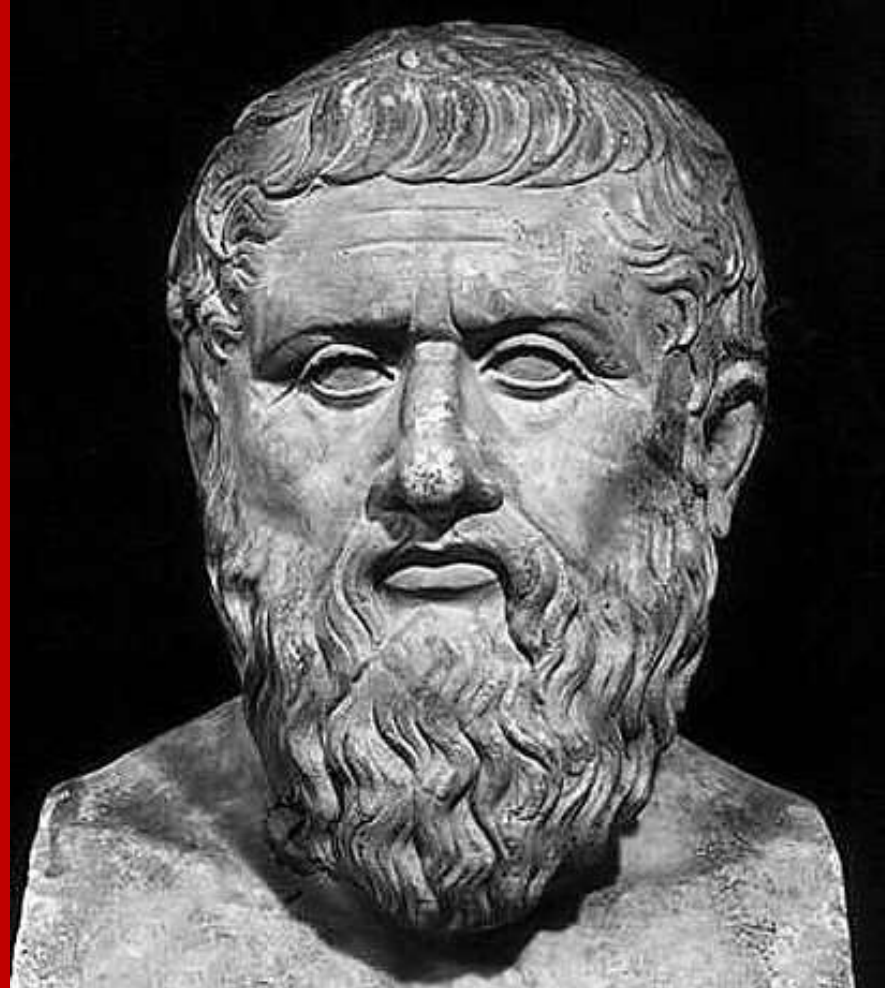


AKE 412: Literary Theory

- Homework: 20%
- Mid-term: 30%
- Final: 50%
- *Beginning Theory* by Peter Barry, *Literary Criticism* by Charles Bressler and *Critical Theory Today* by Lois Tyson

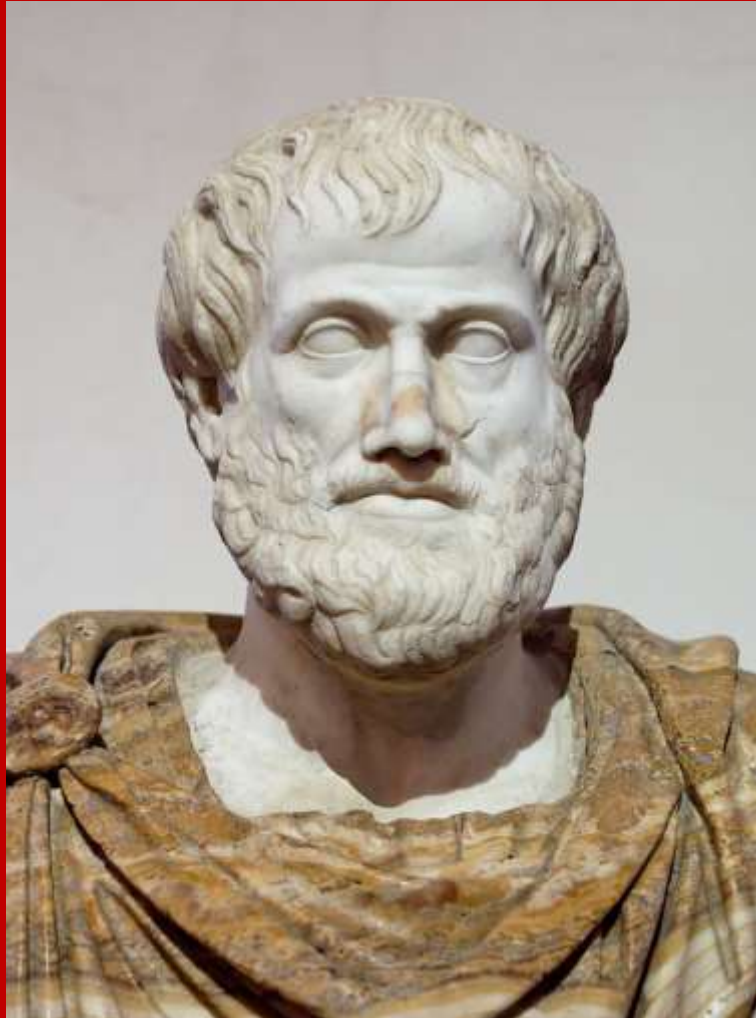
Literary Theory
VS (?)
Literary Criticism

