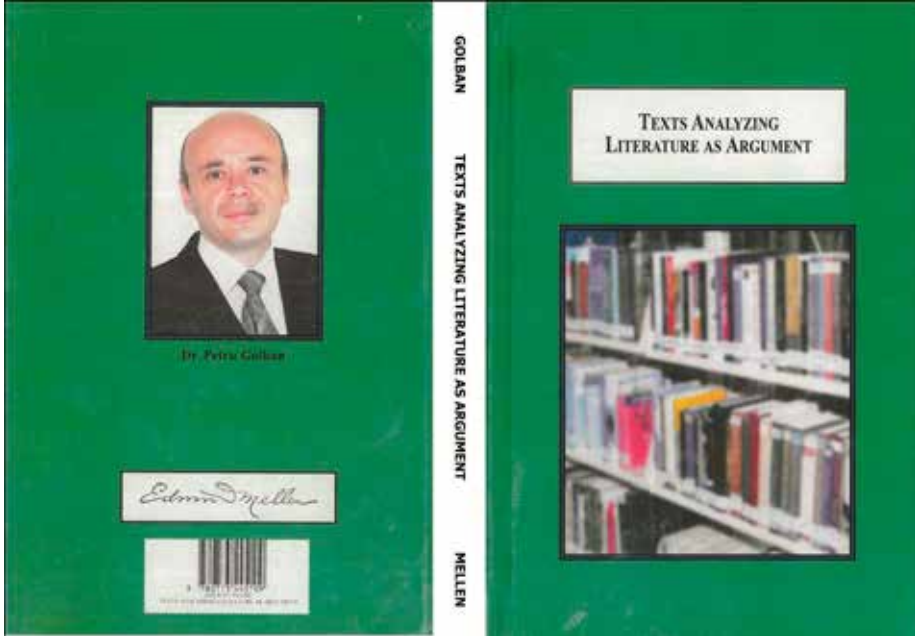


## YAYIN DEĞERLENDİRME / REVIEW

Golban, P. (2013). *Texts Analyzing Literature as Argument: From Philip Sidney to Henry James* (Lewiston USA, Queenston Canada, Lampeter United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd. 256 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-4510-9, ISBN-10: 0-7734-4510-2).

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The main concern of the book entitled *Texts Analyzing Literature as Argument: From Philip Sidney to Henry James*, written by Petru Golban, is the British critical discourse which originates in the Renaissance and continues its developmental process until the rise of the formal approach to literature in the twentieth century.

The first in the line is Sir Philip Sidney and his *The Defence of Poesie* revealing the condition of English criticism in its incipient phase, the Renaissance. John Dryden and his *Of Dramatic Poesie, An Essay* shows the criticism in the Restoration period. The eighteenth century criticism dependent on neoclassical principles is seen in Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* and *An Essay on Man*, and the rise of the English novel in the same century receives its critical expression in Henry Fielding's Preface to *Joseph Andrews*. The Romantic

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period in the history of English criticism is revealed by focusing on William Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, and Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. The condition of criticism in the Victorian age is disclosed by the assessment of Matthew Arnold's *The Study of Poetry*, John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, and Henry James's *The Art of Fiction*. It is in the case of these author-critics, more than in that of freelance or academic critics, that the critical endeavour becomes a subjective system of evaluation and a relatively autonomous act of creation that regards literary phenomenon as a pretext to invent a new discourse.

Some of these author-critics, like Sidney and Dryden, develop critical ideas based on a respectable classical tradition; others, like Coleridge and Ruskin, were more original and innovative in their critical theories. Among them, there were those who used or materialised their own artistic or literary theories in their literary texts, such as Wordsworth reifying his theory of the origin of poetry from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in his poem *Tintern Abbey*, or Pater exemplifying the principles of aestheticism in his novel *Marius the Epicurean*. For some, like for Sidney and Shelley, criticism was a means of defending the aesthetic value of literature; for others, criticism represented the instrument to be used in an attempt to found a new genre, as for Fielding and his "comic novel", or even to introduce into the contemporary culture and to validate a whole new literary movement, as for Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Before the twentieth century, apart from the common considerations as humanistic, moral, biographical, descriptive, and so on, depending on the perspective of approach, the literary criticism in Britain can be characterised as "dependent", "prescriptive", "subjective" and "defensive". These labels emerge from considering the mode of presenting the argument in the critical discourse rather than the theoretical foundation, methodology or perspective of approach. These are the characteristics of the writer-critic, his "points of view" which, like in imaginative literature, in critical works stand for the position and attitude of the author from which he perceives and evaluates literature and communicates his vision on it in a relationship involving the author of literary texts (including the critic as such an author) and the reader. These characteristics of criticism diminish in the Victorian age which represents a period of transition from the dependent on literature, subjective, normative, prescriptive, and defensive criticism of the earlier periods to the twentieth century and contemporary independent, scientific, and methodological literary theory and criticism with their own types, schools and trends.

*Texts Analyzing Literature as Argument* is closely interrelated with – or it even may be taken as an appendix to – the book entitled *The Foundations of English Literary Criticism: From Philip Sidney to Henry James*, which covers the same periods and focuses on the same writer-critics. However, the books may be read independently and not necessarily in any order.

Both books represent a laborious undertaking, in which the author attempts to achieve a fusion between literary history, literary theory, history of criticism and practical criticism, in a metacritical mode. Nevertheless, *The Foundations of English Literary Criticism*, a more theoretical and a larger one, is a monograph, whereas *Texts Analyzing Literature as Argument*, more practical and text-oriented, appeals as a student handbook with its marked didactic bias, in which certain fragments from the critical texts belonging to different writer-critics from different periods are analyzed and compared with regards to their source, form, critical concerns, argumentative methods, main critical ideas, characteristics, and other aspects. The main target of *Texts Analyzing Literature as Argument* is student audience and the intention of the work regards the needs of students in their literature classes, aiming at introducing them to the domain of literary theory and criticism. The reader of the present book acquires the knowledge of literary terminology, theoretical and critical perspectives on textual and critical typology belonging to different periods, movements, trends and genres. But the volume should be also useful to experts in literary studies, professional scholars of literary criticism, or to a more general readership, or anyone concerned with theoretical and practical consideration and understanding of literature, in general, and of English literary phenomenon, in particular, and whose knowledge on certain aspects of literature and literary criticism in Britain might be enriched by reading this book.

In tracing the foundations of British literary criticism, Petru Golban's book provides an original and systematic approach to the development of critical tradition, and covers the key literary and critical periods, literary and critical trends, literary genres, but the main focus is on individual author-critics and their major critical texts. The volume offers a viable alternative to the existing introductory volumes to literary theory and criticism, many of which are lofty and pretentious, but often disembodied, and hardly beneficial for a student audience.