

THEMES *In* COMMUNICATION *Writing*



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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CRITICAL WRITING AND REVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

Criticism is a form of mass communication. The journalist engages in it to propagate knowledge and ideas to a vast audience. This is a significant purpose in criticism and critical writing. The objective of criticism – be it a book or a play, art, exhibition or musical concert – is thereby communicated to an audience larger than its original audience. More specifically, critical writing is a form of specialized reporting. Writers are usually specialists in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Criticism as a subject should be neutral even though in everyday life it has a negative connotation. This paper will deal with the neutral denotation of criticism. Criticism/critical writing is an aspect of the opinion function of

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the mass media as contrasted with the news function. While news is factual and objective and has no room whatsoever for the expression of opinion; criticism involves expression of opinion though facts must play a significant part in the formation of the opinion. Criticism is also said to mediate between works of art and the reader by helping the reader understand and response to the work of art. The critic therefore acts as an interpreter of arts, delving into it with a view of explaining the technical devices and details used in creating such an art.

According to B.H. Lawrence (cited in Potter 1986), literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of feeling produced upon a critic by the book he is criticizing. Criticism can never be a science because 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 science and vital emotion and nothing else.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter aims at the following:

- To teach the reader the meaning of criticism/critical writing.
- To explain why and how criticism is regarded as a form of mass communication.
- To explain the functions of this communication writing
- To expose the qualities expected of a good and professional critic
- To teach the forms of critical writing and the guidelines/formats for doing such reviews
- To teach the different types of reviews and review effects
- To teach how to do critical review
- To explain the theoretical foundations underlying the history of criticism/critical writing

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Definition of criticism, A critic and A critique

- ❖ Functions of critical Writing and Reviews
- ❖ Qualities of A Good Critical Writing
- ❖ Forms/types of Critical Writing
- ❖ Types of Review and Review Effects
- ❖ Theories and history of Criticism

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

CRITICISM

Criticism is defined differently yet similarly by different scholars. To Radford and Sally Minogue, (cited in Cunningham 1986) "criticism is an activity whereby critics give factual information about a work of art and aims at correcting misinformation about them." According to World Book Encyclopedia, "criticism involves analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and communicating ones responses to a work of art." Criticism is also defined as an impartial assessment of works of art or literature. It entails the highlighting of the high points and the low points of any particular piece of creative productions. In summary, we consider criticism/critical writing as a reasoned, intellectual, emotional but factual judgment or opinion on literature and other artistic creations or productions. In other words, critical writing is an objective, evaluative and intellectual analysis of a creative work.

A CRITIC

A critic is a person who is skilled in the professional assessment of literature and other works of art. He/she can also be simply referred to as a person who judges the quality of literature and works of art. He is referred to in the arts as a literary critic.

A CRITIQUE

A critique is simply a critical analysis or essay or review written by a critic or reviewer.

FUNCTIONS OF CRITICAL WRITING AND REVIEWS

- Criticism evaluates works and examines the principles that influence their creation.
- It attempts to promote high standards of craftsmanship among artists.
- It also helps the society to remain aware of the values of the art and literature of the past and recent developments.
- It provides a reader service especially the reviews published in the newspapers for audience consumption.
- It also assesses the success and/or recommendability of all the various art forms.
- It encourages the appreciation of arts and other forms of literature.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD CRITICAL WRITER/LITERARY CRITIC/REVIEWER

- ❖ A critic worth his salt must have the courage to admit what he feels, possesses skillful logic and also should be very honest in his assessment.
- ❖ A good critic must also be objective and factual in his opinions and judgment of literary works. He assesses the work before him and avoids personal bias that will influence his critique. With objectivity, he presents both sides of the art and draws a value judgment based on the work.
- ❖ A good critic must be able to feel the impact of a work in all its complexity and its forces. To do so, he must be a man of force and complexity himself, which few critics are.
- ❖ Apart from the courage to admit what he feels, a good critic must have the flexibility to know what he feels.
- ❖ A good critic must be emotionally alive, intellectually capable, skillful in essential logic and morally and ethically sound.
- ❖ Criticism is not for the ignorant. Therefore, a good critic must have knowledge, tempered with good sense and combined with

an exquisite delicacy of taste.

