
MYTH, FICTION AND DISPLACEMENT ON NORTHROP FRYE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine Northrop Frye's way of looking literature through his four essays. His approach are designed in the specific essays; First, Theory of modes, Second, Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbol, Third, Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myth, Fourth, Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres. The finding showed that every work of art can be categorized as fiction in Frye's literary criticism theory. In other word, fiction is an artistic strategy to tell idea by deceiving a story. Meanwhile, the relation between myth and literature is established by studying genres and conventions of literature. In addition, the displacement meant as a technique to make sure that reader of myth and fiction will get the true message of the story. In other word the displacement will really occurs when the reader can find the complete fiction rather than a partial ideology. We hope that the finding will provide valuable insight to the reader to internalizes the literary traditions of comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire so thoroughly that they can be brought to bear concurrently upon whatever text he reads.

Key words: Northrop Frye, myth, fiction

A. INTRODUCTION

Frye is one of the twentieth century's most excellent English scholars and literary critics and a well-known expert on Canadian society and culture. He was born on 14 July 1912, in Sherbrook, Quebec, and raised in Moncton, New Brunswick. He entered Victoria College in the University of Toronto in 1929, graduating in Honors Philosophy and English in 1933. He then completed the theological course at Emmanuel College, and was ordained in the United Church of Canada in 1936. He attended Merton College, Oxford, receiving his Oxford M.A. in 1940. In 1939, he joined the Department of English at Victoria College in the University of Toronto, and remained there for the rest of his life. He died in Toronto on 23 January 1991. (Victoria College: 2004)

Frye's impact was strongest in the mid-1960s, when a new generation of American scholars, notably Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman, were influenced by the ideas of Anatomy. They were attracted by Frye's insistence that literary criticism was not a poor cousin of philosophy, psychology, linguistics or aesthetics but a symbolically co-ordinate discipline which outlines the shape of the human imagination itself. As such, it has its own authority, which can be useful in the study of other arts and social sciences. While Frye believed his ideas could also help creative writers focus their work, the notion was often abused in the Canadian writing community. (The Canadian Encyclopedia: 2012)

According to his work 'Anatomy of Criticism', there are four ways of looking at literature as a whole. These approaches are set in the specific essays. *First*, Theory of modes, he described three tendencies in fiction; tragic, comic and thematic. *Second*, Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbol. He showed the phases in which the symbol may function. *Third*, Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myth. He deals more fully with the same matter contained in the essay. *Fourth*, Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres. He attempts to go beyond the simple generic distinction and to establish the form, content and tendencies of genres. (Gross: 1970: p 324)

B. DISCUSSION

According to Frye, Myth is a certain type of story in which the chief of character are gods or other beings larger in power than humanity. It usually formed in a verbal art, and belongs to the world of art. (Frye in Trilling: p 583) The myth usually spreads among the society. Some time, it influences the people's faith and way of thinking. Frye means it as the

comprehensive and story and away even it has abstract pattern inside the story. As the complete story, Myth is different from legend that only own partial narratives.

In other hand fiction commonly used in regarding with novel though novel has narrower historical and ideological content than fiction. The basic difference between fiction and novel is that novel must refer to product of imaginative activity, whereas fiction can be used to describe the activity itself. (Fowler, 1987:94)

Meanwhile, Fiction in Frye's essay is a complex term with has a multiple and even overlapping uses. Frye said in his essay that fiction comprises work of literature with internal characters, and include novels, plays, narrative poetry, folk tales, and everything that tells a story. (Frye in Trilling: p 575) Frye noted that myths are often used as allegories of science of religion, or morality: Myth may arise in the first place to account for a ritual or a law, or they may be parables that illustrate a particular situation or argument.

Shortly we can say that every work of art can be categorized as fiction in Frye's literary criticism theory. In other word, fiction is an artistic strategy to tell idea by deceiving a story.

