Towards a Morphology of Critique:
An Attempt to Classify Approaches to Literary Criticism

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the possibility of classifying approaches to literary criticism so that each critical position can be mapped to other critical positions. This article is not an application of a literary criticism approach to reading a particular literary work but an attempt to map the relationships between approaches to literary criticism so that the issues raised here are theoretical and methodological rather than practical. This research offers another alternative: a comprehensive and valuable classification can be obtained by classifying the formal elements of reading practice rather than the theme. The method used here is a morphological study in the spirit of Vladimir Propp (2009) applied to the modality of reading to overcome the limitations of thematic classification offered by M.H. Abrams (1971), Northrop Frye (2007), Yoseph Yapi Taum (2017), and Vincent B. Leitch (Veeser, 2021). Through a formal study of reading modalities (coverage, access relation, and semantic modality), a classification of critical approaches is obtained, modelled in the axis of reading: the axis of depth, width, and distance by which the critics approach the literary phenomena. Based on that model, the entire approach to literary criticism can be classified into eight octants of the cube of reading: narrow–close–surface reading, narrow–close–deep reading, narrow–distant–deep reading, narrow–distant–surface reading, wide–close–surface reading, wide–close–deep reading, wide–distant–deep reading, and wide–distant–surface reading. Each approach is positioned relationally with other approaches in the cube of reading, so the space for dialogue and comparison is always wide open. By demonstrating the morphological relationships between critical approaches, this research opens new possibilities for interpreting each critical position as a liminal one so that each position is always related to and transformed into another.

Keywords: *thematic classification, the morphology of criticism, modalities of reading, the axis of reading, cube of reading*

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, literary criticism with a postcolonial perspective has been one of several rising trends among academic and non-academic critics in Indonesia. Utilizing various postcolonial theories from scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, this kind of reading focuses on cultural representations in the former colonial country and various strategies for writing back colonial narratives about the history and personality of the colonized people. An anthology such as *Modern Indonesian Literature: Postcolonial Criticism,* edited by Keith Foulcher and Tony Day, is one of the *locus classicus* of this kind of reading. In that volume, Manneke Budiman (2008: 21) writes about the need for a perspective that takes sides without having to serve the interests of the colonized in the practice of literary criticism. With postcolonial studies, as with other critical approaches since the 1960s, literary criticism widens into cultural criticism. Old aesthetic values such as beauty and sublimity were also re-interrogated because they

allegedly concealed a bias in colonial power relations.

Such a trend is not new and has been anticipated in the rise of cultural studies since the 1990s in Indonesia, which tends to affirm the continuity between text and context. Viewed from the perspective of cultural studies, literature is not only noble literary works written with modernist aesthetic principles but all the discursive practices of society. That is why critics like Katrin Bandel (2013: 182) write about 'heteronormativity and phallocentrism' in *Saman* and *Larung*, about how phallic images become totems, worshiped rather than critically questioned, in both novels, likewise with Ari Adipurwawidjana (2018) who applied the cultural materialism approach in reading the ambivalence of national identity in popular literature in *Penghiboer* and *Hoa Po*. This kind of reading seeks to find something—ideas, class representations, gender identities, or constructions—in 'literary' texts, interpreted broadly as any form of discursive practice.

This way of working caused disdain for several other critics who believed in the independent nature of literary works. This is a new trend during the last two decades in Indonesia which perhaps could be called tentatively 'new intrinsicism' (in spiritual ties to the 'new criticism'). Arif Bagus Prasetyo (2021: 152-153), for example, in the III Indonesian Writers' Gathering, October 2010, spoke about the death of literary criticism and blamed it, citing Ronan McDonald's opinion, on the rise of cultural studies, which made aesthetic values such as 'good' and 'bad' as "categories that suffer from political bias." A year earlier, Zen Hae also expressed a similar view at the II Indonesian Writers' Gathering, July-August 2009; they wrote about "a brilliant threat to literary criticism," namely when *political correctness* becomes the benchmark for literary evaluation. Regarding the impact of cultural studies on literary criticism, he wrote that in cultural studies, "there are no 'good' or 'bad' literary works'' and that "'the bad ones may take part' as long as they carry 'political' content and can serve the interests of the investigator" (Hae, 2021: 135). The same voice could be heard from an altogether different worldview, i.e., in Saut Situmorang's lamentation of the great replacement of literary criticism by cultural studies (Situmorang, 2018: 218). All these opinions show disdain toward the extrinsic orientation inherent in the postcolonial approach to literary criticism.

Such disdain was anticipated in Nirwan Dewanto's view at a seminar on world literature at the University of Indonesia in 2006, focusing on *overtheorizing tendencies*. Different from comparative studies that want to find conclusions about readings that are sensitive to the uniqueness of texts based on philology, many critical approaches today, as an effect of "Anglo-globalism," import various theories from other disciplines and apply them formulaically to read texts to produce repetitive conclusions (Dewanto, 2020: 224). Cultural materialism, semiotics, feminism, new historicism, ecocriticism, and postcolonialism are some of those methodological mantras.