- ❖ The good critic must also have a good knowledge of the medium of expression. He/She must have a first-hand experience of the work of art and literature to be reviewed. This means that he/she must or should be able to read the book, watch the film or play or go to the exhibition to see it. It is only by doing this that the reviewer can give an honest and fair assessment of the work he is reviewing.
- ❖ A good critic is always open to correction. This means he is very teachable.
- ❖ A good critic must not use his analysis to crudely pronounce a work "bad" or "good". He must be able to show convincing reasons why it is bad or good.
- ❖ The finest critic takes every circumstance of the particular work into consideration. He should know the author, the artist or artiste as well as the influences in his/her life and his/her other works.
- ❖ Knowledge and taste are not sufficient qualities of the good critic. He must have the rare quality of being sympathetic and show empathy.
- ❖ The critical writer must also be skilled in judgment and must possess and exercise the ability to draw valid inferences from a mass of facts.
- ❖ A good command of the English language is also essential for the critical writer in Nigeria. This will enable him to understand the work he is writing criticism on, and to have the language to communicate his criticism

In summary, the business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiar completeness of response and to observe a peculiar strict relevance in developing his response into commentary. He must be on his guard against any premature or irrelevant generalization. His first concern is to enter into possession of the given work of art (say poem) in its fullness, and his constant concern is never to lose his completeness of possession, but rather to increase it. In making valued judgments, implicitly or with the fullness of response, he does not ask, "how does this accord with the specifications of goodness in this work of art?" He aims to make fully

conscious and articulate the immediate sense of value that “place” the work of art.

FORMS OF CRITICAL WRITING

Critical writing can be written both for print and broadcast media. A piece of critical writing can be published or presented as a radio or television programme. The following are different forms of critical writings:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) Book Reviews | (2) Plays/Drama Reviews | (3) Musical Reviews |
| (4) Film Reviews | (5) Literature Reviews | (6) Art Reviews |
| (7) Programme Reviews | (8) Journal Reviews | (9) Review Column |

We shall now briefly discuss them one after the other.

BOOK REVIEWS

This involves analyzing a particular text, so as to explain its theme and insight better. Under the book review, two types stand out: (1) The Non-fiction (2) The Fiction. The non-fiction is the textbook review while the fiction is the novel/short story/novella review. In all, the same principles follow. In book reviews, the reviewer after identifying the book, he highlights the things that make the book unique or special as well as points out any shortcomings or lapses in the book. In order to achieve comprehensive understanding of the book by the readers, he compares the theme and the techniques of the author to subjects and techniques familiar to the readers. Evaluation of the book will be based on the following:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| (1) Originality | (2) Contributions made | (3) Additions | (4) Deletions |
| (5) Relevance | (6) Timeliness | (7) Recommendability | |

THREE KINDS OF BOOK REVIEW

First, you can review a book for a **Book Column**. A book column can review three to five kinds of book at a time. It is normally brief

and used mostly for creating awareness

Second is the **Essay Review**, which is comparatively longer than the book column. Here, the aim is not only to create awareness, it is also to expose and increase knowledge.

The third type is the **Book Feature** where the writer raises issues of what the book is all about.

GUIDELINES TO BOOK EVALUATION

What does the book claim to achieve? See the introduction or Preface claims.

Weigh the contents of the chapters and the entire book against the claims.

Consider the originality to the field of knowledge and ask:

- i. Does it depend on other works?
- ii. Is it presenting the same thing in a different way?
- iii. Is it talking rubbish?

Read some other books that dealt on similar subject

Also, a good knowledge of the author will be helpful.

Comment on the diction – is the language manipulation suitable or boring for the purpose? Is it simple or difficult? Etc.

Assuming you are an author, would you have included more information or cut some. Why?

For which audience are you evaluating? Evaluate the usefulness of the book to them and at the end make your recommendations based on facts.

THE NOVEL REVIEW

When reviewing literature-based works like novel, short stories, plays, drama etc, consider the elements of literature for such reviews. These include:

The Theme – this is the controlling idea or central insight in a novel. Insight is the moral vision gained from a novel – that is the lesson one learns from the novel. Don't forget to identify the major theme and the sub-themes.

The Plot: This is the sequence/ arrangement of events or incidents in the

story. Plot is not the same thing as the story but the storyline.

Characterization: This is the creation of imaginary persons, animals or things so credible that they exist as real within the limits of the work. Look for (a) *Round Characters* that are dynamic and exhibit the complexities of human nature. (b) *Flat characters* that lack depth, complexities and seriousness.

The Setting: This is the general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which the action takes place.

The Diction: This is the choice of words of the author. This is achieved through language. Language is any means through which the art/work is communicated to the reader.

WRITING THE BOOK REVIEW

There are two types of identification when writing book reviews.

