

N O R T H R O P F R Y E
A S A L I T E R A R Y C R I T I C

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by

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under the guidance of

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Preface

In the late 1950's New Criticism, the mainstream literary method of the Anglo-American literary world had almost exhausted itself and was in need of getting supplemented by a fresh critical approach. At this juncture, Frye emerged on the scene with his archetypal method of criticism which was historical, descriptive and scientific in its thrust.

Literary criticism in the late fifties and sixties was considerably influenced by Frye's theory of myths and archetypes. The seventies and eighties however saw a decline in Frye's influence on contemporary Anglo-American criticism as structuralists, post-structuralists and modern psycho-analytic methods in criticism became a dominant critical trend of these two decades.

At the beginning of the nineties structuralism and post-structuralism, the two most influential critical methods of the eighties appear to be wielding less and less influence on contemporary literary world. At this crucial juncture a return to Frye's method could be rewarding for students of literature. One may thus go back to Frye, both for historical and critical reasons.

The present study is prompted by these dual considerations and is aimed at studying Frye in a comprehensive manner so that his significance as a literary critic is adequately underlined and is situated in the context of modern critical

tradition in a proper manner. The study extends over ten chapters in which the different aspects of his critical method are studied in detail so that his achievement as a literary critic is brought out thoroughly before the readers.

I am deeply indebted to my guiding teacher Dr. A. K. Joshi with whose help and guidance only I could complete this study. Dr. Joshi may be too humble a man to admit it but I am too grateful a student to deny it.

I should thank the Librarian and the staff of Goa University Library for their invaluable co-operation. I should also thank Mr. Lewis Fernandes, Mr. Nelson Fernandes of the 'Pascal School of Computers' for the computer services and Miss Vira Noronha for typing the manuscript.

Panaji, 30th April, 1992.


Ainodin Aga

As required under the University Ordinance, I certify that the thesis entitled **NORTHROP FRE AS A LITERARY CRITIC** submitted by Shri Anodin Aga for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of research done by the candidate during the period of study under my guidance and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award to the candidate of any Degree, Diploma, Associationship, Fellowship or other similar titles.

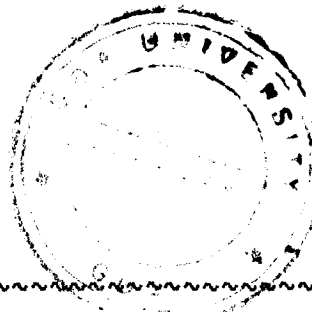
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U N D E R S T A N D I N G

E R Y E

CHAPTER I

UNDERSTANDING FRYE

Northrop Frye enjoys a special place in the history of literary criticism. Widely acknowledged as one of the most influential critics in English since the 1950s, Frye stands at the "center of critical activity as one of the major critics of our age, whose work represents one of the most impressive¹ achievements in the recent history of criticism".

Born on July 14, 1912 in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, Northrop Frye grew up in Moncton, New Brunswick and graduated in the Honours Course in Philosophy and English in 1933 from Victoria College, University of Toronto.

After a three-year theology course, he was ordained in the United Church of Canada in 1936. His strict religious background and the influence of Christian tenets, particularly in the early days of his childhood, appear to have influenced him quite considerably as can be seen from his leanings towards the Bible which eventually seems to have culminated in the publication of The Great Code, a study based upon Bible as a unique masterpiece of mythic literature.

Frye joined the Department of English at Victoria College as

early as 1939 and even at this time he writes "I realized...
that my vocation was for University teaching." He became a²
professor of English in 1948 and served a long term as Principal
of the College in 1959. Since 1967, he had been a visiting
Professor to several Universities, which include Indiana,
Harward, British Columbia, Washington, Princeton, Cornwell,
California and Oxford. He was considerably involved in the
cultural life of Canada and served several cultural organisations
in that country. He was a member of literary organisations like
Modern Language Association of America, Royal Society of Canada,
American Academy of Arts and Sciences, British Academy, American
Philosophical Society, American Academy and Institute of Arts and
Letters. Besides, he had been a winner of many awards, including
the prestigious Lorne Piece Medal of the Royal Society of Canada
in 1958, Canada Council Medal (1967), Pierre Chaveau Medal of the
Royal Society of Canada and a Civic Honour from the City of
Toronto (1974). He was awarded thirty honorary degrees from
Colleges and Universities in Canada and United States which
include Darmouth College, Harward University, Princeton
University and University of Manitoba. He wrote a great number
of scholarly studies on a wide range of literature from the
renaissance to the present, but returning always to the literary
adoptions of mythology as a force in all social life.

