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The Interaction of Literary Criticism with the Humanities: From the Critic's Culture to the Historical Method

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine the nature of the interaction between literary criticism and the humanities, with particular emphasis on the role of the critic's cultural background and the historical method in shaping modern critical vision. Its significance lies in highlighting how this interaction contributes to the construction of contemporary critical theory and in revealing the points of convergence between classical Arabic criticism and modern approaches in their understanding of culture and methodology. The study adopts a descriptive methodology, employing both inductive and comparative methods to analyze the conceptual foundations shared within the critical process.

Keywords: Literary Criticism; Humanities; Critic's Culture; Historical Method; Cognitive Interaction.

Introduction

It is an epistemic field in close interaction with the various branches of the humanities: it enriches them with its concepts, tools, and methodological trends. From there emerged this new critical awareness of the functions of both literature and criticism as two facets of human culture and means for understanding humanity, history, and the world.

In this respect, the basic question that underlies this research is how such interaction between literary criticism and the humanities manifests itself, in light of both the critic's culture on one hand and the historical method on the other. A question of this nature ensures a series of sub-questions about the nature of this kind of relationship between criticism and human knowledge, the extent of this influence with regard to shaping critical vision, and the evolution of modern methodologies-most significantly, the historical method as a practical manifestation of this interaction.

Among the main objectives this study can achieve, the most prominent is to reveal the interactive nature between literary criticism and the humanities in constructing modern critical theory and to show the function played by the critic's culture in shaping the whole reading and critical process. In attempting to point out the historical method as a model in which the intersection between literature and the humanities can be shown, this research attempts to trace its theoretical dimensions and manifestations.The present

study will adopt a descriptive methodology for analyzing those critical concepts that discuss the relationship between literature and the humanities by using both inductive and comparative methods to outline the intellectual commonalities between classical Arabic criticism and modern criticism with regard to the conceptualization of culture and methodology in the critical process.

1. Literary Criticism and Aspects of Human Knowledge:

This has been the role of the humanities throughout their long historical trajectory in providing essential tools for the study of creative text. The text is, therefore, an indispensable and fundamental area for the function and practice of those tools and mechanisms that tend to reach its depths and disclose its secrets.

Literary criticism has never been foreign to other humanistic fields, and its relationship with the other sciences has always contributed to its theoretical and practical development. It has also played a key role in defining its function, its authority over the literary work, and its role within society as a whole (Al-Zahrani, 2018). As a discipline related to other branches of human knowledge, literary criticism is not isolated. It is a reflection of the interactive nature of criticism with other sciences, such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and linguistics. In fact, this has been a source of its enrichment and development on both theoretical and practical levels.

Yet, if the foregoing discussion crystallizes one thing, it is that this relation between criticism and these sciences was not one of external influence; rather, it was complementary, serving to redefine the function of criticism and determining its authority in reading and estimating the literary work. Here, literary criticism comes across as an active cognitive and cultural force, a discourse on textual analysis not being simply a part thereof but rather part of the building of societal and intellectual consciousness. In other words, there is no criticism in a vacuum; rather, it evolves through continuous dialogue with human thought at all its levels.

Therefore, it can be claimed that at least the diverse aspects of human knowledge cannot be dismissed by literary criticism. It has been defined as "the art of studying methods, which requires the use of various forms of knowledge (Mandour, 1988, p. 188) " This reliance is dictated by the logic of influence, effect, and interaction between the different sciences and knowledge fields.

"Literary criticism has been influenced by the humanities with which it has come into contact, influencing its methodologies and leading their researches towards specific directions. (.) It is possible to draw on various sciences in the field of critique so as to widen the horizons of reasoning, deepen the understanding of the soul, life, and the universe, in order to achieve accuracy in research, proper induction, and correct inference." (Muhammad, 1987. pp. 129–132)

The use of other sciences is not an end but a means to delve deeper into the knowledge of humanity and existence, and to ensure methodological precision in critical research by sound induction and correct inference. Thus, literary criticism will continue developing based on how well it interacts with

various domains of knowledge in a creative way. This interaction gives richness to critical thought and arms it with new tools that enable deeper engagement with texts and a wider understanding of them in their psychological, social, and intellectual contexts.

