹

This shows how important Critical Theory is, but this itself explains neither why I consider it to be ‘beyond’ Foucault, especially when most of the Frankfurt theoreticians predate him, nor why I choose to connect it with the tripartite thought I am dealing with. The questions lie answered when Foucault says in the interview that his thoughts are very similar to the Frankfurt School’s, and that he was not acquainted with it while writing his earlier works:

Now, obviously, if I had been familiar with the Frankfurt School, if I had been aware of it at the time, I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say and I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path—when, meanwhile, avenues had been opened up by the Frankfurt School. It is a strange case of non-penetration between two very similar types of thinking...²

Thus, Critical Theory definitely does not form a part of the Foucauldian episteme, but it presents a similar tripartition, so that Adorno and Horkheimer talk about the politics of the media and culture, Benjamin talks about history and class, Marcuse talks about the politics of the body, and Habermas tries to bring it all together in a tripartite model of ‘technologies’.

² Ibid., 26.
b. Adorno and Horkheimer: Culture and Politics

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the working class or the 'masses' get implicated in the consumer culture perpetrated by mass media. Mindless entertainment, which is the hallmark of popular culture, makes the classes forget their class identity and need for the revolution. They show that the role played by religion in pre-capitalist society, in detaching the masses from reality and captivating them in an illusory hope, is nowadays replicated by mass culture. They denounce this 'culture industry' which fails to nourish freedom and instead move into an industrial stage, producing safe standardized products in capitalist economy, like Hollywood movies, radio, television, journalism and advertisements.

Showing how popular culture creates standardization and 'pseudo individuality', they say,

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality. What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted as such.3

Adorno shows in a 1957 article how mass culture becomes a mode of control as it robs people of potential individual resistance and de-intellectualizes and consumerizes culture itself:

Rigid institutionalization transforms modern mass culture into a medium of undreamed of psychological control. The repetitiveness, the self-sameness, and the ubiquity of modern mass culture tend to make for automatized reactions and to weaken the forces of individual resistance... The increasing strength of modern mass culture is further enhanced by changes in the sociological structure of the audience. The old cultured elite does not exist any more; the modern intelligentsia only partially corresponds to it. At the same time, huge strata of the population formerly unacquainted with art have become cultural "consumers".4

In another article, Adorno shows how the very purpose of the culture industry is 'anti-enlightenment', to take away knowledge from entertainment, and create through its inanities, a subaltern class which is devoid of any consciousness that might lead to their liberation:

The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception... It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop. If the masses have been unjustly reviled from above as masses, the culture industry is not among the least responsible for making them into masses and then despising them, while obstructing the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit.5

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Adorno shows, in the same article, how culture is therefore 'administrative' and political:

Whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well, whether this is his intention or not. The combination of so many things lacking a common denominator—such as philosophy and religion, science and art, forms of conduct and mores—and finally the inclusion of the objective spirit of an age in the single word 'culture' betrays from the outset the administrative view, the task of which, looking down from on high, is to assemble, distribute, evaluate and organize.\(^6\)

That mass culture is apparently aimed at entertaining people but basically exercises a political control over them suggests duplicity. In a 1954 article, Adorno shows how the mass media comprise 'polymorphic' meanings, where a hidden message lurks behind the overt one:

Mass media are not simply the sum total of actions they portray or of the messages that radiate from these actions. Mass media also consist of various layers of meaning superimposed on one another, all of which contribute to the effect. True, due to their calculative nature, mere rationalized products seem to be more clear-cut in their meaning than authentic works of art, which can never be boiled down to some unmistakable 'message'. But the heritage of polymorphic meaning has been taken over by cultural industry insomuch as what it conveys becomes itself organized in order to enthral the spectators on various psychological levels simultaneously. As a matter of fact, the hidden message may be more important than the overt, since this hidden message will escape the controls of consciousness. will not be 'looked through', will not be warded off...\(^7\)

While it looks quite grim, with the mass media working steadily towards turning the masses more and more away from reality, depriving them of knowledge and scope to question their existence, Adorno shows how the means for resistance are inlaid within this itself. He shows in another article how the reality of the illusory image presented by mass media is often questioned, popular culture being possible only within the subversive space of 'free time':

What the culture industry presents people with in their free time, if my conclusions are not too hasty, is indeed consumed and accepted, but with a kind of reservation, in the same way that even the most naive theatre or filmgoers do not simply take what they behold there for real. Perhaps one can go even further and say that it is not quite believed in. It is obvious that the integration of consciousness and free time has not yet completely succeeded. The real interests of individuals are still strong enough to resist, within certain limits, a total inclusion that would concern with the social prediction that a society, whose inherent contradictions persist undiminished, cannot be totally integrated even in consciousness. Society cannot have it all its own way, especially not in free time, which does indeed lay claim to people, but by its very nature still cannot totally claim them without pushing them over the edge.\(^8\)

Thus, Adorno and Horkheimer show that the domain of culture is itself political, while also providing a critical analysis of the same, and suggesting the possibility of resistance through an utilization of the liberating potential of 'free' time and blending it with a questioning 'consciousness'. What is important is that these views comprise the location of power within the domain of 'mentality', as represented by culture, entertainment, knowledge I will proceed now to see how Critical Theory talks of power in the other two domains of the tripartition.

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\(^6\) Ibid., 93.


c. **Walter Benjamin: History, Class and Civilization**

Just as Adorno and Horkheimer discuss the role of power in the domain of mentality, Walter Benjamin shows how superstructural power is related to the basal domain of materiality, as comprising history and the class struggle. One can note how close his notion of history is to that of Foucault, when, just like Foucault's claim as to being a 'historian of the present', Benjamin says, 'History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit].'\(^9\) Benjamin also shows how there is a reciprocal relation between class struggle and superstructural categories:

The class struggle, which is always present to a historian influenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. Nevertheless, it is not in the form of the spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in the class struggle. They manifest themselves in this struggle as courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude. They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers.\(^10\)

Thus, Benjamin talks about class hierarchies in the domain of materiality, while never succumbing to a reductionist attempt to abolutize it. He shows how historical materialism is opposed to any conformism, with history itself not being a frozen moment for it:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.\(^11\)

History being conceived as a compilation of moments in struggle, Benjamin goes on to show how culture itself is a product of this brutal struggle. For him, therefore, civilization is connected to a 'barbarism' of conquest of one class by the other, and the task of the historical materialist is to go 'against the grain' and probe the materially political origin of culture:

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.\(^12\)

This is how Critical Theory conceives of power in the material domains of class and history.