LITERARY CAREER OF FRYE

Northrop Frye began his literary career with a contribution
to a magazine called Canadian Forum of which he later

became editor. A prolific writer from the beginning, Frye has to his credit over 22 books and 50 articles, namely: Fearful Symmetry: A study of William Blake (1947); Fables of Identity (1963); The Well-Tempered Critic (1963); T.S.Eliot (1963); Romanticism Reconsidered (1963); A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance (1965); Fools of Time (1967); The Modern Century (1967); A Study of English Romanticism (1968); The Morality of Scholarship (1967); The Stubborn Structure (1970); The Critical Path (1971); The Bush Garden (1971); Secular Scripture: A Study of The Structure of Romance (1976); Spiritus Mundi:Essays on Literature, Myth and Society (1976); Creation and Recreation (1980); Practical Imagination (1980); The Great Code: Bible and Literature (1981).

To collect, identify and name the material for his mythical theory of criticism, Frye put in hard labour for ten years, and in 1957 developed his poetics in Anatomy of Criticism, correlating the various genres of literature with different phases of mythology of the seasons, invoking in the process the techniques of anthropology and finding the appropriate culmination of all in the study of motifs of rebirth.

The Anatomy of Criticism has thus been an epoch-making book not only in the history of criticism but also in Frye's own career. Whatever he has written after this book tends to move around the central thesis of the Anatomy. His first notable book Fearful Symmetry (1947) offered an interpretation of the mythology and symbolism of Blake which helped him prepare a ground

for the systematic poetics established later in the Anatomy.

The Anatomy of Criticism aims at replacing the contemporary evaluative criticism by a scientific theory of literature. The poetics elaborated in the book constitutes the main plank of Frye's theory of myth.

Anatomy's importance can be gauged from the fact that Frye has quite successfully synthesised into one central theory all the contemporary critical approaches. The central theory of Anatomy relates to the discovery of myths as the central structural principles of literature... and the 'quest myth' is central to all such structural principles. In the conclusion of the Anatomy, Frye writes, " The book attacks no method of criticism once that subject has been defined : what it attacks are the barriers between the methods "³. Obviously, this becomes the ultimate focus of Frye's broadly humanistic synoptic, synthesising strategy.

The Fables of Identity (1963) is the first book where the principles laid down in the Anatomy find their practical application. While the central thesis of the Anatomy dominate the essays in this book, the rest of the book constitutes the application of myth-criticism to various works and authors in terms of the central tradition of English mythopoeic poetry. The Winter's Tale, The Fairie Queene and Lycidas are among the main works undertaken for study, while Blake, Byron, Hardy, Yeats, Emily Dickinson, Stevens and Joyce are among the authors studied in the Fables. Frye calls these essays " studies in poetic mythology", and his tendency is to see literature as an unified

imaginative system that can be studied as a whole by criticism. In his view, literature as a whole provides framework or context for every work of literature, just as a fully developed mythology provides framework or context for each of its myths.

The Well-Tempered Critic (1963) consists of three continuous lectures on themes in a region more or less suggested by the title and appears to have been written for the benefit of beginners. Here too, Frye repeats his theories of criticism enunciated earlier. The essays relate to the training of students in different critical approaches, the styles of literature and speech, and the implication of critical theory. Frye appears to be bent upon imposing some kind of discipline on the students of literature when he propounds that, in order to appreciate literature correctly the students should invariably equip themselves with knowledge of some set principles. The principles referred to are the ones enunciated for identifying archetypal patterns of literature. This identification, according to him, is possible only through a thorough awareness of cultural and literary conventions inherited by the writer and the reader. Indirectly, Frye wants to justify his conception of an archetype, that is, a literary and not a primordial symbol or image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognised as an element of one's literary experience as a whole.