For this reason, wide cultural knowledge and acquaintance with diverse sections of knowledge and sciences is an important asset for the critic in his understanding of the text. This makes sure their judgments bear value. Ancient critics did not neglect this influence, and this requirement was sometimes tied to the critic's personality, talent, and intelligence. "The Arab critics did not depend on natural talent and intelligence in the critic, but believed that a broad culture should not be limited to one area, but should embrace areas of cultural knowledge" (Badawi, 1996, p. 82). This indicates the critics' awareness of the influence of culture in forming their criticism and judgment and directing its means and criteria for reading.

2. The Critic's Culture: The Epistemic Foundation of Critical Understanding:

Indeed, scholars have studied a considerable number of texts by classical Arab critics in an attempt to illustrate the critic's culture as it functions within critical judgments for their scientific worth and overall impact on criticism. One such text is that of Al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH), who states: "I sought knowledge of poetry from Al-Asma'i, but found that he only excelled in the obscure words. I turned to Al-Akhfash, but found that he only mastered syntax. I approached Abu Ubayda, but found that he focused solely on narrating reports and genealogies. I only found what I sought from the literary scholars of the writers." (Al-Jahiz, n.d, p. 24).This text brings out Al-Jahiz's early vision of the nature of literary knowledge, how its various branches are related and come together, reflecting the researcher's experience in studying poetry under various scholars. Each one had a piece of this science but was incapable of comprehending the very essence of poetry: Al-Asma'i was an expert in rare words and dialects, Al-Akhfash in grammar, Abu Ubayda in reports and genealogies, but the real aesthetic essence of poetry would elude their grasp.

Then Al-Jahiz insists that poetry cannot be understood by partial knowledge or narrow specialization; it needs a literary taste and a comprehensive culture in which language, meaning, imagination, and thought flow together. Al-Jahiz recognizes that he only found what he was seeking with the literary scholars of the writers-those who combine knowledge and taste, linguistic proficiency and artistic vision. He is criticizing the fragmentation of literary knowledge and calling for an integrated approach to studying poetry-the critic or scholar being an encyclopedic figure who does intellectual analysis with aesthetic sensitivity.

This text also denotes the importance of a broad culture for the critic. Al-Jahiz is in support of this view when he argues that "knowledge of obscure words alone is insufficient, nor is knowledge of grammar, reports, or genealogies. What is required is comprehensive culture" (Badawi, p. 82). Consequently, the literary scholars in possession of broad cultural knowledge are the true experts in poetry, most qualified to appreciate it and critique it. Al-Jahiz, in this respect, makes a distinction between those who are versed

in language and reports and those who are experts in poetry—the critic who should have both broad and expansive knowledge.

As Al-Jahiz says, "the true critic is one whose talents have been honed by experience, whose reading has refined their sensibilities, and whose training has sharpened their faculties. Such a critic is capable of distinguishing between proper rhythm and discordant notes, between genuine excellence and the false" (Hasan, 1996, p. 7) Conversely, if the critic lacks this cultural foundation, then their criticism is bereft of "effectiveness, contribution, and creativity however sharp the intelligence, sensitivity, taste, and broadness of vision." At its very core, literary criticism is a cultural construct flowing from the critic's accumulation of knowledge and experience (Huwaydi, 2005, p. 225).

Culture is what finally enables the critic to pass judgment. This is why long ago, Arab critics have been aware of the fact that "criticism is an innate quality for the critic, combined with intelligence which enables them to analyze the literary work, and culture equips this intelligence with the capacity for judgment. Through being conversant with literary texts, the critic can then position each text according to its quality and creativity." Their view is similar to that of modern critics; yet, these may place more emphasis (Badawi, p. 84) on broadening the critic's culture due to the broadening of knowledge fields and evolution of literature and reading tools.

