

**The Development of the Conception of
"The Function of Criticism"**

from Arnold to Frye . A Comparative Study.

DR. Gamal N. El-Tallawy .

- I -

The literary critics have witnessed various activities of both critical and creative powers all over ages . Through their survey , they discuss the different aspects of critical activity , to the extent that a critic like Northrop Frye entitled one of his books Anatomy of Criticism . The function of criticism is considered one important theme in the discussions and writings of literary critics , especially theorist critics . It is difficult , to find one conception of the function of literary criticism . The conception may be different according to the number of the approaches of criticism.

This paper aims to examine the different conceptions of the function of criticism through the theories of five critics . Rather , it hopes to trace the development of this conception if there is any development . The critics are:

- Matthew Arnold : (1822-1888)
(Poet and critic)
- T.S. Eliot : (1888 - 1965)
(Poet, critic and
playwright)

Development of the Essay

- Allen Tate : (1902 - 1978)
(Poet and critic)

- Ivor Whittier : (1900 - 1968)
(Poet and critic)

- Northrop Frye : (1912 -)
(critic)

One begins to examine the titles of the essays to discover their romantic significance.

- Allardyce : "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is a separate essay.

- Eliot : "The Function of Criticism" is a separate essay.

- Frye : "The Present Function of Criticism" is a chapter of his book Essays in Criticism (1941).

- Whittier's The Function of Criticism is a book which contains four chapters, but no one of them is entitled "The Function of Criticism".

- Frye's : "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", is a separate essay.

One may classify the essays according to their titles into three groups :

A- Arnold and Frye use the same title , but not the same content .

B- Eliot and winters use the same title , but not the same content .

C- Tate uses a different title , but it is relevant to the group (A) , since he has defined the function with the adjective (present).

Therefore , it is better to re-classify the essays into two groups only , group(A) includes : Arnold, Frye, and Tate , the critics who deal with the urgent problems of their own times , and theorize to their own contemporaries , assuring this by the adjective "present" group (B) includes both Eliot and Winters who never use the adjective "present" to define a certain period of time . But when one reads their essays , he finds the reference to their own contemporaries , especially winters , who exerts his efforts to criticize the critics of his generation but Eliot and Frye, are the only exception among these five critics who write not only for their own generations but for other generations as well .

When one comes close to these critics , one finds that Matthew Arnold is the one who represents what is called traditional criticism. Being a Victorian, he belongs to the old attitudes of criticism more than the other four critics, who are considered modernist critics whatever the

ideologies they belong to. To be honest enough, and more accurate, one should refer to the last point in Arnold's essay to be sure that he does to be objective when he refers to what he calls "disinterestedness". It is the same idea which Eliot developed to be "disinterestedness".

Both terms are considered the early steps of what is called "objectivity". Consequently Arnold may be considered as the critic who made the traditional and modern criticism. First, he refers to a certain period of time, the traditional criticism of their own times and the modern criticism. Most of Arnold's early refers to some political and social disturbances in England during the late Victorian age. He does not assume that his view about literary criticism to be criticism of life in general. It is some political and social recurrence.

He says:

.....In the England of the first quarter of this century, there was neither a national glow of life and thought, such as we had in the age of Elizabeth, nor yet a culture and a force of learning and criticism such as were to be found in Germany. (2)

Arnold was eager to express the social and political dilemma of his own time; most of his

essay deals with this problem . He comes to the conclusion that he must compare the literary product of his contemporaries with other generations in English history, on one hand and with German and French literature on the other . It is expected to evaluate the literature of his English contemporaries to be inferior to others , he adds:

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature , through the first quarter of this century , had about it in fact something prematured and that from this cause its production are doomed, most of them in spite of the sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the production of far less splendid epochs". (3)

Arnold may exaggerate when he connects the great epochs of literature with the existence of great epochs of history, and according to this view, he criticizes the literature of his time (Arnold himself was a poet) . This gives implication that Arnold criticizes the political and social affairs of his time . When he praises the French , it means the same thing , he adds :

... she (i.e. France) is the
country in Europe where the people
is most alive. (4)

Maisville Arnott gives an interesting
the process of the function of criticism. (5)

never separates from the general
And he is, really, the first English critic
called for a systematic method of criticism.

