

Open Learning

Translation Department

Third Year
Second Term

Literary Texts

Dr. Abed Ismail

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مجلس التعليم العالي

Good morning!

Literary Criticism

Hello everyone!

This will be our last lecture. Today, we will talk about literary criticism.

Literary criticism: the study of literary works (e.g. novels, poetry, etc).

Elements of literary criticism

Literary criticism means that I write a literary essay. So, you need to read the literary work, and when you read it and understand it, you need to write about it. When we study a poem or a novel, we follow certain steps:

1. **Description (الوصف):** What you want to do first to describe the work to the reader.

≈ So, I try to give a summary of the main elements in that novel.

2. **Analysis (التحليل):** it means to study, to establish, or to find relations between the character and the other characters, the character and the setting, the character and language, etc.

≈ So, to find relations, we study all these elements, like technique, setting, dialogue, etc.

For example, if you are studying *the first confession*, you study the relations between *Jackie* and the other characters in the story.

3. **Interpretation (التفسير):** you are trying to figure out meanings of symbolism.

So, we are not just establishing relations here. Interpretation is beyond analysis.

We say, for example, *Jackie* does not like his grandmother because she is an old lady, and she behaves in a strange way. What we need to do is to interpret this kind of relations. So, this relation can be interpreted as a conflict between two generations.

4. Evaluation (التقييم): we express our opinion. This is an act of judging; I judge the work as good or bad.

If you only describe the work, this is not criticism. When you miss any element in your essay, it can no longer be a good essay. Also, you have to go step by step; you cannot start, for example, from interpretation.

Types of criticism

Criticism may have like 10 different types. The most important ones are:

1. **Historical (تاريخي):** studying the author's age. So, we try to focus on the general background in terms of the political, social, cultural, and economic aspects of a particular age.

By "age," we mean a period of time, such as the 20th century. هي دراسة عصر الكاتب، حيث نركز على الخلفية العامة من خلال النواحي السياسية والاجتماعية والثقافية والاقتصادية لعصر معين.

2. **Rhetorical (بلاغي):** we focus on the style and figures of speech (e.g. simile, alliteration, metaphor, symbol, etc).

3. **Reader's response (استجابة القارئ):** it is the reaction of the reader or the audience. The critic tries to focus on how the work is received by different categories of audience.

For example, how university students react to a particular novel, and is it different from the reaction of a professor or an ordinary person.

The work reflects your own experience; when you read, you convey your own experience for the work. This is a new school in criticism called reader's response theory.

What is the task of the critic? It is to challenge or, perhaps, to redefine certain terms. You do not just follow terms; you redefine them.

مهمة الناقد هي إعادة تعريف بعض المصطلحات.

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Drama and Dramatic Performance

Drama: it is a type of literature written in dialogue in either prose or verse, and it is always intended to be performed.

هي نوع من الأدب مكتوب على شكل حوار إما نثري أو شعري، والغرض منها دائماً هو أن يتم تأديتها مسرحياً.

So, drama is written for both to be read as a text and to be performed. The writer of drama is called a playwright or a dramatist.

The word "drama" is derived from the Greek language, and it means "to do." So, it is connected with action and movement that can be physical (on the stage in front of your eyes) or mental.

Drama relies exclusively on dialogue, which is the main technique in drama. We do not have description in drama; we just have characters talking.

Elements required in drama

- Conflict
- Contrast
- Tension
- Passion (emotions)

Types of drama

1. Commercial theater (مسرح تجاري):

The purpose is entertainment, such as a circus (سيرك).

This is the lowest type, and usually we call it comedy. It is comical and farcical (هزلي).

It is performed by private companies or groups i.e. groups that are not affiliated with or funded by the government.

يتم تأديتها من قبل مجموعات خاصة أي أنها ليست تابعة للحكومة أو ممولة منها.

2. Mainstream (literary) theatre (مسرح سائد أو تقليدي):

It can be both comedy and tragedy because this is very serious. It is funded by the state in most countries.

3. Elitist theatre (مسرح نخبوي):

Sometimes, we refer to it as avant-grade (طليعي). It is intended for specialized tastes; it requires people who are highly-educated and intellectuals.

Remember that here we are just talking about drama as a linguistic text.

In all the times - during medieval times particularly - drama was used as a tool for propaganda. Also, theatre itself is used

as vehicle for religious teaching. Performance seems to be basic in religious rituals

Elements of dramatic performance

When the written drama becomes a play on the stage, we call it performance or dramatic performance.

There are elements to transform a text into a performance:

- Actor (performer)
- Audience

Types of performance

Verbal: actors speak and use language. It applies to all types of drama: comedy, tragedy, historical, romantic, etc.

Non-verbal: we call it pantomime (مسرحية صامتة أو إيمائية). It relies on body language, gestures, and movements. It can be only applied to puppet theatre. A puppet means a doll (دمية). It is very popular in Japan.

From the book:

A performance may be pantomimed or may use language. The performer need not even be human. Puppet drama has been popular throughout history, and mechanical or machine plays have been presented.

The performance may use a kind of accessories, like music, custom (ملابس), music, makeup, and lighting. So, these are not part of the text; they are added to the script.

From the book:

A performance may be enhanced by custom, makeup, scenery, props, lighting, music, and special effects. These are used to help create the illusion of a different character, place, and time or to enhance the special quality of the performance and differentiate it from everyday experience.

The purpose of these elements is to create a sense of reality.

مثلاً إذا كان العرض يتحدث عن فترة العصر العباسي، يقوم الممثلين بلبس ملابس من تلك الفترة، وأيضاً ربما يستخدمون لغة تكون قديمة وفصيحة.

For example, you are watching a play that is supposed to be on an island. When you enter the stage, you feel like you are really on an island surrounded by ocean, waves, fish, whales, etc. This is what we call scenery or scenic design.



In the EXAM, be careful that you may have options with different level of correctness, so you have to choose the most correct one.

You should study from both the book and the summary I am giving you, but the emphasis should be on the summary.

Do you have any questions?

Student: are Charlie Chaplin's shows considered as an example of pantomime?

Professor: no, Charlie Chaplin is a cinema actor, not a drama actor.

Student: how can I differentiate between suspense and mystery that we took last lecture?

Professor: suspense has to do with trying to solve a problem. It is connected with the plot; you do not know how the plot is going to end and solve itself.

Suspense in Arabic means حالة من الترقب. This suspense is caused by mystery (الغموض). A play could have mystery but have no suspense.

الترقب هو وليد الغموض الذي يكتنف العمل الأدبي. قد يحمل العمل الأدبي غموض ولا يحمل ترقب أي أن العمل لا يشد القارئ لمعرفة ما الذي سيحصل.

So, we always have mystery first, and then suspense. For example, the detective story is usually has suspense that is caused by the mystery of the crime.

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That is all for today
Good luck in the exam