Another important text in this respect is by Ibn Salam al-Jumahi (d. 231 AH), where he says: "Poetry is an art and culture known by experts, like all kinds of knowledge and crafts. Some of it is recognized by the eye, some by the ear, some by the hand, and some by the tongue. It is like pearls and rubies, which cannot be recognized by their shape or weight without being examined by someone who sees them. Similarly, the quality of a dinar or dirham cannot be identified by color, touch, design, or inscription, but is known by the expert upon inspection, who can distinguish the false from the true" (al-Jumahī, n.d, p. 5). Ibn Salam establishes in this text that specialization is inevitable, even in fields of knowledge such as literary criticism, which he calls the preserve of "experts" or "people of knowledge." He insists that the critic must possess specific cultural capital on which to base his literary taste; he emphasizes the necessity of familiarizing one's self with literature not only to develop an incisive eye and to learn about its features and aesthetic secrets but also to distinguish the good from the better and the strong from the weak.

The discussion of the critic's qualifications, particularly the wide culture they should possess, aims to highlight how this requirement affects their methodology of reading. Culture plays a major role in forming the critic's reading tools and highlights the necessity for criticism to be linked with other fields of knowledge and sciences. Therefore, it can be said that "what links criticism to different fields of knowledge is the methodology that the critic follows, which becomes a guiding light for revealing the complications and secrets of the literary text". (Ziani, February 2018, p. 79)

Perhaps the most prominent methodology that necessitates the critic's broad culture is the historical method, which we have chosen as our model for this research. Whereas the critic's culture represents the epistemic ground for understanding texts, the historical method serves as an applied tool that actualizes this understanding by reading the text within its human and

historical context. It is in the area of method and culture that the real point of interaction between literary criticism and the humanities is made.

It is the critic's culture that provides the broad basis upon which the critical process then stands in its epistemic and intellectual dimensions. It thus enables him to perceive and understand, interpret, and appreciate the aesthetic and intellectual layers in the literary text.

This culture, in turn, is translated by the historical method into a systematic critical practice that furnishes the applied tool for the critic to embody in the reading of texts his cognitive awareness. The historical method therefore represents to the critic who possesses broad cultural and historical knowledge a scientific frame that systematizes this awareness, orienting it for a complete analysis of the text and relating the literary creation with its temporal and social context. By this method, one may notice that a literary text cannot be apprehended independently from its historical moment, and its aesthetic value is enriched when it is read as the reflection of a real human experience which interacts with the intellectual, and cultural contexts of its time.

3. The Historical Method: The Manifestation of the Critic's Culture in Critical Practice

Integration of the critic's culture with the historical method represents, to that effect, a moment of mature critical awareness when the cognitive aspect merges with the practical one. Criticism is now an integral intellectual activity wherein philosophical reflection merges with the scientific study of literary phenomena. A broad culture confers upon the critic depth of vision and a wide horizon, while the historical method provides system, precision, and discipline in analysis. It would therefore be at this creative junction between culture and method that the real interaction between literary criticism and the humanities will be established. They both derive from the same belief that literature is a human act, hence attesting to history, thought, and collective emotion.

3.1. Concept and Features:

The historical method in literature, as a term, refers to: "The method in which the writer and their work, or the poet and their poetry, are studied in light of their life, biography, environment, and the circumstances that influenced them. This involves knowing the era they lived in, understanding their surroundings, and recognizing how all of this influenced their literary or poetic output, while also examining the general and private events that shaped the author. In this way, historical events and the author's personality can serve as auxiliary factors for analyzing and interpreting the literary text". (‘Amir, December 2015, p. 18)

Consequently, the historical approach is interested in the biography of the author, the stages of their development, their circumstances of writing and their environment. It researches the influences from the outside connected with the origin of the literary text. This is an external kind of criticism since attention is paid more to the origin of the text than to the nature of the text or its meaning. It tries to understand whether the events sunk into it correspond to historical reality (Maqnunif, 2003/2004, p. 245) by means of the facts that were used and their connection with the environment and conditions in which the author lived. It presupposes an analytic scrutiny of the facts based on

sources other than the text with further hypotheses for interpreting and analyzing the text based on the above-mentioned sources.