Before one discusses the development of the
conception of the function of criticism, it is
important to know the different attitudes of these
five critics. It is better, also, to summarize their
views of criticism, and the development of these
views. Do they consider criticism a science or an
art? According to their views, which concepts of
the function of criticism, will be clear.

The researcher may say from the beginning
that all the five critics asked for a science of
criticism, or at least a theory of objectivity.
Some of them referred to the early steps of
making criticism as a science (Lubbock) and
Eliot, really they did not use the word "science"
nor the adjective "scientific", but at the
same time no one can deny some of their
active contribution to the field. Others referred
to the terms "science", "scientific", "methods",

or "systematic" (such as Tate and Winters). But Frye is the only critic among them who adopts a very advanced and "may be" practical terms (science and art).

Matthew Arnold is the one - it is mentioned - previously - who has put the foundations for a kind of "scientific" or rather " objective "criticism . That Arnold is a Victorian , it means -again - that he is the representative of a transition period between what is traditional and non-traditional (new) in criticism.

In his essay "The Function of the Criticism at the Present Time" he discusses the relations between criticism and creativity of art saying:

"...criticism first ; a time of true creative activity ,perhaps -which as, I have said , must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism , hereafter , when criticism has done its work ." (6)

Arnold continues to consider criticism an important activity as well as creativity , and criticism -again- must precede the creativity process .Then , he refers to his point of view concerning the objectivity of criticism or at least what must be:

"It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rules for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rules may be given in one word: by being disinterested". (7)

Arnold sums up the rules of objective or scientific methods of criticism in one word. But, he does not leave his word ambiguous, so he asks a question and answers it directly to explain what he means by this disinterestedness. He adds:

"And how is it to be disinterested? by steadily refusing to lend itself to any of these ulterior, political, practical considerations about them, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them". (8)

Then to avoid the ulterior, political, practical considerations is the early step to avoid subjective criticism and to achieve "disinterestedness" which means by the words

of Eliot , "depersonalization" . It is a serious step towards objectivity and scientific criticism.

The school of criticism which Arnold belongs to , is neo-classical one , and it is an expression of the urgent needs of his generation , so he defines " at the present time" because Arnold is considered one of social reformers of his age, he connects the social and political disasters of his time with the chaos permeated in the literary field . He assures that the criticism of his contemporaries is not the "disinterested one":

*"For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country ? It is that , practical , considerations cling to it and stifle it ; it subserves interests not its own ; our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having ends to serve and with them those practical ends is all that is wanted . An organ like the *Revue Des Deux Mondes* , having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing , it may be said , as Just an organ for a free play of the mind , we have not , but we have the *Edinburgh Review* . existing as an organ of the old*

Whigs' ... and we have the Quarterly Review, existing as an organ of the Tories, ... we have the British Quarterly Review, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters." (9)

This long illustration by Arnold suggests that criticism of the Victorian age was over-ambitious, subjective, therefore he starts up the reformation of these weaknesses in the world "disinterested"

Commenting on Arnold's use of the terms "critical" and "creative" Eliot says:

"Matthew Arnold distinguishes far too fluently, it seems to me, between the two activities: he overlooks the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself, probably, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his works is critical labour, the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing; this frightful toil is as much critical as creative" (10)

Eliot defends the role of the writer to be more important than the critical one "I have assumed

as axiomatic that a creation , a work of art , is autotelic that criticism , by definition , is about something other than itself". (11)

Eliot discusses these terms on other standard of thought . His interest is not social and political as Arnold , but more religious . The work of art is the essential text, one must depend on . And the creativity process includes a critical effort . So , the writer is a critic at the same time - at least - with his work of art. But these attitudes never neglect his view that "criticism and creation are co-operative labour ..". (12)

Eliot agrees with Arnold that criticism must avoid personal interests of the critic, he develops Arnold's view when he defines the work of the critic:

