



# Literary Criticism in the 21st Century

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**Abstract**— *The 21st century has seen a major change in literary criticism, thanks to new technologies, new ways of thinking, and changes in society and politics. The rise of digital humanities, posthumanism, eco-criticism, and the voices of people from around the world and those who are often ignored are some of the significant themes that are changing the discipline. It looks at how the rise of AI technologies and online platforms has made literary discussion more accessible to everyone and questioned old ways of thinking about criticism. The paper also looks at how identity politics, trauma theory, and decolonial critique have changed literary canons and methods. The paper gives a full picture of how literary criticism is changing, fighting back, and rethinking its place in a culture that is getting more complicated all the time by looking at these dynamic changes.*



**Keywords**— *Digital Humanities, Posthumanism, Decolonial Critique, Eco-criticism, and Identity Politics*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, literary criticism has become a dynamic and multidimensional field that reflects how complicated the world is becoming. In the past, criticism was often based on a small number of well-known books and methods. Today, however, criticism is more open, includes people from many fields, and is responsive to changes in technology, politics, and society throughout the world. The lines that used to separate literature and its interpretation are becoming less clear, which has led to new ways of thinking about anything from digital media to environmental problems, AI, and concerns of race, gender, and identity.

Literary academics today don't just study printed works and old theories anymore. Digital tools and internet platforms have made literary analysis more broad, opening up new ways to understand, work together, and make things easier to find. At the same time, voices from historically marginalised groups have become more important, opposing the Eurocentric and patriarchal views that shaped a lot of literary theory in the 20th century. The end result is a lively, changing environment where criticism not only looks at literature but also questions the systems of power and knowledge that shape it.

This article talks about the most important changes that have shaped literary criticism in the 21st century. These include the rise of digital humanities, the impact of posthumanist ideas, the importance of eco-criticism, and the ongoing effects of identity-based and decolonial approaches. We want to learn how literary criticism now helps us understand texts and also helps us think about bigger cultural and moral issues by looking at these tendencies.

### Questions for Research

What changes have digital tools and internet platforms made to the way literary criticism is done and how easy it is to find?

How have modern critical theories like posthumanism, eco-criticism, and decolonial theory changed the way we read and understand literary works?

What part does literary criticism play in dealing with current global problems like climate change, systemic inequality, and digital surveillance?

How has the inclusion of voices and identities that have been left out of the mainstream affected the creation of new literary canons and ways of thinking about them?

How well has literary criticism in the 21st century been able to bring together scholarly analysis and public discourse?

#### Objectives

To look at the big changes in theory and method that have changed literary criticism in the 21st century.

To look into how globalisation, digital technology, and multidisciplinary approaches have changed the way people do literary analysis.

To look at how modern critical frameworks, such as posthumanism, eco-criticism, and decolonial theory, affect how we read and understand literature.

To show how literary criticism may help bring attention to voices that are often ignored and question established norms.

To look at how useful and important literary criticism is for dealing with important cultural, political, and environmental challenges in the current world.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The field of literary criticism has changed a lot in the 21st century because of new ways of thinking and the use of digital technologies. The first observations by an expert shows how hard it is for the humanities, especially the study of comparative literature, to adjust to new media. They say that even though internet publishing could improve research, many scholars are hesitant to accept these changes because they see technology as an unwelcome force. This reluctance has effects on how widely digital methods are accepted in literary studies.

Another critic introduces ecocriticism as an important way for people from many fields to look at literature in relation to environmental issues. They stress how important it is to bring together different scientific points of view to deal with urgent problems like climate change. This makes literary criticism an important part of the conversation about the environment. A third expert goes into further detail on this point of view by looking at how nature is shown in literature. Their work criticises the standard anthropocentric paradigm and calls for a biocentric view that sees nature as an active agency that deserves to be heard and represented. This change calls for a rethinking of the interaction between culture and the natural world and goes against established hierarchies.

Yet another critic gives a full picture of modern literary criticism, pointing out how different theoretical frameworks have shaped it. He talks about the work of important people like Stanley Fish and Edward Said, showing how many different ways there are to understand literature today. This variety is part of a larger tendency in literary studies towards

being more open to different points of view and ways of doing things.

