



CRITICIZING THE CRITIC—ENTERTAINMENT PLUS

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

Before attempting to watch a movie or read a book, I prefer to get my fill of critical reviews of those opuses first. I tend to believe that those who have seen a movie or read a book before me have a heavier authority to judge that work as superior or inferior. Unfortunately, mixed reviews abound, and one can be hard put to figure out which is genuinely helpful and which isn't. And then there's the star system, where a five-star rating (or three, depending on the rating agency's standards) means the work is excellent and anything lower diminishes its quality. I dread ratings that are a cross between poor and above average (read: average). They make you choose between having to experience the work yourself and suffering through the consequences of going through boredom and downright disgust, or the satisfaction of knowing you picked right.

I use ratings as guides, often. But if much hype has been built around the specific movie or book, I strive to find a way to experience it myself. Some say that later on in life, we always regret more the things we didn't do than the things we did. The what ifs tend to set us back more notches than the why dids, so many of us push everything to the edge. When the condemnations come, such people have a simplistic and non-complex justification of everything: you never learn your lessons first because they always come later.

This reminds me of a very young star's really trying and difficult experience last year. The star has disappeared from the entertainment scene after that much-talked about occurrence, all the better to recuperate from all the pain and bitterness it has caused. The star acknowledged the mistakes made, but refused to admit that those mistakes were half as serious as the other person's as it had been that young star's. Well, perhaps the young star was just trying to salvage whatever could be salvaged. Who knows, with the way this country's citizens easily forget even earth-shaking events, the young star's travails could very well be forgotten (and forgiven) in a few years or so.

Critics from both sides have most likely not forgotten (and forgiven) everything and everybody yet. And who can blame them? They might have heaped praise on one side while spouting vitriol on the other. That's a natural phenomenon in such situations. The spectators among us can only look and listen and do no more. Adding our own criticism can only muddle up the situation and create unrest. It'd be as senseless and stupid as poking a hornet's nest. You never get anything good from that.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about a certain entertainment industry occurrence that has been heavily criticized in your country.
2. Is there any showbiz personality you admire for living an exemplary life, without cause for criticism? Talk about this star.
3. Why is it often helpful to read critical reviews?
4. Pick a movie to watch. Deliver a sensible critique of the movie in class.
5. What makes you choose to watch a movie or read a book? Is it easy to tell the difference between a good and a lousy movie or book? How do you personally tell the difference?