" The critic , one would suppose , if he is to justify his existence , should endeavour to discipline his personal prejudices and crank-tares to which we are all subject - and compose his differences with as many of his fellows as possible , in the common pursuit of true judgment". (13)

Searching for "true judgment" is the same idea of impersonal criticism .But Eliot differs from Arnold in the sense of knowing that one

belongs to his present society and the other belongs to the Catholicism, on one hand, and aesthetic criticism, on the other. One can differentiate the titles of essays of both critics. Arnold means his own time and generation but Eliot means what is general and general. Eliot goes on in this sense - to make the criticism the creative process including a critical and true judgment saying:

And the most important qualification which I have been able to find, which accounts for the peculiar importance of the criticism of practitioners, is that a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact.... the sense of fact is something very slow to develop, and its complete development means perhaps the very pinnacle of civilization". (14)

To connect the sense of fact in criticism with the development of elements of civilization, means that Eliot comes to conclusion, to achieve the scientific methods of criticism which realize - directly - the objectivity. It is not this essay by Eliot, that refers directly, to his common term "disinterestedness" which is connected the development of Arnold's "disinterestedness". It is "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that develops Arnold's term and also Eliot's (himself)

the "sense of fact" and "true Judgment". He discusses the effort which must be exerted by the artist to gain the sense of tradition. He adds:

"there remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science". (15)

The artist for Eliot, represents both the author and critic. Here, he uses, for the first time, the word science, saying "the condition of science" and not pure science, and this seems more convincing because it is hardly to believe that human activity like art (i.e. creativity and criticism) becomes pure science but it may take the condition, or the colour of science.

It is better to use in this context, the adjective "scientific" instead of the noun "science". Eliot gives an analogy with a chemical equation and the use of the neutral catalyst. He clarifies his attitude of "depersonalization" which is different to some extent, from the attitude of Arnold. Eliot shows the honest criticism which is "depersonalized" as follows

"Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry". (16)

It makes that Elliot neglects the external effects of the work of art and regards the textual reading and analysis. Unlike Arnold who wants to trace the social and political problems within the work of art. This idea will be clarified when the paper discusses Frye's opinion of "background" and "foreground" criticism. Arnold belongs to neo-classical school of criticism which sees the work of art as an expression of society, but Elliot belongs to the aesthetics of the New criticism school which sees the work of art as an object in itself.

Allen Tate writes a chapter in his book Human in Mind (1962), entitled "The Present Function of Criticism". This long essay is a kind of what is called "social criticism". Tate makes a survey of the literary scene of his generation. He criticizes all the contemporary critics of his own generation. Tate was not clear enough in this essay to present his point of view concerning the scientific approach to criticism. In his essay discussing "contemporary criticism", he asks critics to follow that he did not define these scientific procedures, then he criticizes J. A. Richards for his use of scientific basis of criticism. He begins saying about the method of criticism.

"This essay represents a point of view which means to have little in common with other points of view that are tolerated, and even applauded today. It can not be

communicated at the level of the procedure and the program ; the point of view here , then , is that historicism , scienticism , pshychologism , biologism , in general the confident use of the scientific vocabularies in the spiritual realm , has created , or at any rate is the expression of a spiritual disorder". (17)

It seems that Tate is against (what he calls) "scienticism" , but he supports "knowledge, not historical documentation and information". (18)

When he discusses the contribution of the critics of his generation, he criticizes them all , severally . Even I . A . Richards who is considered one of the pioneers who use psychological ,semantic and stylistic approaches , is also criticized by Tate for his use of a scientific approach in criticism of poetry :

" when we think of the powerful semi-scientific method of studying poetry associated with the name of I.A. Richards , we may say that there is a certain ambiguity of critical focus.. the role I have in mind here is that of The Principles of Literary Criticism it is in a

special way a kind of science; this particular variety in poetry is a kind of applied psychology". (19)

