

The Words of God and Men: Literary Criticism of the Book of Mormon

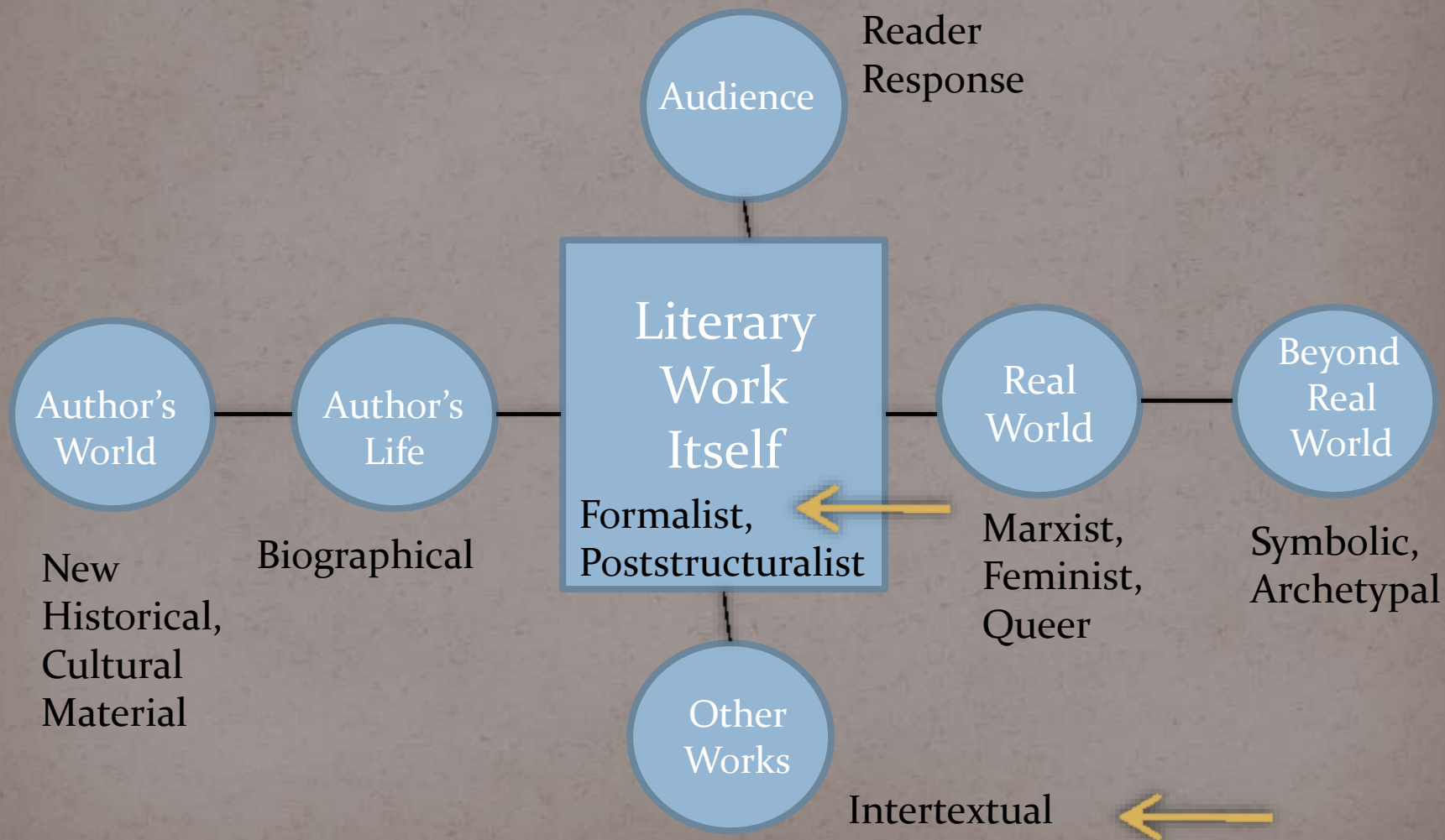
Robert Weatherford

What is Literary Criticism?

- Broadly, an evaluation or interpretation of a text
 - Not a pejorative term
- After the rise of theory, criticism branched into a multitude of approaches
 - Psychoanalytic criticism
 - Marxist criticism
 - Feminist criticism
 - And many others



Elements of Literary Criticism



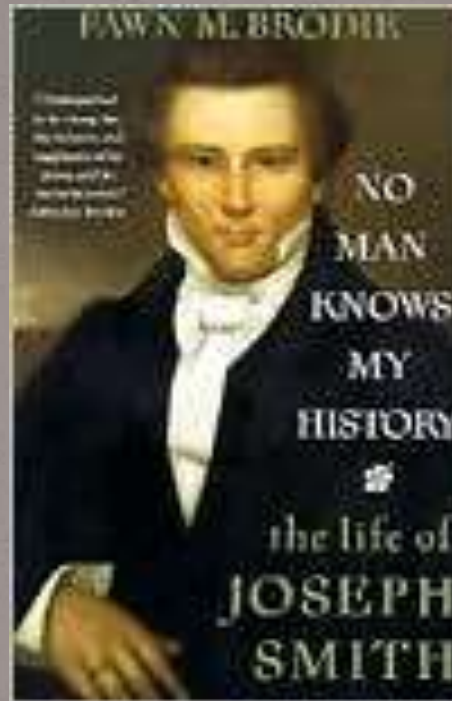
What is the Book of Mormon?