In the last essay of the Well -Tempered Critic, Frye considers two principal ways by which literature can be viewed: The Aristotelian and the Longinian (or Platonic). According to

him, the difference between the two depends on a question whether art is seen fundamentally as a product or a process. In the Aristotelian tradition, nature has reference to the physical order, to its structure and system. In the Longinian tradition, it refers to the total creative process. What is intriguing for students of literary criticism is his argument that criticism, like literature, can also be discussed in terms of both, that is, either as product or process. In other words, though Frye's view is inclusive enough it leaves no doubt in our mind that he believes in the Longinian theory of process, when he asserts that "The disinterested critical response is fundamental but never an end in itself, for the ultimate aim of literary education is an ethical and participating aim"⁴.

In the last chapters of the book, Frye also expounds his own view on culture and its relationship with literature. "Culture", Frye maintains, "is a total imaginative vision of life with literature at its centre... it is, in its totality a vision or model of what humanity is capable of achieving, the matrix of all utopias and social ideals"⁵. Extending this analogy further, Frye defines literature as a total imaginative form which is ... bigger than either nature or human life because it contains them, the actual being only a part of the possible.

J.S.Eliot (1963) is a study of Eliot as man, critic, satirist, devotional poet and dramatist. Eliot's theory of tradition and individual talent has been analysed in the light of Frye's own theory of the poetic process as an activity influenced

by convention. For example, "the word within the word, unable to speak a word", which is Eliot's symbolic meaning of the word has been quoted by Frye to show a kind of similarity to his own views at the anagogic level of symbol, that is, when symbol becomes a monad. Also, Eliot's theory of literature, as a result of cyclical movement of literary experiences shows the similarity between the demonic and apocalyptic epiphanies of Frye and the vision of experience and innocence by Eliot. Extending the analogy further, Frye has described the Waste Land as an example of the highest ironic vision. In the light of his own theory of archetypal criticism, Frye tried to elaborate on the archetypal patterns in Ash Wednesday, The Family Reunion, Four Quartets, The Confidential Clerk, Murder in the Cathedral, The Cocktail Party and other works of Eliot.

The Educated Imagination (1963) has a theme justifying its own title. It propounds that literature, like other arts, has a role in training the human imagination. The ever - advancing civilization is a manifestation of active human imagination. But at the same time, the literature available to an age also contributes, in turn, to shape the imagination. And one can see this better in poetry, which always attempts to create its own world of ideal situations and, at the same time, inspires human beings to create a similar world at the material level. For Frye, the material world, corresponding to the symbolic world of literature is that of cities, gardens, demons, animals, golden ornaments and others. The book sums up the relationship between the imagination on the one hand and the literature and culture on

the other.

The same year, Frye also edited Romanticism Reconsidered, a collection of essays concerning not so much with the characteristics of Romanticism such as wonder, Gothicism, or feeling for nature but with fundamental questions such as: What is the essential meaning of Romanticism? What radical differences in imagery might one expect to find in a comparison between Romantic and pre-Romantic poetry? What is the vision of man that one finds centrally present in the Romantic poetry? And exactly where do we and our contemporary literature stand in relation to the Romantics? The answers to these questions should naturally proceed from Frye's definition of Romanticism and his sense of the essential virtue of the Romantic poets: "that they preserve the feeling that at the heart of the best and fullest life is something anti-social or more accurately something beyond society which is still essential to human society."⁶

In the same context, he also observes: "Romanticism has brought into modern consciousness the feeling that society can develop or progress only by individualizing itself, by being sufficiently tolerant and flexible to allow an individual to find his own identity within it, even though in doing so he comes to repudiate most of the conventional values of that society."⁷

In the introductory essay, Frye discusses the revolutionary element in Romanticism - both in theme and in content - and shows how this feature of Romanticism underwent a change from ecstasy to ironic despair.

Between the years 1965 and 1969, Frye produced another set

of six valuable books, among them two on Shakespeare, one on Milton and one on Romanticism.

In Return of Eden : Five Essays on Milton's Topics (1965), a compilation of his continental lectures on Milton, delivered at Huron College, Western Ontario, Frye chiefly concentrates on Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The central theme of all the five essays is the encyclopaedic nature of epic forms and the hierarchical structure of Renaissance imagery. Eden represents the central archetype of Milton's epics while the loss and regaining of it is identified as its central myth. Paradise Lost is seen in terms of a pattern of themes in the shape of continual epiphanies from Christ's birth to the last Judgement forms the cyclical mythos of Paradise Lost and the pattern of themes its dianoia. Frye makes a specific reference to Milton's cosmology in the book because the mythic structure of Paradise Lost is a part of this cosmology. The imagery is considered as part of the Renaissance imagery on the one hand, and is also seen as a result of Milton's dialectical vision based on his view of the demonic and human.