Here, it is clear that Allen Tate refuses these scientific methods or approaches of criticism or the semi-scientific. He assures that "poems designate things that do not exist" (20) if one follows the methods of Richards, which are, in turn, the scientific one. Tate repeats that "Mr. Richards's most famous invention is scientese; that is, false statements or just plain lies". (21) Then Tate is the only exception (among the five critics of this study) who takes different position against scientific approaches of literary criticism. Consequently, he couldn't be classified as one who developed the scientific approaches even a step forward, but at the same time he never gives alternative, either to consider literary criticism a pure art or a mixture of science and art. He does not call for involving the literary world or for the critical effort in the realistic or political affairs like Arnold. What Tate adopts is that "the tradition of literature is a form of knowledge, by looking at it as merely one among many forms of social and political expression". (22) He criticizes the non-academic critics because they "have been obsessed by politics and the social determinism". (23). He also criticizes "the academic scholars, who have demonstrated that literature does not exist, that it is merely history,

which must be studied as history is studied, through certain scientific analogies". (24)

This situation of Tate necessitates a certain definition of the concept of the function of criticism. Although he entitles his chapter "The Present Function of Criticism", one couldn't define something specific by his "present" time.

Like Allen Tate, Winters criticizes the efforts of different critics

"what have the critics done besides asking important questions propounding incomplete or untenable theories, attacking each other's theories, and defending their preferences for particular works?....."

I think it is fair that we should ask more and I think that they have done very little more" (25)

But unlike him, Winters prefers the use of scientific approaches in literary criticism to be systematic and more objective. He goes on forward to discuss this point asserting its importance in the literary field. He says:

"If we are to have any kind of critical guidance, we shall have to have some kind of critical method"

or methods that are really applicable to the business in hand".

(26)

Winters connects the critical "method" or "methods" with practice. It means that when he criticizes the critics of his time, he gives the ideal form that he believes in. It is the critical method which means scientific approach. Winters does not ask the critics to search for these "methods" to make pure theories, but to be used in practical criticism to be the tools of the critic to analyse the work of art. He adds:

"If we are to have any kind of critical method, we shall have to understand two topics with more or less clarity: the potentialities of different kinds of subject matter and the potentialities of various literary forms. Any understanding of these topics, in turn, will depend upon our view of the purpose, or final cause, of literature". (27)

Winters asserts, again, that the critical method is not desired for its sake, nor any theory but to understand literature. Rather he makes the understanding of the purpose of literature directing the different methods of criticism. Then one may come to a conclusion

that Winters does not follow his predecessor; Tate, to neglect the scientific methods of literary criticism but he assures the importance of these methods.

As for the contributions which exerted by Northrop Frye, in modern criticism, in general and to develop this point, in particular, then, one may say that Frye has deep roots in modern criticism. "*Frye considers it the responsibility of the critic to systematize the previously unorganized study of literature*". (28) Frye, asserts from the very beginning of his career as a critic, that the methods and systems of criticism must be followed. He begins his essay "The Function of Criticism at The Present Time" by saying :

"To truly understand literature, requires seeing it as a system of word-symbols, not unlike mathematics, which must be considered as part of its greater structure, separate from the world that gave rise to the ideas it depicts". (29)

One believes that Frye comes to a great maturity in understanding and evaluating the theories of literary criticism. Therefore the development of his conception of literary criticism as a science or non-science, which in turn, is connecting with his conception of the

function of literary criticism at the present time is more clearer than others . He does not repeat what the predecessors said or believed . He is a critic only the other four names (of the study) are artists and critics as well . His panoramic vision of literary criticism may be more objective and logical than the others . what he believes in , is:

"What if criticism is a science as well as an art ? The writing of history is an art , but no one doubts that scientific principles are involved in the historian's treatment of evidence , and that the presence of this scientific element is what distinguishes history from legend" .(30)

Frye's conception of criticism is a realistic and objective one . It is difficult to consider criticism a pure art like the different literary genres because it uses a minimum of rules and methods to judge or evaluate the work of art . It is difficult , also , to consider criticism a pure science because it deals with an art expresses human feelings and thoughts . This defect is what the preceding critics (of this paper) could not realize . Frye himself criticizes the critical approaches which depend on the stylistic, statistical procedures "I understand that there is a Ph.D. thesis somewhere that displays a list of Hardy's novels in the order of the percentages of gloom that they contain , but one does

not feel that that sort of procedure should be encouraged". (31) "Statistics" should not be an end in itself, but a means to another effort, that a critic should exert to analyse the work of art. Frye criticizes the present scene of literary criticism saying :

