

Literary theory and criticism: investigating literature and literary study

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Literary theory, literary criticism Methods of studying literature are defined and described. A section on definitions and distinctions investigates literature and literary study; literary theory and literary criticism. First of all it is necessary for us to know the definition of literary theory, and literary criticism.

Nevertheless, the distinctions between literary theory, criticism, and history are the most important Literary theory is the study of the principles of literature, its categories, criteria, and the like. The theory of literature investigates the general laws of the structure and development of literature.

The history of literature studies the literary past as a process or one of the stages of this process. On the other side, literary criticism is the study, evaluation, and interpretation of literature. Modern literary criticism is often informed by literary theory, which is the philosophical discussion of its methods and goals. It is also concerned with the most recent, the “ present” state of literature.

Literary criticism is always interested in evaluating a literary work. But even though, these two are closely related, literary critics haven’t always been theorists.

Some critics consider literary criticism a practical application of literary theory, because criticism always deals directly with particular literary works, while theory may be more general or abstract. Even though literary theory and literary criticism may be defined distinctly, they are not completely separated. It seems best to draw attention to these distinctions by describing as “ literary theory” the study of the principles of literature, its categories,
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criteria, and the like, and by differentiating studies of concrete works of art as either “ literary criticism” (primarily static in approach) or “ literary history”.

Of course, “ literary criticism” is frequently used in such a way as to include all literary theory ; but such usage ignores a useful distinction.

Literary works which have been evaluated as important can than be used to draw general conclusions on a genre. This is the case with Aristotle’s Poetics. The close relation between literary theory and criticism and the other humanities was formerly reflected in the concept of philology as a synthesizing branch of learning, studying culture in all its written manifestations, including literary works.

In the mid-20th century the concept of philology suggests the affinity between literary theory and criticism and linguistics; in the strict sense philology denotes textual criticism. Even after these obvious differences, complete separation is impossible, it is inconceivable to have literary theory without criticism or history, or criticism without theory and history, or history without theory and criticism. It’s all connected.

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