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The pace at which the literary world has progressed in all branches of criticism this century has given rise to more questions than answers. Never before in the history of critical theory have men known so much about so many things, and never before have they been so confused on such basic questions as whether the word is what it seems, or even whether it means. As scholars delve more deeply into the secrets of nature and encompass ever wider fields of knowledge, critics find it necessary to specialize more and more exclusively on smaller and smaller areas of knowledge. The growing trend in literary circles is to channelize literary criticism into the study of psychology, anthropology, sociology, biography, ethics, or any one of the contemporary "extrinsic" schools of thought. These extrinsic schools of criticism seek to consider a work of art in terms of a preconceived theory which they embody and not really interpret art as art, or literature as literature. For example, a work of art may be read as a commentary on the social and economic conditions of its period or as propaganda for class-
struggle, but these readings, according to the New Critics, do not justify our calling the work an art form; besides, as Ludwig Wittgenstein says in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, "Everything we see could also be otherwise." Thus collectively, the critics have pushed back the frontiers of criticism and multiplied many times over the sum of facts known to mankind as well as increased the repertory of critical terms. In the process, however, each specialist has necessarily closed his mind to everything except his own little specialization. Such specialization as we have can be accomplished only by sacrificing wide knowledge for deep learning in a small area.

Modern literary critics, therefore, remind one of the six men of Indostan in that Children's rhyme:

It was six men of Indostan 
To learning much inclined
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

Each man, according to the fable, took hold of a certain part of the elephant's anatomy, and each
concluded from his limited experience what sort of
an animal the elephant was.

And so the men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long
Each in his opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,

Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong:

Each had, in his own way, become a specialist in one
part of the elephant's anatomy, but none was qualified
to generalize correctly about the elephant as an
animal because none could step back a few paces to
view the whole elephant. There, however, is a
seventh man, disgusted with the findings of the blind
men and their bitter debate, but he is content to see
the elephant from a distance. If the fable of the
blind men and the elephant is to have a happy ending,
we need still another man -- an eighth -- to stand
back a few paces, study the elephant as an integral
whole, find out what the blind specialists are doing,
and then correlate their findings into a unified
picture. This eighth man, then, must be one who
welcomes the genuine discoveries of the specialists
and who does not lose sight of the whole anatomy that is being studied by the blind men.

Such a man in the twentieth century is the Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, who urges us to "stand back" when looking at a literary work. He draws an analogy between literature and the pictorial arts where he observes the distinction between its design and stylization on one hand, and its content or subject on the other. "In looking at a picture," Frye says,

we may stand close to it and analyse the details, brush work and palette knife. This corresponds roughly to the rhetorical analysis of the new critics in literature. At a little distance back, the design comes clearer into view, and we study rather the content represented: this the best distance for realistic Dutch pictures, for example, where we are in a sense reading the picture. The further back we go, the more conscious we are of the organizing design. At a great distance from, say, a Madonna, we can see nothing but the archetype of the Madonna, a
large centripetal blue mass with a contrasting point of interest at its center. In the criticism of literature, too, we often have to "stand back" from the poem to see its archetypal organization. (Anatomy 140)

The categories of painting are analogous to the structural principles of literature, and we are better able to observe their archetypal shapes and mythopoeic designs when some distance separates us from the realistic details of content.

It is significant that Frye calls his seminal work on criticism the Anatomy. This book, full of catalogues and diagrams, definitions and critical terms, "encyclopedic in scope, and reliant on the free play of intellectual fancy" (Denham 55) and often satiric in form is born of a thematic interest, and like its precursor, the Menippean satire, it "presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern" (Anatomy 310). The single pattern in the Anatomy of Criticism is the exposition of man's whole literary experience growing out from a central myth. On the surface, however, the Anatomy seems to attempt a synthesis of the principal types of modern literary
criticism—historical, Marxist, ethical, archetypal, psychological, and rhetorical—but underneath, we notice a programmatic proclivity for archetypal criticism. The first essay does treat its subject historically, but displays Frye’s theory of the progressive displacement of literature from the central myth. The second essay demonstrates the necessity for and mode of existence of this myth, while the third and the fourth start a practical criticism of the way myth appears in literature and attempts “to show empirically how conventional archetypes get embodied in conventional genres.”

This has led George Woodcock to remark that the Anatomy of Criticism is,

a great and intricate edifice of theory and myth whose true purpose is in its own existence; it has the same ultimate effect as buildings like the Angkor Wat or the Sainte Chapelle, which were built to exemplify religious truths and which survive, when their message is forgotten or derided, as objects whose sole meaning to modern man lies in their beauty. . . . (Frye) has
exemplified more effectively than Wilde himself the latter's argument that criticism is primarily a creative process, leaving its masterpieces to impress and move by their skill and grandeur long after their subjects have ceased to interest us. (4)

While drawing attention to the creative genius in Frye, Woodcock dismisses rather too flippantly the practical aspects of Frye's ideas and their far-reaching consequences seen in an entire generation of literary critics and teachers. A good part of this practical value lies in Frye's "opening up the critical world to questions previously slighted and to literary works frequently neglected; and on his providing us with some excellent analytical tools and an extensive glossary of concepts to better accomplish one kind of critical task" (Denham 54).