Thus, there is a conflict between the two notions of literary criticism, which is difficult to bridge. On the one hand, some critics view that intrinsic elements do not exist separately from the extrinsic, that text is always already embedded in intertextual relations with its context, and that literary and non-literary interests cannot be treated independently. The theoretical framework behind it is Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, new historicism ecocriticism, and the like. On the other hand, some critics view that literary criticism deals primarily with the intrinsic aspect of literary works, that texts can be analyzed separately from context, and that literary interests can be distinguished from non-literary interests. The theoretical framework behind it is T.S. Eliot's modernism, new criticism, and the recent post-critical approach of surface reading promoted by Rita Felski (2015).

The question, then, is how to build a dialogue between the two or between other stances of literary criticism. What is at issue here is not which position is correct and which is wrong, but on what basis can one critical position be translated into, and therefore understood, in another position? Can different approaches to criticism find common ground to engage in dialogue and negotiation between positions? The opposition between the two models of literary criticism illustrates how difficult it is to make comparisons between different theoretical assumptions in reading literary works and especially how urgent it is to make comparisons and dialogue possible.

This article attempts to build a taxonomy of various approaches to literary criticism. The main question to be answered here is: Is there a way to classify all literary criticism so that each critical position can be mapped to other critical positions?

To answer this question, this article takes inspiration as well as deepens insights from previous research by Abrams (1971), Frye (2007), Taum (2017), and Leitch (Veeser, 2021), namely by shifting the focus of classification from themes to formal features of reading practices conducted by the critics, i.e., the process of interpreting and evaluating literary phenomena which constitutes the essential act of literary criticism. This article shares Abrams' theoretical framework, which seeks to classify literary approaches formally. This theoretical framework contrasts the more thematic classification Frye, Taum, and Leitch offer. The formalist theoretical framework adopted in this article is deemed necessary for classifying a bewildering variety of theories and approaches in literary criticism today. Without an attempt to classify approaches based on their formal features, any attempt to navigate the theoretical open sea of contemporary literary criticism will strand in endless themes and '-isms'. The method used here is a qualitative study in the spirit of Propp (2009) on the modality of reading as a morphological basis for any literary criticism. Propp's morphological study, which classifies Russian folklore based on recurring formal patterns, is modified in this article to become a morphological study of recurring formal patterns in the reading practice of the critics, namely the relationship between the critics and the literary phenomena they read.

This article is structured as follows. *First*, several previous efforts in conducting a taxonomy of critical approaches will be discussed, as well as an overview of how these various efforts deal with the dilemma of comprehensiveness versus usefulness. *Second*, another classification method will be proposed that focuses more on the form of reading. On that basis, a cube of reading will be obtained, namely a universal map of literary criticism in which each critical approach can be placed and, therefore, compared with another. Because the orientation of this article is basic research, namely establishing morphological relations between approaches to literary criticism, there will be no application of a critical approach to reading a particular literary text.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
The Historical Development of Critical Approach Classification Systems

What is meant by 'reading'? In its most general sense, reading means interpreting the meaning of a phenomenon which is the object of reading. The problem is that the interpretation is too broad. One critic can interpret literary phenomena by paying particular attention to gender representation. In contrast, another critic is more focused on class relations and ideology. At the same time, a third critic is obsessed with formal elements without being too concerned about the representational impressions generated by the literary phenomena he studies. That is, the types of reading are as numerous as the approaches to criticism. For hundreds of other approaches, a list of readings with unclear relationships emerges from deconstructive, semiotic, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, formalist, etc. This complexity is reflected, for example, in an introductory reading often used in universities (Selden, 2014). What can be found there is a list of approaches to reading and examples of their application: moral criticism, new criticism, Russian formalism, structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, new historicism, reader-response, Marxist, feminist, and so on.

Such lists are also often found in introductions to literary criticism in Indonesia. In the introductory book on criticism, for example Nugraha & Suyitno (2022) and Rokhmansyah (2014), the descriptions almost always contain various literary theories sorted by the history of their emergence. Thus, it cannot be seen what the relationship between the theories is beside the chronological relationship: after critic A, there is critic B, then critic C, and so on. Rarely is there an introductory book on criticism that presents the problem of criticism systematically and integrated. What is missing is a *model* that describes the relationship between approaches to literary criticism.

