



THOMAS ADEWUMI UNIVERSITY, OKO, KWARA STATE

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION

COURSE CODE:

MCM 416

COURSE TITLE:

FILM CRITICISM

LEVEL: 400

LECTURER IN CHARGE:

MR I.A IBRAHIM

Module 1: THE CONCEPT OF FILM

The film uses the visual arts' creative aspects of line, form, mass, volume, and texture and takes advantage of light and shadow to project. Despite these comparisons, film is distinct from other forms of media because of its capacity to move continuously.

Film transcends the static limitations of painting and sculpture in the complexity of its sensual appeal as well as its ability to communicate simultaneously on multiple levels due to the continual interaction of sight, sound, and motion. Film even outclasses theatre in terms of showing several points of view, depicting action, manipulating time, and conveying an infinite feeling of space. Unlike a stage drama, a film can give a continuous, uninterrupted flow, blurring and minimizing transitions while maintaining the story's continuity.

Unlike the novel and the poem, a film communicates directly through real images and sound rather than abstract symbols like words on paper. Furthermore, films can cover an almost limitless range of topics. Films have the potential to portray almost anything we can think of or observe. The unseen can be exposed by slowing or speeding up time.

Almost like magic, scenes can become 'realities. Films can provide us with experiences that we would not otherwise have. Film is limitless not only in terms of the subject matter but also in terms of how it approaches that material. The tone and presentation of a film can range from lyric to epic. A film's point of view can span the entire range from absolutely objective to passionately subjective.

It can dive into the intellectual and philosophical, or it can focus on the superficial reality and the merely physical. A film may transport you to the distant past or the far future; it can stretch a few seconds into hours or compress a century into minutes. A film can evoke a wide range of emotions, from the most delicate, sweet, and lovely to the cruellest, violent, and unpleasant.

Therefore, when we discuss films, what do we talk about? The discussion begins with likes and dislikes, and subjective answers that reflect our experience, knowledge, and temperament about the film. The interest gets higher regarding what we say and how we say it- a discussion that often reveals if we love or hate a film that we have watched. Let me ask you a question.

In the modern era, film exists at the intersection of three main forces which are creativity, industry and advanced technology and that makes it an interesting object of study. Film analysis allows us to see how the filmmakers worked their magic on us, and how all of the film's constituent elements came together to produce that magic. Do you know why this background information

is relevant to this course? Before we answer and relate to film analysis, we must provide and discuss some operational definitions of a film before we proceed.

DEFINITIONS OF FILM

Over the years, several scholars and authors have reviewed the concept of film and have given different definitions that will help you to understand more about films as you prepare to analyse or criticise any film. We will consider some of these definitions here. According to Enwefah (2009), films are nothing but 'moving' pictures or pictures in 'motion'. They are a series of slightly different pictures (still pictures) passing before our eyes in sequential order and at a regular speed to tell a story. This movement is referred to as optical illusion. Film, according to Oyero, Amodu, and Usaini (2015), is a term that incorporates both individual motion pictures and the field as a whole. A film, often known as a "movie" or a "motion picture," is a collection of moving images that tell a story and are displayed on a screen, generally with sound.

A style of entertainment in which a tale is told using music and a series of visuals that provide the impression of continuous movement (Vocabulary.com, 2020). A film is a collection of moving images that have been recorded for projection in a cinema or on television. A film tells a story or depicts a real-life situation (Collins Online Dictionary, 2020).

Oloruntola (2009) also defined film as a record of an image through light upon a sensitive material called cellulose. Oyero et al (2015) further explained that the name 'film' originated from a photographic film that is also called filmstock which has historically been the primary medium for recording and displaying motion pictures. In the sense that they tell a story, films are similar to books or short tales. Romantic, historical, detective, thriller, adventure, horror, and science fiction are among the genres covered by books. Films, on the other hand, can be divided into subcategories such as action, comedy, tragedy, westerns, and war films.

Although the procedures used to study a film are similar to those used to examine literature, films are multidimensional. They are forms of visual media that are intended to be viewed by others. Films use a greater number of our senses to generate unique atmospheres, moods, and sentiments. Therefore, for you to conduct an informed analysis of any film, you must be able to

identify the type of film, or what we refer to as film genres. Can you guess some of the genres of films that are available? Let us consider the next subheading.

Module 2 and 3: GENRE OF FILMS

To start with, you must know that 'genre' is a word that was derived from the French language which means a style or category of art, music, or literature. In film studies, film genres are classifications that categorize films based on their narrative themes. The types of stories told by each genre are distinct. Over time, genres have evolved and changed, resulting in various subgenres that further define filmmaking approaches.

However, when a film is categorized as a Western, a musical, or a comedy, viewers have preconceptions about what to expect. Films within each genre may differ in many ways, but they will all follow similar, recognized patterns in terms of theme, time, setting, plot, symbolism, and characters. Scriptwriters and filmmakers can use genres to organize, cast, and structure their stories inside a manageable, well-defined framework (to speak a common 'language').

Genres also provide studios with an easily marketable product, as well as pleasing, expected, and predictable choices for audiences. Again, some experts believe that the genre of a film is usually a reflection of the perspective of the writer, the producer or the director. Normally, all films belong to a genre but over time, it has been noted that some films may be referred to as crossbreeds or hybrids because they address various themes across the different genres. When you are aware of the genre of film that you wish to analyse, then you can anticipate and make the necessary research before you start. Now, let us consider in detail some of these genres.