- A religious text first published in 1830
- Purportedly a translation of ancient records documenting the history of a group of fugitive Israelites



Literary Criticism of the Book of Mormon

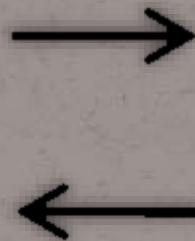
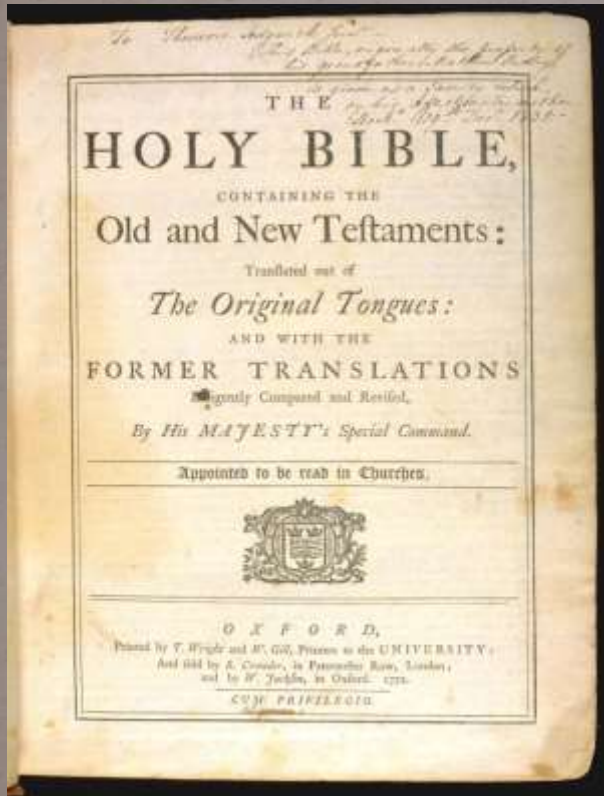
- Previous studies



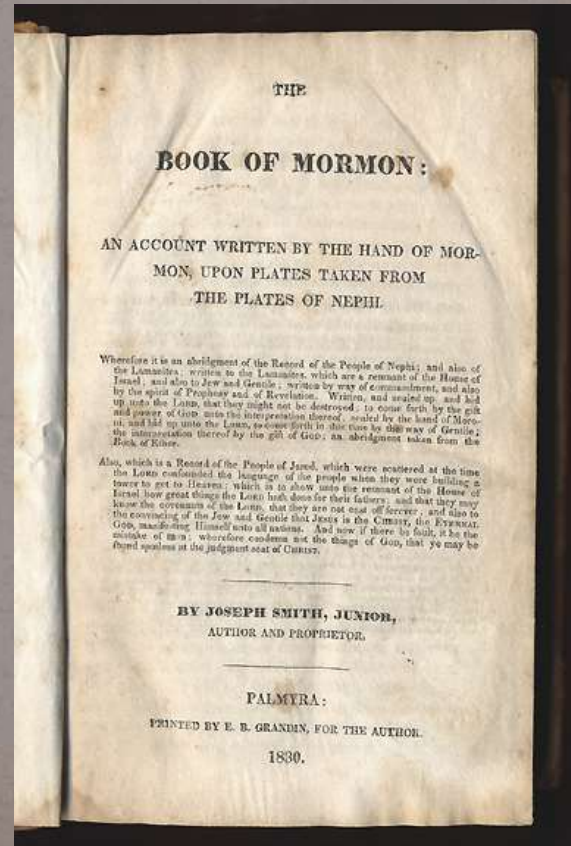
- My study
 - Formalist approach—begins with the text
 - Higher criticism of the Bible as model
 - Literary criticism ≠ critique of religion

Results

- King James Version of the Bible (1611)



- Book of Mormon (1830)



Results: Early Modern English

- Book of Mormon
 - Many well-constructed verbal tenses and grammatical phrases
- Occasional errors
 - -(e)th
 - Thou/ye
- KJV Bible
 - Perfect execution



Results: Narratology

- Book of Mormon
 - Loss of first-person identity
 - Inexplicable past tenses
- KJV Bible
 - Superscriptions
 - Complicated verbal tenses and narrators



Results: Semiotics

- Book of Mormon
 - Lists containing English and non-English objects
- KJV Bible
 - Exotic sounding names of spices and other objects

Book of Mormon Animal	Apologist “Candidate” Animal
Horse	Tapir
Elephant	Bison
Curelom	Mastodon/something extinct
Cumom	Mastodon/something extinct

Conclusion

- The Book of Mormon replicates the language and style of the KJV Bible
- Further research
 - Continued academic discussion of the textual phenomenon