If there is one model that captures the variety of literary criticism often used in Indonesia, it is the M.H. Abrams model. In his seminal work, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams constructs a model that captures the 'total situation of a work of art' with four main elements: (1) the work of art, (2) the artist, (3) the viewer, and (4) the universe. He represented the four of them in an 'analytic scheme,' which is still often reproduced today (Abrams, 1971: 6). He starts from the problem faced by critics today, namely the diversity of literary theories that can never be compared systematically due to a lack of common ground. The solution to this lack of commonality is creating an analytic scheme within which all critical

approaches can be located.

Abrams (1971) classifies all literary criticism into four types. *First*, mimetic criticism, namely all forms of criticism that want to see the relationship between the work and the universe: to what extent a work reflects reality, what aspects of reality are imitated by works, and so on. *Second* is pragmatic criticism, which examines the relationship between the work and its audience: what effects arise on the viewer when dealing with the work, the rhetorical nature of the work that affects the viewer, and so on. *Third*, expressive criticism, namely all forms of criticism that want to see the relationship between the work and the artist: to what extent the work is an honest expression of the artist's personality, and in what sense does the work refer to any external reality except the artist's imagination and so on. *Fourth*, objective criticism, namely all kinds of criticism that wants to examine the work itself regardless of its connection with the universe, the viewer, and the artist: to what extent the work is a self-sufficient universe and does not depend on the artist's intention or the viewer's response, what are the intrinsic elements that need to be examined in art criticism and so on.

Abrams (1971) narrates these four approaches to criticism as a process of chronological succession: Aristotelian mimetic criticism falls under the sway of pragmatic criticism, which grew from Horatius to the 18th century before finally being overthrown by expressive criticism, which stands on the romantic notion of the artistic genius, an approach which finally subverted by objective criticism in the 20th century fronted by TS Eliot and the new critics. From this, it appears that Abrams' classification is unlikely to be comprehensive. This chronological nature made his classification system rule out many other approaches, either because they did not represent the spirit of the ages (for example, the feminist approach) or simply because this approach had not appeared at the time Abrams was compiling his chronology (for example, distant reading). Classification based on chronological logic, thus, is inadequate to describe the relationship between approaches to criticism, whose number is increasing daily.

Thematic classification also deals with similar problems. In his main work, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye (2007) questioned the condition of literary criticism, which according to him, was scattered; each critic was busy with his approach

without having a dialogue with critics from other approaches. What he aims to achieve is the destruction of the "walls between methods" (Frye, 2007: 317). Departing from these concerns, Frye gathers all the various approaches to criticism into four types: (1) historical criticism, which deals with the history of the development of the protagonist's position in literary works, (2) ethical criticism, which deals with changes in the function of symbols, (3) archetypal criticism which deals with myth theory which can be read as a combination of Vladimir Propp's formalism and Gustav Jung's psychology, and (4) rhetorical criticism dealing with literary genre theory. This classification system is characterized by thematic division and, therefore, very particular. Frye (2007: 67 & 226) relies, for example, on Aristotle's system, which alienates half of today's literary criticism, namely the practice of criticism that does not presuppose specific categories of Greco-Roman culture such as the division of literary genres and Aristotelian theory of *mythos* (narration), *ethos* (characteristics), and *dianoia* (meaning).

This kind of thematic classification is still being continued in the contemporary era, for example, in the 'ism'-based classification by Vincent B. Leitch. He classifies the expanses of literary theory into 94 clusters of theories which are further classified into 12 focus studies (Pradopo, 2002). In this classification, -isms, theories, studies, and even concepts, sit equally as a family of approaches: starting from multiculturalism, affective theory, gender studies, to the multitude. The problem is that each cluster, such as disability studies, has many derived theories and concepts, so the total number of approaches can reach thousands. Another problem is that there are many ways to classify themes: body studies can be classified into biopolitics but also affect studies. In order to achieve a more ecumenical classification system, which embraces more different aesthetic beliefs, an ascent to a more formal realm is required, leaving behind thematic presuppositions with too specific a range of applicability.

In Indonesia, the first systematic effort to classify the diversity of approaches to literary criticism was manifested in Rachmat Djoko Pradopo's dissertation, defended at Gadjah Mada University in 1989 (Pradopo, 2002), which follows the English studies model in a quite haphazard way, with many overlaps between approaches. For instance, his division between applied and judicial criticism, on

the one hand, and inductive criticism, on the other, is unacceptable in light of today's awareness which has recognized that critical theory and practice are not separate things. There is no criticism without theoretical assumptions. No matter how inductive, criticism presupposes certain theoretical assumptions and must have judicial and applied character. In short, the classification of criticism presented by Pradopo eventually collapses into a mixture whose differences are challenging to recognize.