- i. **Action Films:** Action films are fast-paced and feature lots of action, such as fight sequences, chase scenes, and slow-motion shots. Superheroes, martial arts, and spectacular stunts are all possibilities. These elevated flicks are more concerned with the story's execution than with the plot itself. The style is associated with non-stop action—dramatic chases, shoot-outs, and explosions—often centered around a male hero struggling against terrible odds. Action films offer pure escapism and entertainment to the audience and are regularly big box-office hits. Action films are supposed to be entertaining to watch and keep the audience on the edge of their

seats. Action movies include cop movies, disaster flicks, and certain spy films. Some of the main sub-genres include War and Military Action; Spy and Espionage Action; Martial Arts Action; Western Shoot 'Em Up Action; and Action Hybrid Genres.

- ii. **Adventure Films:** Because the adventure and action genres are so similar, adventure films are frequently classed as action/adventure films. Adventure films typically have the same core genre characteristics as action films, with the setting serving as the primary differentiator. Adventure films are frequently set in a faraway, exotic, or unusual location. Traditional martial combat or pirate films, serialized films, and historical spectacles (similar to the epics film genre), searches or expeditions for lost continents, "jungle" and "desert" epics, treasure hunts, disaster films, or explorations for the unknown are also examples of the adventure genre. A typical example of an adventure film is Lord of the Rings directed by Peter Jackson, based on the novel written by J. R. R. Tolkien and Igodo: The Land of the Living Dead, a Nigerian movie produced by Don Pedro Obaseki and directed by Andy Amenechi in 1999. You can scan the QR codes below to watch Igodo and the thriller of Lords of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001).
- iii. **Comedy Films:** Have you ever watched a film that made you shed joyous tears while laughing and probably roll on the floor? If you have, then may have likely watched a comedy film. One of the oldest theatrical genres is comedy. It was better adapted to silent films than tragedy, as it was derived from the commedia dell'arte (improvised comedy from 16th-century Italy) and the burlesque, circus, and vaudeville traditions. Comedies are lighthearted stories that exaggerate the scenario, the language, the action, the relationships, and the characters to entertain and induce laughter (with one-liners, jokes, and so on). This section discusses slapstick, screwball, spoofs and parodies, romantic comedies, black comedy (dark satirical comedy), and other types of comedy throughout cinematic history. Good comedies are more about telling a globally relatable, true-to-life story with complicated characters who learn an essential lesson than they are about making nonstop jokes. The comedy genre has also shown

to be one of the most adaptable, with its roots infiltrating the very fabric of film and its many subgenres

- iv. **Drama:** You can easily conclude that the dram genre is your regular film. Drama is characterized by stories with high risks and multiple conflicts. They are plot driven, and every character and scene must advance the plot. Dramas have a well-defined narrative story structure and depict real-life or severe circumstances with emotionally charged individuals. Usually, they are not focused on special effects, comedy, or action. Dramatic films are probably the largest film genre, with many subsets. Historical drama, romantic drama, teen drama, medical drama, docudrama, and film noir are examples of drama subgenres. A good example of a drama movie is Half of a Yellow Sun a 2013 Anglo Nigerian drama film directed by Biyi Bandele and based on the novel of the same name by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The film is historical fiction that follows two sisters who are caught up in the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. Another example of a drama movie is Titanic a 1997 American epic romance and disaster film directed, written, produced, and co-edited by James Cameron. Incorporating both historical and fictionalized aspects, it is based on accounts of the sinking of the RMS Titanic.
- v. **Epic:** Most times, epical films are those set-in history. Costume dramas, historical dramas, war films, medieval thrillers, or 'period pictures' are all examples of epics, which often cover a lengthy period and are set against a broad, panoramic backdrop. Epics typically have characteristics in common with the genre of elaborate adventure films. Epics take a historical or imagined event, a mythic, legendary, or heroic figure, and add elegance, spectacle, dramatic perspective, high production values, and a panoramic musical score, as well as an exotic location or time, expensive clothes, and a sweeping musical score. Epics are usually a more elaborate, spectacular form of a biographical film. Epic movies typically feature vast panoramas, with hundreds of extras, and are likely to be historical or Biblical stories containing spectacular scenes. Films that fall under this category include Gladiators and Troy. One of the films in that category produced in Nigeria is Sango: The Legendary African King (1997) written by

Wale Ogunyemi and produced and directed by Obafemi Lasode. The film depicts the life and reign of the legendary fifteenth-century African king Sango, who ruled as the Alaafin of Oyo and became an important deity of the Yoruba people.

- vi. **English Gothic novel**, were among the first examples of the genre. People are left with an overpowering sense of terror and fear after seeing horror films. Serial killers or monsters are frequently featured as persistent, evil adversaries in horror films, to play on viewers' anxieties or imaginations. Horror movie lovers seek out these films expressly for the adrenaline rush provided by ghosts, gore, monsters, and jump scares. Ghost stories, gothic horror films, science fiction horror films, supernatural films, dark fantasy films, psychological horror films, and slasher films are all horror sub-genres. Examples of these films include *Wrong Turn* (2011) written and directed by Declan O'Brien and *Dawn of the Dead* a 2004 American action horror film directed by Zack Snyder. *Nneka the Pretty Serpent*.
- vii. **Musical/Dance Films:** Sometimes when you watch a film, you will observe that over 80% of the film has musical performances. Dialogue may be going on between two persons, and the next thing you will hear would be a musical sound from the background. When you notice this, you might be watching a musical film. To advance the tale or further develop the characters, musical films use songs or musical numbers in the narrative. The movie musical, which began with the invention of sound, had its roots in vaudeville (a light often comic theatrical piece frequently combining pantomime, dialogue, dancing, and song) and opera. Musical films provided audiences with an accessible and instant escape from life, with their creative blending of fantasy and reality. Musicals are frequently associated with romance films, but they are not restricted to that genre. Musical films feature large-scale stage productions that incorporate major plot or character elements into the sequences. Musical/dance films are films that feature full-scale scores or song and dance routines in a substantial way (typically with a musical or dance performance interwoven into the film story), or films that have a mix of music, dance, song, or choreography. Musical comedies and concert films are two popular subgenres of musical films. Hollywood and Bollywood often

