

Mythological criticism essay sample

[Literature](#), [Mythology](#)



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Summary of the book by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia ‘ Literature an introduction to fiction poetry and drama’

This approach as covered in the book emphasizes on the current universal patterns applied in most works of literature. This approach combines insights from aspects of common humanity by borrowing from facets such as anthropology, psychology, history and comparative religion. Using the mythological criticism concept, scrutiny of the individual artist’s imagination is done by their use of myths and other identifying factors in relation to a certain epoch/ culture. The archetype is an enduring concept in mythological; criticisms of literally works. The archetype is a symbol, character or situation that resonates with every society or cultural setting. The critic Carl Jung advances this principle where he holds that all human beings share a ‘ collective unconscious’. By advancing this principle, Carl Jung reasoned that all human beings were bound to find some relation in most literary works despite their cultural grounding owing to a common past

shared by our predecessors who shaped our collective memory. The memories held are set deep within the human soul and are known as the primal memories deriving from phenomena such as the sun, moon, night, fire and such other phenomena that occurs universally to all human kind irrespective of their location. The main tenet for the advancement of the “mythological criticism” is the observation of enduring similarity in literature works. The patterns employed in the works such as the season’s concept lends them a blue print of having the same setting in a big stage.

The summary of the critic Carl Jung

This critic holds that the personal unconscious of an individual is based on a deeper layer of the human memory and does not feed from the personal experiences of an individual, neither is it acquired but inborn. This in-acquired deeper layer is the collective unconsciousness where this part of the unconscious is not personal to the individual but universal to everyone else. The universality of this unconscious is manifest in the modes of behavior that are present everywhere in all individuals and thus represent a common psyche substrate of a supra-personal nature present in every one of us.

The psychic existence can be demonstrated by elements capable of consciousness. The unconscious is in this way proven; only after its contents are demonstrated. The chief difference between the personal unconscious are the feeling toned complexes constituting the private side of psychic life. The collective unconscious on the other hand contains the archetypes. According to Carl Jung, the term archetypes as used in the context, refers to the archaic/primordial universal images that have been existence since the

remotest times. On the other hand, primitive tribal lore concerns itself with archetypes modified in a special way. The modification into the tribal setting modifies them from being archetypal to conscious formula taught through handing down of traditions.

Myths and fairy tales also constitute another form of archetypes. However, they have specific stamps and are handed down through long periods.

Archetype reference therefore only applies to the ‘representation of collectives’ as it only designates those contents that are not submitted to conscious elaboration.

Summary of the critic Northrop Frye criticism

Northrop Frye is of the opinion that the study of archetypes is mythical and purely abstract world of fictional and thematic design unaffected by laws of reasonable adaptation to experience. Myths, as he holds out, resides at the apex of human desire and does not necessary mean that it is achievable by man. Realism on the other hand questions the level of knowledge towards what is presented in the literature. Myth and realism are compared where realism is an art of implicit simile, while myth is an art of implicit metaphorical identity. This means that in myth, the principles of literature are isolated and exist independently, while in realism, the literature flows and evokes a seeming of plausibility and applicability in our present situations. When a mythical structure is present in a realistic fictional piece of literature, displacement method of analysis is employed in their interpretations.

In this critic review, myth is at extreme ends with realism with the idea of romance lying in between the two. Romance is the idea that myth is

progressively dispelled from the essay, while in contrast to realism, used to conventionalize content in an idealized direction. The idea of displacement holds, on the other hand, that an equally representative simile, association and such other devices displace an object in mythology.

Summary of the criticism by Edmond Volpe

Social criticism of literature examines it in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is made. The sociological criticism of art evaluates the relationship between the artist and the society. Additionally, sociological status of the author is evaluated to determine how the profession of writing affected the content. The content of the art of work itself also affects the review of the literature. The content in terms of social, cultural and political wealth betrays the intent and origin of the literature. The audience also has a role in shaping literature. This aspect evaluates the role the audience plays in shaping the particular piece of literature. The piece by Edmond Volpe “ Barn Burning” employs many instruments of literature. An outstanding aspect of this piece is its use of mythology versus realism. The story focuses on the Sarty’s experiences of emotional dilemma. Sarty, is the son of Ab a black man who is fighting for his liberation with extreme means, he burns barns. The content in the narration points to a particular time in history, where conflicts between blacks and whites were rampant, the period of slavery and imperialism. Ab in the mythical comparison with the devil plays the rebellious role, just like Lucifer in the bible. The use of this imagery aids in bringing the story into perspective by comparison with a popular mythical analogy. Abs’ comparison with the devil implies a strong intent for rebellion he had while working to disrupt from the

inside rather than out. Sarty, on the other hand is the unwitting collaborator who is forced into following his father in his destructive sprees. Sarty's participation, like the angels who thrown out of heaven together with the devil, imputes of both party's direct willingness to participate.

Analysis of a source on Mythological criticism

The triumph of good over evil is a common literary analogy in many cultures over the world. Communities all over the world disseminate this kind of literature in their young ones in order to stimulate good morals development in them. The bible and other religious literatures contain the notion of triumph of good over evil. Jesus for instance triumphed over Satan in the Christian context, while job triumphed over Satan borrowing from the same Christian text. This triumph however has proven to exist mildly, if at all in the present conditions of life. Life is increasingly difficult, and the development of markets and mass production has opened avenues for exploitation of people by others. The success enjoyed by the slave traders for instance shatters the literary creation of triumph of good over evil, where evil, paradoxically triumphs over good (Frye and Dunham 2003).

Critical response

The paper is evaluative of all the forms applied in the criticism and literature analysis. Literature is a highly volatile subject with its forms and structures varying as seasons and generations vary. Developments in human culture is mirrored in richer and more diverse literature works while at the same time literature is used to preserve ancient cultures in written and spoken form. In this context, literature and life are inextricable with existence of life giving

rise to literature and literature giving preservation to life. Criticism of literature is progressive which each subsequent evaluation building from the preceding one. In time, literature can be evaluated to mirror existing realities in different societies and epochs from the ones of its origins, attesting to its evolving nature.

Works Cited

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