The overlapping classification of approaches to literary criticism is also a concern for Yoseph Yapi Taum. In a paper presented at the National Seminar on Literary Criticism on 15-16 August 2017, he complained about the scarcity of efforts to map various approaches to literary criticism into a comprehensive paradigm, or what is here called a model, so much that it resulted in an ambiguous direction of literary criticism in Indonesia. Taum offers a 'reposition' by adding two other approaches to the Abrams model, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Taum, 2017: 5):
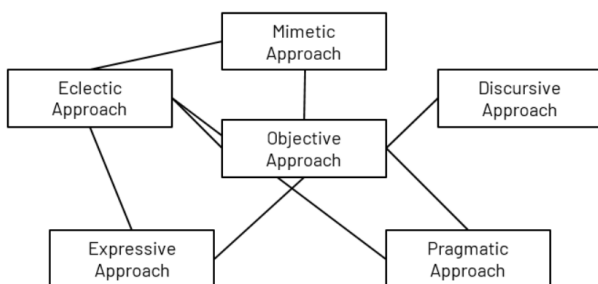

Figure 1. Taum's Model.

In the chart, two new approaches emerge eclectic and discursive approaches. An eclectic approach is defined as an "approach that selectively combines several approaches to understanding a phenomenon," for example, psychological, feminist, minority, and postcolonial approaches (Taum, 2017: 4). Meanwhile, the discursive approach is defined as "an approach that focuses on discourse (literary discourse) as a discursive practice," namely an approach inspired by poststructuralism, especially the views of Michel Foucault (Taum, 2017: 5).

Is the model offered by Taum sufficient to capture the diversity of contemporary critical approaches? Several notes can be given here. If examined further, the category of "eclectic approach"

seems to be counterproductive for classification efforts because it is a category that can be filled with anything as long as it is a mixture of mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective approaches. This categorization is problematic for two main reasons.

First, the eclectic approach will also include the discursive approach. Because the discursive approach presupposes "the connection between literary texts and the various social, economic and political forces that surround them" (Taum, 2017: 6), the discursive approach is an eclectic approach to a literary phenomenon. Insofar as the discursive approach focuses on text as context and context as text (or what the new historicists call as the historicity of the text and the textuality of history (Montrose, 1989: 20)), then this approach inevitably combines attention to the work, the universe encompassing works, artists, and viewers. The discursive approach thus can be seen as a particular case of the eclectic approach. If so, then the existence of the eclectic approach category makes the discursive approach category redundant.

Second, the eclectic approach obscures the critical distinction between mixed approaches. This category makes feminist criticism cognate with psychological and ecocriticism as if they work with the same or similar approaches even though they depart from different assumptions and reading practices. It is possible that Taum's model completely encapsulates all approaches to criticism because everything that cannot be included in other categories can be included in the category of eclectic approaches. However, precisely because of this, the category of eclectic approaches adds nothing to the specifics of the approaches it encompasses. With the category of eclectic approach, Taum's model can cover all types of approaches to literary criticism, but that is precisely what makes his model trivial: the category of eclectic approach is a kind of drawer that is so big that it swallows up the entire cupboard and the room where the cupboard is located.

Despite these shortcomings, Taum's efforts are essential in developing literary criticism in Indonesia. This research shares Taum's concern about developing a comprehensive classification of critical approaches. With that effort, people began to realize that the messy classification of approaches to literary criticism needed to be corrected through an integrated scheme so that critical work could be carried out more systematically and with greater awareness of different

positions. Drawing lessons from Taum's model and broadening its horizons, what is needed is a system of classification of critical approaches that, on the one hand, is *comprehensive enough* to cover all critical practices but, on the other hand, remains *sensitive to differences* so that it can guide the critical approach.

The challenge in classifying all kinds of criticism is overcoming the intractable tension between the comprehensiveness and the usefulness of critical approach classification. On the one hand, comprehensive things usually cannot be used as a guide, for example, Leitch's taxonomy. A literary critic could list all the approaches to criticism existing worldwide, running into hundreds and even thousands in a few decades. However, such a list is no better than a list of groceries. Without knowing the relationships between the approaches (other than chronological ones), it would be hard for a critic to determine which approach she should use. That is, an exhaustive list of approaches will make it unwieldy. On the other hand, things that are easy to hold on to are usually not comprehensive, for example, the taxonomy of Abrams and Taum. A literary critic may classify some critical approaches as necessary to him for one reason or another. However, this choice of approach will be no more than the tip of an iceberg whose bottom is invisible to the critic himself. As a result, when the critic concludes something with that approach, he never really knows whether that conclusion can be accounted for based on various other approaches, something that is at the bottom of the ocean, hidden from the critic's observation. What emerges is a leap in the dark.