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\(^12\) *Ibid.*, 217.
d. **Herbert Marcuse: The Body and Individual Freedom**

Herbert Marcuse takes the Frankfurt School argument to the last element of the triad, the domain of physicality, when he shows, in his *Eros and Civilization* (1966), how power works at the level of individuality, sexuality and the body. He shows how the fundamental political game of democracy is to create collaborative ‘free’ subjects out of individual bodies:

Mass democracy provides the political paraphernalia for effectuating this introjection of the Reality principle; it not only permits the people (up to a point) to choose their own masters and to participate (up to a point) in the government which governs them—it also allows the masters to disappear behind the technological veil of the productive and destructive apparatus which they control, and it conceals the human (and material) costs of the benefits and comforts which it bestows upon those who collaborate. The people, efficiently manipulated and organized are free; ignorance and impotence, introjected heteronomy, is the price of their freedom.\(^{13}\)

Thus, freedom and servitude become basically two sides of the same coin, and Marcuse shows how under such a system true individual freedom gets subverted and dislocated:

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Today, this union of freedom and servitude has become ‘natural’ and a vehicle of progress. Prosperity appears more and more as the prerequisite for consumption and for distinction in outer and inner space, while being restrained from ‘overflowing’ into the areas of misery at home and abroad. As against this amalgam of liberty and aggression, production and destruction, the image of human freedom is dislocated: it becomes the project of the subversion of this sort of progress.\(^{14}\)
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Marcuse states that this dual ‘welfare-through-warfare’ strategy of power can be defeated only when individuals do away with all non-corporeal ideational moorings and an optimistic delegation of power to the other, and instead take the physical life as an ‘end in itself’:

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It was the thesis of *Eros and Civilization*, more fully developed in my *One Dimensional Man*, that man could avoid the fate of welfare-through-warfare state only by achieving a new starting point where he could construct the productive apparatus without that ‘inner-worldly asceticism’ which provided the mental basis for domination and exploitation. This image of man was the determinate negation of Nietzsche’s superman: man intelligent enough and healthy enough to dispense with all heroes and heroic virtues...man with the good conscience to make life an end in itself, to live in joy a life without fear.\(^{15}\)
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This understanding of power as working in the domain of physicality, and resistance as emerging from physicality itself, makes Marcuse propose his notion of ‘polymorphous sexuality’, whereby a physical inculcation of the individual subject leads to social liberation:

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‘Polymorphous sexuality’ was the term which I used to indicate that the new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested organic, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure than labor... But the very scope and effectiveness of the democratic introjection have suppressed the historical subject, the agent of revolution: free people are not in need of liberation, and the oppressed are not strong enough to liberate themselves.\(^{16}\)
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Having shown how Critical Theory deals with the three domains of tri-hierarchization, I move into Habermas to see how these three modes are brought together in a single tripartite model.

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14 Ibid., 228.

15 Ibid., 228-29.

16 Ibid., 229.
e. **Habermas and the Tripartition of ‘Techniques’**

Jürgen Habermas, a second-generation Frankfurt School theorist, shows in his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), that both ‘scientism’ and the hermeneutic tradition present inadequate and reductionist views of knowledge, with the former’s objectivism and the latter’s subjectivism hiding the politically motivated nature of all knowledge. For him, this system of power is perpetrated through certain ‘techniques’, comprising the ‘technocracy’ through which knowledge is dispensed in advanced capitalist societies. In his *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), Habermas shows how this technocracy maintains the status quo by adopting a dual system—exploitation and repression on the one hand, and producing the hegemonic requirements of a consensus on the other. He also shows how there are three main types of techniques: those concerning a material production of ‘things’, those concerning a (mental) significational use of ‘signs’, and those concerning a domination of physical individual beings. This is quite akin to ‘tri-hierarchization’, and Foucault says in a 1982 article,

> It seems according to some suggestions of Habermas, that one can distinguish three major types of techniques: techniques that permit one to produce, to transform, to manipulate things; techniques that permit one to use sign systems; and, finally, techniques that permit one to determine the conduct of individuals, to impose certain ends or objectives—that is, techniques of production, techniques of signification or communication, and techniques of domination. 17

The genesis of this tripartite notion of power in Habermas can be located in his *Toward a Rational Society* (1970), where he shows how the supplementation of the repressive state with forms of knowledge in advanced capitalism requires a radical rethinking of Marxian thought:

> Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, two developmental tendencies have become noticeable in the most advanced capitalist countries: an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system’s stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading productive force. Both tendencies have destroyed the particular constellation of institutional framework and sub-systems of purposive rational action which characterized liberal capitalism, thereby eliminating the conditions relevant for the application of political economy in the version correctly formulated by Marx for liberal capitalism. 18

He says that in such a situation, the material domain of political economy cannot alone explain modes of hierarchies, and one needs to form a more composite model of social power:

> If society no longer ‘autonomously’ perpetuates itself through self-regulation as a sphere preceding and lying at the basis of the state—and its ability to do so was the really novel feature of the capitalist mode of production—then society and the state are no longer in the relationship that Marxian theory had defined as that of base and superstructure. Then, however, a critical theory of society can no longer be constructed in the exclusive form of a critique of political economy. 19

Habermas shows that in the current system, knowledge can produce surplus value by itself:

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19 Ibid., 156.
...technology and science become a leading productive force, rendering imperative the conditions for Marx's labour theory of value. It is no longer meaningful to calculate the amount of capital investment in research and development on the basis of the value of unskilled (simple) labour power, when scientific-technical progress has become an independent source of surplus value, in relation to which the only source of surplus value considered by Marx, namely the labour power of the immediate producers, plays an even smaller role.20

Knowledge having become a parallel productive force, it is easy to conceive how the individual subject also gets implicated in the production process, because unlike the capitalist mode where the individual who laboured was not the one who owned and controlled the production and appropriated the surplus value, in advanced capitalism the intellectual labourer is himself or herself the 'master' of production. Thus, mental knowledge and the physical individual come alongside material capital in contemporary modes of power. Accordingly, Habermas shows how current 'class' struggles, as that of race (or gender) are not necessarily economic, and concern instead individuals and modes of signification or appellation. He says,

This means not that class antagonisms have been abolished but that they have become latent. Class distinctions persist in the form of sub-cultural traditions... [e.g.] racial conflict in the United States...[where] disfranchisement and pauperization no longer coincide with exploitation, because the system does not live off their labour... That is why these demands retain an appellative character... as long as no coalitions are made with privileged groups, such a civil war lacks the chance of revolutionary success that class struggle possesses.21