produce films in this genre. Examples of musical films include *Step Sisters* a 2018 dance comedy film directed by Charles Stone III; *Lakshmi* a 2018 Indian Tamil-language musical dance film written and directed by A. L. Vijay; *High School Musical 3: Senior Year* a 2008 American 22 musical film written by Peter Barsocchini and directed by Kenny Ortega; and *The Campus Queen*, a 2004 Nollywood musical written by Akinwunmi Ishola and directed by Tunde Kelani and produced Mainframe Films and Television Productions.

- viii. **Science-Fiction (Sci-Fi) and Fantasy:** Films The influence of scientific discoveries and projections has influenced film production across the world. When growing up, you might have watched some of those films that would take you into space and made you think that life in space presents some fantasies that you should desire. Those are some of the features of science fiction and fantasy films. In science fiction and fantasy films, imaginary worlds and scenarios are constructed, most times by special effects, to make the unlikely likely. Sci-Fi movies are frequently quasi-scientific, visionary, and imaginative, with heroes, aliens, faraway planets, impossible quests, absurd locations, fascinating places, enormous dark and sinister villains, futuristic technology, unknown and unknowable powers, and incredible monsters ('things or creatures from space'), either made by furious scientists or created by a nuclear disaster. They are occasionally a spin-off of more metaphysical action movies (or superhero films), or they are similar to action/adventure films. Science fiction frequently conveys the potential for technology to harm humanity and frequently crosses over into 23 horror films, especially when technology or extraterrestrial life forms become hostile. The science fiction genre creates universes and alternate realities that are full of imagined things that do not exist in reality. Science fiction covers a wide range of topics, including time travel, space travel, future settings, and the implications of technical and scientific advancements. For the viewers to accept the tale and universe, sci-fi films often entail rigorous world-building with significant attention to detail. There are many other types of science fiction: apocalyptic or dystopic, space opera, futuristic noirs, speculative fiction, and so on. Examples of Sci-Fi films include *The Matrix Resurrections*, a 2021

American science fiction action film produced, co-written, and directed by Lana Wachowski; *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, a 2019 American epic space opera film produced, co-written, and directed by J. J. Abrams; and *Ratnik*, a 2020 Nigerian apocalyptic science fiction dystopian-action film written, directed and produced by Dimeji Ajibola.

- ix. **Romance/Love Films:** Love stories are the focus of romance films. They follow two protagonists as they explore many aspects of love such as relationships, sacrifice, marriage, obsession, and destruction. Illness, betrayal, tragedy, or other challenges for the love characters to overcome are sometimes featured in romance films. Popular romance subgenres include romantic comedies, gothic romance, and romantic 24 action. The romance genre, like the action and comedy genres, has become a fundamental factor in almost every other film genre. It is difficult to see a film now without a romance theme in it. Even though early cinema was known for classic romance plots as well as several mixes of styles, the romance genre has evolved. Examples of romance films include *Fifty Shades of Grey*, a 2015 American erotic romantic drama film directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson; *365 Days* a 2020 Polish erotic thriller film directed by Barbara Białowąs and Tomasz Mandes; *When Love Happens* a 2014 Nigerian romantic comedy film coproduced and directed by Seyi Babatope and *Phone Swap* a 2012 Nigerian romance comedy-drama film written by Kemi Adesoye, directed and produced by Kunle Afolayan.
- x. **Documentary Film** **Documentary films:** present you with reality. Which you may not have been able to see in a long time or even in a lifetime. Do you not feel excited when you watch those animal kingdom films that bring live into your living room what happens in the jungle? Amongst other things, that is what documentaries do. The documentary film, often known as a non-fiction film, has a long history in cinema. The genre could be regarded as the most durable of all film types, having undergone a resurgence and being more popular since the turn of the twenty-first century. A documentary film, simply known as a documentary, aims to "capture reality, primarily for instruction, education, or the preservation of historical records." Documentary

filmmaking is a discipline with a cinematic heritage with a broad scope of subjects that would attract a diverse audience of diverse 25 interests. Also known as 'actuality films', early documentaries lasted for about one minute or less. However, production in this genre has grown and expanded to full-length films and scope over time and covering a wider range of topics. Documentaries include nature documentary that showcases animals in the jungle and the changes or developments in the environment and life in the oceans. Aldredge (2020) identified 6 types of documentaries which are poetic documentaries, expository documentaries, observational documentaries, participatory documentaries, reflexive documentaries and performative documentaries.

Module 5: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL FUNCTION OF FILM IN SOCIETY

Films can significantly influence how the populace views government, political office holders and the policies made by the government at any given time. Historically, the advent of films has a strong background in political discourse. For instance, many films produced during the World War were to sway peoples' perspectives in favour of a particular government's reason for engaging or not engaging in war. Many of these films were classified as tools of government propaganda. Researchers have attempted to establish these socio-political functions of a film.

For instance, research by Michelle C. Pautz examined the impact of two films, *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, on the audience's perceptions of government in the United State of America. The study found that after viewing the two films, many of the study participants' views changed, with most expressing greater levels of trust in government and having a more positive view of government performance. Political situations or issues, such as suspicious dealings within a large organization, a politician's struggle for power, a community's effort to come to terms with some collective issues, etc., are often the primary subjects of films that address socio-political themes.