In A Map of Misreading, Harold Bloom remarks that Frye's myths of freedom and concern are a "Low Church version of T.S. Eliot's Anglo-Catholic myth of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'" (30). This
remark of Bloom's is fraught with more than a suspicion of the anxiety of influence. While it is a mistake to suggest that Frye is merely an "ephebe" of Eliot, it, however, must be admitted that Frye is clearly under the sway of Eliot's ideal of order, which he tries to broaden and extend. Bloom, we see from his writings, is suspicious of the "freedom" of visionary poetry and its promise of a self-generated myth. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, he asserts a negating triumph of past over present art and demonstrates that the influence of poet on poet is as inescapable as of father on son. "The deceptions of 'spirit,' 'imagination,' or 'desire' are marshalled into categories, depressed into ratios that show how literal and unavoidable is our debt to the past" (Hartman 88). He chooses as his examples Blake, Yeats, and post-Miltonic poets, to show that they cannot escape belatedness and self-deception (88).

In *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye places Blake along with Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare as a poet from whom a "total form of vision" could be derived. He turns Blake's cry, "Where are human feet? For lo! my eyes are in heavens," into a slogan that motivates the
systematic enterprise of criticism. Literature is said to "incarnate" imagination, to become its ideal human body, (113), and Blake was made the forerunner of a new myth-making age—what Matthew Arnold was anticipating and what Eliot thought of as an imperfection in Blake. Frye, however, says that he merely completes the "humanist revolution" inaugurated by the English poets and commentators with his insistence that, since Chapman, "the conception of the Classical in art and the conception of the scriptural or canonical in religion have always tended to approximate one another; that the closer the approximation, the healthier it is for both religion and art; that on this approximation the authority of human letters has always rested. (Hartman 86-87)

In spite of such a modest representation, Frye goes beyond the Arnoldian desire and the Eliotic line of argument when he proposes a concept of creative criticism behind which we get a glimpse of a radical
Protestant perspective. The question then arises as to what is Protestant and what is Catholic and their relevance to the study of art. Geoffrey Hartman is of the opinion that "this is where Frye's insistence on archetypes as the organizing principles of all imaginative activity, culminating in the Anatomy of Criticism, has a clarifying and disburdening effect (89-90). Frye recovers through Blake a poetic language—traditionally denominatured as allegory—and formulates it as a universal poetics, a grammar of archetypes. Hartman adds further that, "Frye raises Blake's identification of poetry with divinity to a legitimating axiom for literary studies and hence accommodates more easily both scripture and its extension into secular canon, what we call literature" (95). In doing so, Frye completes Arnold by stressing that the imagination is eternal and also corrects Eliot by showing that what is important in religion can be communicated only through art. He strongly affirms in The Modern Century: "The arts, which address the imagination, have, ever since the Romantic movement, acquired increasingly the role of
the agents through which religion is understood and appreciated. The arts have taken on a prophetic function in society, never more of one than when the artist pretends to depreciate such a role, as for instance, T.S. Eliot did" (119).

The present study, while taking as its cue Harold Bloom's premise, goes on to treat both Eliot and Frye as belonging to the same tradition and sharing a common concern — a Romantic myth of literary history, and the relation of art as a whole to society. Although the subject is somewhat limited within its own field, its importance, nevertheless, in our understanding and revaluation of Eliot as a literary critic and Frye as a contemporary Romanticist, is in no way diminished. Eliot's dislike of Romanticism and his scathing critical remarks at the expense of the Romantic poets are well known; but the debate on it is far from exhausted. The idea of a literary myth was first advocated by the Romantics, and Eliot's use of it suggests that there is more than merely a germ of the Romantic heritage in Eliot's literary criticism. Further, the extent to which modern trends and modernism as a whole are an extension of the Romantic argument is
still subject to questioning; but Frye's declaration that his literary position is Romantic in tendency makes the debate less tense. To suggest a unity between the two major critics of this century is not to lessen the originality of either in any way; it only further endorses the view that it is only in the acceptance and use of a living tradition that any real originality is possible.

In re-examining Eliot's idea of Tradition and suggesting that the premise had its germinal roots in the concept of myth we are led to believe that Eliot's version of literary history is mythic, and that the mythical method is an essential part of his criticism in that we cannot see the shape of the whole without it. On the other hand, Frye's doctrine of the imagination forms the major construct in his critical theory and this aspect of his poetics marks a departure from the dualistic approach of Eliot. Moreover, Frye's concern with the Romantic tradition is central to the "creative" aspect of his literary criticism. While it is admitted that Frye used some of the ideas of Eliot, the real similarity does not lie in any supposed
borrowings, but rather, in the common perception of an issue and the attempt to come to terms with it imaginatively. Frye's relation to Eliot, as well as to the Romantic tradition suggests, although partially, an answer to one of the persistent questions about the literature of the twentieth century: whether modernism was in fact a new movement or simply a continuation and development of Romantic ideas. The argument remains open and the debate on it far from exhausted. The present study is an endeavour to widen the critical path in the hope of straightening things out.