Habermas takes up the same tripartition in his Communication and the Evolution of Society (1979), how in advanced capitalism, to assure its governance, a regime cannot but take care of three domains: the knowledge or policy behind production, the actual material production and fulfilment of collective needs, and also individual needs and social inequality. He says,

There is today no disagreement concerning the structural risks built into developed capitalist economies. These have to do primarily with interruptions of the accumulation process conditioned by the business cycle, the external costs of a private production that cannot adequately deal with the problem situations it itself creates, and a pattern of privilege whose core is a structurally conditioned unequal distribution of wealth and income... The three great areas of responsibility against which the performance of the government is today reassured are then, shaping business policy that ensures growth, influencing the structure of production in a manner oriented to collective needs, and correcting the pattern of social inequality.22

Thus, one reaches at a tripartite model of systems of hierarchies operating in society. On the one hand, at a more abstract level, it can be noticed how power itself is tripartite, since any instance of it concerns things, signs and bodies. On the other hand, at a more concrete level, this power is itself manifest in three forms, race, class and gender, depending on which of the three poles is more fundamental in its formation. It is this tripartition that I take up next and see primarily through formulations in literary theory, how resistant observations in these three domains work in challenging and dethroning normative hierarchies of race, class and gender.

20 Ibid., 159-60.
21 Ibid., 164-65.
III. The Politics of Race: Knowledge and Beyond

a. Hierarchies in the Domain of Race

I have already mentioned in the introductory section to this chapter how the hierarchies of race are connected to categories of knowledge. Here I would like to show how theorizations on race and critical attempts to debunk its politics take off from the initial point of departure of language, culture, literature and such significational constructs, but also move beyond them into radical political activism and also a critique of the pitfalls of critique itself. To do this, I choose to discuss the postulations of four major critics—Ngugi, Fanon, Said and Aijaz Ahmad—on the colonial situation in Africa, West Asia and India. I deliberately leave out theorizations on race in America, because it precludes the colonial situation and, arising synchronically out of a monolingual and uni-religious situation, it is quite different from the problematics of race that concerns the erstwhile colonized world, the world we inhabit.

b. Ngugi wa Thiong’o on Language in Colonialism

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (b.1938), an African novelist and a theoretician on the effects of colonization on the mind, shows how language is the primary tool of colonial exploitation, with the colonizer’s language being imposed on colonial educational apparatuses. He says,

> English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child’s progress up the ladder of formal education.23

Ngugi talks of the dual character of language as a means of communication and as a carrier of culture. As a means of communication, language has three parts: the ‘language of real life’, or the whole of a language, its history and its relations with people; language as speech; and language in the form of written signs. Language as a carrier of culture also has three features: it is a product of history; it is an image-forming agent in the mind of the child; and these images are imparted through speech and writing. Talking about this second role, Ngugi says,

> Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.24

This problem of ‘colonizing the mind’ gains greater proportions because the written language that the child gets exposed to at school is the colonizer’s language while at home he or she speaks a different tongue. This disjunction between written and spoken language leads to what Ngugi calls a ‘colonial alienation’. Ngugi shows how colonial alienation operates through two forms—that of alienating oneself from one’s own realities and that of identifying with what is linguistically and culturally external. Talking of this incompleteness, he says,

24 Ibid., 441.
Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around, and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one’s environment. It starts with a deliberate dissociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.\(^\text{25}\)

For Ngugi, this alienation is furthered because theorizations on it are made by the colonized people in the language of the colonizer, with English being made the language of protest against imposition of English! Ngugi shows how even after independence the erstwhile colonies stick to using the colonial language, because the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, who used the colonizer’s language earlier, continue to do the same to maintain their distance from the peasantry and the proletariat and forward their own narrow class interests. He says that as opposed to this, African culture and literature are kept alive by the peasantry itself. This shows how a critique of colonial exploitation turns into a radical critique of a continuation of the same tyranny in the postcolonial period too, and one can appreciate why Ngugi chooses to write in his own language Gikuyu, later in his career.

c. Frantz Fanon and the Debate on ‘National Culture’

Just as Ngugi takes the critique of colonial politics beyond the colonial situation into the postcolonial one, Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) does the same, but while Ngugi talks of rebuilding national culture, Fanon views this category suspiciously and shows how such an enterprise has the potential to be regressive. He instead talks about the role of political parties in nation building parallel to that of ‘cultured’ individuals in building ‘national culture’. For him, the major debate in ‘post-colonial’ societies is how to react to its colonial cultural legacy, whether to reject it or appropriate it, and where to locate its indigenous culture in relation to it. He shows that while rejecting the colonial legacy might appear as the logical choice in a colonial situation, it also has its regressive and illusory side, whereby the people escape the present and pin all their hopes on a mythical and elusive distant past. He says,

...but it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by the native intellectuals to shrink away from that western culture in which they all risk being swamped. Because they realize they are in danger of losing their lives and thus becoming lost to their people, these men, hot-headed and with anger in their hearts, relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial spring of life of their people... Perhaps this passionate research and this anger are kept up or at least directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and aspiration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others.\(^\text{26}\)

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 451.

Fanon shows how monolithic colonial imaginations like 'negroes' and other such categories are appropriated by national cultures, which construct global categories like 'blacks' and 'negritude', and thereby, instead of resisting such essential categories, national cultures work within the paradigm dictated by colonial discourses and legitimize them. Instead, Fanon argues for heterogeneity within the space of the 'nation', and shows that a true national art cannot regress into a mythical past but deal with the political realities of the present. He says,

The artist who has decided to illustrate the truths of the nation turns paradoxically towards the past and away from actual events... But the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities.\textsuperscript{27}

For Fanon, culture is just a part of the nation, and the intellectual cannot confine himself or herself to mere speech making and proclamations about 'culture', because the primary task is a political liberation of the nation from the colonial regime. He shows how attempts to revive and adhere to a 'national culture' take on clandestine forms and contribute to a static inertia:

A national culture under colonial domination is a contested culture where destruction is sought in systematic fashion. It very quickly becomes a culture condemned to secrecy. This idea of a clandestine culture is immediately seen in the reactions of the occupying power which interprets attachment to traditions as faithfulness to the spirit of the nation and as a refusal to submit. This persistence in following forms of cultures which are already condemned to extinction is already a demonstration which is a throw back to the laws of inertia. There is no taking of the offensive and no redefining of relationships. There is simply a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shrivelled up, inert and empty.\textsuperscript{28}