Incorporated Identification: This type of identification is incorporated into the review especially in the introductory paragraphs. Example:

The Inevitable Aftermath is a novel written by Rems Nna Umeasiegbu, published by Cecta in Enugu. The novel has 159 pages and sells for N80 only.

Headed Identification: This identifies a work on top of the review and separates the identification from the paragraphs of the review. It can have many items ranging from 4 to 9 as the case may be.

Example: TITLE OF NOVEL: **The Inevitable Aftermath**

AUTHOR: **Rems Nna Umensiegbu**

PUBLISHER: **Cecta**

PLACE OF PUBLICATION: **Enugu**

NO. OF PAGES: **159**

PRICE: **N250.00k**

REVIEWER: **Ekeanyanwu, Nnamdi T.**

PLAYS/DRAMA REVIEWS

Plays/dramas could be reviewed in two ways: Literary criticism, which is a critique of a play in script while the theatre criticism is criticizing a play in text and production.

Literary Criticism Of A Play

To criticize a play in script, the critic first examines the synopsis of the play. That is the summary of the storyline in terms of conventional belief, beginning, climax and denouement (resolution). He also examines the theme of the play and the technical analysis (elements of a play) - characterization, language, setting, narrative, point of view (first person, second person, omniscient). He traces the sociology of the society portrayed in the play by comparing them with the characters in the play. Examines the element of language and determines if the play was written in verse (poetry), straightforward and examines the use of figures of speech. He also examines whether the language put in the mouth of each character fits the statue and idiosyncrasies of that character.

Theatric Critic Of A Play

The theatric critic on the other hand, goes beyond what the literary critic has done above. He talks on the suitability of the play in the medium it was performed. He goes into the element of production and examines the production style. In the production style, the critic finds out how emotionally involved the actors are, looks at the gestures and how well they synchronize with the lines, looks at the body carriage of the actors which involves their movement on the stage, examines facial expression of the actors and how successful it has been in order to determine the level of the performance. He examines the speech arts- were the actors /actresses articulate, audible and projecting? He also considers directorial concepts or approach.

The director of any play must have a focus or image -spectacle, satire etc. How successful has the director been in approach? After this, he examines the scenic design, the visual aesthetic of the production, which comprises stage and hand prop, costumes, light application, stage set, and accessories. He also evaluates dance and movement if they are used

in the play, using the language of choreography. Here, he evaluates dancers use of space to the concert of production. Does the dance communicate? If it does how lucid is the communication? If there is music in the play, he evaluates it using the language of music- harmony, pitch, melody, instrumentation, vocal etc. He also examines the relevance of the music to the content and context of the production.

MUSICAL REVIEWS

Music is the arrangement of or the art of combining or putting together sounds that pleases the ear. Noise on the other hand is loud and unpleasant sound especially when confused and undesired.

Appreciation Of Music

The appreciation of music can be defined as the acquired ability to listen to music intelligently. Although people have different aptitude in their music perceptiveness, no one is born with this ability; it is acquired. Conscious effort is at all times necessary in the exercise of intelligent listening. Enjoyment of music and appreciation of music are relative terms but they are not synonymous. It is quite possible to enjoy music- receive pleasure from it – without understanding or really appreciating it. It is also possible to understand the technicalities of musical composition without fully enjoying it.

Agents Of Music Art [Human]

These are the participants that are essential to the existence of music. They are:

I. The composer II. The performer III. The listener

The **composer** is likened to the manufacturer because he produces the music by the means of his impulse. The **performer** is also likened to the merchant. The music idea, which the composer writes down, constitutes a mere record of his creativity. The music comes to life when it is translated from musical symbols on paper to physical sounds through the artistry of the performer. The **listener** is the consumer. It is apparent that neither the composer nor the performer can exist without the listener. The art of the composer and the performer means nothing without the audience.

Agents Of Musical Art [Mechanical]

Medium——the instrument on which the music is played.

Publication——consists of the printing and distribution

Transmission——the transfer of the recorded music through CDs, DVDs etc

HOW TO DEVELOP PERCEPTION IN LISTENING

1. **Attention** – the sedative character of music, its emotional pull and the natural inclination of the listener to let the mind wander are barriers to overcome on the road to appreciation. So, learn to concentrate and avoid talking or listening to someone else while music you want to hear is being played.
2. **Repetition** – No one can hope to grasp in one hearing all that go on in a piece of music. We do not retain auditory impressions as readily as visual impression. Therefore, it is necessary for you to listen over and over again to a piece of music that you wish to understand.
3. **Familiarity** – Repeated hearing of a piece of music leads to familiarity. One is naturally attracted to old friends and familiar faces, so it is in music. But you should not rely entirely on familiar composition to acquire appreciation, for that would deprive you of the satisfaction derived from exploring new music and broadening your musical horizon.
4. **Background knowledge** - A part of achieving an appreciation of music is that of acquiring a musical background. This means you should have a general familiarity with musical literature.