Plato 427 B.C. – 347 B.C.



- He believed in an ideal world of absolute truths.
- Our world is a shadow of that ideal world (Plato's cave).
- Art is an imitation of our world.
- Therefore, it is an imitation of a shadow and it leads the audience away from the ideal world.

Aristotle 384 B.C. – 322 B.C.



Poetics (335 B.C.)

- Imitates what *would be* and not what *is*
- Imitation of a noble action
- Unity (cause and effect)
- Appropriate length (1 day)
- Pity and fear
- Catharsis
- Tragic hero
- Hamartia

Any objections?

First printed book

Who?

✓ **Gutenberg**

When?

✓ **1455**

Where?

✓ **Mainz**

What?

✓ **Bible**

Literary criticism until the 20th century

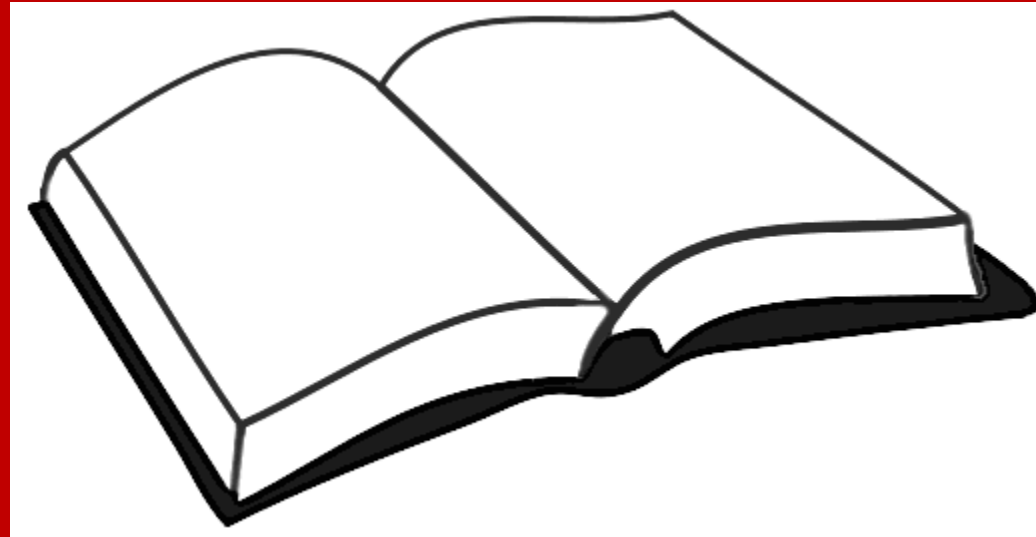
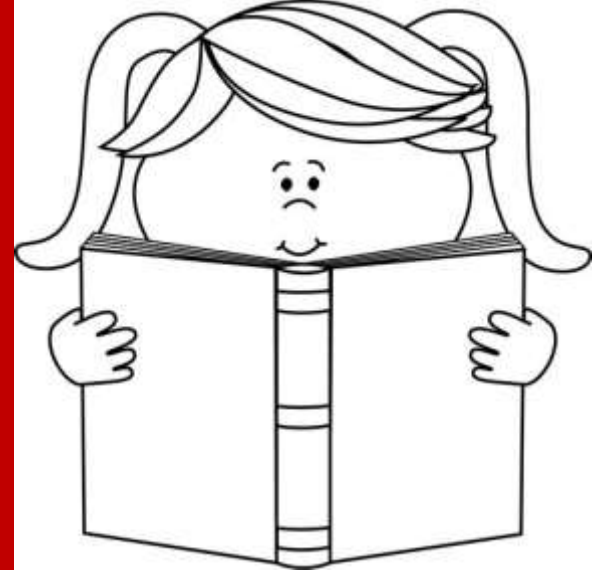
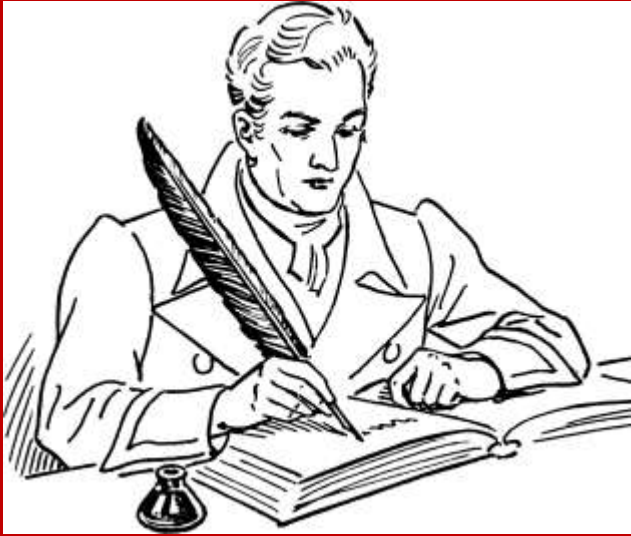
New Criticism