Fanon of course does not deny the persuasiveness of colonialism and says that not only does it affect the current way of living of the colonized but it also tampers with the natives' history as it goes on to posit its own culture as superior to the native and decides to 'civilize' the natives. He however says that liberation from this domination does not lie in merely reviving national culture but in political activism aimed at a liberation of the state itself:

In the colonial situation, culture, which is doubly deprived of the support of the nation and the state, falls away and dies. The condition for its existence is therefore national liberation and the renaissance of the state.\textsuperscript{29}

This is more so, because for Fanon, in post-colonial societies, there is an over-production of literature and the producers are the very people who were the consumers during the colonial period—the intelligentsia. Fanon says that a national culture should break out of the shackles of the colonial phase and addresses its own people with a 'literature of combat'. He says,

The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former values and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture.\textsuperscript{30}

This is how Fanon links the discourse of racial domination to the domain of culture and takes it beyond the mere cultural into actual political practice aimed at colonial liberation.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 42.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 46.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 50.  
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 50-51.
d. Edward Said and Orientalism

It is in Edward Said (b. 1935) and his theory of 'Orientalism', as articulated in his text *Orientalism* (1978), that one has a theorization about the racial play in a cultural construction of Asia in the colonial mind. Said shows how the European imagination essentializes the Orient to create a problematic construction of the same. He defines this as:

...Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based in the Orient's special place in European western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.31

The notion of Orientalism shows that colonial hegemony and racial imagination of the other is restricted neither to the geopolitical designs of the imperialist state alone, nor to the mere collection of texts and documents about the other nation, but to a combination of the two: imperial power being carried over to a whole cultural construction, through language and other means of the domain of mentality, of the colonized nation as an other. For Said,

Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description...32

While Orientalism, or the racial construction of the other, is thus the result of a combination of political state power and cultural imaginings, Said shows how this relationship is not direct or unilateral. He shows how colonial power takes on a multiple form, with 'power political' being in a dialectic exchange with forms of intellectual, cultural and moral power. He says,

...it is above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with narrow kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do).33

Having defined Orientalism, Said tries to locate it in relation to established branches of Western scholarship like philosophy, rhetoric and psychology. He shows how all these three modes show Orientalism as a device aimed at constructing and controlling the other. He says,

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32 Ibid., 12.
33 Ibid., 12.
Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. 34

For Said, therefore, colonial control takes place with the construction of a body of knowledge about the racial other, which is what Orientalism is all about. The politics of race is not just a case of repressive control but one involving the production of multiple dividing discourses:

A field like Orientalism has a cumulative and corporate identity, one that is particularly strong given its associations with traditional learning (the classics, the Bible, philology), public institutions (governments, trading companies, geographical societies, universities), and generally determined writing (travel books, books of exploration, fantasy, exotic description)... Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is thought, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways. 35

Therefore, the working principle of racial domination is knowledge, and Said shows how the entire Orientalist enterprise was aimed at knowing the other for a thorough domination:

The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object. 36

Thus, for Said, the colonial imagination does not only repress the culture of the racial other, but in fact goes on to produce its own discourses about the same, the politics of race thereby getting connected in a two-way process of workings at the discursive level of mentality.

e. Aijaz Ahmad and the Category of ‘Third World’

In dealing with the Indian response to theorizations about colonization, I choose to discuss Aijaz Ahmad, who in his In Theory (1994) shows how there are several problems in the homogeneous category of the ‘third world’ literature. He begins by showing how contemporary literary radicalism fails to consider its own conditions of production:

The characteristic feature of contemporary literary radicalism is that it rarely addresses the question of its own determination by the conditions of its production and the class location of its agents. In the rare case where this issue of one’s own location—hence of social determination of one’s own practice—is addressed at all, even fleetingly, the stance is characteristically that of a very post structuralist kind of ironic self-referentiality and self-pleading. 37

Ahmad tries to locate literary theory in practice in relation to the colony and empire through categories like nation, nationalism and the third world. Ahmad critiques the current counter-

34 Ibid., 72.
36 Ibid., 222.
canonical trends in literary scholarship, because an analysis of its conditions of production would reveal a third-worldist outlook of the Anglo-American academia and certain sociological moorings of the intelligentsia at its roots. Ahmad talks about Jameson's conception of 'national allegory' as the determinate form of cultural production in the third world. He links nationalism to imperialism, socialism, class forces and socio-political practices, which go towards organizing the 'power bloc' that takes the nationalist initiative. He argues instead for a progressive nationalism, which does not view the state as merely coercive. In this context, he analyses Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and also Said's theory of Orientalism, to show how both privilege the migrant intellectual and 'the figure of the exile'. Ahmad argues that such attempts at theorizing upper class migrancy purely in terms of the metropolitan grids of modernism and post-modernism cannot overlook considerations of gender, class and nationalism. In this connection, he rejects the post-structuralist right wing as well as the journalistic or commonsensical 'leftist' dealings with colonialism, saying that a more detailed engagement is necessary. Showing how such shallow and polemical theoretical stances are connected to the interests of the national bourgeoisies, Ahmad says,

> It is useful, I think, to raise issues of theoretical accuracy and political responsibility with regard to a cultural theory which either constructs a counter-canonicity based upon the cultural productions of these dependent, mutually competing national bourgeoisies and homogenizes it into a 'Third World Literature', or its poststructuralist ideological location and metropolitan privilege. But then, the very fortunes of these national bourgeoisies, not to speak of their cultural productions, have been determined, on the whole, by the fundamental dialectic of our times which was mediated—to devastating effect—the relationship between imperialism, decolonization and socialism. 38

Thus, Ahmad rejects the category of 'Third World Literature' on political and epistemological grounds, while also warning, much like Fanon, against the 'national' literature endeavour, showing how it is a bourgeois project with upper caste dominance which works in a 'print-capitalism' framework. He further shows that such categories privilege coloniality as an 'epochal experience' and thus play the same game of power as the colonialists themselves:

> To the extent that both 'Third World literature' and 'Colonial Discourse analysis' privilege coloniality as the framing term of epochal experience, national identity is logically privileged as the main locus of meaning, analyses and (self-) representation, which is, in turn, particularly attractive to the growing number of 'Third World Intellectuals' who are based in the metropolitan university. They can now materially represent the undifferentiated colonized other—more recently and more fashionably, the postcolonial other—without much evaluating of their own presence in that institution except perhaps in the characteristically postmodernist mode of ironic pleasure in observing the duplicities and multiplicities of one's own persona. The East, reborn and greatly expanded now as a 'Third World', seems to have become, yet again, a career—even for the 'Oriental' this time, and within the occident too. 39

It is with this assertion that thoughts critical of racial hierarchies should not themselves create homogenized niches of significative knowledge which perpetrate similar hierarchic forms that I conclude my discussion of colonialism and race and turn to the hierarchic category of class.

