

The Literary Roots of Critical Media Studies¹

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Abstract The study of media is a very young discipline but its roots in literature can be traced as far back as 60 B.C.E. with *Rhetoric* by Aristotle. From the early days of print, to the age of social media, and with the new technologies that are expected to grace the fourth industrial revolution that is now being felt by the current generation, the discipline of media studies has consistently worked around frameworks and methodologies drawn from both the humanities and social sciences. However, it is from literary criticism that it draws its incipient and later on, deeply-entrenched, theoretical and methodological impulses. More specifically, the literary roots of critical media studies may be identifiable in the following elements: 1. The continuing use of rhetorical criticism; 2. The influence of linguistic theory and the semiological tradition; 3. The role of narratology through the constructionist and the phenomenological-hermeneutic traditions; 4. The influence of phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition on reception studies; 5. The emphasis on textual analysis using critical theory and poststructuralist approaches; 6. The commitment to expose the interplay between power and communication; 7. The openness to the link between theory, criticism, and social action. It is therefore the contention of this paper that the basic tenets of ethical literary criticism have influenced too the supposed ethical framework of media studies. The proof of such assumption may be linked to the rhetorical, semiotic, constructionist, phenomenological, hermeneutic and poststructuralist traditions that continue to propel and animate the discipline.

Key words literary criticism; media studies; rhetoric; semiotics; constructionist; phenomenological-hermeneutic framework; post-structuralism; ethical framework

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and Adaptations, which won the National Book Award for Film/Film Criticism in 200, tackled the intersection between literary criticism and film theory through a sampling of texts. Her research interests include postcolonial and postmodern literary and cultural studies.

Introduction

This paper explores the complementary existence between literature and media, how one sometimes supplant the other, or perhaps become the other's resurrected form. The paper does not claim that critical media studies is just an offshoot of literary criticism. Rather, it claims that the rise of media is part of a major turning point in literary development or a shift in literary history. It can be seen too from a reverse perspective: literature is itself a medium. This paper then will undertake a historical explanation of the parallel developments between literary criticism and the critical study of media, which eventually point to their complementary ethical trajectories.

Is It a “Turn” of a Revitalization?

A “turn” connotes a major shift, a change in consciousness, or a transformation in modes of thinking. Insofar as the concept of “ethics” has always been attached to the nature of function of literature from the beginning, this “turn” to ethics may be claimed to be more of a revitalization of the concept rather than a new one.

Any study in the history of Western literary criticism would commence on a discussion of the contrary positions of Plato and Aristotle on the nature and function of literature. While Plato raised concerned for the possible negative influence of poets to the citizens of the Republic, Aristotle noted the value that the mimetic quality of poetry has on its hearers. Ethics is at the core of this dialogue that has influenced the course of literary production and literary criticism down the ages.

The idea of literature has been as old as the concept of the word itself. In the King James Version of the Bible, John noted in Chapter 1 Verse 1 the inextricability of the word from the concept of creation in the passage: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God.” Such primeval partnership between word and narrative points to the inherent value of language and communication which governs the relationship between a divine power and a community of believers.

If language has always been around, then literature and media have had a long tenure too on earth. However, if we follow what Walter Benjamin said in his essay titled “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” our idea of art

today had only a remote connection to what they had in ancient times, from classical Greece for instance. Ancient tools of technology were developed in the name of religion. Foundry, sculpting and recitation of epics were part of temple rituals. The world would wait some 3,500 years more for mechanical reproduction to supplant the world of originals. Past the period of antiquity, they came to be known as art. But they are known by another name to the mechanical world: they were called the media. To quote Benjamin: “We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind. . . . Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art” (223-224).

The Period of Orality

Oral speech was the first medium ever invented by humanity. That which we call oral literature today may in fact be more aptly referred to as verbal performance of “tales, oratory, and song” (Ong 331). Walter Ong, the Jesuit scholar who wrote on Marshall McLuhan, notes that the phrase “oral literature” or “oral writing” results to a “confused nomenclature” (331) because it is so distinct from our conception of literature as written.