A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance (1965) conducts a careful survey of Shakespearean comedies and romances and concludes that Shakespeare has desparately departed from the conventions of reality. The book consists of four essays delivered at the annual Bampton Lectures in America at Columbia University in November 1963. The author intends them as a general introduction to Shakespearean comedy. It is his thesis that the poet's comedy is widely

misunderstood and underestimated. He writes that each play of Shakespeare is a world in itself, so complete and satisfying a world that it is easy, delightful, and profitable to get lost in it.... The study will help a reader to understand more clearly the relation of his experience of Shakespearean comedy to his experience of other literature and drama. In early comedy, Frye says, Shakespeare introduces an anti-romantic element, so much so that his comedies sometimes become incredible. The plots of Shakespearean comedies and romances, in Frye's view, frequently enact ritualistic scenes in his tragedies like the dramatically conceived crime of killing the lawful king. The mythos of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, says Frye, is a movement from conventional feudalistic society to the free society of the hero and the heroine, or from death to rebirth or renewal.⁸

Fools of Time (1967) is complementary to A Natural Perspective. The chief recurrent patterns in Shakespearean comedies are defined in this book. Shakespearean tragedies, Frye assumes, are mythical in the vision they build up of life, in their mythos (narrative) and in the symbolism used by them.

The Modern Century (1967) touches upon the central aspects of modern myth-making, the dichotomy of progress and alienation, the effects of technology, growing anti-social attitudes in modern culture, and the role of art in shaping the contemporary imagination. It is basically a book on socio-cultural aspects of literature. The central burden of the book is the search for the identity of Canada. Not that Canada has lost its identity in any way, but Frye desires to look at it from a different angle and

place it in a perspective. Frye also expresses in this book some provocative thoughts on modern education and life. He wants to analyze the causes of anxiety and frustration in modern life and its direct effect upon literature. The second essay of the book "Improved Binoculars", tries to define what is 'modern' in modern art and literature. It is remarkable that the principles applied to literature in the book widely differ from Frye's theory of literature in the Anatomy.

A Study of English Romanticism (1968), is one of the more significant books of this period. The book mainly deals with the change in the mythological structure of poetry. The change is said to have resulted from various cultural and historical forces. According to Frye, Romanticism has given birth to a new myth of creation, a new myth of the fall and redemption. Frye adduces these myths to be the prime cause of fictional and metaphysical literature. Every myth, he says, should be understood in terms of its story and its patterns of imagery forming the dianoia of a fictional work. The rest of the book is devoted to the study of archetypal patterns in Beddoe's Death Jest Book, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound and Keats's Endymion.

The Morality of Scholarship (1967) has for its subject the relationship of society and scholarship. Frye believes that the scholar should have total detachment from politics. However, he should not lose his concern with it. The lack of concern for society and its politics, he avers, will result in indifference towards our own society.

The Stubborn Structure, published in 1970, is a compilation

of essays on theory and on application of myth criticism. In this book, Frye focuses mainly on the criticism of culture, more particularly on an analysis of the social, moral, and philosophical aspects of the products of culture. He discusses issues such as the role of literature, the kind of knowledge to be pursued and some aspects of practical criticism such as the connection between Frye's theory of criticism and his study of Blake, the application of Frye's conception of New Comedy to Dicken's novels and Yeat's imagery. In the last chapter he makes a conclusive summary of a book Literary History of Canada.

In The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism (1971), Frye attempts to answer the fundamental questions of literary criticism such as: What is the function of poetry? What is the aim of Criticism? What is the relationship of society to its art? Arguing on the relationship of criticism to other disciplines, he says: "I have always insisted that criticism cannot take presuppositions from elsewhere, which always means wrenching them out of their real context, and must work out its own."⁹

The Bush Garden (1971) is a collection of Frye's critical essays and reviews on Canadian writers. Frye has attempted to analyse the works of Canadian writers in terms of their cultural background and has offered his observations on the mythic patterns discernible in their works.