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IV. The Politics of Class: Money and Beyond

a. Hierarchies in the Domain of Class

It might be a little too obvious to state that class is a hierarchy constructed in the domain of materiality with access to the means of economic production as its fundamental category. However, just as in the case of race, I showed how in spite of the mental domain of language and culture being its point of departure, the contradiction moves beyond knowledge into other political forms, in the case of class hierarchies too, one can notice how critical thought moves beyond the basal category of money to complex superstructural categories. To examine this movement as also to highlight some of the principal features of literary analysis based on the politics of class, I choose to discuss below some of the chief postulates of the two best known ‘Marxist’ literary critics—Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann.

b. Georg Lukács: Historicism and Realism

Georg Lukács (1885-1971) shows in his *The Historical Novel* (1937) how first of all literature is connected to history and next how history itself is a study of human progress through class struggle. Talking about such a historicist interpretation, he says,

...according to this interpretation history itself is the bearer and realizer of human progress. The most important thing here is the increasing historical awareness of the decisive role played in human progress by the struggle of classes in history. The new spirit of historical writing, which is most clearly visible in the important French historians of the Restoration period, concentrates precisely on this question: on showing historically how modern bourgeois society arose out of the class struggles which raged throughout the entire ‘idyllic Middle Ages’ and whose last decisive stage was the great French Revolution.

Lukács shows how, from a Marxist perspective, literature cannot go beyond the society from which it originates, and what a literary work depicts can only be analysed in terms of historical conditions, so that ‘romantic-Utopian projections’ in it can only be termed illusory:

What Marx said of legal institutions applies in wide measure to literary forms. They cannot stand higher than the society which brought them forth. Indeed, since they deal with the deepest human laws, problems and contradictions of an epoch they should not stand higher—in the sense, say, of anticipating coming perspectives of development by romantic-Utopian projections of the future into the present. For the tendencies leading to the future are in fact more firmly and definitely contained in what really is than in the most beautiful Utopian dreams or projections.

For Lukács the ‘historical’ novel of yore has been a non-realist attempt to escape the true contemporary conditions, and this being quite the contrary of what a Marxist writer or critic should look for in literature, he argues that the primary artistic struggle lies in negating this ahistorical legacy which negates reality. For Lukács, therefore, a Marxist critique of literature lies very much in the Hegelian synthetic act of ‘negation of a negation’. He says,

Thus, Lukács claims that literature has to be freed from its old ahistorical trappings of mystic poeticity and intimate enjoyment and has to be analysed in terms of the Marxist notion of historical materialism. In the 1948 preface to his *Studies in European Realism*, Lukács says,

...the clouds of mysticism which once surrounded the phenomena of literature with a poetic colour and warmth and created, an intimate and "interesting" atmosphere around them, have been dispersed. Things now face us in a clear, sharp light which to many may seem cold and hard; a light shed on them by the teachings of Marx. Marxism searches for the material roots of each phenomenon, regards them in their historical connection and movement, ascertains the laws of such movement and demonstrates their development from root to flower, and in so doing lifts every phenomenon out of a merely emotional, irrational, mystic fog and brings it to the bright light of understanding. 43

Lukács clarifies how this insistence of his on Marxism does not amount to dogmatism because, for him, Marxist aesthetics and literary theory is guided, not by a monologic, but by a dialectic duality between unchanging theoretical conviction and flexible adaptability:

Marxism combines the consistent following of an unchanging direction with incessant theoretical and practical allowances for the deviousness of the path of evolution. Its well-defined philosophy of history is based on a flexible and adaptable acceptance and analysis of historical development. The apparent duality—which is in reality the dialectic unity of the materialist worldview—is also the guiding principle of Marxist aesthetics and literary theory. 44

Lukács also says that, quite contrary to the popular belief of Marxian iconoclasm, Marxian thought has deep respect for the past and classical heritage, with the only difference between it and regressive forms of thought being that Marxism makes no attempt to return to the past and treats cultural events of the past as landmarks in the historical process. He says,

Those who do not know Marxism at all or know it only superficially or at second-hand, may be surprised by the respect for the classical heritage of mankind which one finds in the really great representatives of this doctrine and by their incessant references to that classical heritage... But they do not regard this classical heritage as a reversion to the past; it is a necessary outcome of their philosophy of history that they should regard the past as irretrievably gone and not susceptible of renewal. Respect for the classical heritage of humanity in aesthetics means that the great Marxists look for the true highroad of history, the true direction of its development, the true course of the historical curve, the formula of which they know... 45

For Lukács, a Marxist approach to literature says that 'everything is politics', and he shows how this understanding of literature and art is already found in the nineteenth-century realists:

An unbiassed investigation of life and the setting aside of these false traditions of modern literature leads easily enough to the uncovering of the true circumstances, to the discovery which has long been made by the great realists of the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century and which Gottfried Keller expressed thus: "Everything is politics." 46

Based on this political understanding of literature, Lukács distinguishes between two types of creative writers—those who take part in contemporary social struggles and those who do not:

In the course of these studies we shall point out in detail the basic differences which arise in the creative methods of writers according to the degree to which they are bound up with the life of the community, take part in the struggles going on around them or are merely passive observers of events. Such differences determine creative processes which may be diametrical opposites; even the experience which gives rise to the work will be structurally different, and in accordance with this the process of shaping the work will be different. 47

Since, therefore, certain politically noncommittal authors notwithstanding, the general function of literature and criticism is political, Lukács shows how authors have to take up their historical role in post-Fascist Europe and rebuild liberating political thought. For him, with the collapse and eradication of Fascism a new life has begun for every liberated people. Literature has a great part to play in solving the new tasks imposed by the new life in every country. If literature is really to fulfil this role, a role dictated by history, there must be as a natural prerequisite, a philosophical and political rebirth of the writers who produce it. But although this is an indispensable prerequisite, it is not enough. It is not only the opinions that must change, but the whole emotional world of men; and the most effective propagandists of the new, liberating, democratic feeling are the men of letters. 48

The role of the writer is thus political, and literature and criticism should be aimed at an undercutting of the passive role that capitalism relegates art and the artist to. Lukács says, the result of such a close link in the cultural and literary sphere was then and is today that the writer can overcome his isolation, his relegation to the role of a mere observer, to which he would otherwise be driven by the present state of capitalist society. He thus becomes able to take up a free, unbiased, critical attitude towards those tendencies of present-day culture which are unfavourable to art and literature. 49

For Lukács, however, this battle that the writer must launch cannot be fought with artistic methods alone. One needs to associate oneself with mass movements of the day, and actively participate in struggles for class liberation to achieve the same. He sums up saying, to fight against such tendencies by purely artistic methods, by the mere formal use of new forms, is a hopeless undertaking, as the tragic fate of the great writers of the West in the course of the last century clearly shows. A close link with a mass movement struggling for the emancipation of the common people does, on the other hand, provide the writer with the broader viewpoint, with the fructifying subject-matter from which a true artist can develop the effective artistic forms which are commensurate with the requirements of the age, even if they go against the superficial artistic fashions of the day. 50

Having discussed Lukács’s notions of the political role of art, I will now turn to Goldmann.