The films frequently use their story to make a point about the failings or nobility of political institutions. When a society is experiencing difficult political situations, usually occasioned by perceived poor policies and government initiatives, filmmakers often create films that could address the issues. Such films may also address misbehavior or obvious incompetencies of a

particular politician or conspiracies among politicians and government officials that are impacting negatively on the social and economic activities of the society. Given this, we can conclude that the socio-political function of a film includes:

1. Identifying socio-political issues that are affecting society.
2. Showcasing the influence of such acts on the socio-political well-being of the society
3. Proffering solutions by showcasing the short and long-term impact of the actions.

However, you need to know that the socio-political function of film is not only about showcasing the negative parts of the government. It may also involve honoring and exalting good governance collectively or by individuals.

Sometimes, films are used to **foster political awareness**. For instance, during elections, films can be produced **to inform and educate** the people on the need for active participation and the possible effect of political violence during an electioneering process. In doing these, filmmakers may adopt a fiction or non-fiction approach in their films so long as the message would be sufficiently passed. Some could be in the form of a satire, comedy or thriller. An example of a film that treats **socio-political themes** is Official Secrets.

The film is a 2019 British drama film based on the case of whistleblower Katharine Gun, who leaked a memo exposing an illegal spying operation by American and British intelligence services to gauge the sentiment of and potentially blackmail United Nations diplomats tasked to vote on a resolution regarding the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Wikipedia, 2022). Another example is *Kòseégbé* (Immovable), a 1995 Yoruba film directed by Tunde Kelani and based on a stage play of the same name by Akinwunmi Isola. The film features a morally decent customs officer who takes over from a senior official who was fired due to corruption. He seeks to sanitize the system at his new post, but he was met with resistance from the equally corrupt junior officers.

In summary, your understanding of these functions of a film will help you as you analyse any film in the following ways:

1. It will help you to adequately classify what role the film aims to play through the themes that are expressed in it.

2. It will help you to fully appreciate the direction and production of the film in line with the broad concept of the film.
3. It will help contextualise, that is to relate the themes in the film to the society, particularly the audience in the locale of the film.
4. It will also help you to pass an informed judgement on your film of interest.

Module 6: THE CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS OF FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The study of human cultural life is known as criticism. Criticism does to cultural life what science does to physical existence. It deconstructs it, investigates it, and determines why it functions the way it does. The procedures used to create cultural artefacts such as novels, movies, music, and paintings, as well as the concepts included in such artefacts, the universe from which they emerge, and their significance in our lives, are all subject to such criticism.

With this background, we will discuss some definitions of film analysis and criticism so that we all can have a better understanding. However, would you want to try based on this brief background and your residual knowledge reading about films? According to Branco (2015), criticism may be defined simply as an argued appreciation of the value of a work of art, for instance, a film. Villarejo (2007) describes film analysis as “the study of film “like a language” through a taxonomy of its form and an examination of its rules”.

Long, Minervini and Gladd (2022) define film analysis as “the process in which film is analyzed in terms of semiotics, narrative structure, cultural context, and mise-enscene, among other approaches”. Reviewing the foregoing definitions of film analysis, you may wonder, why do you also have “film criticism”? we try to create a picture of what happens when we study film and this includes analysis and criticism.

In the process of analysis, you may pass judgement on certain elements of the film and by that, you would be making a criticism. Now, let us examine some definitions and descriptions of film criticism.

The Research Guide (2017) published by the University of Vermont describes film criticism thus: **Film criticism** is the study, interpretation, and evaluation of a film and its place in cinema history.

Film criticism usually offers an interpretation of its meaning, an analysis of its structure and style, a judgement of its worth by comparison with other films, and an estimation of its likely effect on viewers. Film theory (e.g. feminist, postmodernist, etc.) often informs the critical analysis of a film.

Criticism may examine a particular film or may look at a group of films in the same genre, or a director's or actor's body of work. Film criticism differs from movie reviews in several ways: it entails both analysis and judgement; it may be published many years after a film is released; it is usually longer and more complex than a movie review.

Along with literary, theatrical, and art criticism, all of which accept narrative dominance, film criticism has both scholarly and popular approaches with strong traditions of aesthetic analysis.

The Nigerian Experience

Film criticism in Nigeria become recognized when Nigerians started making films postindependence. According to a foremost Nigerian film critic, Shaibu Husseini, documented critique of Nigerian films started post-independence around 1972 when more Nigerian 51 stage actors started venturing into the production of films on celluloid. Before that period, most of the films available were Western films, Chinese Films and Indian films which were only been watched simply for entertainment.

However, film producers such as Ola Balogun, Hubert Ogunde, and Francis Oladele among others created a buzz in the production of indigenous Nigerian films which critics can now analyse and criticise within the Nigerian context of folkloric films. In the 1970s through the early 1990s, film criticism and reviews were majorly published in newspapers particularly Daily Times the foremost Nigerian newspaper then. Later, The Guardian started publishing film analyses and reviews.

According to Husseini, film producers in Nigeria often protest what the film critics write about their films. In some instances, newspapers which are the media for such film reviews and critiques have had to either stop the publication or reduce the number of art pages to discourage the

critics. Despite the challenges in passing their messages across through newspapers, some critics now use social media by creating blogs to communicate their messages.

Module 7: VALUES OF FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICIS

Now that you have read about the concept and some historical perspectives to film criticism and analysis, you may be wondering about why the interest in film? the film represents the life of a society. It reflects what society was, what it is and what it may be in the future. Based on this crucial role that films play in our social wellbeing, we must understand what the productions reflect; if they are well done; if they are worthy to watch and also understand the areas of improvement where they are necessary.