Nie Zhenzhao also shares that view. In his interview with Charles Ross, Prof. Nie said that “oral literature is an incorrect term, since it was narrated through memory. It can be better addressed as brain text. In other words, oral literature is not literature per se but the brain text related via oral narratives” (“A Conceptual Map of Ethical Literary Criticism: An Interview with Nie Zhenzhao,” www.fwls.org/plus/view.php?aid=247).

The world will have to wait for 500,000 years before learning to write. And when it finally happened, the vanguards of oral culture issued a warning to the death of memory. Plato wrote on this in “Phaedrus” whose recreation of the conversation between Socrates and the Sophist Phaedrus, as they were walking by the walls of Athens, may be considered as sort of cautionary discourse on the diminution of memory when the new skill of writing that had been introduced into Athenian society at that time.

Socrates, in that conversation, recounted the story of Theuth who presented “his arts” (Leitch, et al. 81) to Thamus, then King of Egypt. When the subject wandered into Theuth’s new invention called writing, Thamus replied “O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of

those who learn it.... You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality..." ("Phaedrus," in Leitch, et al., eds, 81). And so, as Thamus has voiced out, human memory would become a prized possession in the subsequent age of writing. Therefore, the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus addressed the role of memory in a society that is increasingly adopting the technology of writing.

The Age of Written Literature/The Age of the First Information Revolution

Media historian Irving Fang (1997) considers the invention of writing sometime in 4,000 B.C.E. as the first media technology, the first information revolution, so to speak. The discovery of writing materials such as clay, animal skin, bones, papyrus, and parchments helped ancient people conceive media as a tool to carry out the task of survival and eventually, in laying the foundations for a concept of community. Most relevant to this investigation is the utility of writing as medium of literature. In fact, it can be deduced from Benjamin's analysis that literature had always been the language of ancient belief.

From the ideographic writing of the Egyptians to the phonetic system of the Babylonians, the technology of writing took the function of what today's media does: documenter, chronicler, mediator, memory archive. These early literature was interchangeable with daily human activities. Literature was media. Ong (2002), for instance, traces the beginnings of writing from the Sumerians sometime in c.3500 B.C. to the Aztec script around A.D. 1400 (333). Meanwhile, Real (1989) divides ancient writing systems into ideographic and phonetic writing (25).

The very first impact of media technology on developing literature as an art form was "fixing [of] the spoken words," which Fang (1997) said "changed the human condition" (9). Literature, for its part, passed from oral to written, and so its function adjusted too — from ritualistic to aesthetic.

But the world would soon give way to a new context—the context of writing—which did not happen overnight. It took 496,000 years for the oral or tribal age to transition into a writing age and the transition from ideographic writing to phonetic writing waited two thousand years to happen.

During the entire middle ages, the monks perfected the art and science of writing technology. As Fang (1997) reports: "In a monastery scriptorium monks copied books onto parchment, a prepared animal skin, usually from a sheep or a goat" (24). Such monastic preoccupations led to the development of a host of book production-related skills, namely: annotating, translating, copying, illuminating, binding, cataloguing, abstracting, medieval calligraphy, paper technology and book

archiving. But the biggest invention of theocratic Middle Ages was the culture of reading itself.

With Johann Gutenberg's movable type, the eyes of the world grew fixated on the printed text. And it seemed that Socrates' fear of writing had only a remote connection with what would come after. Printing gave birth to a generation who will rebuild the old world. A visual interpretation in the book *The Medium is the Massage* captures it well: "The hand that filled the parchment page built a city" (McLuhan and Fiore 48). It was the second information age, and it was writing at its finest.

Printing allowed the world to think in symbolic terms. While the oral world is cyclic and temporal, printing is linear and fixed. People were no longer listening to a recitation of an epic, they were reading a version of that epic. The new medium carries with it knowledge and memory. It is perishable but it is also replicable.

It took three millennia and a half for the world to pass from writing to print, but when it finally happened, literature was never the same again. The first book printed, the King James Bible, contributed to the wide popularity of exegetical reading, beyond the confines of the monasteries.

The newspaper, said Benedict Anderson, was crucial in the birth of modern nation-states. They are, in Anderson's words, "one-day bestsellers" (35) that can unite the consciousness of a community. To the colonies, the newspaper played a key role in galvanizing resistance against the empire. People who have not met at all except in an "imagined community" forged their dream of liberation, guided only by the news of the day.

Through Gutenberg print, stories were serialized in magazines and mass advertising became a regular part of the penny press. Mass consumption of affordable periodicals led to mass literacies. The invention of printing provided space to new literary genres. One of such was the novel. As Fred Inglis (1990) has said "The novel, grandest of art forms invented by the bourgeoisie of capitalism, expresses through its structure its sense of its novelty and the importance of the individual in all his or her individuality. The titles of some of Europe's most famous novels tell us this: Tom Jones, David Copperfield, Emma, Jane Eyre, Anna Karenina, Pere Goriot. Personal moral psychology is at the very heart of the novel" (11).

By the early 19th century, the coming of electronic media led to major shifts in literary production. With the birth of telegraph, telephone, phonograph, motion pictures, radio broadcasting and television, literary genres, forms and styles became more dynamic and experimental, accommodating the mechanistic, provisional and

aural context of the new media.

Despite the concerns against electronic media, literature adjusted its forms and function. As Adam Hammond (2016) has noted, “Precisely because new media threatened literature with extinction—precisely because they seemed to possess the ability to unseat it from its historical position of power—they prompted such critics into a productive reconsideration of what literature was” (29).

Literary Studies and/as Media Studies

Scholars used to regard media studies as a subfield of communication studies. Today, it is now perceived and practiced as a separate discipline. Although it is still deeply intertwined with communications studies, it has already developed its own set of theories and research frameworks. The rise of social media and the birth of super technologies and systems such as artificial intelligence, robotics, internet of things, and the other products of the fourth industrial revolution have forced us to give it more serious thought.

However, it cannot be denied that one should acknowledge the synchronic development of literary studies and media studies. Early communication studies trace its lineage from literary study. The word “communication,” for instance, is connected to the tools by which knowledge may be attained. Communication in its earliest senses involved language. During the Middle Ages, the subjects called trivium address the need for communication competence. Grammar, rhetoric, and logic were but the means of language to seek knowledge about the world. Subsequently, quadrivium or the subjects pertaining to music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy were introduced to develop competence in the use of language, which then was based on Latin.

Early media studies borrowed theories, conceptual frameworks and pedagogical approaches from literature, finding its strongest link in the centrality of language in communication. The early faculties that studied communication in the United States were the speech and drama faculties. These faculties started in the first half of the 20th century as small breakaway groups from the English departments which then were dominated by literature scholars.

The early teachers of oral communication drew from the classical theory of *Rhetoric*, the oldest communication theory. The speech teachers developed courses around “public address, oral interpretation of literature, radio announcing, drama, debate, and roundtable discussion,” which were modern extensions of the theories of “Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian” (Griffin 21). Aristotle named three rhetorical methods that can help in producing an excellent public speech, namely:

“Logos (which refers to its argumentative and ideational content), pathos (which refers to the speech’s emotional appeals), and ethos (which pertains to message source credibility)” (John Smith 269).

After the Second World War, variations of classical rhetoric and Neo-Aristotlelianism became famous in universities. In contemporary times, rhetoric is appropriated in communication studies as “the practical art of discourse” (Griffin 13). In terms of examining effects, the field of rhetoric is largely humanistic. To avoid the use of quantitative methods, they came up with methods of analyzing message designs that lead to analysis of effect of speech or public speaking.

Early critical media theorists came in the wake of the rise of mass society in the 19th century at the height of the Industrial Revolution. However, the concern for massification has been there ever since the printing technology was invented in the 16th century. Inglis notes the indebtedness to literary criticism of the liberal and Marxist traditions of critical media studies.

The 19th century was still reeling from the influence of romanticism and its heavy emphasis on the value of the individual. As capitalism and modernist lifestyles pose a threat on the value of the individual, the liberal-humanist imagination makes its loudest and most pointed critique of society. Matthew Arnold issued a prescription on the value of criticism in educating modern man on the “best that has been thought and written in the world (in Leitch, et al. 824).

Arnold would be complemented by the Leavises. The wife, Q.D. wrote in *Fiction and the Reading Public* of the manipulative strategies deployed by commercial publishers in influencing the way of life of the unmindful readers. The once established status of the canon, of the great tradition, is giving way to mass media and F.R. Leavis, that last vanguard of the said tradition, lamented the so-called onslaught of massification in the book *The Great Tradition*. Leavis’ solution is “to use the educational system to distribute literary knowledge and appreciation more widely” (qtd in During, ed., 1993).

The British Cultural Studies is another tradition of critical media studies that draw from the literary criticism that was prevalent in the early 20th century. It has been influenced by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and later, Stuart Hall of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Hoggart, one its stalwarts, decried, along with the Leavises, the impact of media on the masses, partly owing to the demise of the supposed superior education provided by literary classics. However, Hoggart was more thoughtful in pointing out that the masses may have the ability to discriminate from among the mass-produced materials circulated in public. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart issues a caution on

outright dismissal of popular culture and blind veneration of elite culture.

Literature and media are of equal footing in William's estimation for they arose from the ordinary lives of the people. Williams contradicts McLuhan's theory of technological determinism, claiming that society is a determining factor to the production of cultural forms.

Stuart Hall, for his part, continued the early scholars' position on the levelling of hierarchies between elite and popular culture and in negotiating between literature and media. The British Cultural Studies scholars, then, represented by Hoggart, Williams and Hall, see both literature and media as texts of culture whose nature and function are decided by their contexts.

The other theoretical tradition that has influenced shifts in the function and reception of literature in the 19th century and the growing concern over the proliferation of mass media was the Marxist theoretical tradition.

Central to Marxist analysis of literature is a critique of the mode of production and the relations of production. Literary works, according to this framework, are assessed according to how they examine the impact of capitalism on the work; how the concepts of class and labour shape the worldviews of authors; how the entire ecology of literary production may intrude on the production, distribution and consumption of the works; the external factors that influence the circulation of the works; and, the role of social institutions like family, religion, government, education, arts and media in influencing the whole cycle of economic and creative activities.

Marxist literary theory treats the concept of class category and how the consciousness of the bourgeoisie have been a seepage in both the content and form of literature. For instance, the Marxists see the consequence of printing as two-fold: On the one hand, print technology allowed the serialization of the novels and their accessibility to the masses. On the other, the mass distribution and consumption of said novels were instrumental in affirming middle class morality and maintaining the status quo.

One example is Terry Eagleton's critique of Karl Marx who observed the supposed "eternal charm" of the Greek classics such as the *Iliad* when the original contexts in which they were produced are no longer in place. But then the Neo-Marxist in Eagleton (2001) is quick to point Marx's residual elitism:

But how do we know that it will remain 'eternally' charming, since history has not yet ended? Let us imagine that by dint of some deft archaeological research we discovered a great deal more about what ancient Greek Tragedy

actually meant to its original audiences, recognized that these concerns were utterly remote from our own, and began to read the plays again in the light of this deepened knowledge. One result might be that we stopped enjoying them. We might come to see that we had enjoyed them previously because we were unwittingly reading them in the light of our own preoccupations; once this became less possible, the drama might cease to speak at all significantly to us.
(10)

Eagleton's view on the problematic stance of Marxists on the aura of the classics is instructive in understanding how the shifts in the function and reception of literature also affected the function and reception to media texts in the 19th century. On the one hand, the Marxists decry the massification supposedly engineered by capitalists through the bourgeoisie. On the other, they can also valorize elite culture through which the class and gender divide originated.

Along the Marxist lines, is the towering contribution of The Frankfurt Institute, consisting of a group of scholars who came together in Germany in 1922 but fled from the Nazis and re-established themselves at the University of Columbia in the United States and came back only to Germany in 1949. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin were the names of the scholars who studied both literature and media before and after the 2nd World War.

The Frankfurt critics read beneath the surface of literary and media texts. This is called the "hermeneutics of suspicion," which Ott and Mack (2013) define as a mode of analysis with a deep distrust of surface appearances and "common sense explanations" (16). This kind of hermeneutics therefore prevents either an outright dismissal of the text produced by media nor a blind acceptance of everything they produce. For instance, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, particularly the chapter on "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," issued a condemnation of the technologically-enhanced products of mass media as a manipulative, totalizing, and deceptive entertainment that lead to a homogenization of taste and the affirmation of the status quo.

Walter Benjamin, seemed have a more complex view of mechanization, which he said "changes the reaction of the masses toward art" (234). He noted too the aesthetization of Fascism in his time but has also predicted the subsequent response of the masses by politicizing art—which means that reproducibility will allow them to take the role of critic, through in an "absent-minded" (241) way, having been given the chance to see its worth on their own terms.

The liberal-humanist and Marxist Literary and media studies coincided with the growth and development of positivism and empiricism in natural and social sciences. It must be noted that despite the humanistic thrust of European media studies, which culminated in the peak of liberal-humanist and Marxist theories, empiricism dominated American media studies. The scientific or empirical tradition has been a residue of 19th century positivism. Greatly influenced by August Comte's Positivist Philosophy relies on empiricism, evidence and observation.

Twentieth century positivism, largely championed by the U.S., led to large-scale research projects deploying the survey method and quantitative content analysis that measure the amount of knowledge, attitudinal and behavioral response to mass media.

How did literary approach to media analysis fare during the peak of positivist communication science?

From the 1930s to 1960s, the use of the analysis of effects became so dominant in communication. One example is the Payne Fund study conducted in the U.S. in 1933. The study measured the impact of feature films on the young and their delinquent behavior through quantitative data and field interviews (Blumer and Hauser, Hanson and Maxcy, eds.). Similarly, a classic case of suggestibility and panic occasioned by the radio production of Orson Welles' adaptation of the H. G. Wells classic *The War of the Worlds* saw the people in Chicago and nearby states being so affected by the broadcast (Cantril, in Hanson and Maxcy, eds.). Unmindful that it was only a dramatization of the Wells novel, a segment of the population became panic-stricken and started calling up their relatives and fleeing their homes. The literary sources seem to produce a curious response eliciting either a direct or indirect responses from the audience.

The effects tradition depended on the scientific method, more particularly the influence of behavioral science (Griffin), the connection to the literary was still identifiable. For example, Harold Lasswell, a political scientist who studied Nazi propaganda and developed the functionalist model, came up with a theory that connects to the art and science of persuasion, which traces its roots to the theory of rhetoric.

Propaganda analysis and the scientific study of effects co-existed during the first half of the 1900s, proving that the literary method continue to influence the study of communications media even if the latter have been increasingly encroached upon by social scientists who employ quantitative methods. Since they both deal with texts, literary criticism and media analysis attempt to unmask the ideologies that underpin them.

The rise of qualitative research methods and the interest in critical theory may be linked to the disenchantment of scholars over the limits of quantitative science in unmasking the misinformation and disinformation linked to wartime propaganda. After the Second World War, Lasswell and his colleagues at the University of Chicago, now associated with the famous Chicago School of theories, began analyzing Adolf Hitler's massive propaganda campaign to promote the Third Reich in Nazi Germany. The work of Hitler's information chief, Alfred Goebbels, and that of his official filmmaker, Leni Reifentahl, of that infamous *Triumph of the Will* film, could not simply be subjected to the cult of objectivity of promoted by quantitative science. Propaganda and its negative consequence required a fuller understanding of communication persuasion.

One methodology that has been used to unmask ideology is structuralism. Claude Levi-Strauss's method of structuralist anthropology has been particularly useful to literary studies and has since migrated to media studies. The method of decoding binary oppositions inspired many readings of literary works, going through both surface structures and deep structures of texts. The structuralist methods of Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp launched analysis of fairytales, folk tales, and myths and have migrated into analyses of films, television soap operas, comic books, popular music, advertising, and recently, online games, watsapp stories, and other forms of narrative media.

The provenance of the structuralist framework in literature particularly in reading epics, tales, and written versions of oral literature, inspired their deployment in media forms which now serve as the new portal for their adaptations and reprise. Herein, structuralist methods intersect with narratology, adaptation and intertextual approaches spearheaded by scholars such as Gerard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin.

Aside from structuralist analysis of media texts, literary studies have also influenced the employment of semiotic analysis on media texts. One of the most influential semiotic theories came from Ferdinand de Saussure through his work titled *General Course on Linguistics*. Saussurean linguistics have aided language, literature, and media scholars in unraveling the arbitrary rules of language and their function in communication. The semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce (Littlejohn 63), Roland Barthes (Griffin 110), and Umberto Eco (Littlejohn 62) assist in examining the signification process that take place in decoding literary works. The same theories facilitate the study of media and cultural texts.

Semiologists in literature have the tendency to be eclectic and multidisciplinary. One example is the body of works of scholar and novelist Umberto Eco whose writings range from the literary criticism to analyses of media texts is Umberto Eco.

His novels like *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum* are novels of ideas and theoretical discourses at the same time, tackling semiotics, the postmodernist literary styles and cultural analysis such as apocalypticism, millenarianism, marginalia and the like. His novels teem with foregrounded discussions of theories of the novel. His works of criticism serve as architexts to his fiction and they include analyses of media texts, treating these as extensions of literary and cultural criticism.

Connected to the study of the ideological apparatus of texts is the analysis of the political economy of literature, communication and media. Political economy is the critique of the production, distribution and consumption of literary and media texts.

Both literary studies and media studies share this analytical lens, using methods drawn from sociology and economics in examining the cultural capital or the specifics of production, distribution and consumption of literary and media texts. The assumption is that the capitalist mode of production and the nature of media have their significant effect on the types of literary works and media texts that are circulated. It also has an effect on their reception by the different classes of society.

The concept of social construction of reality is connected to phenomenology, a grand theory that has affected practically all knowledge. There has been a welcome shift from the emphasis on objective reality to one's experience as a source of knowledge. Objects and events come to our consciousness and we process them as part of our experience and this is the basic assumption of phenomenology.

Connected to phenomenology is hermeneutics which is the method of interpreting any event, object, and text. Literature drew on the earliest works of biblical hermeneuts called exegesis or interpretation of scripture for the process of what would later on be known as the method of close reading. Eventually, biblical exegesis led to the philology or the interpretation of literary texts and social hermeneutics or the interpretation of personal and social interactions. The attention of literary analysis on the texts and their specific features influenced latter-day analyses of news stories, reportage, editorial cartoons, broadcast news, dramas, documentaries, films, games, advertising, and other media texts. The narratives produced drawn from events also borrowed from the methods of literary narratologists and cultural anthropologists.

Paul Ricouer's phenomenological and hermeneutical methods are assisted literary critics, particularly the New Critics, the formalists, and the pragmatic critics, in closely reading the internal features of texts (In Skinner, ed., 1985). For scholars of media, the method helped in appreciating the elements of forms and genres that are re-appropriated, beyond their original contexts.

The phenomenological and hermeneutical position of Hans-Georg Gadamer (In Skinner, ed., 1985) pay premium to people's assumptions about the world and the role of language in it. Gadamerian hermeneutics is useful in mapping the experience of the various media forms through time; how there can be no universal experience of reality but only highly selective, individual experiences. This only sharpened the idea of selective perception that guide theories like uses and gratifications and personal influence model.

Aside from the intersubjectivities inspired by phenomenology, some theoretical traditions still privilege the broad interpretation of literary and media cultures. Working on broad strokes, culturalists connect media environments to overarching consciousness.

The most important scholar who crystallized this view was Canadian literary critic, Marshall McLuhan, who in the 1960s released the controversial book titled, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, where he claimed that the content of the medium is immaterial compared to the components of the medium itself. Thus, the medium is the message. As a Shakespeare professor at the University of Toronto, McLuhan found out that his students' diminishing interest in the classics was connected to the increasing influence of electronic media. Instead of denouncing the new medium, he examined the kind of culture that was produced by that generation, citing it as major shift in consciousness. Where media was only a tool to approach knowledge before, the media became itself a reality, a worldview by itself.

McLuhan points to the same progression by citing the media eras of the tribal age, the writing age, the print age, the visual age, the electronic age, and so forth. For McLuhan, no medium will ever die. It will only re-appear in another form. Writing is survived by print. The book is survived by cinema. Cinema is survived by television. And the list goes on.

McLuhan sought to approach to communication and media studies from the perspective of literary criticism. He noted the transformations that happened to communities as a new medium is introduced. The media serve as extensions of human senses so that a new culture reared on the medium is born. McLuhan media eras are therefore literary eras and that is if we will disabuse the conventional view of the print-based literature. McLuhan died just before the dawn of the digital age but his theory continues to be relevant as a new technology is introduced to a certain community or generation.

In the Philippines, one may consider Nick Joaquin, National Artist for Literature, as a cultural theorist who followed McLuhan's path. Joaquin's theorizing helped explain his creative works and sometimes the creative works served as

extension of his cultural critique.

Joaquin appropriated McLuhan's cultural view of technology when he said in "Culture as History" that the Filipinos have indeed become the media environment that they inherited and altered. To quote Joaquin : "Culture has so come to mean its loftier dicta (like literature and the arts) that we needed a Marshall McLuhan to remind us that the medium itself is the message. And the message is: metamorphosis. We are being shaped by the tools we shape; and culture is the way of life being impressed on a community by its technics" (5). Joaquin's adoption of McLuhan's media eras helped crystallize his theory on the Filipino as an amalgam of identities. His theories on form—the fiction and nonfiction—reflected his integrated view of literature, media, and culture.

Conclusion: An Ethical Framework of Literary and Media Studies

The final point that may be considered here is the intersection between criticism and social action. This is where, I think, the ethical function of literary criticism and media studies may be located. Commitment and social action have always been linked to criticism.

In the 19th century, the rise of sociological approach to literary criticism, the concern for entities outside of the text, the reference to the actual, and the translation of intellectual commitment into social activism, have been the shared advocacies of socially-conscious literature and critical media studies.

Arriving late in the history of ideas, critical media studies draws inspiration from the realist, romantic, and liberal-humanist literary movements and from the political stance of Marxist literary theory. It is an umbrella term used to describe an array of theoretical perspectives which, though diverse, are united by their skeptical attitude, humanistic approach, political assessment, and commitment to social justice (Ott and Mack 15).

As earlier mentioned, it might not be correct to view media studies only drawing inspiration from literary criticism for as I have shown through an analysis of their beginnings and growth, literary and media technology developed synchronously.

To recapitulate, both disciplines therefore share the following components:

1. Common language;
2. Roots in the English literature programs;
3. Common interest in rhetoric;
4. The influence of the liberal-humanist tradition in their ethical and moral frameworks;

5. The influence of Marxist theoretical tradition in their political stance;
6. Their response to the challenges posed by the positivist tradition;
7. Their shared work and commitment to unmask the underlying ideologies in their texts;
8. The political economy of their circulation;
9. The phenomenological and hermeneutical methods that they appropriate through narratology;
10. Their contribution to cultural theory and cultural studies.

Furthermore, it can also be claimed that the ethical framework of critical media studies is somehow drawn from the same ethical framework that animated the transformations that literary criticism has undergone in the nineteenth century. Although they can now be studied as separate disciplines, they are connected by both method and aspiration, which is the humanistic method and the commitment to inspire social action. Even if the consequences of discourse for both literary studies and media studies have remained, for the most part, within the realm of thought or intellectual reflection, the commitment to change will always be their permanently shared aspiration.

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