Introducing the Cube of Reading

Based on the explanation so far, it is known that several things become obstacles to efforts to classify critical approaches: (1) new '-isms' or theoretical ideologies emerge every day so that a trans-ideological classification is needed, (2) compiling a list of approaches alone is not enough so that a different classification is needed, (3) grouping approaches based on themes does not help, so a formal-structural pattern classification is needed, (4) grouping based on the object of study does not help, so a classification that focuses on how to read rather than on what is read is needed. Realizing this, efforts to build a classification need to take a step back: not to classify literary expressions directly (a

work that will only end in dogmatism about the nature of literature), but to classify ways of reading these various literary expressions. Classification at the level of reading, therefore, can be seen as a middle way that can be taken between the risks of philosophizing literature (the search for a handful of principles that are so general that they no longer explain anything), on the one hand, and being immersed in thousand actual practices of criticism which each always asks to be taken differently from the others (the listing of a series of cases that are so particular also no longer explains anything).

Here inspiration will be drawn from morphology. In linguistics, morphology is defined as the study of a set of basic rules that play a role in the pattern of forming word diversity (Booij, 2005: 4). In the study of oral traditions and folklore, well-known is Vladimir Propp's efforts to study 'folklore morphology': a taxonomic system of several elementary formal patterns that constantly recur in any folklore, namely 'character function' as a "constant element in a story" (Propp, 2009: 21). In biology, morphology is the study of the diversity of forms of organisms initiated by the literary-scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, developed by Ernst Haeckel and Charles Darwin, with the basic intuition that the diversity of formal characteristics of animals and plants "can be understood as variations of several basic types'' (Richards, 2008: 119). What can be abstracted from the various notions of morphology in these different scientific fields is an awareness of (1) the diversity of phenomena and (2) the possibility of explaining the relations between phenomena based on the laws governing the variations in their elementary forms. With an awareness of (1) and (2), it is possible to design an equivalent understanding of literary criticism.

The following analysis will explore the possibility of the *morphology of criticism*, namely a systematic study of the taxonomy of approaches to literary criticism based on a small number of formal traits that recur and form patterns in any literary criticism. So far, morphological studies have often been carried out on objects of criticism, namely literary works, for example, in the Proppian taxonomy of folklore and several other formalist-structuralist efforts. Here, a semantic ascent will be carried out: postponing questions about the general characteristics of *literary works* by focusing first on

questions about the general characteristics of *literary criticism*. Because what can be considered literary works, or what is more neutral and inclusive can be called 'literary phenomena,' is very dependent on the theoretical assumptions behind the practice of reading that works behind the criticism, so clarifying the approach of criticism through the development of a taxonomy of reading can be seen as the requisite step to a healthy conversation about literature.

Based on the level of how to read (or how to interact with) literary phenomena, several general patterns can be found that are useful (i.e. can be used as a guideline or rule of thumb) in mapping out possible interpretations and assessments (and therefore criticism) of literary phenomena. Three general patterns will be explored here: the pattern of the reading scope, the distance between the reader and texts, and the interpretative depth. From these three general patterns, six ways of reading can be distinguished as extreme cases (without neglecting the possible intermediate positions between each extreme). The six different reading modalities can be glanced in the following description:

- Coverage modality. This reading modality is sorted based on the scope of the object it reads. Some critics see that the object of reading is literary works bound by its medium specificity. In contrast, others see that the reading object can be expanded into a context encompassing the literary work. Thus, there are two polar approaches to reading: *narrow* and *wide*.
- Access relation modality. This reading modality is sorted based on the continuity or discontinuity of the access relation between the critic and the object he is reading. Some critics think that reading must be directly related to the object of reading. In contrast, others open up the possibility of an indirect relationship with the object of reading, for example, by using computational technology. So there are two poles of approach to reading: *close* and *distant reading*.
- Semantic modality. This reading modality is sorted based on the degree of symbolic density the critic assumes to be contained in the object he is reading. Some critics think that reading must be faithful to the symbols given in the literary works. In contrast, others think reading must be critical of literary works' hidden and often suppressed symbolism. So there are two more polar approaches to reading: *surface* and *deep*.

So, there are six general ways of positioning oneself in the face of a literary phenomenon. These six general ways can be varied infinitely by taking an infinite number of intermediate positions; for example, a reading of the text and paratext is more comprehensive than a narrow reading which only wants to recognize the text as an object of analysis while at the same time narrower than a wide reading which recognizes the totality of the context as a text. The six reading modalities, therefore, are more accurately seen as poles, as extreme cases, of the three patterns of relating to literary phenomena.

A critic does not solely read from near or far; he must simultaneously determine the scope of his reading that is, whether he will read narrowly or broadly, as well as determine how far he wants to believe in the symbols given in the object of his reading, namely, whether he will read superficially or deeply. In other words, a reading always involves three patterns of relations at once; how much a reading practice's narrowness, closeness, and shallowness determines the range of conclusions from that reading. A critical approach can be defined as a combination of three of the six reading modalities. Thus, there are eight families of readings: narrow–close–surface reading, narrow–close–deep reading, and so on. These eight reading families reflect *positionality* in *interfacing* with the literary phenomenon. In that positionality, there is always a map of all possible and impossible conclusions to be drawn relative to the strengths and weaknesses of the reading modality. By recognizing this positionality, a critic can become more self-aware of the specific scope of his critical claims.