"It occurs to me that literary criticism is now in such a state of naive induction as we find in a primitive science. Its materials, the masterpieces of literature, are not yet regarded as phenomena to be explained in terms of a conceptual framework which criticism alone possesses ...". (32)

At last Frye gives his opinion saying "I suggest that it is time for criticism to leap to new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are". (33)

Four critics agree that scientific approach is important for literary criticism, especially at the present time but Allen Tate's conception is an ambiguous one, he refuses the scientific approaches, and he gives no substitute. By scientific approach they mean a kind of "disinterestedness, depersonalization, objectivity, or systematic procedures". These terms mean to avoid the external environment of the artist and his art, to read the text itself and

to discover its rules .It is not important to depend on biographical, historical ,political (except Matthew Arnold who belong to a school of criticism neo-classical one , depends on the external affairs) religious or any external affairs. The first four critics tried to develop the idea of following scientific procedures in literary criticism depending on their own experiences , at their own times . But Frye who read , well , the past and the present , realizes what the present time needs, so when he asks for a necessity of scientific procedures , he knows well that he deals with a human science (literary criticism) which , in turn deals with works of art (literature) . The final conception for what he adopts , is to make a kind of harmony and conformity between science and art . Is it the same idea which was adopted by Alexander Pope (during the eighteenth century) when he called for using both (Judgment and wit) ? one may find a kind of similarity between Frye's and Pope's . In Pope's " An Essay on Criticism" Pope uses "Judgment" as a reference to "mind" and "wit" for faculty . It's the same purpose of the "mind" which we replace nowadays ,by science , and replace "wit" or faculty by "art" . If the scholars of literary criticism believe that the beginning of the English literary criticism is connecting by that Augustan age of Pope , and Johnson , one believes that the development of the identity of literary criticism did not change

from the early beginning . Pope and Frye adopt the same idea , with one different issue which is the change of the terms . At the time of Pope no one could think that the term " science" may be an adjective for criticism . It is the beginning of Pope that Frye advocates now , and this is what the researcher supports and believes in .

Now , it is logical to discuss the kernel point of this study , which is the function of literary criticism departing from the different conceptions of the scientific procedures of criticism .

- III -

It was impossible to begin the discussion of the function of literary criticism before one knows the points of view of these critics towards literary criticism itself . And it is important to know what they mean by scientific approach of literary criticism .

Matthew Arnold connects the function of his present time with the general attitudes of that time ; the Victorian age which witnessed the beginning of realism . He says that criticism is :

"to see the object as in itself it really is". (34)

Then there is a harmony between the ideas of his age, and his conception of criticism. It means that it is a good conception at that time because it considers literature is an expression of life. The Artist becomes as a passive photographer, he could not use his own imagination on one hand. But on the other hand, this conception could not be generalized at different times. Arnold gives more details about criticism that he has in mind:

"It must be patient, and know how to wait, and flexible, and know how to attach itself to things, and how to withdraw from them. It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fullness of spiritual perfection are wanted,..... And this without any notion of favouring or injuring, in the practical sphere one power against the other". (35)

Arnold gives his conception of the methods of criticism and the limitations that must be followed to be objective or, rather, disinterested. He concludes that:

*"..... criticism must be sincere ,
simple ; Flexible ardent , ever
widening its knowledge". (36)*

These characteristics of criticism made by Arnold , are clear but not specific , in other words , any kind of criticism may be described as "flexible , ardentetc". But the use of "sincere" refers to its value and objectivity , and "simple" is developed , later , by Frye that criticism must be understood by the common people to enable them to read well and understand the work of art.

Although the conception of the function of criticism according to Arnold seems simple and may be "naive", and general , but it is considered a valuable one by the measures of the Victorian age . And it bears the seeds of development which made by the coming generations of critics .

T.S. Eliot - as it is expected - gives more accurate and pertinent conception of the function of criticism that he considers a problem of order when he discusses the sense of tradition:

*Tate used the same word when he criticized contemporary critics of his generation .