The Musical Review

Examine the intention (theme) of the composer, the texture/character of the music and the interpretation given by the performers. Also examine the use of musical instruments like keyboards, strings, wind, percussion and electronic devices.

FILM CRITICISM

Good film criticism, like good literary criticism serves two functions:

- ❖ It explicates the work at hand
- ❖ It evaluates the public taste

The first is more obvious. As film techniques have become complex, as film has probed deeper into human sensibility and experience, and as film has become identifiable as work of a particular director who uses personal symbols in the manner of contemporary poets and novelists, affective film criticism seeks to explain this heightened complexity by clarifying techniques, images and relationships of time, place and character. The second purpose is perhaps best explained by Walt Whitman's off-quote remark that great audience makes great poets. An audience knowledgeable about film history and techniques is in a position to recognize the second-rate, the fall, the vacuous, the film that appear to be saying something but in reality says nothing; and the slick directorial tricks that attempt to hide the untrue.

A good film criticism is informative, expanding the readers knowledge by relating the film at hand to other works of a particular film maker or to other film of similar or dissimilar genre, it bears the stamp of its creator's mind by possessing distinctive style; it bridges epochs and nations by linking past with present achievement regardless of country of origin. In all this, the film critic must be distinguished from a film reviewer who serves a reportorial function. Whereas the film critic seeks to analyze and explain, the film reviewer seeks to ascertain the merits of a particular film with the intention of warning his audience(s) against an inferior, boring, or morally degrading film, or touting those films with a high entertainment values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a research technique by which the scholar reviews all the existing and relevant works on a particular subject or study. The soul objective is to assemble into a unit whole all existing knowledge on the particular subject and latest findings on the subject. Literature reviews are usually part of research reports; and they are a form of critical writing.

ART REVIEWS

These are special forms of critical writing by which pieces of art works are analyzed for the benefits of readers. Art exhibitions, sculpture, paintings, pictures and cartoons can be reviewed. In the reviews, their themes, significance and special qualities are highlighted. Such reviews are subsequently published in a mass media to enhance audiences understanding of the work of art.

PROGRAMME/JOURNAL AND OTHER REVIEWS

The same principles explained above applies in programme, journal, etc reviews. The critic must watch the programme and analyze it based on the type and nature of such programmes. The same thing with journals, which is more academic. The reviews depending on their purposes and intended audience are published in the mass media. Specialist media writers write most of them.

REVIEW COLUMNS

Reviews columns are popular among some newspapers, magazines and journals. Certain programmes are also devoted by radio and TV stations to reviewing different but related creative works. Such works include books, pieces of art, music, place/drama, film, important speeches and so on. Indeed every journalist should possess the skills of critical reviewing and writing.

TYPES OF REVIEW

There are two types of review namely:

1. Pro-review
2. Con-review

PRO-REVIEW

Pro-review is also called positive review. It is a type of review, which dwells so much on the merits and strength of a creative work of art of literature and ignores or down plays the weaknesses or faults. Pro-Review aims to encourage the audience or potential consumer to go on

and consume the work. It also aims at recommending the said work for purchase.

CON-REVIEW

This is known as contrary or negative reviews. In Con-Review, the work being reviewed in this manner has a lot of faults and therefore, the reviewer refuses or discourages the potential consumers from consuming the work. Con-review exposes the weakness and faults in a work and sees very little good in the work. He down plays on the strength of the work if any and ends asking his audience not to read, watch or listen to such work.

TYPES OF REVIEWS EFFECTS

When engaged in either pro or con reviews, the reviewer can aim for two types of review effects-

- ❖ Recency effects
- ❖ Primacy effects

RECENCY EFFECTS

In trying to achieve Recency effect, the reviewer highlights and discusses the weaknesses of a work first in small details and uses the main body and conclusion of his critique to expose and emphasize the strength of the work in the review. The aim here is for the strength of the work to remain current and recent in the mind of the audience so that they can immediately make up their mind to go and purchase the work and use it.

PRIMACY EFFECTS

In trying to achieve primacy effect the reviewer discusses the good or bad aspect of the work, depending on his aim and convinces the reader to purchase the work afterwards. He aims at making the potential consumer accept or reject the work immediately they read the leading paragraphs of the review. By the time the weaknesses are mentioned later in the review, the consumers have already made up their mind to purchase the work.