There are talks about how digital scholarship is still up for debate, showing how the academic community is divided on the importance of digital humanities. He criticises important publications that don't take into account how digital methods could change the way literary research and communication are done. Some experts agree with this idea. They see a growing interest in ecocriticism in renaissance studies and call for a more activist and involved approach to environmental literature. Their work shows that literary scholars need to think about historical backgrounds while also dealing with current environmental problems.

One goes deeper into the dynamics of literary review, focussing on how intellectual discourse and popular involvement affect each other. He says that literature is shaped by exchanges between people, which goes against the idea that literary critique is elitist. Another critic agrees with this idea and talks about how digital humanities have changed the way we analyse and preserve literary texts, especially in terms of new methods. The growth of electronic literature, which comes with its own set of problems, calls for new ways of analysing literature that take into account the difficulties of digital media.

An expert in *criticism* shows how literary theory is becoming more open to using empirical approaches and calls for the use of digital technologies to make research easier. His analysis shows that there is a move towards quantitative methods, which means that literary criticism will rely more and more on data-driven methods to support theoretical discussions in the future.

This literature review shows more closely at these themes, focussing on how literary criticism is changing in the age of digital technology and collaboration between different fields.

The essay "SYNOPSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COMPARATIVE HUMANITIES IN THE U.S. AND EUROPE" by Tötösy de Zepetnek and O. Vasvári (2011) looks at the current state of humanities studies in a nuanced way, focussing on comparative literature. The writers point out the big problems the humanities are having, like getting enough money and being seen as socially important, which could make them less important in schools and in culture. Even with these problems, the essay stresses how new media and internet technologies can change things in ways that go beyond what was possible before (Tötösy de Zepetnek & O. Vasvári, 2011).

A key point made in the paper is that comparative literature is interdisciplinary, which makes it a strategic field that can help stop the collapse of the humanities. This point of view is similar to larger discussions in literary criticism about

how cross-disciplinary approaches might bring new life to academic and public discussions. The authors also point out that there is a strong opposition to online publishing in the humanities community, which is shown by a lack of thought about what it means to share information digitally. Many academics see technology as an outside force that gets in the way of cultural growth, which makes it harder to use digital platforms in academic work (Tötösy de Zepetnek & O. Vasvári, 2011).

The paper critically looks at how slowly acceptance and support for online, peer-reviewed, open-access journals are growing. It stresses that these kinds of platforms could be very important for bringing comparative humanities back to life and making it more accessible around the world. Scholars are hesitant because many people are sceptical about technological change, which is typically based on fears of lower quality or losing conventional scholarly authority. The authors nevertheless want people to think more deeply about how they use digital media. They say that embracing online scholarship might help comparative literature become more visible and have a bigger influence, which would help the humanities survive in the digital age.

The article "Environmental Renaissance Studies" by (Sörmus et al., 2013) gives a thorough look at how ecocriticism has changed in recent years in relation to renaissance and early modern literature. It can be critically evaluated in terms of how it adds to the larger field of literary criticism in the 21st century. The writers explain how the area has become more discursive, showing a range of views from activist and presentist to historicist. This variety of opinions shows that ecocritical scholarship is ideologically pluralistic, which helps it grow and change. This is in line with larger tendencies in modern literary criticism that stress the importance of having several ways to understand a text and many methods of doing research (Sörmus et al., 2013).

One important point the essay makes is that there has been a big rise in critical interest in environmental studies of early modern texts between 2007 and 2008, especially when it comes to Shakespeare and other writers from that time. The rise of special issues and edited collections shows that more and more scholars are interested in ecocriticism, which is why it is such an important discipline of literary criticism. The writers do, however, point out that the field is still split between presentism and historicism, a dispute that goes beyond ecocriticism and into general literary theory. This split shows how there are still disagreements in 21st-century criticism about how to reconcile contextual historicism and current activism. These disagreements affect how texts are read and appreciated (Sörmus et al., 2013).