To further clarify the idea of positionality, the following description will visualize it in spatial groupings in an abstract space. Postponing reference to critical works that will be mentioned in the next section, if the three relation patterns are projected in a three-dimensional plane, then the three basic relation patterns can be attached to the three axes in the Cartesian plane (Figure 2):

- The x-axis represents the level of semantic depth: the more positive, the shallower; the more negative, the more profound.
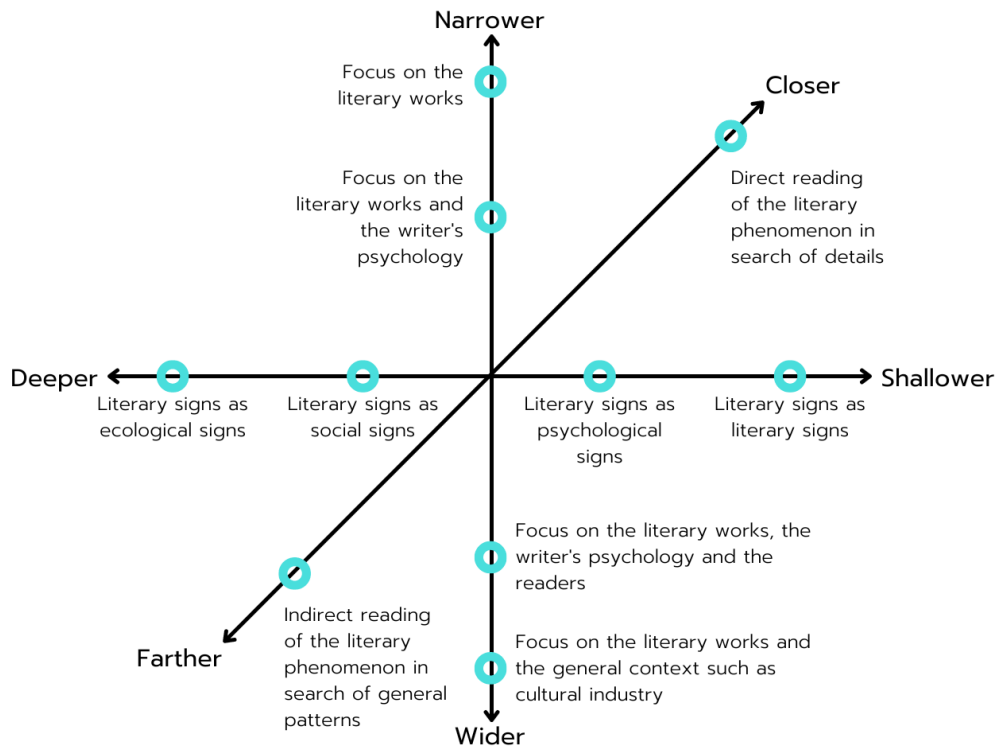- The y-axis represents the degree of the

Figure 2. The Axis of Reading.

narrowness of coverage: the more positive, the narrower, and the more negative, the more comprehensive.

- The z-axis represents the degree of the immediacy of the access relation: the more positive, the closer; the more negative, the farther.

With these three axes, a coordinate system that captures the diversity of possible approaches to criticism can be created. Therefore, the eight reading modalities can be represented in a cube called the cube of reading, as seen in Figure 3.

The cube of reading can be partitioned into eight octants or smaller cubes (octants for three-dimensional shapes as quadrants for two-dimensional fields). It is in these eight octants that all literary criticism is situated. The eight modalities of reading can therefore be mapped to the eight octants:

- Octant 1: Narrow–close–surface reading. It is narrow. It only focuses on literary works, close because it emphasizes direct reading of

works, and stays on the surface because it does not treat literary works as social symbolism or repressed psycho-political symptoms. Examples: new criticism, such as Ransom (2008: 57-59), rejects the philological, moral, or historical analysis of literary works, Eliot's (2008: 13) rejection of affective criticism, and Pound's (1979: 77) emphasis on poetry as "the art of verbal expression."

- Octant 2: Narrow–close–deep reading. It is narrow because it only focuses on literary work, close because it emphasizes direct reading of work, and deep because it connects literature to philosophical issues concerning reading. Example: Paul de Man's close reading (1979: 77) of Proust's novel which reveals the 'allegory of reading' as the hidden mode of the text.