Frye tried to interrelate between myth and fiction (literature). According to him, the relation between myth and literature is established by studying genres and conventions of literature. "It is considered that myth is an integral element of literature, a certain type of story with anonymous author. He said that myth would naturally have the same kind of appeal for the fiction writer that folk tales have. Within myth is a special category of seriousness, the people believed to have really happened or to have some exceptional significance in explaining certain feature of life, such a ritual." (Frye in Trilling: p 584) Here we can say that Frye subjected reading myth as like reading fiction.

T.S. Elliot understands of 'tradition' is defined by Frye as 'Creative and informing power operation on the poet specifically as a craftsman', whereas they offer no account for possibility to create new work of literature out of old ones. In T.S. Elliot metaphysic, myth can be used as medium to present old tradition while writing the ideal literature. As we know that according to Elliot, the ideal literature must not away from the tradition of earlier author. Myth is the medium of this process. Frye said in Trilling (p.588), Literary shape cannot come from life, it come from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth.

According to Frye, in process of reading myth and fiction, readers are usually trapped into ideology. It is because they don't read them in a whole or partially. In other word, the readers may read only what common people say about certain myth and fiction. Furthermore, the reader assumption about the content of particular myth and fiction is diverged from the real value.

Frye's vision about ideal reader is who absorbs, assimilates, and internalizes the literary traditions of comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire so thoroughly that they can be brought to bear concurrently upon whatever text he reads. This complete power of perception, attained at the end of the theory of myths, resembles the complete power of action in the mythic mode of the first essay. (Russell, 2000:p.106)

According to Freudian psychology, displacement is an unconscious defense mechanism whereby the mind redirects effects from an object felt to be dangerous or unacceptable to an object felt to be safe or acceptable. ("Displacement", 2011) Even this definition does not have exact context with Frye's concept of displacement, but it has certain relation to what further Frye defined on displacement. In next discussion about displacement; the definition has a relation to what the reader's view changes and reaction after they had read myth and fiction as comprehensive source rather than ideology.

Frye said in his third essay entitled Archetypal Criticism (1957: 135), "The presence of a mythical structure in realistic fiction, however, poses certain technical problems for making it plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of displacement."

Here Frye means that displacement is a kind of technique to make sure that reader of myth and fiction will get the true message of the story. In other word the displacement will really occurs when the reader can find the complete fiction rather than a partial ideology. Frye insisted that to make the story being reasonable and morally acceptable by its reader, it needs displacement.

More extend Frye said, "The central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like. In a myth we

can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees." (Frye, 1957: p 137) Frye may mean that displacement itself is his central principle. It accounts for the various forms that not only myth in literature but also of literary language. He insisted that simile, analogy and imagery are the concrete product of displacement.

Based on which myth can be displaced, Frye has differed three organization of myth (1957: 138-139). *First* is undisplaced myth, this kind of myth usually relates to theme of god and devil. It takes the form two contrast worlds of total metaphorical identification; both are desirable and the other one is undesirable. Those worlds identified the existence of heaven and hells of religious literature. Frye named those form as apocalyptic and demonic metaphorical organization.

Second is romantic myth, it concerned implicit mythical pattern in world more closely. It is usually associated with human experience. *Third* is realism. It tried to emphasize on content and representation rather on the shape of story.

The difference between these three modes is that analogy is characteristic of his romantic mode, significant association is implicitly aligned with his high mimetic mode, and writers in the period extending through naturalism use incidental imagery. (Russell, 2000:p.192)

Finally, Frye's reading myth and fiction must be sensitive both to our age and to the era to which they belong. It is suggested to read the most comprehensive and original myth or fiction in order to get the whole message of literary work.

C. CONCLUSION

It is essential for analyst and literature reader to not access the main fiction or myth in order to gain the true messages. It is often occurred when the readers are trapped into other people or expert opinion about particular myth and fiction. This occur means that both analyst reader are trapped into ideology of certain literature.

When analyst and reader have accessed to the main source of myth and fiction then the displacement of individual perspective will occur.

D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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