Regarding the value of film criticism, Matt Zoller Seitz, Editor in Chief of Roger Ebert.com and New Yorker Film Critic said it is the responsibility of film reviewers to explain to 55 audiences how form and content interact and how form expresses content. Film analysts who decline to write about form in any depth relinquish their responsibility and promote visual illiteracy. In essence, film critics are the mirror through which the audience sees the relevance of a film to them and society.

Analysis as a concept entail examining the whole to determine the nature, size, purpose, and connections between the components. Therefore, film analysis assumes the existence of a complete and logically ordered artistic work. With the aid of analysis, we can learn the most profound truths that only the artist in us can truly comprehend. The analytical approach is crucial to the craft of watching films because it allows us to observe and comprehend how each component works to add its vitality and dynamics as a whole.

Film analysis aids in retaining memories of experiences so that we can enjoy them in the future. Analyzing a movie allows us to interact intellectually and creatively with it, making it more completely our own. Analysis should also refine our tastes because it involves our critical judgments in the process. We may be too impressed by a bad movie at first, but after giving it some thought, we may come to dislike it. A fantastic or very good film will hold up to scrutiny; the more we learn about it, the more we will admire it.

Thus, there are several obvious advantages to film analysis. It enables us to draw accurate conclusions about the significance and worth of a movie, aids in the mental retention of a movie's experience, and generally perfects our critical judgements. The fact that analysis offers new awareness channels and understanding perspectives is its ultimate goal and biggest advantage. The assumption that we will appreciate art more fully the more knowledge we have seems logical.

The love we feel for an art form will be more solid, more durable, and of greater worth if it is founded on intellectual understanding rather than just on irrational and entirely subjective reactions. Although this does not mean that analysis will make someone enjoy films, it can generate love for a film by creating an intimate and personal union between films and the audience. If we truly appreciate movies, we will realize that analysis is worthwhile because it increases our comprehension and heightens our enthusiasm. Film analysis will amplify and deepen that experience rather than negate the emotional impact of seeing the film.

New levels of emotional experience will emerge as we sharpen our perception and examine the film more thoroughly (Petrie & Boggs, 2012). Generally, generations of discerning viewers have been taught how to distinguish between good and terrible films by film critics, who have also highlighted the positive and negative aspects of films. Film critics have revived films that had been hastily written off or that had trouble finding early audiences. They praised exceptional directors while frequently highlighting the accomplishments of their team members, including the cinematographers, production designers, screenwriters, costume designers, and actors. For readers to comprehend the aesthetic visions, storytelling sensibilities, and emotional intent inherent in films as well, film critics do provide the pathway. This history of leading the way, examining, investigating, applauding, and criticizing has been followed by many critics.

Module 8: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Despite the values that film analysis and criticism bring to both the critics and the audience, there are some misconceptions regarding the whole process. As a student in this class or eventually when you become a professional in the business of film analysis and criticism, you may face some of these challenges. However, in any circumstance, you must ensure that you abide by the

principles so that you can stand out. Let us now consider some of the misconceptions about film analysis and criticism.

- I. Film criticism guides the audience Many comments on social media accuse film critics of trying to impose influence on audiences by advising them on what to watch. Given that film criticism, notwithstanding star ratings, is not a consumer guide, this influence is almost nonexistent. For many film critics, star ratings do not inform their analysis and judgement but they may only mention the ratings to fulfil certain editorial criteria. Therefore, what critics do is approach a piece of work analytically and provide a judgment of its qualities and defects, including what it aims to achieve. Although a few critiques do contain language that suggests a recommendation, these are typically the exception and are frequently the result of extraordinary situations.
- II. Film critics influence box office Most times, this claim reoccurs across societies where film criticism thrives. However, what has been noted over time is that films that are analysed sometime do not make the top list at the box office. What this means is that the critics despite his critique may not influence the box office ratings due to other factors that are responsible for such ratings. The chances of this occurring may be occasional and not constant.
- III. Film critics believe that their opinions are fact This is another misconception about film critics. The claim that critics believe their words to be the absolute truth is a typical one used to discredit the profession. This is not true because any critic will tell you that they love nothing more than sharing their ideas with others, whether it be readers or colleagues, as long as the discussion is respectful and civil. This is particularly valid if the opinions differ. Furthermore, critics' viewpoints do change continuously. Although some critics may be overbearing with their critique, it has been noted that such critics are usually amateurs who may be into film criticism as a hobby rather than a profession. In their quest to counter the so-called biases of professional critics, these non-professionals operate smaller websites or YouTube channels to promote their so-called authentic positions on films. Large, their actions do not reflect respect for their peers.

- IV.** Film critics should 'always' be objective Another frequently voiced opinion is that critics should put aside their prejudices and try to be as impartial as possible. Like all people, critics have their prejudices and experiences that form their perspectives and distinguish their voices from those of others. Although certain elements of a film such as a storyline summary, cast and crew, can fully pass the objective stage, some professionals have argued that the critic will still have to interpret from his perspective. Of course, there are some empirical factors to consider while evaluating a movie, including camera motions and angles, but those are only unprocessed data. If we were to judge a film solely on how objectively it adheres to established cinematic grammar, any movie that thinks decided to be creative and do some things differently may be viewed negatively. Therefore, film critics cannot afford to deal with only the evidenced component but to interrogate the whole process from their perspective and make submissions which might reflect some subjectivity.
- V.** Film critics are those who could not succeed in making their own films Another popular misconception is that most critics are unsuccessful filmmakers who are jealous of successful directors. Aside from the fact that there would be no favorable critiques if that opinion were to be true, there are pieces of evidence that critics have historically made excellent filmmakers. Additionally, creating a film and critiquing one are extremely distinct activities that require very different learning strategies. VI. Film critics hate films This is a misconception that negates logic. If film critics hate films, how come they watch hundreds of films year-in, year-out to critique them. Hatred would not make them engage is such a daunting task for which they may have to sit for hours, playing back certain scenes several times to make an observation. VII. Film critics are bribed by studios to write good reviews as earlier noted, film critique in most instances has no major influence on the box office ratings of a film. Not too many people look out for analysis beyond the advertisements posted on a film before they go to watch it. Therefore, it may not be wise for film producers/studios to bribe film critics. Where such exist, most times, the film critic is not a professional.