- *Understanding Poetry* (1938) by Brooks and Warren
- *The New Criticism* (1941) by Crowe Ransom

**Are they better than us?
We can do it too!**



Where is the meaning according to the New Critics?



Problems everywhere

- Intentional Fallacy
- Affective Fallacy
- Extrinsic analysis

Focus is on the text! And only the text!

- Information outside the text (author's biographical data, social and historical context) may be examined to help the analysis/interpretation of the text.

Because... the text has ontological status

- It means that it has its own existence
- Wholeness and unity (unity is crucial)
- Heresy of paraphrase

So what does this imply?

- Universality of human nature
- A text can have only one true interpretation

And who can discover the true meaning?

The ideal reader

So what do new critics do?

- Close reading
- Search for evidence in the text

What do they look at?

- Theme
- Tone
- Imagery
- Setting
- Literary techniques (simile, metaphor, personification etc.)
- Paradox
- Ambiguity
- Tension
- And of course unity

What kind of texts do they usually use?

- Texts of well-accepted artistic value
- They focus on excerpts of novels, poems, short stories
- Or they look for patterns

Do all these things ring a bell?

Any objections on New Criticism?

- Essentialism
- It doesn't accept the cultural, historical and political context
- It doesn't take into consideration the reader
- It has a religious-like approach to the text
- The concept of “unity” is problematic (we'll talk about this in the future)

“There Is a Girl Inside” (1977) by Lucille Clifton

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.

she has waited
patient as a nun
for the second coming,
when she can break through gray hairs
into blossom

and her lovers will harvest
honey and thyme
and the woods will be wild
with the damn wonder of it.

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
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“There Is a Girl Inside” (1977) by Lucille Clifton
Analysis (more or less) according to Lois Tyson (*Critical Theory Today* 143-47)

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
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Tension

Youth and age

Inside and outside

Paradox

Timeless youth

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.

she has waited
patient as a nun
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and her lovers will harvest
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and the woods will be wild
with the damn wonder of it.

Discovering the theme
Will youth or age prevail?

How does punctuation affect the poem?

Alternation of images ends here

The last five lines praise youth

there is a girl inside.
she is **randy as a wolf**.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.

she has waited
patient as a nun
for the second coming,
when **she can break through** gray hairs
into blossom

and **her lovers will harvest**
honey and thyme
and the woods will be wild
with the damn wonder of it.

The power of the girl
Active verbs and a **simile**

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.



Metaphor

she has waited
patient as a nun
for the second coming,
when she can break through gray hairs
into blossom

and her lovers will harvest
honey and thyme
and the woods will be wild
with the damn wonder of it.

The rejuvenating power

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a **green girl**
in a used poet.

she has waited
patient as **a nun**
for the **second coming**,
when she can break through gray hairs
into blossom

and **her lovers will harvest**
honey and thyme
and the woods will be wild
with the **damn** wonder of it.

**Now things get more complicated because of
ambiguity...**

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.

she has waited
patient as a nun
for the second coming,
when she can break through gray hairs
into blossom

and her lovers **will harvest
honey and thyme**
and the woods will be wild
with the damn wonder of it.

A paradox that merges young and old age

there is a girl inside.
she is randy as a wolf.
she will not walk away
and leave these bones
to an old woman.

she is a green tree
in a forest of kindling.
she is a green girl
in a used poet.

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and her lovers will harvest
honey and thyme
and the woods will be wild
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There is unity and the tensions are resolved. The theme is:
“Youth springs eternal in the human breast”

The Metamorphosis (1915) by Franz Kafka

One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin. He lay on his armour-like back, and if he lifted his head a little he could see his brown belly, slightly domed and divided by arches into stiff sections. The bedding was hardly able to cover it and seemed ready to slide off any moment. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked.