

## **The Frontiers of Criticism**

"The Frontiers of Criticism" is a lecture given by T. S. Eliot at the University of Minnesota in 1956.[1] It was reprinted in *On Poetry and Poets*, a collection of Eliot's critical essays, in 1957. The essay is an attempt by Eliot to define the boundaries of literary criticism: to say what does, and what does not, constitute truly literary criticism, as opposed to, for example, a study in history based upon a work of literature. The essay is significant because it represents Eliot's response to the New Critical perspective which had taken the academic study of literature by storm during Eliot's lifetime. It also presents an analysis of some of its author's own poetic works, an unusual characteristic for modern criticism—it has become far more usual today for poets and critics to be in separate camps, rather than united in one individual. Perhaps even more importantly, it demonstrates the progress and change in Eliot's own critical thought over the years between 1919 and 1956.

'The Frontiers of criticism' was written by T.S. Eliot. Eliot was already the most famous poet and critic of the 20th century. In his critical writings, Eliot's main thesis is that critical truths are not permanent and universal and they cannot be valid for all times and ages. Every new generation has its own values and creates its own critical truths. There is a fundamental difference between literary truths and truth of social and physical sciences. The person who tries to mix them up in a territory, who lies outside the limits of literary criticism. The meaning of 'Frontiers of criticism' means the limits of literary criticism or to cease the limits of literary criticism. So far as the function of a critic is to promote the understanding and the enjoyment of the reader. A critic who pays a great attention to the sources of the poem and the hidden motives of the poem, it may obstruct the understanding and enjoyment of poetry. But it means that he should

cut off himself from other branches of knowledge. He must have a wide experience of this world and life. His main interest in writing criticism is to help his readers to understand and enjoy.

Criticism like other branches of knowledge has become very rich. Eliot has been believed to be the father of new criticism. He says that a critic tries to find out the books which have helped the poet in finding own suitable images of his poems.

This type of criticism, according to T.S. Eliot, is beyond the frontier of literary criticism. The critic should always remember the difference between explanation and understanding.

If a critic fails to help us in understanding and enjoying poetry, his works may be a useful activity, but it does not come under the category of literary criticism. It is a contribution to psychology, sociology, logic or some other branch of knowledge, but it cannot be called criticism. If we take an information of a poet's period and the

conditions of the society in which he lived, we do not understand the real understanding of poetry. Such type of information are only history and not literary criticism. Our task as a critic is to devote our self of the limitations our own age and the poet, whose work we are reading of the limitations of his age in order to get immediate contact with his poetry. There is a striking consistency in Eliot's views on the function of literary criticism. The critic's job to look at the poem as it is without bothering about other thing. The function of criticism, according to Eliot, is that a critic must possess a very highly developed 'sense of fact'. The duty of a critic is to find out the facts about a work of art. In 'Frontiers of criticism' Eliot says that a poet has other interests besides poetry. But he is a poet, because his main interest are turning his experience and thought. So a critic has also other interests besides poetry and literary criticism.

The Critic must be the whole man with principles and of knowledge and experience of life. But he is literary critic, because his primary interest in writing criticism is to help his readers to understand and enjoy the poetry of particular poetry.