Module 9 and 10: MAJOR STEPS IN FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Since you are now familiar with the values that film analysis offers to the film industry and society, you would want to ensure that when you conduct a film analysis, you do it the right way and follow the normal procedure. These steps are simple but you must not take them for granted else, you run the risk of falling victim to some of the misconceived notions about film criticism since the outcome of such non-procedural steps may be faulty. Essentially, you must understand what to do before, during and after watching a film which you intend to analyse.

Before Watching the Film The first question to ask is what task have I been asked to do in this film? Your understanding of the task would to a large extent guide all the next steps you will take because you would have understood the objectives. Before starting your analysis, you should take into account the barriers to impartiality due to our preconceptions and biases as well as the specific circumstances surrounding our viewing of the film. We all respond differently and sensitively to internal and environmental factors that are out of the director's control.

Although these factors have no direct impact on the film itself, they can affect how we view it. Knowing about these factors should enable us to counter them or at the very least reduce their impact. The prejudice that causes us to disregard particular film genres is among the most challenging to eradicate. For instance, you may not like epic films, however, as a film critic, if you have a job to analyse the film, such prejudice must not reflect in your analysis. Even though it is normal to prefer some genres over others, the majority of us can find something to like or admire about practically any film. It is important to remember that not every film will match our expectations.

Expecting too much from a film, regardless of whether it has garnered praise from critics, audiences, or friends, is another subjective aspect that affects film evaluation. If we particularly enjoy a book that is later made into a film, our expectations could become unreasonably high. When we have unreasonable expectations, a movie cannot possibly

live up to them, and our disappointment taints what would otherwise be a great piece of art.

Others might overlook interesting films because they are unwilling to deviate from the norm. Audiences with rigid notions about what movies should be are another group with a limited perspective. Critics who establish their own standards for what constitutes a good film and disapprove of those that follow different guidelines are closely connected.

Excellent films might not be appreciated because the characters are unlikeable or the action is unrealistic. You must avoid these kinds of assumptions and attempt to be receptive to the film's goals, meanings and message. After you have purged yourself of prejudices or preconceptions and you have selected a film to analyse, for factors may help to further provide some background. First, you may consider what reviewers have written about the film either in newspapers, magazines, on television, radio or online. The majority of reviews also touch on the crucial and attention-grabbing aspects of the film. By comparing the film to other works by the same filmmaker or production team, or to similar works by other directors, the review may aid in helping us understand the film's context. A review could dissect the film into its component pieces and assess each one's makeup, dimensions, purpose, and relationships.

Despite the fact that most journalistic reviews are hurriedly drafted to meet deadlines, they nearly always contain some sort of value judgment, such as an assessment of the overall quality of the film. While this may serve as a basis for your initial thoughts, you must remember that the reviewers may have their own biases which may have influenced what they have written. Except where you are familiar and sure of a fair review, do not totally rely on the reviews. Second, you may gather thoughts from the publicity given to the film.

Our responses may be influenced by the massive amount of publicity that practically every film receives from producers, studios, and frequently, media sources that are owned by the same conglomerates that operate the studios. Interviews with actors and directors from freshly released movies are a common element on television discussion shows. The third source of information is word-of-mouth from friends who have watched the film. Numerous people can now express their ideas and engage in real-time conversation regarding recent films thanks to online chat rooms and blogs. The fourth option is to find reviews on specialized movie websites.. A good understanding of the film terms will help you as you take your notes when watching the film. Some of the terms are listed below: CU: Close-up XCU: Extreme close-up MCU: Medium close-up MS: Medium shot LS: Long shot XLS: Extreme long shot MLS: Medium long shot HA: High angle LA: Low angle SL: Screen left SR: Screen right, CM: Camera movement TS: Tracking shot HH: Handheld CR: Crane shot Z: Zoom LT: Long take S/RS: Shot/reverse shot DISS: Dissolve FI: Fade-in FO: Fade-out DS: Diegetic sound NDS: Nondiegetic sound VO: Voice-over OS: Off-screen.

While Watching the Film Having succeeded with making your decision on the film to watch, when, where and how many times you want to watch it, you have to create a schedule for yourself. If you intend to capture all the elements you may draw up a schedule that will align with the forms and approaches to film analysis that will be examined. You must record your observations swiftly either during or right away after the viewing, while your impressions are still fresh, as you do not want note-taking to interfere with how much you enjoy the film. You should not be concerned with how the entries might tie into an argument or thesis. Write down any ideas that come to mind. Whether it is your first time watching a film, the key is to identify significant, unusual, and transitional moments: a pivotal moment in the story, a change in the film's visual or aural aesthetic, a memorable scene, a sound or line of dialogue that appears repeatedly with slight variations, or an image.

These observations will assist you in selecting the scenes that you will focus on. The film might need to be seen more than once because further viewings will enable you to take more detailed notes and halt the action as you write. Using acronyms for terms related to camera work, editing, and sound will enable you to take notes more quickly. As you record, you might need to make notes about minutes of action etc. You can support your analysis of the film with precise information from your notes. Additionally, they can assist you in identifying key patterns in the scene that might serve as the basis for an interpretation. The significance of such unique details such as strange shadows, and the way the image is lit, how the character looks might be thought of as a whole in your analysis.