HOW TO INCORPORATE RECENCY AND PRIMACY EFFECTS IN BOTH PRO AND CON -REVIEWS

Aiming for Recency Effect in a Pro Review

In trying to achieve a Recency effect in a pro-review, the reviewer discusses the weaknesses of the work being reviewed first and then in details discusses the good aspect of the work so that it will still be fresh in the minds of the audience.

Aiming For Primacy Effect In A Pro-Review

In an attempt to achieve a primacy effect in a pro-review situation, you first and foremost discuss in detail the strength and good aspect of the work so that the audience will make up their mind to expose themselves to the work. You can later on in your critique or review briefly discuss (not in details this time) the weaknesses or the short comings of the work in a way that it will not have effect on the readers because they have already made up their mind based on the primacy effect (first impression gotten from your review).

Aiming For Primacy Effect In A Con-Review

In aiming for primacy effect in a con-review, you first of all discuss in full details the shortcomings of the work being reviewed, treating those weaknesses so effectively that the readers/listeners will quickly make up their mind against buying and using the work.

Aiming For Recency Effect In A Con-Review

In achieving this effect in a con-review, you should quickly dismiss the good points (strengths) of the work and then concentrate on detail discussion and analysis of the shortcomings of the work of art in order to achieve recent effects or have the facts against the work fresh in the mind of the audience.

HOW TO WRITE A CRITICAL REVIEW

Before we drive into the topic in question, it is important at this juncture to distinguish between the words **REVIEW** and **CRITICISM**. The words have come to be used interchangeable that is why Wolsely declares that a distinction is necessary especially for the students of critical writing so as to help improve their understanding of the subject.

Both review and criticism pertain to performance, used to represent a book, a concert, a dance, an art etc. The review is essentially a report of a performance that attempts to avoid expression of personal or prejudiced opinion. It is a description that does not attempt to evaluate or appreciate. Criticism on the other hand is an evaluation, an expression of opinion (based on facts) that is usually preceded by or is intermingled with a description. For those who want a distinction between the two, a review is a report of what goes on outside the review whereas criticism is a relation of what goes on inside the critic. In short, the former is objective reporting of a performance. Criticism, it must be added, demands expertise in the subject being evaluated, something which many who write criticism for many publications tend to lack. Review is more or less a fair game that can be handled by anybody who has adequate reportorial skills, a keen sense of observation, a knack for what is interesting and a flair for good writing.

WRITING THE CRITICAL ESSAY AND REVIEW

The critical essay and review follow the same format only that the review is shorter and sometimes does not pass judgment. There are four concerns or posers that should be answered in an attempt to write a successful essay or review.

- What does the work set out to do?
- How does it go about doing this?
- How effective is their achievement?
- How significant is the total work in its purpose and achievement?

The student/analyst must identify the author's purpose, analyze his method and appraise the success and significance of the work. His judgment must be favorable, unfavorable or balanced but should not condemn. If his criticism is an effective one, it should give the reader fresh and valuable insight into the subject. These concerns or posers raised above can now be treated under the following three stages in critical essay:

1. Interpretation

Interpretation means being able to answer the simple questions in the work. What happens to whom, where, why, when and how. These questions will lead the reader to grasp the gist of the story. This also means that you need to summarize the incidents of the story in your own words and also be able to identify the theme of the work. Interpretation provides answers to the number one question above.

2. Technical Analysis

The second question you need to crack is the author's technique – how has he handled his story, how does he go about doing this, what literary devices have been employed by the author in order to bring out the meaning of a work? Technical analysis of a work of literature involves comment on the plot, structure, characterization, narrative points of view, language, imagery and symbols. For other works including art, principles of art/work – i.e. aesthetic and functionality must be appreciated and commented on. It is the enrichment of technique that gives a work a lasting meaning. The reader must take note of all the nuances of meanings employed by the author as clues to the real meaning of his work. So, technical analysis is the technique through which the author selects shapes and presents his material. This answers the number two question above.

3. Judgment

After understanding and appreciating the author's meaning, both surface and deep (subject matter and theme), the reader has to pass some personal judgment on whether the devices employed by the artist/

author are appropriate to his subject and intentions. He must mention how effective/significant the total work is in his purpose and achievement. The critic must determine how effective the author in handling his theme. He evaluates the work by expressing an opinion. Judgment answers questions three and four above.