46 Ibid., 9.
47 Ibid., 11.
48 Ibid., 17.
49 Ibid., 18.
50 Ibid., 18.
c. Lucien Goldmann: Sociology and Literature

Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) carries further the analysis of literature in terms of the hierarchies of class by equating literary criticism with a political agenda. In a 1971 article, he shows how capitalist society and subjective thought being dialectically related, sciences as well as cultural creation are linked to social consciousness and historical action:

The subject is also part of the object of thought and conversely, the object (capitalist society) is part of the mental structure of the subject. For the human sciences, then, science is at least partially affected by social consciousness. When dealing with the human sciences, cultural creation and historical action, one cannot separate science from consciousness, theory from practice, and judgements of fact from value judgements.51

This means that historical and sociological research cannot be ‘neutral’, value judgments being very much a part of the critical enterprise, and the critic’s task comprising not just being objectively ‘true’, but also the practical attempt to transform society. In 1967, Goldmann says,

Specific value judgements are inevitably part of all historical and sociological research, either in an explicit or implicit way, and this participation has an immediate and technical character in the development and elaboration of ideas in social life. Thus, even the most scrupulous and critical sociological study can be characterized as an explicit or implicit wager, both theoretically and practically: theoretically with regard to the maximum possible conformity to the object studied; practically, with regard to the possibility of transforming society or stabilizing it.52

The objective, for Goldmann, is to study the ideological field of knowledge and locate in it two modalities: of ‘effective consciousness’ and ‘maximum possible consciousness’:

Depending on the level of research, the important thing is not to know the effective consciousness of the group at a given moment, but rather the field within which this knowledge and these responses can vary without there being an essential modification of existing structures and processes. If sociological research is not yet able to make an inventory of these possible responses, it can, on the other hand, establish at least two privileged modalities within this field. They are effective consciousness and the maximum possible consciousness...53

A cultural work is the site where effective and possible consciousnesses tend to merge, and Goldmann shows how a cultural text is thus both collective and individual, with it expressing the possible consciousness or the collective ‘world view’, and the author making this world view reach as close as possible to the effective consciousness individually. He says,

...if the real consciousness of groups rarely matches their possible consciousness, the great cultural works seem precisely to express this maximum to an advanced and nearly coherent degree... Thus, cultural works are both collective and individual to the extent that the world view they correspond to have been elaborated over several years and several generations by the collectivity. The author, however, is the first or at least one of the first, to express this world view at a level of advanced coherence, whether on the theoretical level or on the artistic, by creating an imaginary universe of characters, objects and relations.54

53 Ibid., 65.
54 Ibid., 66.
Having introduced 'world view' Goldmann proceeds, in a 1952 article, to define it as the 'actual thought of a particular individual' that determines overall collective relationships:

By 'world view' we mean a coherent and unitary perspective concerning man's relationships with his fellow man and the universe. Since the thought of individuals is rarely coherent and unitary, a world view rarely corresponds to the actual thought of a particular individual.\(^5\)

This definition might make it appear that Goldmann bases his analysis solely on human consciousness, but as he clarifies in *Cultural Creation in Modern Society* (1971), subjective action is always related towards achieving an equilibrium in relation to the external world:

I want to insist that in the study of human phenomena we never deal with problems located uniquely on the plane of consciousness. Actually, every social or individual human fact occurs as an overall [global] effort of a subject to adapt to a surrounding world. It is a process oriented toward a state of equilibrium; it remains provisional insofar as it will be modified by the subject's active transformation of the surrounding world within this equilibrium, and simultaneously by the extension of the sphere of that action. Under these conditions, any attempt to separate a particular domain of this equilibrium process can be a useful procedure for comprehension and research, provided it remains provisional and is later corrected by inserting the object studied into the major relevant ensembles of which it is part.\(^6\)

Therefore, Goldmann identifies the scope of his type of research as one aimed at studying these processes of equilibrium emanating from a collective structuration both at the plane of interpersonal and person-matter relationships, as articulated especially in literary texts:

...the research, to which I am referring, including my own work, conceives social life as an ensemble of collective structuration processes oriented, as much on the psychic plane as on that of action, towards creating equilibria in the relations among men, and between men and nature. These structuration processes are expressed in the psyche of all the group's members; and within them cultural and especially literary creation have a privileged status insofar as they elaborate universes which, while corresponding to the structuration tendencies of the group's mental categories (and thus, to the consciousness of all its members), nonetheless present an incomparably more advanced degree of coherence than the latter attain.\(^7\)

Thus, on the one hand, Goldmann talks of an analysis aimed at a use of dialectics to launch a political struggle to unveil the truth about reality which remains covered under the ideological trappings of class hierarchies. In his *The Human Sciences and Philosophy* (1952), he says,

To ask whether the social sciences ought to be dialectical or not means purely and simply to ask if they ought to understand reality or to distort and obscure it: in spite of its different and, apparently even contrary, aspect, it is the same battle which, in the seventeenth century, the physicists fought against the particular interests of forces bound to the past and to the Church, the struggle against particular ideologies for a free, objective and human knowledge.\(^8\)

On the other, however, it is clear how he takes his enterprise beyond the obvious domain of materiality, introducing the notion of consciousness and interpersonal relationships into social structuration. It is with this understanding that I move on to the next category of gender.