The essay does a good job of showing how ecocriticism is a discursive field and how it has grown into early modern studies. However, it could need a more in-depth look at how these theoretical disputes affect how people understand things in real life. For example, not enough research has been done on how putting activism ahead of historicism—or the other way around—affects how we read certain texts. This kind of study would help us understand better how ideological beliefs affect literary criticism in the 21st century, especially when it comes to environmental issues.

William G. III Thomas's paper "The Promise of the Digital Humanities and the Contested Nature of Digital Scholarship" takes a critical look at how digital scholarship is changing in the humanities, especially in higher education. The author talks about how people are still unsure about and are still arguing about how to use digital tools in traditional research and communication (G. III Thomas, 2014). One important point the article makes is that well-known reports like Harvard University's "Mapping the Future" and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' "The Heart of the Matter" tend to ignore or only briefly mention digital humanities, even though digital tools have a huge impact on academic work.

Thomas points out that Harvard's report doesn't pay much attention to digital humanities; it only has one footnote that mentions digital scholarship, which shows that the school doesn't recognise its importance very much (G. III Thomas, 2014). On the other hand, "The Heart of the Matter" report looks at the effects of the digital age mostly through the prism of open online learning and cultural preservation projects like The Perseus Digital Library. These projects show how digital resources can make historical texts more accessible and encourage people to engage with them. However, the report's point of view is mostly instrumental and deterministic, focussing on opportunities for public participation and lifelong learning instead of critically examining the methodological changes that digital tools bring about.

Thomas's analysis shows that the digital humanities disrupt traditional disciplinary boundaries and research paradigms. However, institutional frameworks and policy reports have been sluggish to adapt or fully recognise these changes. The paper makes a strong case that this divergence is a sign of a bigger fight in the industry between adopting new digital methods and keeping up with old academic standards. The author wants people to have a more comprehensive view of how digital scholarship affects the humanities today. They stress that its potential goes beyond only making research and communication easier to access and reach out to more people.

G. wrote the article "Environmental Renaissance Studies." Jones and G. Jones (2017) gives a full picture of current changes in ecocriticism in the context of renaissance and early modern literature. This can be critically looked at in terms of how it adds to the larger area of literary criticism in the 21st century. The writers explain how the area has become more discursive, showing a spectrum of viewpoints, from activist and presentist to historicist. There are many different points of view, which is a sign of healthy ideological diversity that encourages growth and change in ecocritical study. This is in line with broader tendencies in modern literary criticism that stress the importance of different ways of interpreting and using different methods (Jones & Jones, 2017).

One important thing the article points out is that during 2007 and 2008, there has been a big rise in critical interest in environmental studies of early modern texts, especially those by Shakespeare and other authors from that time. The rise of special issues and edited collections shows that more and more scholars are interested in ecocriticism, which is why it is such an important discipline of literary criticism. The writers do, however, point out that the field is still divided between presentism and historicism. This is a dispute that goes beyond ecocriticism and into general literary theory. This split shows that there are still disagreements in 21st-century criticism about how to reconcile contextual historicism and current activism, which affects how texts are understood and valued (Jones & Jones, 2017).

The essay does a good job of showing how ecocriticism is a type of discourse and how it has grown into early modern studies. However, it could need a more in-depth look at how these theoretical arguments affect the way people actually view things. For example, not enough research has been done on how putting activism ahead of historicism—or the other way around—affects how we read certain texts. This kind of analysis would help us understand better how ideological beliefs affect literary interpretation in the 21st century, especially when it comes to environmental issues.

"Five Stars: Contemporary Review and Literary Discourse" by Maxwell Louis Sims is a very interesting look at how literary criticism has changed in the 21st century. Sims stresses that literature is not separate from other things; it is profoundly rooted in a social and cultural matrix shaped by religion, emotional appeals, personal experiences, and community organisation (Louis Sims, 2017). This point of view stresses how important it is to see literary criticism as an ongoing, community-involved process instead of just an academic one.