- Octant 3: Narrow–distant–deep reading. It is narrow because it only focuses on literary work, distant because it uses digital tools to analyze a novel, and deep because it connects
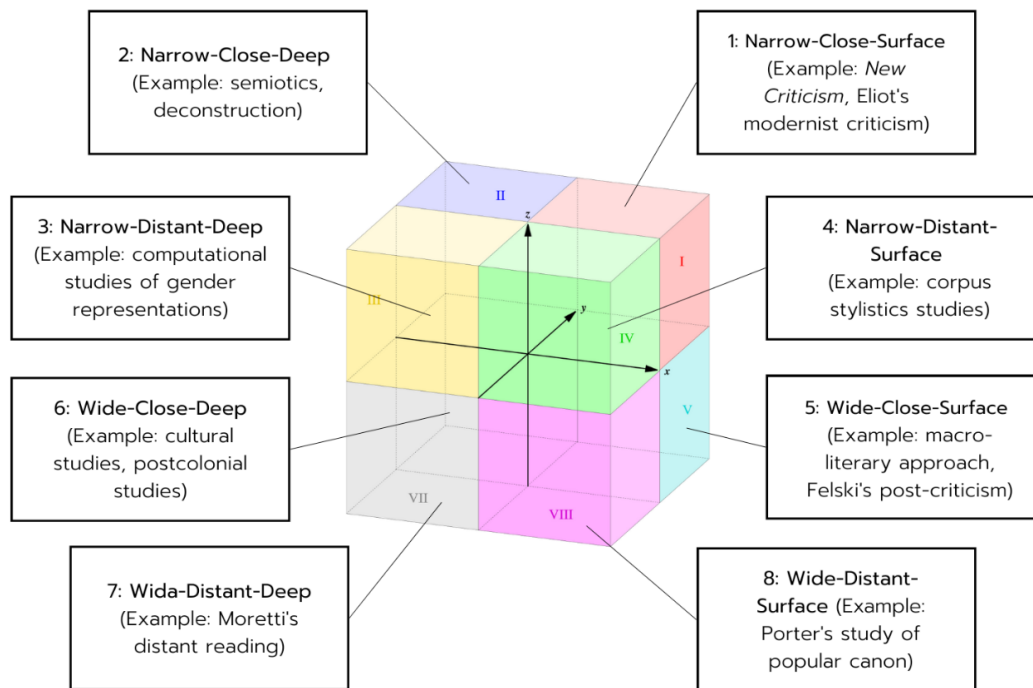
Figure 3. The Cube of Reading.

(This graphical representation of the cube, but not the concept of the cube of reading, is taken from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Octant_numbers.svg, accessed on November 26, 2022)

literature to gender problems related to broader sociocultural phenomena. Example: Lalitia Apsari's study (2022) uses digital humanities approach to examine gender representation in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan based on Lövheim's emotional cube.

- Octant 4: Narrow–distant–surface reading. It is narrow because it only focuses on literary work, distant because it uses digital tools to analyze and formally classify poetic works, and stays on the surface. After all, it does not connect literature to the broader political situation. Example: Martin Suryajaya's study (2010) uses digital humanities to examine the separation of poetic voices between two heteronyms in the poetry book *Dua Marga* by Nirwan Dewanto.

- Octant 5: Wide–close–surface reading. Example: Yulitin Sungkowati's study (2010), which uses a macro-literary approach from Ronald Tanaka to examine the formation of literary communities in East Java and Nurhidayah and Setiawan's study (2019) of the postmodern ecosystem of cyber literature. Another example is Rita Felski's 'post-critical' study (2015) which rejects 'paranoid reading' (which places text as a socio-political symptom) and emphasizes the concrete experience of reading as bodily events. It is broad in scope because it does not deal only with literary works, it is close because it uses ethnographic methods, and it stays on the surface because it does not relate literature to the broader political situation.

- Octant 6: Wide–close–deep reading. Example: Melani Budianta's study (2008) on the representation of Betawi culture in various literary works and films between 1936 and 1990s with the conclusion that Betawi is a subject position rather than a fixed essence, also Novita Dewi's ecocritical reading (2022) of Eka Budianta's poems. It is broad in scope because it focuses not only on literary works but also on films and popular cultural products, close because it is based on direct reading that

pays attention to textual details, and deep because it connects literature to a broader political situation.

- Octant 7: Wide–distant–deep reading. Example: Franco Moretti's study (2013: 200) on the title length of 7,500 English novels between 1740-1850 shows how the dynamics of the English language book market encouraged stylistic evolution in the form of shortened titles. It is broad in scope because it does not only focus on literary works but also the book market and the evolution of mass culture, distant because it is based on digital tools to read the formal patterns of thousands of novels, and deep because it connects literature to a broader political-economic situation.

- Octant 8: Wide–distant–surface reading. Example: J.D. Porter's study (2018), which enriches Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of artistic tastes with digital tools to examine the correlation between expert tastes (MLA's literary canon) and market tastes (Goodreads' literary canon). It is broad in scope because it does not only focus on canonical literature but also famous works and pulp fiction, distant because it is based on digital tools to read formal patterns from thousands of texts, and stays on the surface because it does not connect literature to the broader political-economic situation.