\(^7\) *Ibid.*, 76-77.
V. The Politics of Gender: the Body and beyond

a. Hierarchies in the Domain of Gender

Finally, I arrive at the third major contradiction that contemporary literary theory deals with, namely gender. As far as the two earlier contradictions are concerned, it can be noticed that Foucault deals with hierarchies in the domain of knowledge (often implicating colonialism and race too) and in the domain of socio-politico-economic power (also including class) quite extensively, but though he deals with body and sexuality in great detail, he hardly does so in relation to gender. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to note that Foucault was not insensitive to gender and in a 1977 discussion he talks very highly of feminist movements:

For a long time they tried to pin women to their sex. For centuries they were told: "You are nothing but your sex." And this sex, doctors added, is fragile, almost always sick and always inducing illness. "You are man's sickness." And towards the 18th century this ancient movement ran wild, ending in a pathologization of woman: the female body became a medical object par excellence... But the feminist movements responded defiantly. Are we sex by nature? Well then, let us be so but in its singularity, in its irreducible specificity. Let us draw the consequences and reinvent our own type of existence, political, economic and cultural...Always the same movement: to use this sexuality as the starting point in an attempt to colonize them and to cross beyond it toward other affirmations.59

While this makes feminism and the politics of gender relevant in a discussion of the Foucauldian schema of tri-hierarchization, what one should be on the lookout for is how, just as dehierarchist discourses on race go beyond the initial contradiction of knowledge and those on class that of money, postulations on gender go beyond the obvious physical marker of sexual difference towards a more global politics. In this connection, I can again quote from a 1977 interview of Foucault, to show how feminism moves beyond the body and sexuality:

The real strength of the women's liberation movements is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality...
The creative and interesting element in the women's movements is precisely that.60

To show what the basic postulations of theorizations on gender hierarchies are as well as how they try to go beyond the obviousness of the body into the domain of cultural constructs about gender, I would discuss one after the other Anglo-American feminism, French feminism, and gay-lesbian criticism. The inclusion of the third, though only tangentially related to gender, is necessary not only because it deals with a hierarchy which concerns physicality and sexuality, but also because Foucault himself was a practising homosexual.


In the Anglo-American tradition, though one can notice major writings on women’s rights from as early as the days of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Bentham (see p. 34 above), and though many women writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have later been read as feminist authors, feminist theorization, in the general sense of the term, is primarily a twentieth century affair. Some early and foundational feminist texts are Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1927), Betty Friedan’s, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Mary Ellmann’s, *Thinking about Women* (1968) and Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1969). In the last book, which is usually considered the most influential of the four, Kate Millet (b. 1934) criticises Freud and psychoanalysis for perpetrating a biological essentialism, which reduces all behaviours to inborn sexual characteristics. Thus, though a later feminist thinker Toril Moi accuses Millet’s criticism of being limited and often reductionist because of her strong adherence to opposition or dichotomy, one can notice how right from the beginning there is an attempt in feminist thought to take the problematics of gender beyond the obvious physiological markers. Mary Ellmann, carries this logic forward, albeit in a different direction, by focussing on ‘women as words’ instead of the political or historical approach, showing how everything gets described or comprehended through ‘sexual analogy’ and sexual difference, with all forms being subsumed by the dichotomy of male/female, so much so that cultural productions by women are also consumed by men as bodies:

With a kind of inverted fidelity, the discussion of women’s books by men will arrive punctually at the point of preoccupation, which is the fact of femininity. Books by women are treated as though they themselves were women, and criticism embarks, at its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips.

Ellmann also shows how femininity gets represented by male writers and critics in terms of stereotypical images like formlessness, spirituality, irrationality, complacency, confinement, passivity, instability, the witch, the shrew, etc.

The second phase of Anglo-American feminist criticism is usually located in the late seventies and eighties, when Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (1976) talk about a ‘subculture’ of women’s writings. Showalter talks of three phases of women’s writings: feminine, feminist and female. In the first phase, women writers imitate the prevailing modes of representation having internalized patriarchal standards of the role of art and the role of women in society. In the second phase, there is a protest against these standards and a demand for rights and autonomy for women. In the third phase, the woman writer looks beyond the man/woman opposition and searches for an identity for herself in an

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attempt at self-discovery. She also distinguishes between two types of feminist criticism: 'feminist critique' where the woman is the reader, and 'gynocritics' with the woman as writer. Gilbert (b.1944) and Gubar, on the other hand, label creativity as essentially male, and talk of an alternate feminist poetics. According to them, while women can have to access knowledge only through patriarchal standards, they must also try to subvert them. Thus, women's voice is essentially 'duplicitous', having to keep up with the patriarchal standard of knowledge and also to subvert it, and they call this 'female schizophrenia of authorship'. It should be noted that however theoretical feminist thinking might have become in this phase, it still rejected any relationship to dominant Western philosophy and theory, because till Annette Kolodney (b.1941) and Myra Tehlen, feminists generally rejected theory as abstract and masculine. Kolodney however shows that feminism can only be a comparativist activity because women's creativity can only be studied in relation to the masculine standards that marginalize it, and Tehlen shows how it is not possible for feminist studies to totally ignore the given paradigm, because feminism can only be relational to patriarchal norms, though, as Kolodney argues, certain stylistic devices like 'reflexive perception' and 'inversion' might be exclusive to women's writing.

c.  French Feminist Criticism

Modern French feminist criticism may be seen to have started with Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), who in her *The Second Sex* (1949), claims that the woman is 'immanence', while the man is 'transcendence', and shows how the woman internalizes given roles and lives in 'bad faith' towards patriarchal social forms. It should also be noted how Beauvoir started her political career as a Marxist but gave up the dream of socialism as a great saver of women as she saw Marxists subordinating gender to class, and joined the MLF (Women's Liberation Movement) in 1972. This indicates the movement of feminist thought into actual radical political practice, and one can mention in this context the formulations of other important figures of French feminist thought like Hélène Cixous (b.1937), Luce Irigaray (b. 1930) and Julia Kristeva (b.1941).

Hélène Cixous declares that she is not a 'feminist' because on the one hand, feminism, in retaining the dichotomy between man and woman, prescribes to patriarchal binarism, and on the other, in demanding 'equality' for women, feminism submits itself to bourgeois egalitarianism and humanism. Instead, Cixous talks about the multiple and the heterogeneous, thereby positing the idea of 'difference'. She talks of an 'écriture feminine', or an exclusive style of women's writing, which is tendentially 'bisexual' as opposed to the 'glorious monosexuality' of masculine writing. For Cixous, writing is an extension of voice or speech, the 'voice' itself referring to the primeval song that emanates from the voice of the
mother, the figure that dominates the pre-oedipal child. While male writing tries to repress this voice, écriture feminine does not and draws strength from this voice. For Cixous, masculinity is structured according to an 'economy of the proper', the emphasis in masculinity therefore being on propriety, self-identity and dominance, and masculine obsessions being classification, systematization and hierarchization. She says, The Realm of the Proper culture, functions by the appropriation articulated, set into play, by man's classic fear of seeing himself expropriated, seeing himself deprived...by his refusal to be deprived, in a state of separation, by his fear of losing the prerogative, fear whose response is all of History. Every thing must return to the masculine. 'Return': the economy is founded on a system of returns. If a man spends and is spent, it's on condition that his power returns. As opposed to this is the realm of the 'Gift', where the man feels threatened to receive a gift, because receiving 'opens' oneself to the other, and in the masculine domain of propriety, a gift must be returned to break the circuit of exchange thus opened, while the woman gives without a thought of return, propriety of woman resting in her selfless giving, because as Cixous says a woman does not suffer from castration anxiety.