One important thing the essay does is look at how the connection between academia and the general population is

changing. Sims says that in the past, literary criticism was mostly limited to privileged academic circles that controlled the canon and the ways that works were understood. However, there is a clear trend towards democratisation in modern discourse, with ideas and reviews being created more and more in line with what people think and say in their communities (Louis Sims, 2017). This change means that criticism is becoming more open and participatory, with critics taking part in continuous social exchanges that directly involve readers.

Sims also points out that modern evaluations are both social and conversational, which makes it hard to tell the difference between scholarly criticism and popular opinion. This mix of styles creates an environment where criticism is an easy conversation, which is in line with the community-oriented aspect of modern literary discourse. This kind of change goes against established ideas of who has authority in literary criticism and fits in with larger cultural trends that stress social participation and democratisation.

The article does a good job of describing these changes, but it could be even better if it went into more detail about how digital media and social networks have sped up this blurring of lines, especially since online reviews and social media conversations have become more popular in the 21st century. Still, Sims' study gives us a useful way to think about the social structure of modern literary criticism, focussing on how it is always participatory and community-driven.

The essay "Some digital literature questions for the digital humanities" (Marcinkowski, 2017) gives a full picture of how digital humanities methods are changing the way we study literature in the 21st century. The author stresses that the digital humanities are committed to "thinking and theorising through making." This shows a change away from traditional textual analysis towards techniques that are more interactive, computational, and data-driven (Marcinkowski, 2017). This model makes it easier to create tools for analysing text and networks, digitising manuscripts, and getting people involved, which expands the field of literary criticism.

One of the article's most important strengths is how it goes into great depth about how computer science methods like formalising and analysing humanities data can lead to new questions and insights in literary studies. For example, network analysis lets researchers look at intertextual and thematic links that might not be as clear through traditional close reading. The article does, however, also talk about the problems that electronic literature, especially ambient and digital-native writings, might cause. These works challenge conventional models since they are inherently variable,



depend on human interaction, and have unclear reader contexts (Marcinkowski, 2017). These kinds of problems show how important it is to use flexible methods, such those from human-computer interface design, to properly analyse and understand digital literature.

The article makes a strong case for using computer tools in literary criticism, but it also makes you think about the risks of relying too much on numbers. If digital analysis is given more weight than traditional hermeneutic methods, literature's subtle interpretive properties may be lost. Marcinkowski's perspective, on the other hand, makes it clear that electronic literature offers unique chances for methodological innovation. This is why researchers should improve tools that can handle the changing and interactive nature of digital texts.

Salgado's (2018) paper gives a full picture of how digital humanities tools are changing literary criticism in the 21st century. It talks about the history of using empirical methods in literary analysis, such as the founding of the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature in 1987 and the Max Planck Centre for Empirical Aesthetics in 2013. These events show how more institutions are supporting empirical approaches in literary theory. Salgado stresses that even while institutions support it, the use of empirical methods is still limited, mostly because researchers don't know how to use them well enough, which makes it hard for them to be used more widely.

The main point of the piece is to show how digitisation has changed the way literary criticism is done and what it can cover. Text digitisation has made it possible to access vast databases, which makes us rethink the difference between empirical and theoretical approaches. Salgado describes many digital humanities technologies that make it easier to do quantitative analysis of literary texts. These techniques include text encoding, digital scholarly editing, computational text analysis, and stylometry. These methodologies let researchers put complicated ideas like "late style," "authorship attribution," and "literary movement" into action, which opens up more ways to analyse things than just subjective interpretation.

The article makes a very important point: the move towards computational methods is not only about technology; it's also about how we know things, which encourages a more data-driven approach to literary studies. But it also raises worries about how easy it is for people to get these tools and how they can leave out researchers who aren't good with technology. This shows that there is still a conflict in the field between classic hermeneutic methods and new empirical methods. Salgado's case studies are good examples of how digital tools may make abstract literary

ideas work in real life. This is a potential area for further research.