After Watching the Film After watching the film, what is expected of you is to gather and organize your notes. Remember that before you started you have drawn up an outline of what you want to achieve. However, your notes may also include things that you observed that you may not have envisaged. Such may be a technique deployed by the director that looks very unique. Although no one method works for all writers, it is always a good idea to arrange your notes before you start writing. Outlining is beneficial for many writers.

An outline can be a straightforward list of concepts or a selection of noteworthy images and scenarios. Moving from generalities to specifics is facilitated by adding details or instances from your notes. When you are prepared to begin writing, you should formulate your interpretative notion into a theme and then convey that idea in a clear, short manner. Each paragraph must contribute to the development of your analysis and be logical, consistent, and have a clear understanding of what it is attempting to express.

However, you must clear your thoughts adequately before you start creating your report. Clearing your thoughts will help to reduce the possibilities of what may be regarded as excessive subjectivity in your analysis. Remember that earlier, we explain that although a film analyst is expected to be objective, our exposure, background and preferences still present some level of subjectivity in us. Therefore, you may consider some of the

following questions which may guide you: Do you have any strong preconceptions about this specific kind of film? If yes, how did these biases influence your reactions to the film? How much do the actors, how sexually explicit the content is, and how violent the scenes are all personally subjectively impact your evaluation of the film? Generally, your introduction must link perfectly with the body and the conclusion must be clear for the readers to know exactly where you stand.

Module 11 and 12: TYPES OF FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

JOURNALISTIC FILM ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Newspapers, general magazines, television shows, and websites are where you find journalistic film critiques. The success of a movie at the box office is frequently influenced by these reviews, which are extensively read by the general audience. Analysis can be so influential that studios frequently refuse to release films in advance for which there is a chance of poor reception. But certain movies frequently earn a lot of money while receiving nearly unanimously negative reviews from critics. The role of journalistic criticism is one of vigilance and critique of the film industry. However, the advent of increasingly sophisticated marketing strategies by studios and the rise of the Internet has led to a fall in the position of journalistic film criticism. The overall quality has been diluted as a result of the frequent equal weighting of reviews of junk movies, largely by non-professionals and those written by seasoned journalists.

Movie Review: 'Swallow' is sweet, bitter pill for Nigerian audience The movie is sweet because it is a reminder of the travails of the average Nigerian seeking greener pastures abroad.

By Emmanuel Onu October 17, 2021 4 min read

Movie title: 'Swallow' Based on Sefi Atta's novel of the same title Running Time: 2hours 8minutes
Directors: Kunle Afolayan Writers: Sefi Atta and Kunle Afolayan Producers: Netflix studios Lead cast: Eniola Akinbo (Niyola), Ijeoma Grace Agu (as Rose), Deyemi Okanlanwon (as Sanwo), Eniola Badmus (as Mrs Durojaiye), Chioma Akpotha (as Mama Chidi), Kevin Ikeduba (as OC), Offiong Anthony Edet (as Johnny) and veteran Olusegun Remi (as Mr Salako). Date of Release: October 1,

2021. For greener pastures outside of Nigeria, the lead characters in Kunle Afolayan's latest movie, *Swallow*, are ready to risk it all-literally, everything, including their lives.

The movie, which is an adaptation of the screen adaptation of Sefi Atta's third novel 'Swallow', was shot in the city of rusty roofs, Ibadan in Oyo State, and Lagos. It follows the story of a naive bank secretary, Tolani Ajao, who, after a series of career woes, considers her roommate's offer to work as a drug mule in mid-1980s Lagos. However, Tolani faces a crisis of conscience, and as she questions her morality in a repressive military regime, she finds herself flung into a journey of self-discovery. It is the first screenwriting credit for the Nigerian novelist, who co-wrote the screen adaptation with Afolayan. Nollywood is fast evolving from the era of predictable storylines to dynamic and thematic narrations which is an offshoot of the vast skills, knowledge, and trends in filmmaking.

Great movie adaptations are usually tasking because they go beyond just screenplay. It requires extra efforts to coherently birth the story (with its peculiarities) into a movie and create relative psychological proximity between the book and the movie. To this end, Afolayan deserves some accolades. However, Afolayan, who is in the attitude of casting non-actors in lead roles in his movies, should, from his wealth of experience, understand that these non-actors suffer certain shortfalls. Not many of them can, in reality, provide the ingredients that spice or if you like, make a good movie. Was *Swallow* a sweet or bitter pill for the Nigerian movie audience? Plot 68 The original story, "Swallow" by Atta tells a simple and interesting narrative about the quest for survival by young women entangled by their unifying struggle to survive in a patriarchal society.

The plight of these women depicted in the characters of Tolani Ajao and Rose, her obstinate friend and roommate, is relatable and this realisation is keenly detailed enough to keep the readers glued to the book. The movie, reminiscent of Lagos in the 1980s, takes into cognizance the customs, the currency value, the vehicles in use, the discourse, and the Nigerian football games aired via radio, all depicting a typical 80s lifestyle. Set in the heart of the war against indiscipline, a hallmark of Muhammadu Buhari's 1983-1985 military government, Tolani and her roommate Rose, two proud independent women, suffer injustice in a bid to survive the bureaucratic system of the bank where they work as clerk and secretary respectively. Aside from work, they live

together in a small room, at an open compound, amongst people from various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

One cannot forget the interesting characters of her neighbours like the strict and busy nurse, Mrs Durojaiye, played by Eniola Badmus and the intelligent Igbo housewife, Mama Chidi, played by Chioma Chukwuka. Rose, fed up with the harassment from her obsolete and corrupt boss, Mr Salako, resigns from her job, while Tolani replaces her as secretary. However, Rose seeks financial assistance from her relative who owns a salon but was turned down. This opens her to the reality of life and survival. Tolani on the other hand is optimistic as she continued with her job, holding in high esteem the values her father instilled in her at a young age. Tolani unbending to the illicit advances thrown to her by her boss and the controversial rumours being peddled around the office encounters similar difficulties as Rose and is on the verge of giving up. Turning point However, Rose meets OC, an acclaimed 'big boy' who showers her with gifts and soon introduces her to his source of livelihood-smuggling drugs with a stable of female drug mules.