Luce Irigaray's doctoral thesis *Speculum of the Other Woman* (English trans. 1979) led to her expulsion from Lacan's École freudienne at Vincennes, showing how her radical thought was perceived as threatening to the dominant patriarchal French intellectual foundations. In the thesis, while rejecting Freud's misogyny, Irigaray however does not view psychoanalysis itself as reactionary. In the work, apart from looking at the Freudian notion of female psychosexual development, Irigaray analyses Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel, with what she calls a feminist 'speculum' or looking glass. She shows how the whole of subject-oriented Western philosophy leaves out the woman from any subjective position of authority, subordinating her to patriarchal discourse. Irigaray also shows how while the man's pleasure is unified by a phallocentrism, the woman is denied her pleasure because of a construction of her pleasure as multiple, non-unified, endless, and thus unattainable, with the morphological argument that her sex organs comprise different elements like hips, vagina, clitoris, cervix, uterus, breasts, etc. Thus, Irigaray talks of 'This sex which is not one' and attempts to undo in her work many of the patriarchal constructions about femininity.

Julia Kristeva was described by Barthes as 'l'étrangère', the strange or foreign woman, showing once again how the predominantly masculine French intellectual circles viewed its female members. Kristeva talks of three types of feminist thought: first, a liberating

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feminism, stressing on equality, whereby women can have equal access to the symbolic order; secondly, a radical feminism, whereby femininity is extolled and women may reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference; and finally, a rejection by women of the dichotomy between feminism/masculinism itself. Talking of this dichotomy, Kristeva says,

The very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics. What can 'identity', even sexual identity, mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of ideality is challenged? Moving from binarism to heterogeneity, Kristeva rejects Saussure's emphasis on the langue and says that she is interested in 'language as a heterogeneous process'. She talks of a feminist linguistics which would question sex differences and similarities in language use, especially with stress on sexism in language and the relationship between language structure and language use. She does not, however, talk of a separate language for the woman, because such a view assumes a transcendental and closed nature of language, thereby making this type of 'feminism' a part of the phallogocentric enterprise. She instead talks of unveiling the sexist nature of language from a semiotician's point of view of difference, plurality and heterogeneity. Thus, one can sum up the major postulations of feminism as amounting to not really a doing away of the primary sexual parameters of gender but going beyond it to a deeper politics concerning role taking and linguistic and cultural constructs about the same.

d. Homosexuality and Criticism

Before showing very briefly how homosexuality becomes a major category in criticism resistant to the discrimination against homosexuals in this predominantly heterosexual homophobic society, and also mentioning how this hierarchy operates in the domain of physicality (in close collusion with gender) while also moving beyond it, I would mention what Foucault has to say about homosexual resistance. While I have already discussed in detail Foucault's theorizations about homosexuality in Chapter 9, it may be worth noting how in a 1977 discussion, Foucault lauds homosexual literature. He says,

Take the case of homosexuality. Psychiatrists began a medical analysis of it in the 1870s: a point of departure certainly for a whole series of new interventions and controls.

They began either to incarcerate homosexuals in asylums or to try to cure them. Sometimes they were looked upon as libertines and sometimes as delinquents... In the future we will all see them as manifesting forms of insanity, sickness of the sexual instinct. But taking such discourses literally, and thereby turning them around, we see responses arising in the form of defiance: "all right, we are the same as you, by nature sick or perverse, whichever you want. And so if we are, let us be so, and if you wish to know what we are, we can tell you better than you can." The entire literature of homosexuality, very differently from libertine narratives, appears at the end of the 19th century: recall Wilde and Gide. It is the strategic return of one "same" desire for truth.65

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While Wilde, Gide, Proust, Forster or Maugham may have been extremely successful authors with a rightful place in the canon, in spite of being homosexuals, a dehierarchist criticism cannot but observe the general discrimination against homosexuals in the cultural domains. Moreover, the homo/heterosexual dichotomy is one that no critical reading of any form of a cultural text can really bypass. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick says in her *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), one of the most important texts on homosexual criticism,

...an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition; and it will assume that the appropriate place for that critical analysis to begin is from the relatively decentered perspective of modern gay and antihomophobic theory.\(^{67}\)

It should be noted that just like gender, gay-lesbian criticism also takes off from the body and sexual practice itself, but goes far beyond it, because homophobic politics concerns cultural parameters, like the effeminacy of gays, age-old constructs about transvestism or the position of the ‘eunuch’, etc., and socio-political strictures including anti-sodomy laws, the extra-judicial legitimacy of gay-bashing, and even the recent scare of homosexuals being specifically responsible for AIDS when the HIV does not care much about its victim’s sexual preferences. Though, whether gay-lesbian criticism should be considered a part of gender is debatable, what is not is that there is absolute necessity for all politically progressive criticism to aid the homosexual to ‘come out of the closet’, as Sedgwick terms it.

VI. Conclusion: Towards a Tripartite ‘Dehierarchization’

In this chapter, I have seen how the tripartition of domains of structuration into the broad categories of the mental, the material and the physical works ‘beyond’ the Foucauldian *episteme* too. I discussed how in the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, the working of power is located in the three domains of culture, history and the individual, leading to Habermas’s composite tripartite model of the three together. I also discussed how current political cultural criticisms, which are often collectively clubbed together as ‘Cultural Materialism’ or ‘New Historicism’, get primarily divided into three domains—race, class and gender (along with homosexuality). While the initial finding in Foucault of what I have called the principle of tri-hierarchization gets confirmed with these observations, the real ‘moral’ of this chapter lies somewhere else. The way Habermas brings together the three different domains of anti-hierarchic analysis, or the way in which all the three forms of radical criticism go beyond their obvious roots into other domains, indicates that resistant reading cannot rest content with any one of these domains alone, but attack all the three poles of hierarchization together, constituting what I call a tripartite dehierarchist poetics.

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