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Quotes about Literary Criticism

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I demand that my books be judged with utmost severity, by knowledgeable people who know the rules of grammar and of logic, and who will seek beneath the footsteps of my commas the lice of my thought in the head of my style.

- Aragon, Louis

Genuine polemics approach a book as lovingly as a cannibal spices a baby.

- Benjamin, Walter

We have our little theory on all human and divine things. Poetry, the workings of genius itself, which, in all times, with one or another meaning, has been called Inspiration, and held to be mysterious and inscrutable, is no longer without its scientific exposition. The building of the lofty rhyme is like any other masonry or bricklaying: we have theories of its rise, height, decline and fall -- which latter, it would seem, is now near, among all people.

- Carlyle, Thomas

There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

Unless criticism refuses to take itself quite so seriously or at least to permit its readers not to, it will inevitably continue to reflect the finicky canons of the genteel tradition and the depressing pieties of the Culture Religion of Modernism.

- Fiedler, Leslie

The text is merely one of the contexts of a piece of literature, its lexical or verbal one, no more or less important than the sociological, psychological, historical, anthropological or generic.

- Fiedler, Leslie

A reader who quarrels with postulates, who dislikes Hamlet because he does not believe that there are ghosts or that people speak in pentameters, clearly has no business in literature. He cannot distinguish fiction from fact, and belongs in the same category as the people who send checks to radio stations for the relief of suffering heroines in soap operas.

- Frye, Northrop

Much literary criticism comes from people for whom extreme specialization is a cover for either grave cerebral inadequacy or terminal laziness, the latter being a much cherished aspect of academic freedom.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

When everyone is against you, it means you are absolutely wrong -- or you are absolutely

right.

- Guinon, Albert

You know lots of criticism is written by characters who are very academic and think it is a sign you are worthless if you make jokes or kid or even clown. I wouldn't kid Our Lord if he was on the cross. But I would attempt a joke with him if I ran into him chasing the money changers out of the temple.

- Hemingway, Ernest

The literary critic, or the critic of any other specific form of artistic expression, may detach himself from the world for as long as the work of art he is contemplating appears to do the same.

- James, Clive

Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticizing. Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. The touchstone is emotion, not reason. We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudoscientific classifying and analyzing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon.

- Lawrence, D. H.

There is an air of last things, a brooding sense of impending annihilation, about so much

deconstructive activity, in so many of its guises; it is not merely postmodernist but preapocalyptic.

- Lehman, David

The critical method which denies literary modernity would appear -- and even, in certain respects, would be -- the most modern of critical movements.

- Man, Paul De

The great critic must be a philosopher, for from philosophy he will learn serenity, impartiality, and the transitoriness of human things.

- Maugham, W. Somerset

Interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art. Even more. It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world -- in order to set up a shadow world of meanings.

- Sontag, Susan

Let me walk three weeks in the footsteps of my enemy, carry the same burden, have the same trials as he, before I say one word to criticize.

- Unknown, Source



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