What Is Literary Studies?

Christoph Reinfandt

Lecture Series
Introduction to Literary Studies
University of Tuebingen
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Questions/feedback: christoph.reinfandt@uni-tuebingen.de

Material for the Lecture Series will be provided on Moodle (Department website > ‘Studium’ > Moodle) Sign up with your student ID.
Password/enrolment key for the course: reinf1718
Outline

1) From ‘Literariness’ to Literary Studies
2) What Is Literary Studies?
3) Contemporary Fiction in the Academy
1) From ‘Literariness’ to Literary Studies

What Is Literature? (in the narrower sense)

Extrinsic answers (what it does):

- Imitation/representation > mimetic theories (< mimesis)
- Education/entertainment > pragmatic theories
- Expression > expressive theories

Intrinsic answers (what it is):

- Aesthetics: form, complexity, reflexivity \( \bigcup \) objective theories
- Depragmatization \( \bigcup \) (reflexive theories)

‘Literariness’: representation (What? / meaning)

\( \downarrow \)

performativity (How? / form)
Mimetic theories (Plato, Aristotle)
Pragmatic theories (Horace)

Expressive theories (Romanticism)
Objective theories (modernism/postmodernism)

The Basic Outline of a Systematic Approach to Western Literature (c. 1500-2017)

traditional criteria for art and literature
(based on the ideal of objective truth)

mimetic criteria  
pragmatic criteria  
expressive criteria  
reflexive criteria

modern criteria for art and literature
(based on the emerging interface of subjectivity and mediality)

Modernization: Renaissance  Neo-Classicism  Romanticism  Postmodernism
Compensation: 1500  1660  1800  1900  2000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Reader</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biographical approach (Positivism)</td>
<td>hermeneutics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological/psychoanalytical approach</td>
<td>history of reception / aesthetics of reception</td>
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<td>oeuvre studies</td>
<td>empirical reception studies</td>
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**Text**
- text-centred approaches:
  - new criticism / intrinsic approach (close reading)
  - rhetorics, stylistics, formalist/structuralist approaches
  - poststructuralism / deconstruction

**Textuality**

**Historical Reality**
- ‘background’ studies (Positivism)
- sociological approaches
- Marxist approaches/ Cultural Materialism
- New Historicism/historical discourse analysis
- feminist approaches
- postcolonial theory

**Other Texts**
- ‘sources and influence studies’
- history of topics and themes
- genre studies
- intertextuality
2) What Is Literary Studies?

Literary Criticism / Literary Studies
(Literaturkritik vs. Literaturwissenschaft)

- Description
- Analysis ▶ How? (Form, Style)
- Evaluation
- Interpretation ▶ What? (Meaning)

▲ Literary History (Canon)
▲ Literary Theory
If a common denominator can be said to have emerged from this multitude [of critical approaches], it is an awareness of the **interdependence of the literary text and the historical conditions** of its production and reception. [...] Literary studies can hence be described as both formal and cultural-historic analysis, and the requirements for literary analysis are therefore manifold: a knowledge of (literary) history, of literary and cultural theory as much as the methods and terminologies of literary analysis.

What’s the point?

- To illuminate the meaning(s) and function(s) of texts in their historical, cultural, social and psychological dimensions (from What? to How?)
- Knowledge about ourselves/human beings and our/their ways of making sense of the world (the nature of signification, the function of the imagination, the roles of medially, ...)
- To explicate, recapitulate and/or critique modes of sense-making and (aesthetic) enjoyment, both in the past and in the present

- literary studies as a historical, aesthetic and political discipline, the humanities as instances of cultural self-reflection
3) Contemporary Fiction in the Academy

Abstract
Researching contemporary fiction in the academy raises uncomfortable and worrying questions about what we academics do. It also reveals that we have yet to come to a view – not even a dissensus range of views – about what it means to research contemporary fiction. In order to begin to develop such a dissensus, this manifesto outlines nine questions or problems for the study of contemporary fiction.

Question: What makes a geek different from an academic?

Problems:

1) Period
2) Archive
3) Authors
4) Agents and Publishers
5) Globalisation
6) Genre
7) Value and Judgement
8) Form

Answers: Literary and cultural history
Inter- or even transdisciplinary theory
+ an awareness of the contingency of one’s own approach
Example 1:

Booker Prize 1981, Best of Bookers 1993 and 2008
(25th and 40th anniversary of the Booker Prize, respectively)
Example 2:

The Singer/Songwriter-Paradigm

Romantic Communication (The Lyric Turn)

Literary Communication vs. Popular Culture

Romanticism Today in Rock Music/Popular Culture

Problems of Authenticity

- literary studies and/as cultural studies/media studies
- the paradigmatic function of print culture and its displacement by other media
Next week:

Ingrid Hotz-Davies, 
Poetry I: 
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130: What to Look for in a Poem
Thank you!