"... The past should be altered by the present as much as present is directed by the past

..... I was dealing then with the artist, and the sense of tradition which, it seemed to me, the artist should have; but it was generally a problem of order; and the function of criticism seems to be essentially a problem of order too". (37)

This problem of order is never separated from the importance of scientific procedures. But when Eliot discusses the conception of the function of criticism, he never refers to "the present time as Arnold"; Eliot knows that he cherishes for his generation and the coming generations. He says:

"When I say criticism, I mean of course in this place the commentation and exposition of works of art by means of written words; ... criticism, on the other hand, must always profess an end in view, which, roughly speaking, appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste". (38)

This conception by Eliot is more accurate than that of Arnold. And it is also more accurate

than those of Tate and Winters. It is a practical one that critics can easily understand and apply. Firstly, he refers to the words of "commentation and exposition". They mean that the role of the critic must be active and positive to comment on the works of art, at the same time, the critic must be in close contact with the work of art he deals with. Secondly, he uses the words "elucidation of works of art, and the correction of the taste" then elucidation takes the role of descriptive criticism, which one follows when he deals with an experimental work of art. "Correction of taste" is the definition as well as the function of criticism that most people have used to the present day. Really one important issue of the function of criticism is to correct the taste. Eliot belongs to a kind of criticism (New Criticism) which considers the role of the critic is the medium between the text and the reader of the text, (in his objective correlative theory, there is more details concerning this point). Eliot gives the function of criticism another description; "interpretation" but it is not the interpretation of Susan Sontage which calls for hermeneutics. Eliot's interpretation clarifies his previous conception of the function of criticism :

"..... interpretation (...) is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession

of the facts which he would otherwise have missed". (39)

Eliot wants the critic to play this active role between the text and the reader. Therefore, he gives the tools of the critic to achieve his goal, saying:

"comparison and analysis, I have, said before, and Remy de Gourmont had said before me (...) are the chief tools of the critic". (40)

Eliot connects comparison and analysis with his conception of interpretation. He addresses critics saying:

"You must know what to compare and what to analyse. comparison and analysis need only the cadavers on the table; but interpretation is always producing parts of the body from its pockets, and fixing them in place". (41)

When one discusses the function of criticism according to Allen Tate, comparing it with the previous one of Eliot, one discovers a great difference. Eliot defines what he means clearly and objectively, but Tate never defines anything in his essay "The Present Function of

Criticism” .He is against the conception of considering literary criticism as a science , and against following scientific procedures . His statements seem contrasting and when he gives definition of the function of criticism ,it seems an ambiguous one. He says:

“The function of criticism should have been , in our time , as in all times , to maintain and to demonstrate the special unique , and complete knowledge which the great forms of literature affords us” . (42)

Then , it is understood that the function of criticism here . is to define the uniqueness of the knowledge of the work of art . This conception raises many questions :

First of all : What does he mean by “special unique and complete knowledge ?

Does he believe that the function of criticism is to know the content of the work of art ? where is the role of the critic? Is it a passive or positive one ? Is it a kind of similarity between this conception of Tate and that of Plato , who believes in pure knowledge of “pre-birth life in paradise”? But one understands that Plato’s view stands on philosophical basis , what is the philosophical background of Tate ?

It is repeated that Tate’s conception of the function of criticism is an ambiguous one as well

as his conception of the "scientism" of criticism. Tate concludes his essay saying :

"This essay has been written from a point of view which does not admit the validity of the rival claims of formalism and history and art - art's sake and society. Literature is the complete knowledge of man's experience, and by knowledge I mean that unique and formed intelligence of the world of which man alone is capable". (43)

Again, Tate does not represent a point of development of the conception of the function of criticism. Rather, he represents a certain point of view of his own, and it may be a biased one.