Rose, decides to join OC in his illegal business, to swallow drugs and travel abroad to evacuate them in the bathroom for sales. Rose begins to practice and in no time gains mastery on how to swallow and keep the drugs in her abdomen Rose soon introduces Tolani to the business. She agrees at first but clinging to her father's instructions and her mother's advice back at Makoku (her hometown), "Protect your reputation. Don't let life or any man take it away from you," "be content with what you have." Tolani refrains from joining Rose on the trip. This is where the plot thickens and the drama we signed up for, truly begins. Props 69 The dominant languages in the movie were English, Yoruba, and pidgin English and they helped set the tone for the film. The conscious employ of indigenous languages in recent Nollywood movies like Igbo in 'Lionheart', Hausa in 'Voiceless', and Yoruba in 'Citation' and 'Swallow' is applaudable. The producers paid extra attention to the tiny details which are hitherto overlooked in most Nollywood movies.

The set designers deserve accolades for the set and props. It is definitely no mean feat shooting an 80s movie in 21st-century contemporary Nigeria and bringing into reality some 1980s relics and props which gave the movie a rich taste of history. Sweet bitter because it is not the regular movie we see where the hero or heroine always wins. Bitter because it is a tragedy, sweet because

there are lessons to learn from it. Conclusion Singer Niyola, popularly known as Eniola Akinbo, struggled with the role. Having featured in music videos that require less action, the conscious ability to impersonate and bring the character 'Tolani' to life was majorly lacking. However, the supporting lead, Ijeoma Grace Agu, who played the role of Rose, owned the spotlight. The lead character should shine throughout the film, but Agu's brilliant portrayal of Rose gave the much-needed 'action' that we all longed for in the film. It is safe to say Afolayan, and perhaps his cast, played too safe in the film.

Clearly, the director focused too much attention on achieving a believable 80s setting but failed at delivering the much-needed punch where it was needed especially at the climax of the movie. For instance, we were expecting more action towards the end of the movie, especially in the plane scene where Rose died. We did not want to be told how she died, it would have made more sense if it was vividly portrayed. Verdict 'Swallow' is a sweet and bitter pill for the Nigerian audience. It is a reminder of the travails of the average Nigerian seeking greener pastures abroad against all odds and bitter because it is a stark reminder of a time when things actually worked in Nigeria. It is a good movie worth watching especially as a family. It is didactic and entertaining.

Module 13: ACADEMIC FILM CRITICISM

Academic criticism also referred to as film theory or film studies, investigates film in greater depth than do journalistic film reviews. The critics attempt to investigate the reasons behind a film's success, its aesthetic or political merits, its significance, and its impact on viewers. Instead of writing for mass-market publications, their pieces are frequently published in academic journals and books that are frequently associated with university presses, as well as occasionally in upscale periodicals.

The majority of academic film criticism frequently uses a similar structure. They typically feature story summaries to either remind the reader of the plot or to support the notion that the genre of the film is repetitive. Following this, there are frequent discussions about the sociocultural context, prominent themes and recurring patterns, and specifics regarding the film's legacy. Academic film criticism examines a variety of filmmaking, production, and distribution issues.

These specialities include digitalization, lighting, sound, and camera work. It studies and evaluates a variety of factors when providing criticism, including narratives, dialogues, themes, and genres. Academic criticism is often divided and taught as a variety of disciplines that approach criticism in various ways. These may consist of:

- i. Formalism is the study of how things are done and how they appear in form or shape.
- ii. Structuralism investigates how narratives are organized, have a distinct style, and how language and art itself can convey meaning.
- iii. Historical criticism examines a film's culture and context rather than the explicit messages that are being conveyed. The historical critic will infer significance from something that isn't expressed or demonstrated in the movie.
- iv. Psychoanalysis dissects the unconscious feeling that one may have when seeing a particular movie.
- v. The political and economic analysis examines not only how politics and the economy are portrayed in the movie but also how they affect the movie's production, promotion, distribution, and purchase.

Creating Meaning through Interpretations: A Mise-En-Scene Analysis of the 71 Film 'The Song of Sparrows' Jayakrishnan Sreekumar, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies Special Issue – September 2015

Abstract Cinema is a mass medium and it stimulates experiences in its pursuit to put across ideas and perceptions (Acker, 1991). Filmmakers adopt different ways to transfer their thoughts and perceptions to the audience. Elements like décor, lighting, space, costumes, and acting, which can be collectively referred to as mise-en-scene, play a crucial role in creating mood and meaning to the shots (Barsam and Monahan, 2010).

Specific scenes from the Iranian film 'The Song of Sparrows' are identified to discuss each of the five elements and their importance in the storyline and their possible effects on the audience are analyzed using content analysis. The paper concludes that meanings can be created through the

interpretation of these five mise-en-scene elements. Close observation and analysis of these elements in the film could lead to a much-enhanced film-watching experience.

Keywords: Film, Mise-en-scene Analysis, Majid Majidi, Content Analysis