The Secular Scripture : A Study of the Structure of Romance (1976) deals with the various stories of romance. These stories, Frye observes, are characterized by typical archetypal motives

such as mysterious birth, foster-parents, mistaken identity, narrow escape from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and the hero's eventual marriage to the heroine. In this book, he cites the examples of archetypal patterns from Huckleberry Fin, The Castle of Ostranto, A Tale of Two Cities, The Last of the Mohicans, and Arcadia. The second part of the book attempts to draw a kind of correspondence between the mythological universe and the cyclical movement of literature. The authors studied in the third part are Milton, Blake, Yeats and Stevens.

Besides the above works Frye has produced another set of three books in the eighties namely, Creation and Recreation (1980), Practical Imagination (1980) and The Great Code : Bible and Literature (1981).

Frye was a prolific writer. His writings have left an indelible impact on the minds of the contemporary critics. For instance, commenting on the pervasive influence of his works Robert Denham observes: "Frye's ideas had far reaching consequences. An entire generation of literary critics has found his work to be useful and challenging. The practical effect of his criticisms, however, extends far beyond its application, to individual literary texts, having influenced the nature of curriculum and provided model for educational programs in the humanities".

II

Northrop Frye's career as a literary critic began at a time

when New Criticism had almost completed its historical function. Frye observed that New Criticism was a spent-force as it was unable to meet the literary challenges of the times. He was also impatient with confusions and contradictions in the available systems of criticism. He believed that literary criticism should acquire something of the methodological discipline and coherence of the sciences and this could be achieved only by assuming a total coherence in criticism based on a general hypothesis about literature itself. The primary source of this coherence, Frye believed, is the recurrence of certain archetypes in literature of all periods and cultures.

Frye's position as one of the major archetypal critics would be understood better by referring to the background associated with the Formalism and New Criticism, particularly with reference to their limitations and shortcomings. Understanding Frye as an archetypal critic is justified on the ground that myth or archetypal criticism is seen as a reaction to New Criticism.

New Criticism

Until the 1930s, literature was mainly studied in relation to its background. The study of literature was restricted to areas like biography or history. Twentieth century, more particularly the last fifty years or so, saw the emergence of a new type of literary analysis. For the first time, a literary work was seen, not as an account of any background but as a separate entity, divorced from extrinsic considerations. The main proponents of this view were the critics belonging to the

school of New Criticism, who insisted that scholars should concentrate more on the work itself or the text itself and should examine it as an aesthetic creation. In other words, they should view it as a piece of fine art.

New Critics regarded all literary works as structures of language and were relatively indifferent to concepts like genre, character or plot. They insisted on regarding the literary work as an independent, self-existent work of art to be described, analyzed and evaluated without regard to its authors' intention or to any other extrinsic consideration. In this context, it is pertinent to note the four relevant observations made by M.H.Abrams:

In analyzing and evaluating a particular work, New Critics, usually eschew recourse to biography of the author, to the social conditions at the time of its production, or to its psychological and moral effects on the reader. They also tend to minimise recourse to the history of literary genres and subject matter.

The distinctive procedure of the New Critics is explication or close reading: the detailed and subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and ambiguities (multiple meanings) of the component elements within a word.

The principles of New Criticism are basically verbal. That is, literature is conceived to be a social kind of language whose attributes are defined by systematic opposition to the language of science and of logical discourse, and the key concepts of the criticism deal with meaning and interaction of words, figures of speech and symbols.

The distinction between literary genres, is not essential in the New Criticism. The basic components of any work of literature, whether lyric, narrative, or dramatic, are conceived to be words, images and symbols rather than characters, thought and plot.

Harry Shaw also makes similar observations: New Criticism emphasizes concentrated study and subsequent interpretation of a selection as selection rather than as a biographical or historical study or as a statement of philosophy, ethics or sociology. A form of criticism that relies on close and detailed analysis of the language, imagery, and emotional or intellectual meanings of a literary work. In New Criticism, analysis of the text itself results in a repeated discovery of layers of meaning.¹²