Winters restores the development of the function of criticism, and he gives his own conception. Two aspects are relevant to the function of criticism of Winters; The first one focuses on his conception of the function of literature, in general, because literature is the material of criticism. The second one is the problem of literary genres; Winters believes that the literary genres need a kind of discussion and new understanding. Winters connects both problems together as follows :

" one gets the impression from Crane and from his disciple also that works of one genre can not be compared with works of anotherIt is impossible merely to compare a lyric, say, with a tragedy ? . . . Such comparisons would seem to be the purpose of the study of forms to find out which forms offer the finest media both in general and for particular purposes , and perhaps to modify certain forms where it is possible by drawing upon aspects of the other . Yet this kind of criticism is possible only if we have a clear idea of the function of literature in general , so that we may evaluate the forms in the hight of that final cause". (44)

Winters suggests to re-evaluate the theory of literary genres . He adopts a very advanced idea (that is common nowadays) to compare the different genres with each other ; to widen the scope of the function of criticism . The final cause for Winters is to have a clear idea of the function of literature . The function of criticism is to evaluate the literary genres on new bases and to have a new function of literature that its

understanding connecting with and departing from the re-evaluation of the literary genres. Although Winters does not write directly about the function of criticism these lines and their significance give a clear conception and make a kind of harmony with his conception "the necessity of scientific criticism". By this discussion, one may come to a conclusion that these four critics, however different their views are, they represent one side or division of modern criticism; and Frye himself, may represent another one, because the conception of the function of criticism is more clearer and deeper than that of Eliot.

- IV -

Frye's conception of scientific approach of criticism is a comprehensive and realistic one, since he considers it a science as well as an art. This advanced and developed conception is connected with his conception of the function of criticism. He does not discuss the problem of other critics like Arnold, Tate and Winters. Like Eliot, he focuses his interest in the process of the function of criticism and the relation of the elements of the circle:

(Text → Critic → Reader)

(Text ← Critic ← Reader)

He gives more details about this process . He begins by defining the relation between art (text) and critic:

"Art is a continuously emancipating factor in society, and the critic whose Job it is to get as many people in contact with the best that has been and is being thought and said , is , at least , ideally , the pioneer of education and the sharper of cultural tradition". (45)

Frye asserts that criticism , increases the popularity of the artist , and this is another function of criticism , "Most of Shakespeare's current popularity is due to critical publicity". (46)

Frye justifies this idea by asking an important question "Why does criticism have to exist?" he answers directly saying " the best and shortest answer is that it can talk , and all the arts are dumb".(47)

Frye believes that criticism can explain and grasp what art can not , because art is significant and criticism can perceive and elucidate this significance . Criticism also has an enough power to trace the roots of the significance according to Frye who maintains that:

"The poet, as Mill saw in a wonderful flash of critical insight, is not heard but overheard." (48)

This function is what modern criticism searches for. He adds

"If criticism exists, it must be, we have said, an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of literary field". (49)

Frye develops the conception of the function of criticism, even his early one; he says:

"This autonomous organizing of literature may be criticism, but it is not the activity of mediating between the artist and his public which we at first ascribed to criticism". (50)

Frye classifies the function of criticism according to the role of the critic into two functions as follows :

"There is one kind of critic, evidently, who faces the public and another who is still a completely involved in literary values as the poet himself. We

may call the latter type the critic proper, and the follower the critical reader".(51)

This classification of Frye is a very objective and agreeable one because it solves many problems in the field of criticism and its function . To simplify the work of art or to study its deep roots and branches , is an old problem . Now , it is easy to believe that both functions are important but Frye considers most modern critics (including Winters ,Tate , Eliot) as belonging to the first kind of critics (Critical readers) . Frye gives the issues which must be followed by any literary critic , or the true one as follows :

" The first thing that the literary critic has to do is to read literature , to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field. Critical principles can not be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics , science or any combination of these".(52)

Although Frye gives the characteristics of the true critic and the principles he should follow , but these principles are not new .