The historical method is "the first modern critical approach" because it is directly related to the fundamental development of human thought, which transitioned from the medieval age to the modern age. It expresses itself in the rise of historical consciousness (Fadl, 2002, p. 25). The method mentions that historical influences are emphasized, which help in the production of texts. It uses political and social historical events as tools for understanding literature and studying its various phenomena.It focuses on the temporal contexts of texts and their creators, employing a chain of causal equations: the text is the product of its author, the author reflects their culture, culture is shaped by the environment, and the environment is part of history. Therefore, criticism becomes a history of literature through the environment (Qassab, 2009, p. 23). The main figures in the historical method in modern criticism include Sainte-Beuve, Gustav Lanson, Ferdinand Brunetière, and Hippolyte Taine (Hilal, n.d, pp. 60-62). Each made unique contributions to the theory, application, and formulation of principles and characteristics of this method. However, they all agreed on its primary goal: relating literature to its historical and environmental context.

They viewed it as "a historical reading of literary criticism that attempts to explain the emergence of a literary work by linking it to its time, place, and characters. Here, history serves the text, and its study is not an end in itself but rather a means to understand the text's external context, emphasizing the importance of what lies outside the text." This method involves drawing values from the external world, especially specialized research, to reach a set of interpretations that relate the environment to literature (Fadl, 2002, p. 251).

The historical approach may be viewed as a "critical approach directed to the close relationship existing between works of literature and society in its state of evolution." It aims at emphasizing the interconnection between literature and history, at relating the text and its author to their surroundings, epoch, and society. This approach is based on showing the aspects of the works through various events that happened historically, politically, and socially around the time of their creation.

It also extends its reach by connecting works to past periods, recognizing that cultural, social, and political developments influence subsequent generations. Since literature captures the life of a nation in a specific time and place, and history is the substance of that life, the connection between literature and history is inseparable, making historical knowledge essential for literary study (Hamad, n.d, p. 21), In other words, when we revisit the original conditions in which a poem was created through historical research, the historical method allows us to re-create it and then judge it.

The historical method helps reach critical opinions, and judgments are now possible, especially when evaluating the aesthetic value, which at its core is a historical judgment. There are literary histories that do not establish values, and literary criticism that affirms value without embedding it in any historical context. However, historical critics turn value into an event, equating beauty with history. They accommodate the individual work within its specific context but judge the work itself, not the methodology. (Imbert, 1991, p. 109)

Thus, the literary text is considered a historical document: "It is a source for understanding and studying history because it is rich with information about the era the author lived in, and about their contemporaries, whether they were writers, rulers, princes, or other notable figures. The relationship between literature and history is mutual and intertwined; each serves the other" (Qassab, 2009, p. 33). This is reflected in the saying, "Poetry is the record of the Arabs" in Arab heritage, where "poetry in the pre-Islamic era was the repository of their knowledge and the final authority on their judgments, from which they took and to which they returned" (al-Jumahī, n.d, p. 24). This illustrates the deep connection between literature, history, environment, and society. Poetry, in its role as "the record," emphasizes its importance as a historical document. "Poetry is a necessary tool for acquiring language and transmitting culture, which must be mastered. Poetry has defined its goal, which is the aid it provides in various fields such as lexicography, grammar, the Qur'an, and Hadith" (Sheikh, 1996, pp. 10-11) Thus, poetry, and creative texts in general, represent historical and social truths, not just linguistic structures.

This is summarized by David Bushbinder's assertion: "A poem is not merely an artistic truth but also a social one. That is, the poem is produced in a context that includes the life of the author and the recipient it is written for, along with the relationships of various social, historical, and political factors that form the backdrop. Consequently, the poem is embedded in a network of circumstances when produced by the poet and when received by the reader. These circumstances include relationships between the poet and the reader, the social context, the political nature of their ideologies, and their positions in the historical timeline" (Bishbender, 1991, p. 121).

Therefore, knowledge of history in literature is "an essential and indispensable part of studying, knowing, understanding, and interpreting literature. It is often impossible to understand a literary text without extensive historical study of the events and conditions that influenced it" (Qassab, 2009, p. 23); The history that underpins the critical method takes on its "narrowest connotations—linking events to time—and then divides literature into eras, describing the characteristics of each period's literature and how these characteristics relate to the dominant political trends of that time" (al-Taher, 1989, p. 397). Often, literature is presented in a passive form, though it should also be presented as both active and passive, to achieve the full purpose and critical characteristic of the researcher.