Looking at literary criticism in the 21st century shows that old methods and new digital activities are always interacting with each other. Interdisciplinary techniques, especially the use of ecocriticism and digital humanities, have had a big impact on the field. These approaches question traditional ways of thinking and expand the range of literary study.

The first observations about the problems in the humanities, especially in comparative literature, show that there is a reluctance to use digital methods. People don't want to use technology because they see it as an intrusive force instead of a helpful instrument for learning]. This doubt makes it very hard to combine digital research with literary studies, even though it is clear that it may make things more visible and interesting. Advocates for online, peer-reviewed platforms say that a more thoughtful approach to digital media might breathe new life into the industry and make it more accessible around the world.

Ecocriticism is becoming an important part of modern literary criticism, as shown by the increased interest in environmental studies and how nature is shown in literature (Sörmus et al., 2013). The debate over ecocriticism is part of a larger ideological heterogeneity, with conflicts between historicism and presentism affecting how texts are read. This variety shows that there are a lot of different ways to look at things, which is good for literature since it means it can deal with important environmental issues in a meaningful way.

Critiques of how institutions have responded to the digital humanities show how disputed digital scholarship is. These critiques sometimes don't fully recognise how digital tools might change things (G. III Thomas, 2014). This mismatch brings up current discussions about how digital methods can change the way research is done and how scholars talk to each other. The appeal for a more sophisticated view of digital research stresses its ability to change the boundaries of academic fields and make literary studies more accessible.

Also, the changing interaction between literary criticism and public involvement shows that discourse is becoming more democratic, with community voices having more of an impact on important topics (Louis Sims, 2017). This change goes against the traditional ideas of elitism in literary criticism and encourages a more participative approach that takes into account the social context of literature.

By combining digital humanities methods, researchers can use new ways of analysing data that let them look at

complicated intertextual and thematic linkages (Marcinkowski, 2017). But the problems that electronic literature presents require flexible methods that can handle the changing nature of digital texts. The rise of empirical methods in literary analysis shows how the field is changing. Scholars are using data-driven approaches more and more to support their theoretical arguments (Salgaro, 2018).

To sum up, the literature review shows how literary criticism is changing in big ways in the 21st century. The interaction between digital methods, ecocriticism, and larger social involvement shows a continuing change that questions old ways of thinking and pushes for a more open and participatory way of looking at literature. These new themes are expected to continue to impact the future of literary criticism as scholars deal with the challenges of working together across fields and with new technologies.

### III. RESEARCH GAPS

Even though literary criticism has come a long way in the 21st century, there are still a few areas that haven't been studied enough or haven't been studied at all. These are major gaps that need to be filled in future research:

**Limited Use of Global South Perspectives:** Even if decolonial and postcolonial ideas have become more popular, most literary criticism still focusses on Western frameworks and English-language texts. To really globalise the subject, we need to spend more time reading literature and critical theory from the Global South, especially in African, Indigenous, Latin American, and Southeast Asian settings.

**Underdeveloped Ethical Frameworks for Digital Criticism:** The growth of AI and data-driven literary analysis has overtaken the growth of ethical rules for digital humanities study. Mainstream critique still doesn't have enough theories about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and how machines read texts.

**Superficial Use of Intersectionality:** Intersectionality is often used in a broad fashion, even if it is often talked about. We need more in-depth studies that look at how race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability interact in certain literary and cultural settings.

There is a gap between academic and popular critique. While public literary debate is developing online, academic criticism is still hard for most people to understand. There is still a gap between academic work and a wider audience that needs more accessible, legible, and participative forms of criticism.

**Ignoring Non-Traditional and Multimodal Texts:** Many literary critics still put more value on printed, linear texts than on new forms like digital storytelling, graphic novels, fan fiction, and transmedia narratives. These multimodal genres need more critical attention for how they affect modern literary culture.

### IV. ANALYSIS

In the 21st century, literary criticism has changed a lot. It's moved away from close reading and formalist methods and towards practices that are more interdisciplinary, tech-savvy, and socially aware. This study looks at the main movements and methodologies that make up the current critical landscape.