THEORIES AND HISTORY OF CRITICISM

Literary criticism in the Western World may be said to have begun with the Greek philosophers of the 4th century BC. Plato in *The Public* asserted that poets are divinely inspired but he regarded poetry as a mere imitation of the transitory actual world and therefore untrue. The most influential work of literary criticism was *The Poetics* an essay by Aristotle on tragic drama and the psychological effects of the arts. Other early essays on criticism include *Art of poetry* by Roman Poet Horace and “*on the sublime*” by the Greek writer Longinus.

CLASSICISM

The history of criticism is closely related to the development of classicism and Romanticism. Classicism established the nature of epic poetry and drama. Such work must adhere to “nature” by aspiring to order and regularity and strictly observe the unities of time, place and action in dramatic composition. Such work must be complete as an aristocrat as a protagonist, must be serious in content [tragedy], purgation of emotion, pity and fear [catharsis]. One of the most classical movements in Western Europe developed during the 1600s and 1700s. These classical writers based many of their theories on Aristotle’s *Poetics*. They tried to portray the world objectively. English critics who contributed to classicism include in chronological order: Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden and Samuel Johnson.

ROMANTICISM

Romanticism developed during the last of 1700s as a reaction against classicism. Romantic writers tried to portray their personal views of the world. Unlike the Greek plays, Romanticists mixed comic matters with serious matters, sub plots followed the main plots and how born

characters some times had prominent roles. Romanticism had an especially strong influence in England and Germany. English romantic critics include in a chronological order: Samuel Taylor, Coleridge, William Wordsworth, William Hazlitt e.t.c.

19th CENTURY REALISM

During the second half of the 19th century, realism rose to a dominant position in criticism and literature. Realism is used in two ways:

1. To identify a literary movement of the 19th century, especially in prose fiction

2. To designate a recurrent way, in this was typified by writers of this historical movement.

Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction. Romantic is said to present life, as we would have it; while realism presents an accurate imitation of life as it is. The subject is represented in such a way to give the reader the illusion of actual experience. Daniel Defoe, Henrick Iban were some of such writers on realism.

NATURALISM

This is a product of post-Darwinism biology in the mid 19th century. It believes that man belongs entirely to the order of nature and does not have a soul or any other connection with a religious or spiritual world beyond nature, that man is therefore, merely a higher order animal whose character and fortunes are determined by two kinds of natural forces- heredity and environment. Work on naturalism portrays the setting, characters, situations, and incidences e.t.c exactly the way they are in life. By the end of the 19th century, Realism was evolving into Naturalism as exemplified by the novels of Emile Zola e.t.c. American Frank Norris, Stephen Crane are other critics of the naturalism order.

20th CENTURY CRITICAL MOVEMENT

The chief opposition of naturalism came from a group of American professors. The central figures of the neo-human movement as it was called were Paul Elmer Moore [1864-1937], Iruing Babbitt e.t.c. It is an attack on Naturalism and called for reaffirmation of human institutions

and recognition of human beings as moral, responsible individuals. The theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud have also had enormous impact on 20th century criticism and writing. This is a socialist realism, which views that the struggle between two classes is the essential dynamics of society. Since 1930, "Socialist Realism" has been the official doctrine directing the work of authors.

NEW CRITICISM

No movement has had so resounding an impact on 20th century criticism as the New Criticism, which was greatly influenced by T.S Elliot. The new critics differ from one another in many ways but the following points of view and procedures are common to many of them.

- A poem should be treated as primarily as poetry and not other thing and should be regarded as independent and self-sufficient object.

- The distinctive procedure of the new critic is close reading and subtle analysis of the complex interpretation and ambiguities (multiple meaning) of the component elements with a work.

- The principles of the new criticism are basically verbal. That is, literature is conceived to be a special kind of language whose attributes are defined by systematic opposition to the language of science and logical discourse, the meaning and interactions of language and words, figures of speech, and symbols.

- The distinction between literary genres, although casually recognized, is not essential in New Criticism. The basic components of any work of literature whether lyric, narrative, or dramatic are conceived to be words, images and symbols rather than character, thought and plot.

The New Critics were not concerned with the historical context in which a work was written or with biographical details about the author or with the author's purpose. Rather, the technique was to discover by close analysis of structure and imagery, precisely those technical devices capable of expressing the particular concrete meaning that the literary work possesses.

LATER 20TH CENTURY TRENDS

EXISTENTIALISM

This new philosophical movement was occasioned by a critical re-examination of earlier writers like Hemingway David Galloway e.t.c. This is based on Kierkegaard doctrine, a Danish philosopher. Existentialism states that man is a unique and isolated individual in an indifferent or hostile universe, responsible for his own actions and free to close his destiny.