It is worth noting that the historical method in criticism is "sensitive. If the critic loses their balance, they will veer off course and distort their analysis, becoming a mere historian or collector. They will judge the era by its own scale and apply it to the text, thus turning the literary work into a historical artifact rather than analyzing it within its own literary context. This requires the critic to unequivocally establish their stance in relation to history. A critic should be competent to consider the text, its feelings and imagination, and utilize the history and prevailing ethos to discern the deeper senses of the text. The knowledge of the events, personalities, and particular connotations of the language and terms involved in the text must not mislead the critic into drifting away from their main undertaking of literary criticism" (al-Taher,

1989, p. 398). Therefore, there exists a clear demarcation between history and criticism; the critic has to employ the historical approach as an aid to track the artistic phenomenon through the ages.

3.2. Manifestations and Expressions of the Historical Method:

The historical method finds its manifestations and expressions in a number of areas, among which are the following (Qassab, 2009, pp. 28-29):Text verification means verifying a number of issues pertaining to the text, such as that indeed the text is authentic and quoted verbatim from its original author, or that nothing was added or distorted before its transmission. This also involves determining the historical context in which a given text is placed, the timing of its creation, and what era it relates to.

• Specific Era Literature Study: This deals with understanding the characteristics of a particular era, tracing the general features of the literary movement during that period, stating what new features it introduced than the previous one, and placing the movement within its historical context in which it evolved.

• Identifying a Particular Type of Literary Art in a Specific Historical Period: This involves analyzing a type of art in literature during a historical period, or a trend within that art, or an intellectual or artistic school of thought.

• Studying an Author from a Specific Era: This involves looking at the literary characteristics of the writer by referring to his biography, the context of that era he belonged to, and political, social, and economic setting.

• Studying a Literary Text: Understand characteristics based on the historical context the text is set within, its circumstances of creation, its author's life, and other external factors.

In all this:

• Objectivity in the historical method includes strict observance of objectivity in the study of a work of literature because it is highly dependent on historical truth, which itself is a product of objectivity.

• Literature in a Greater Context: This critical approach to history views literature not as a world unto itself; it does not exist in any independent unit. As such, it cannot be grasped or dealt with or studied in any deep sense outside the connection with the factors that combined to form it. It demands the consideration of a historical setting in which it took place, and its moments of genesis when considering its examination.

The manifestations of the historical method epitomize the broad range of tools and techniques at its command and make it one of the most salient ways in which the connection between literature and its human and historical environment may be demonstrated. For instance, verification of texts by confirmation of their attribution and freedom from distortion shows objectivity and accuracy as emphasized by the historical method; thus, it gives scientific credibility to the study of literary phenomena.

Contrarily, this method gives the possibility of analyzing literature in its historical perspective: it means either considering the entire literary movement or turning one's attention to one form of art, one intellectual current, or even only one author, relating the creative process of literature with the surrounding historical, political, social, and cultural circumstances.

4. Conclusion:

The study concludes that the relationship between literary criticism and the humanities is not one of dependence but of dynamic interaction and intellectual complementarity. Literary criticism, as an interpretive and cognitive act, relies on the concepts and methodologies of the humanities to understand literary phenomena within their cultural, social, and historical contexts. In turn, the humanities find in literature a rich field for examining human values and testing theoretical assumptions in symbolic and aesthetic forms.

The research emphasizes that the critic's culture constitutes the foundation of the critical act. It shapes the critical vision and determines the methodological approach adopted in reading texts. Thus, criticism becomes a multidimensional cognitive activity in which philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics intersect.

The historical method serves as a practical example of this interaction, viewing the literary text not as an autonomous entity but as the product of a historically and culturally situated human experience. Consequently, critical reading emerges as a dual process that combines aesthetic interpretation with human understanding.

Ultimately, the study highlights that criticism is not merely a matter of taste but the result of broad, interdisciplinary knowledge. A well-rounded cultural formation enables the critic to perceive implicit dimensions within literary works and relate them to their wider intellectual and human contexts.

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