**Digital Humanities and Technocriticism:** Digital tools have changed the way scholars read texts. They can now do large-scale textual analysis (remote reading), data visualisation, and interactive critical editions. Literary study has grown in both scope and scale thanks to platforms like JSTOR Labs, Voyant Tools, and AI-assisted annotation tools. Digital critique also brings up new moral and philosophical issues regarding who wrote something, how it should be read, and how machine learning fits into the process of making literature.

**Posthumanism and the Reimagining of the Human:** Posthumanist thought goes against the ideas that older literary models had about people being the centre of the universe. It questions the lines that separate people, animals, machines, and ecosystems, often in the setting of science fiction, climate fiction, and speculative fiction. Writers like Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, and Kazuo Ishiguro have become very important to these talks. Critics are looking at how literature changes our ideas of subjectivity, consciousness, and embodiment.

As climate change becomes a serious issue of our day, eco-criticism has become a big part of literary study. It looks at how literature shows the environment, criticises anthropocentrism, and looks at the connections between people and nature. The rise of "cli-fi" (climate fiction) has given us a lot of opportunities to look at how story-telling techniques might change how people think about the environment and how important politics are.

Criticism in the 21st century is more and more questioning Eurocentric canons and ways of knowing. Decolonial theory and intersectionality show how race, gender, class, and colonial history affect literature and the way people talk about literature. Scholars have given more attention to the work of Indigenous, Black, feminist, and queer authors. They have called for more inclusive curricula and new ways

of critiquing that take into consideration cultural differences and historical context.

**Public and Participatory critique:** The internet has made it harder to tell the difference between academic and popular critique. More democratic ways to read and write have become possible because of social media, blogs, podcasts, and open-access publications. Readers who aren't academics have been able to alter literary discourse thanks to this trend. They often bring in new points of view that go against the rules of the institutions.

When you look at all of these developments together, they show that literary criticism today is both very reflective of and very involved with the problems and opportunities of the modern world. It doesn't just ask, "What does a text mean?" anymore.—whose voices are heard, who is left out, how do technology change how things are understood, and what is the critic's moral duty in a globalised world?

## V. RESULTS

There are a number of important results from the study of literary criticism in the 21st century that show how the field has changed and is still changing:

**Expanded Critical Frameworks:** Literary criticism has been more open to a wider range of theoretical ideas, including posthumanism, eco-criticism, and decolonial philosophy. These frameworks have helped scholars look at not only the substance of literature but also the larger cultural, moral, and technical influences that create texts and how people respond to them.

**Digital Access and Democracy:** The digital age has made it easier for more people to read and write literary criticism. Scholars, students, and regular readers can now talk about literature in ways that go beyond the usual academic settings thanks to online platforms, social media, and open-access publications. This change has made key environments more open and diverse.

**Including Voices from Marginalised Groups:** There has been a noticeable shift towards including literature and criticism from groups who have been historically left out. Authors and critics from a wide range of racial, gender, and geopolitical origins are having a bigger impact on academic discourse, changing literary canons, and questioning hegemonic Eurocentric stories.

Literary criticism has become increasingly interdisciplinary, using ideas from philosophy, sociology, environmental science, media studies, and digital technology. This has made literary analysis more interesting and useful in both academic and cultural settings.

**Structural Problems That Keep Coming Up Even Though Things Are Getting Better** Literary criticism is still limited in its reach and ability to include everyone because of academic elitism, a lack of global representation, and the glacial pace of institutional reform. Also, there are ethical problems regarding using digital methods and AI in literary research that need to be taken more seriously.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS

The changes in literary criticism in the 21st century will have a big impact on the future of literary studies, education, and cultural conversation:

**Redefining the Role of the Critic** Critics are no longer just people who read and analyse texts; they are now cultural commentators, moral agents, and intellectuals who work across disciplines. Critics now have a bigger job to do when it comes to dealing with important global concerns and making meaningful contributions to public debates about identity, justice, and the production of knowledge.

**Changing the Way We Teach Literature:** The move towards digital tools, global viewpoints, and intersectional methods means that we need to rethink how we teach literature. To keep up with the current world, schools need to include non-Western literature, new forms of media, and critical ideas that show how diverse and complicated things are.