STRUCTURALISM

This emerged in France during the 1960s and 70s. Structuralism criticism views literature as a second order system which uses language, the first order, as its medium and is itself to be analyzed on the model of linguistic theory. Most structuralist critics concern themselves with single work of literature, or else with a limited group of related works which they analyze by applying linguistic concepts such as the distinction between phonemic and morphemic, paradigmatic and syntagmatic e.t.c.

APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

There are so many schools and approaches to literary criticism that a classification seems presumptuous. However, if the various approaches are not put together, two major approaches will emerge. These approaches are:

- ❖ The Intrinsic Approach
- ❖ The Extrinsic Approach

INTRINSIC APPROACH

This treats a work of art as complete in itself. Here, the work is autonomous and self-adequate. Critics examine the internal relations within the text. They ask such questions as what is the relationship between the plot in the novel and the narrative technique and how far has the writer

succeeded in developing his message through his plot and technique of narration. This approach is also known as the autelic approach. The Intrinsic or Autelic approach in criticism is mostly dominant in English-speaking nations. It can be seen to operate on several levels. The first level is the level of the "UNSEEN" - which is the level of literary appreciation. The second level is that of practical and textual analysis. This level has two divisions.

1. The first subdivision deals with the theory of forms and genres in literature. This theory states that literature has certain genetic forms e.g. drama, poetry and the novel. This division describes (i) the characteristics of the form

(ii) The different basic types within the form e.g. in poetry, we have the epic, lyric, dirge, ballad, sonnet e.t.c.

There is also the development of the novel into individual heroes e.g. Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Ihuoma in *The Concubine*. Modernists' novels succeeded the novel of individualism. Unlike the earlier novels where there is a solid, well-ordered reality, everything follows the stream of consciousness here. The notion of plot and characterization breaks down.

2. The second level is the level of practical criticism, which deals with the language of the text. Here, one is engaged with such things as figures of sounds e.g. alliteration, assonance and figures of meaning e.g. metaphor, simile e.t.c. These are figures peculiar to literature itself.

Intrinsic criticism is also known as **formalistic approach** because there, the emphasis is on the form (style) rather than the content of the said work of art.

EXTRINSIC CRITICISM

In extrinsic criticism, literature is seen as a feature of life- a reflection of life concerned with the Socio/Cultural/Economic life of a group of people. Because the writer is a member of a society, several factors which include sociology, history, and philosophy e.t.c. affect his writings. In order words, writers draw from philosophy, sociology, history among others. An extrinsic attempt from the viewpoint of history will see it, for in-

stance, as a fictional recreation of history and will proceed to show the aspects of history that were recreated. An extrinsic approach will ask such questions as “what is the relationship between literature and society? What is the writer’s vision of man, human?”

OTHER APPROACHES OF CRITICISM

SEMANTIC CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

This is one type of critical analysis that must accompany every interpretative writing. In its simplest sense, semantic criticism means understanding each and every word so as to avoid ambiguity in the writing. Whether the work is poetry, prose or drama, the reviewer must know the meaning and relationships of every word contained within the piece. Occasionally, good critics let a word slide by without full knowledge of it, and that mistake can make a great difference in the evaluation. The dictionary is therefore important to semantic criticism but sometimes such criticism must extend beyond the dictionary and examine words in different contexts. Although, semantic criticism or analysis seems obvious and fairly easy, it is not always so. It must, however, always be the first step in the analysis of a literature and the foundation of the critical process.

HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

This is one of the most overly used and often least helpful forms of criticism. It makes use of historical and biological data; that is, searching into the author’s life or historical period for clues to the work itself. A search into the life of the author can furnish some valuable information, but remember the critic is evaluating the poem, story, book, film, etc, not the author’s life. If information about the author aids in the understanding of the printed material, of course it should be utilized. A Knowledge of Shakespeare’s life and times (era) may be interesting and even add color for one studying his works, but Merchant of Venice for instance is a great play with or without Shakespeare’s biography. Consequently, the rule of thumb must be that at least a superficial investigation of the author’s life should be undertaken when possible. If there to be some reasons to investigate the life more thoroughly, then do so, and always remember that

in the final analysis the interpretation must arise from what appears on the printed pages and must be consistent with the work in order to be valid. Biography may be interesting and informative, but it is not criticism, analysis, or interpretation of the work itself.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