Both, Abrams and Shaw clearly point out that literary analysis is a text-centered activity and has hardly anything to do with the study of biography, psychology, history et al. Along the same lines, Imre Salusinszky articulates the view of New Criticism saying that for the New Critics "each poem is the realization of some sort of pre-poetic mood or emotion or experience; that the proper perspective for criticism is microscopic linguistic analysis that each poem is a self-contained unity; and that criticism and value judgements are inseparable".¹³ As against these beliefs, Frye argues that criticism should "stand back" far enough from the poem to be able to perceive its archetypal or mythic connections with other poems; that these patterns serve to unify literature as a whole and comprise a "literary universe" or "order of words" created by the poetic imagination. Frye thus in a way upsets "the whole basket of New Critical, Eliotic, "neo-classical" literary values that preceded him".¹⁴ On Frye-New Criticism relationship it can be argued that he tried to devise a

different critical path of talking meaningfully about literature from New Criticism. New Criticism's over-emphasis on autonomy and self-sufficiency of literature virtually resulted in imposing limitations on its application and consequently by 1950 it lost much of its revolutionary thrust of the thirties. The predicament of New Criticism has been aptly summed up by Frank Lentricchia: "... by about 1957, the moribund condition of the New Criticism and the literary needs it left unfulfilled placed us in a critical void".¹⁵

The late 1950s thus provided an important critical juncture and Frye's Anatomy of Criticism emerged as an appropriate response to it. The significance and force of Anatomy of Criticism was so much that it led critics to call the book a "decisive coup".¹⁶ Louis Mackey was tempted to maintain that the proscriptive and austere formalism of the New Critics¹⁷ was taken over by Frye's "rich and inclusive formalism that took the whole of literature as its primary object".¹⁸ He further argues that the critical hegemony which prior to the advent of Anatomy belonged to the New Critics was broken as Frye "included in the form everything that they had excluded from form in what they took to be the interest of the form".¹⁹ He means that the New Criticism's idea of form was an inadequate idea and the notion of form was extended and made more comprehensive by Frye by his extended idea of myth. Not surprisingly, the Anatomy came to be regarded as a highly original publication of the decade. Further attention was drawn to it by another factor: Frye had also made

a systematic attempt to correlate various genres of literature with different phases of Nature. Besides, he had also attempted to discover mythological significance in the changes brought by different seasons of the year by Nature.

FRYE'S TYPOLOGY OF CRITICISM

Frye approached the entire problem of literary classification by devising an intricate scheme of modes, symbols, myths and genres by following Jung's theory of archetypes. He identified four main genres: comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire and maintained that these four genres correspond to the rhythm of nature manifested through its four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. It would be pertinent here to discuss briefly the important aspects of his theory as outlined in four essays of Anatomy.

The first, which can be considered his basic essay, 'Historical criticism', presents a theory of modes. Mode is defined as "a conventional power of action assumed about the chief characters in fictional literature, or the corresponding attitude assumed by the poet toward his audience in thematic literature".²⁰ The modes, whether tragic fictional, comic fictional, or thematic, tend to move in historical sequence: thus myth, romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic generally succeed one another in time.

Frye's second essay 'Ethical Criticism' develops a theory of

symbols and underlines the necessity of polysemous meaning, of a sequence of contexts or relationships in which to place a literary work for consideration of its narrative and meaning. The essay attends to the nature of literary language, its organisation as symbol. By symbol Frye means "any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention"²¹. Symbols function as signs, images, archetypes, and monads. Frye classifies five contexts or "phases" of meaning: literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal, and anagogic, and connects the phases to ironic, low mimetic, high mimetic, romantic and mythical modes respectively. In other words, each of the symbolic types is found to be paired with one of the modes in historical criticism.

The third critical method called 'Archetypal Criticism' demonstrates the usefulness of the above mentioned categories. This method employs myth as a fundamental type of narrative: comic, romantic, tragic, or ironic. In this essay, Frye imparts clarity to literary criticism by employing concepts such as 'myths', 'archetype', 'ritual'. The 'archetype' for Frye is literary, and not primordial. It is "a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole"²².

Frye divides his essay on archetypal criticism into two parts: theory of archetypal meaning and a theory of mythos. Mythos represent an archetypal narrative such as comic, romantic, tragic, or ironic. The archetypal meaning is explored by Frye in

terms of its imagery: apocalyptic, demonic, analogical. The structure of this imagery, its dianoia, is set forth largely in Biblical typology. Frye examines these structures in different movement in the mythoi in the cyclic succession of the Spring of Comedy, Summer of Romance, Autumn of Tragedy, Winter of Irony and Satire.