They were adopted by the new critics who declared the importance of textual-reading and verbal-analysis of the text. Frye does not mean to separate the literary text from society. What he wants is to give the text more freedom to express itself as a complete knowledge and to give literary criticism a pure function of its own, not depending on other subjects. These subjects mean to give the critic a preconception when he deals with the literary text. Therefore, he differentiates between what is called "background" and "foreground". If the critics could use them equally, their criticism will be an objective one, but in fact the practical sense of criticism proves something contrasting, he says:

"the digging up of relevant information about a poet should lead to a steady consolidating progress in the criticism of his poetry. One feels a certain failure of nerve in coming out of the background into the foreground and somehow seems to prefer to become centrifugal, moving away from the works of art into more and more research project". (53)

Frye gives an example of the critics of Spenser and his Faerie Queen (so far as I know

there is no book devoted to an analysis of the *Faerie Queen* itself). Frye adds saying :

"though there are many numbers on its sources , and, of course, background. As for Blake , I have read a whole shelf of books on his poetry by critics who did not know what any of his major poems meant". (54)

Then Frye , defines his conception of the function of criticism, and particularly, the practical one. He concludes his essay by giving the critics the important steps that they should follow . He never negates the value of judgments , which is relevant to evaluative and not descriptive criticism *"it follows that arriving at value judgments is not , as it is so often said to be , part of the immediate tactic of criticism". (55)* It does not mean that he prefers the evaluative criticism to the descriptive one . He is more realistic to adopt both evaluative and descriptive methods .

Notes

- 1- Rashad Rushdy (ed) **Criticism from Matthew Arnold to the Present Day**, The Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo, 1986, P.12
- 2- Ibid., P.12
- 3- Ibid., P.10
- 4- Ibid., P.14
- 5- This idea will be illustrated in this paper with the discussion of the scientific procedures of literary criticism.
- 6- Rashad Rushdy (ed) **Criticism from Matthew Arnold to the Present Day**, The Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo, 1986, P.12
- 7- Ibid., P.20
- 8- Ibid., P.20
- 9- Ibid., P.21
- 10- Ibid., P.115
- 11- Ibid., P.119
- 12- Ibid., P.112
- 13- Ibid., P.112
- 14- Ibid., P.120
- 15- Ibid., P.130
- 16- Ibid., P.130
- 17- Ibid., P.169
- 18- Ibid., P.174
- 19- Ibid., PP.175-176
- 20- Ibid., P.177
- 21- Ibid., P.177

- 22- Ibid.,P.175
23- Ibid.,P.174
24- Ibid.,PP.174-175
25- Yvor Winters., The Function of Criticism ., Routledge &Kegan Paul, London , 1964,P.15
- 26- Ibid.,P.15
27- Ibid.,P.15
28- Robert Con. Davis.,& Ronald Schkifer., (eds)., Contemporary Literary Criticism, Literary and Cultural Studies., Longman , New York & London ,1989, P.541
- 29- Ibid.,P.541
30- Ibid.,P.545
31- Ibid.,P.545
32- Ibid.,P.545
33- Ibid.,P.545
34- Rashad Rushdy (ed) ., Op.cit .,P. 50
35- Ibid.,P.34
36- Ibid.,P.38
37- Ibid.,PP.110-111
38- Ibid.,P.111
39- Ibid.,P.122
40- Ibid.,P.122
41- Ibid.,P.122
42- Ibid.,P.174
43- Ibid.,P.184
44- Yvor Winters., Op.cit.,PP.23-24
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- 45- Robert Con.Davis., & Ronald Schkifer (eds) Ibid. - 50
- 46- Ibid., P.542
- 47- Ibid., P.542
- 48- Ibid., P.542
- 49- Ibid., P.545
- 50- Ibid., P.543
- 51- Ibid., P.543
- 52- Ibid., P.544
- 53- Ibid., P.546
- 54- Ibid., P.546
- 55- Ibid., P.549

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- 59- Ibid. - 53
- 60- Ibid. - 53
- 61- Ibid. - 53
- 62- Ibid. - 53
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- 65- Ibid. - 53
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- 100- Ibid. - 53

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- 1- Rushdy, Rashad (ed) ., Criticism from Matthew Arnold to the Present Day ., The Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo , 1986.

- 2- Davis, Robert Con.,& Schkifer, Ronald., (eds)., Contemporary Literary Criticism, Literary and Cultural Studies., Longman , New York & London ,1989.