By its very name, psychological criticism implies a study of the workings of the human mind. In order to suggest a human mind at work, the literature must depict strong characterization and personalities that readers and listeners can easily accept as real people. Psychological criticism examines the way in which those characters within the story do the things they do. Because drama tells its story through actual characters on stage, psychological criticism is of great importance to the analysis of theatrical works. Of course the more serious with the drama and the more intense the characterization, the more value will be attained by psychological examination. This type of criticism is also essentially valuable in the analysis of modern prose fiction, a form in which the characters have time to develop fully. In psychological criticism the analyst delves into the mind of the characters to find out what makes them function as they do and to determine whether their actions are consistent with their personalities. By understanding why a character speaks or acts in particular way or manner, the interpreter is able to suggest a person with more nuances, subtleties, and motivation, and thus can establish the character in a work. The critic's inability to do an in depth psychological studies should not be used as an excuse to neglect psychological criticism. The critic who analyzes *Things Fall Apart* and fails to question and ascertain the reason(s) why Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna—a boy who calls him father and a boy he admits secretly that he admires—then that critic is not worth his salt.

SOCIOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

Criticism is closely related to historical criticism and in some respects inseparable from it. The primary difference is that historical criticism deals with the events and people who shape the history of an era, while sociological criticism delves into the milieu of a particular place.

AESTHETIC CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

Every literary critic is an artist and engages to some degree in a form of aesthetics. All literary work has an aesthetic quality and appeals to us and to an audience. In all probability, however, we have not yet made a formal aesthetic enquiry into the work but are responding impressionistically. This impressionistic criticism is probably the most common form of criticism. We all indulge in it every time we try to establish the relative beauty or appeal of an object, be it a member of the opposite sex, a sunset, a TV show, a work of literary art. Impressionistic judgment is entirely not open to contradictions. True aesthetic criticism establishes criteria as universal standards. The most famous set of criteria for judging literature are those proposed by Aristotle in his "Poetics" in the fourth century BC. For centuries, people involved in literature criticized and created according to the "rules" set down by Aristotle. Aristotle's works has inspired most aesthetic philosophy over two centuries now.

Many modern philosophers have tried to establish an aesthetic for the arts, so far none has been completely successfully or satisfactory. The wide varieties of art and the approaches to the arts complicate and compound the problem facing the aesthetician. For instance, what works for classical painting may not work for Romantic literature or contemporary music. Using a specific set of criteria, however, can help the reviewer choose and interpret literary works, because the interpreter will find that a systematic approach to evaluating the beauty of literature enhances his or her understanding for a particular work and of the field in general.

MORAL CRITICISMS AND ANALYSIS

Closely related to sociological and aesthetic criticism is the attempt to criticize a work morally. A common type of moral criticism seen in modern times is the rating established by motion picture industry. An 'R' or 'X' rating proclaims that certain scenes may be morally offensive to some people. The most difficult problem with moral criticism, of course, rests with the phrase "to some people." What is morally offensive to one person may not be to another. Establishing and promulgating moral criteria can lead to censorship and control of literature.

Moral criticism analyzes literature in terms of values and truth. Moral criticism adheres to the basic tenets that the purpose of literature is to teach morality, whether or not religiously oriented. The interpreter may wish to provide a specific audience with specific moral or philosophical point of view. The interpreter may also find some values in examining the relative worth of a selection to himself, as well as an audience. The critic/interpreter should beware, however, of moralizing or forcing captive audience to listen to views they should ordinarily not wish to hear. One pitfall in moral criticism lies in the ephemeral quality of some of our moral standards. A casual glance at the popular art of motion, TV and magazines illustrate the major differences in public attitude towards morality that developed during the 1960s.

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM

The theory of archetypal is derived from the school of comparative anthropology at Cambridge University. This is the use of myth and ritual, which recur in the legend, and ceremony of most diverse culture. They are expressed in myth-tortoise; Moremi in Yoruba land; and Queen Amina; religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in the works of literature. Negritude for instance when analyzed in terms of the large scale of collective experience of the people. i.e. as basic to the reaction of the modern literature of the black man. This attitude of celebration of values, authentic to a group comes under this type of criticism.

Carl Jung insists that "true poet" select their characters, images, patterns, (archetypes) from a deep unconscious realm, a primordial world, where racial experience of our ancestors are storied, i.e. a store where the trials, triumphs, failures and aspirations of these are preserved. The true artist selects from this primordial world and when they do this, their works and voices stir in us a feeling that is at once familiar and strange, because these experiences belonged to our root; strange, because these goes deep into a distant "primordial world in primordial times" of our lives. This feeling, he explains, is our response to "great art"

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