

## Eagleton Outline- Anna VanSeveren

Overall thesis: Literature is not something that is objectively determined; it is based on value-judgements that both vary with history and relate to social ideologies. Literature supports these social ideologies and makes it so groups can exercise power over the social construct.

### Argument 1:

- Literature is writing that is fictional
- Fact vs. real
- Imaginative writing

### Counterargument 1:

- The distinction between fact and fiction is not black and white
- Example of how the Bible can be viewed as fact by some people and fiction by others; it's not a universal thing
- Similarly, if literature was seen as factual writing, it would exclude a lot of fictional writing
- Superman example: it's fictional but we don't see it as literature → similar to romance novels

### Argument 2: at least two paragraphs

- Literature uses language in peculiar ways → estrangement
- Russian formalists
  - Defamiliarization
    - Viewed all literature as material object (see: devices)
    - Thought that criticism should focus on how texts worked, not on the artful impact of a work – literature was not a reflection of social reality nor did it hold any huge truth
    - Didn't want to see literature as an expression of an author's mind
    - Devices: imagery, syntax, meter, etc.
      - What these had in common was what distinguished literature from non-literature (“language made strange”) – special language v. ordinary language

### Counterargument 2:

- In order to spot a deviation of language, you have to be able to know where it is deviating from – you have to know what the “normal” language is
- There is no “normal” language, no common language shared by everyone
- One person's normal language is not the same as someone else's
- Context is what tells someone that something is literary
- There is no writing that cannot be read as “strange”

- Formalists are actually looking at literature like poetry

#### Argument 3:

- Literature is non-pragmatic; it serves no practical purpose, but instead refers to a general state of affairs
- We don't read literature to get anything from it
- Leaves the definition up to how someone decides to read
- "Non-pragmatic discourse"

#### Counterargument 3:

- Practicality of literature is considered important to the effect of it
- This definition of literature is not objective; it leaves the reader to define it by how they decide to read it
- Pieces of writing can be intended to be non-pragmatic, but people still might not read them that way

#### Argument 4:

- Literature is any writing that someone values highly or thinks is good

#### Counterargument 4:

- Good, except that you have to acknowledge that literature is not objective and that pretty much anything can be considered literature
- Also have to acknowledge the fact that something that is considered literature right now might not be considered literature forever
- Too variable- based on what's good or bad (so technically there is no bad literature)

#### Ideology- THESIS

- Power structure of society that determines what we believe to a degree
- See quotes on page 13
- By adding ideology to value, it means that we value that by which we are told we need to value
- Practical criticism- don't mention/take too long on
- Ideology is an overarching thing
- There is no essence of literature – it doesn't exist to the extent that an insect does
- We're conditioned and controlled by those who are in charge
- Left to your devices, you will like what you value, not what society values

#### Stages of Eagleton's thought:

1. If there is something called literary theory, then there has to be something called literature