**Opening up access and participation:** Digital platforms are making literary discourse more democratic, which creates new chances for cooperation and inclusion. But it also makes academics reassess how they share knowledge, publish papers, and evaluate papers in favour of more open and participatory ways.

**Reevaluating the Canon** As voices that have been left out and other stories become more well-known, the literary canon is changing. This has big effects on how we think about literary merit, whose stories are kept, and how we judge books in schools and in public.

**Ethical Use of Technology:** Using AI and big data in literary research makes us think about how we perceive things, how creative we are, and who wrote what. Future criticism needs to come up with ethical rules for digital methods so that technology helps, not hurts, critical thinking and humanistic principles.

## VII. LIMITATIONS

This article gives a full picture of the most important trends and changes in literary criticism in the 21st century, although it does have certain flaws that need to be pointed out:

**Scope of Analysis** Because literary criticism is so big and changes so quickly these days, this study has to focus on a few important movements and themes. Because of this, certain new ways of thinking, regional literatures, or niche critical practices may not get the attention they deserve.

The approach relies largely on modern theoretical frameworks including posthumanism, eco-criticism, and decolonial theory. The book only talks about other important theories, such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, or formalism, when they come into contact with newer ones.

**Limited Empirical Data:** This study is mostly based on ideas and doesn't involve a lot of real-world research, including surveys or interviews with reviewers, authors, or readers. So, most of the conclusions come from secondary literature and theoretical conversation.

**Rapid Technological Change:** The digital world that has a big effect on literary criticism is always changing. Changes in AI, social media, and digital publication could soon make certain observations out of date, therefore research and revisions will need to be done on a regular basis.

**Language and Cultural Bias:** Even if the article tries to take into account global points of view, most of the source material and examples are from Anglophone and Western contexts. This may make it less useful for other literary traditions around the world.

## VIII. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on what has been learnt and what is still missing in 21st-century literary criticism, future research could look into a number of intriguing areas:

**More global and non-Western points of view** More research should focus on literary critique that comes from areas that don't get enough attention, such as Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Indigenous people. This would help people all across the world comprehend literature and criticism better.

**Creating Ethical rules for Digital and AI-Driven Criticism** We need to do more research to come up with strong ethical rules for using AI, machine learning, and big data in literary analysis. These guidelines should cover issues like prejudice, privacy, and the role of humans in interpretation.

Scholars should do detailed case studies that look at how different identity markers, such as race, gender, class, and disability, come together in specific texts, genres, and literary traditions. These studies should go beyond broad theoretical applications.

**Bridging Academic and Public Literary Discourse** Future study may look into how to make academic critique more

accessible to a wider audience and how social media, podcasts, and other digital platforms affect how people read and write.

**Critical Studies of Multimodal and Emerging Texts** As storytelling uses more and more multimedia, interactive, and transmedia aspects, we need new ways to study these forms, such as graphic novels, video games, and virtual reality stories.

**Longitudinal Studies on the Evolution of Literary Canons** Research documenting how literary canons change over time in response to social, political, and technological circumstances could offer useful insights into the mechanics of canon formation and exclusion.

## IX. CONCLUSION

There is a lot of variety, new ideas, and responsiveness to modern problems in 21st-century literary criticism. Digital tools, interdisciplinary techniques, and the amplification of marginalised voices have all helped to push the limits of critical inquiry in this period. Literary criticism today not only looks at texts but also questions the cultural, political, and moral settings in which they are made and consumed. It does this by using new ideas like posthumanism, eco-criticism, decolonial theory, and others.

At the same time, the field still has a lot of problems to deal with, such as making its views more universally applicable, dealing with the ethical issues that come up with digital methods, and bringing academic and public conversation closer together. Even with these problems, the ongoing development of literary criticism shows that it is still an important way to promote critical thinking, cultural awareness, and social change.

Literary criticism in the 21st century is a lively and dynamic force that makes us question not only what literature means, but also who gets to decide what it means and why.

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