In this way, we obtained a classification system that is both comprehensive and useful. Examination of the nature of each octant can be used as the basis for examining the characteristics of any approach to literary criticism. Studying inter-octant relations can become the basis for studying the relationship between literary criticisms. The difference between the two critical approaches, for instance, between cultural studies and new intrinsicism, can be anticipated from the relationship pattern between the two octants, which reflected the positionality of

Table 1. The Matrix of Reading

Octant	Aesthetic Assumptions	Explanatory Strengths	Explanatory Weaknesses
1: Narrow - Close - Surface	Intrinsic value, phenomenological stance, apolitical	Rich in details, sensitive to uniqueness, faithful interpretation of the work	Poor in context, ignores general patterns, poor in the interpretative elaboration
2: Narrow - Close - Deep	Intrinsic value, phenomenological stance, political	Rich in details, sensitive to uniqueness, rich in the interpretative elaboration	Poor in context, ignores general patterns, interpretation is not faithful to the work
3: Narrow - Distant - Deep	Intrinsic value, disembodied stance, political	Rich in details, sensitive to general patterns, rich in the interpretative elaboration	Poor in context, ignores uniqueness, interpretation is not faithful to the work.
4: Narrow - Distant - Surface	Intrinsic value, disembodied stance, apolitical	Rich in details, sensitive to general patterns, faithful interpretation of the work	Poor in context, ignores uniqueness, poor in the interpretative elaboration.
5: Wide - Close - Surface	Extrinsic value, phenomenological stance, apolitical	Rich in context, sensitive to uniqueness, faithful interpretation of the work	Poor in details ignores general pattern, poor in the interpretative elaboration
6: Wide - Close - Deep	Extrinsic value, phenomenological stance, political	Rich in context, sensitive to uniqueness, rich in the interpretative elaboration	Poor details ignore general pattern; interpretation is not faithful to the work
7: Wide - Distant - Deep	Extrinsic value, disembodied stance, political	Rich in context, sensitive to general patterns, rich in the interpretative elaboration	Poor details, ignoring uniqueness, and interpretation is not loyal to the symptom.
8: Wide - Distant - Surface	Extrinsic value, disembodied stance, apolitical	Rich in context, sensitive to general patterns, faithful interpretation of the works	Poor in details, ignore uniqueness, poor interpretative elaboration.

the two critical approaches.

By being mapped to the cube of reading, each approach can be evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses relative to other approaches. This can be briefly portrayed in the matrix as illustrated in Table 1. Through this matrix of reading, it can be seen that each critical position is related to one another. No approach is entirely foreign from the extended family of critical approaches. For example, an approach such as new criticism can be transformed into a postcolonial approach by widening its coverage and deepening its semantic modality, and vice versa. The cube of reading is a classification system for approaches to literary criticism that is both comprehensive and useful. It can map out all approaches to literary criticism (and therefore is comprehensive) while still showing the relations between these approaches so that it does not just produce a list of isms or schools of thought (and therefore helps examine the positionality of any critical approach). It shows the differences and similarities between various approaches considered to live in entirely different ideological worlds. This morphological kinship, thus, shows the possibility for reconciliation and challenges the courage to see literary phenomena from the point of view of another.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is a way to classify all approaches to literary criticism so that each critical position can be mapped about other critical positions. This conclusion was reached after examining that classification of critical approaches based on chronology, themes, and objects of study would not be able to overcome a dilemma; to make a classification system that is both comprehensive and not too unwieldy (not just listing different -isms or schools of thought) so that it can assist in the analysis. To overcome this dilemma, a classification system based on reading is offered. There are three reading modalities: coverage modality (narrow or wide reading), access relation modality (close or distant reading), and semantic modality (surface or deep reading). The permutations between modalities produce eight types of readings that can be mapped to the cube of reading structured by eight octants. In this model, each approach is positioned relationally with other approaches so that the space for dialogue and comparison is always wide open.

By demonstrating the morphological relationship between critical approaches, this study opens up new possibilities for the meaning of each critical position as a liminal position. The reading cube is a liminal universe in which every position is always related and transformed into another. Therefore, each position is a threshold of other positions. Suppose every critic is aware of the liminality of their position, aware that the conclusion they draw concerning literary phenomena implies their starting point. In that case, space will open for a more intimate dialogue so that the proper disposition in looking at the results of criticism is a willingness to see from another point of view. By assuming oneself to be in the position of the opposite opinion, even someone with an opposing aesthetic point of view, the reader will begin to appreciate why the critic was able to arrive at her conclusion.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that this article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the general data collection, analysis, editorial, and publication process.

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