Frye's final essay, 'Rhetorical Criticism' presents a theory of Genres, basing the generic distinctions in literature upon what he terms "the radical of presentation", the conditions set up between the poet and his audience. In this theory, Frye has expounded four types of rhythms: i) a rhythm of recurrence defines epos, ii) a rhythm of continuity refers to prose; iii) a rhythm of decorum relates to drama; and iv) a rhythm of association is linked with lyric. The encyclopaedic forms, namely scripture, quest, epic and ironic literary forms are constituents of Frye's perception of literary categorization.

To have a broad and clear perspective of Frye's contribution to literary criticism, it would be useful to introduce his analytical framework in the form of five diagrams at this stage only.

Diagram 1.

Four types of criticism (corresponding to four basic categories of literary concepts).

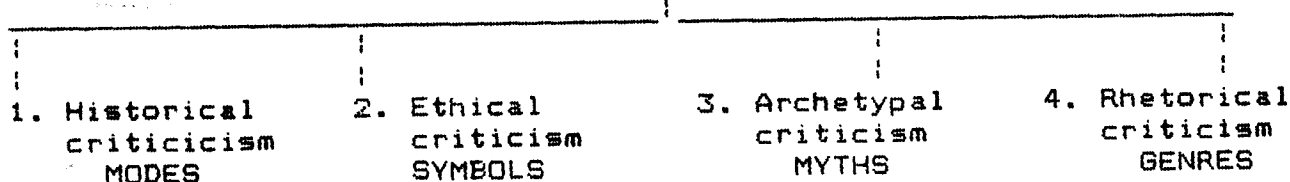


Diagram 2

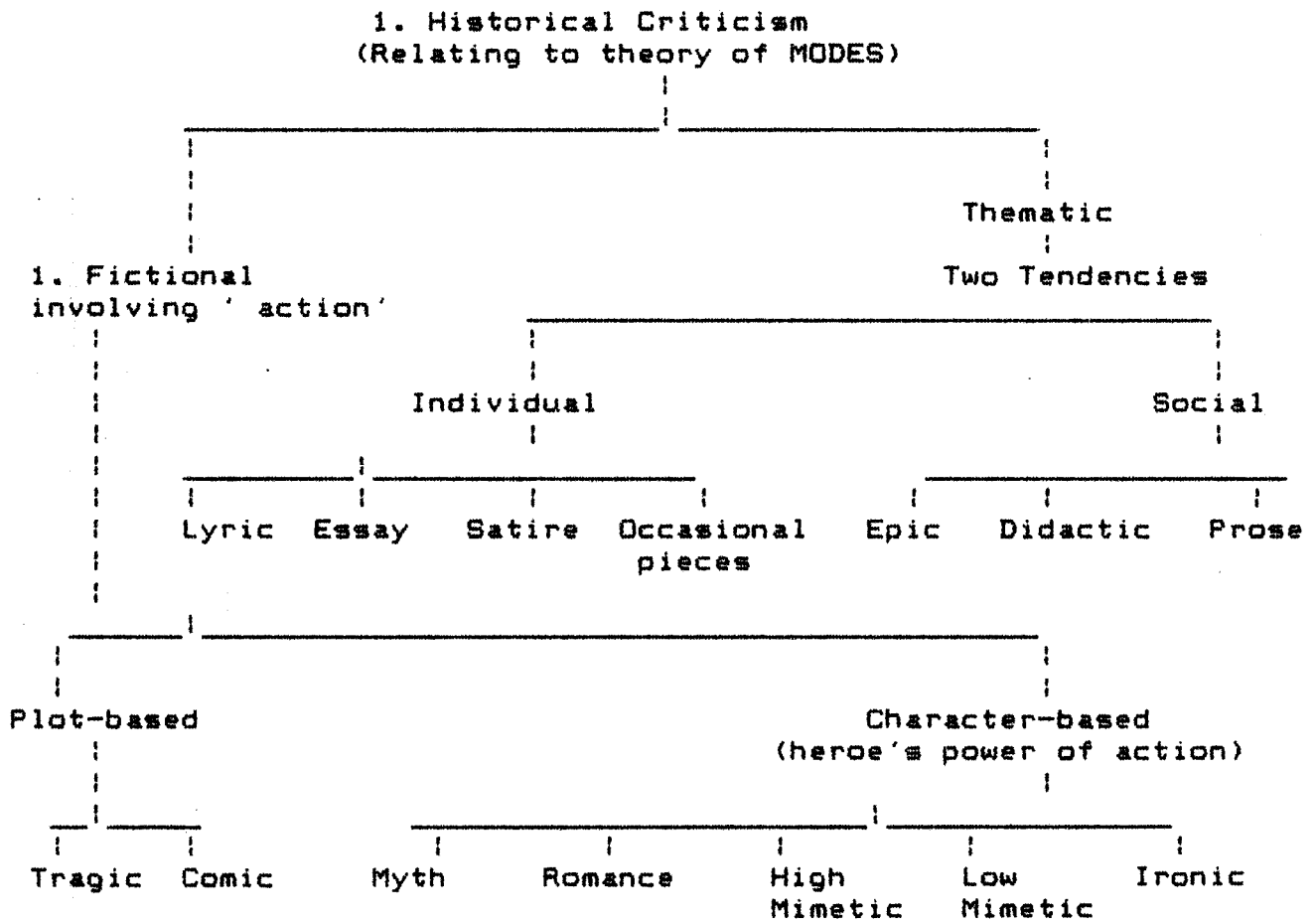


Diagram 3

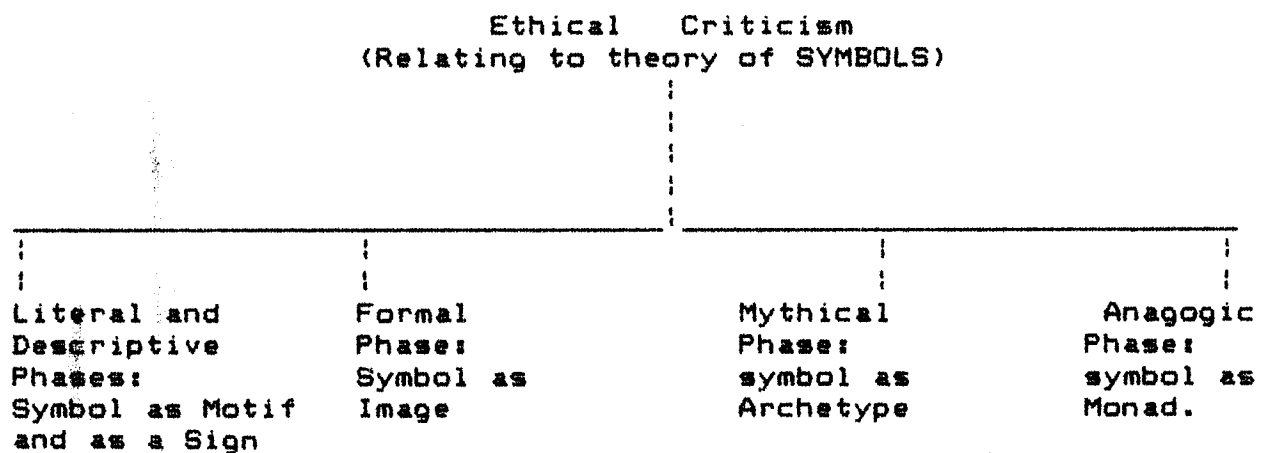


Diagram 4

Archetypal Criticism
(Relating to theory of MYTHS)
(seasonal rhythms)

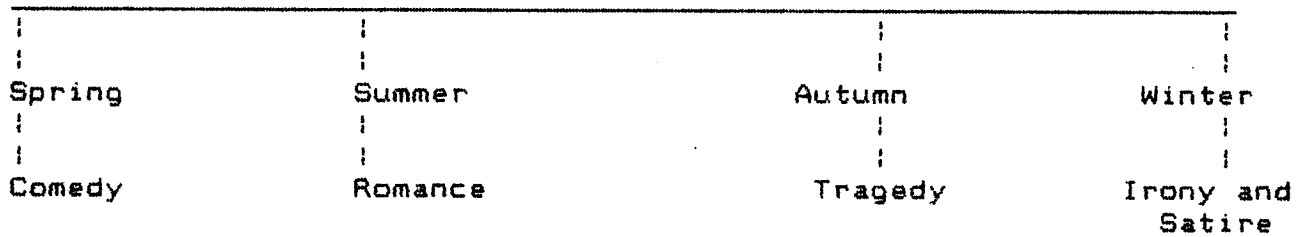
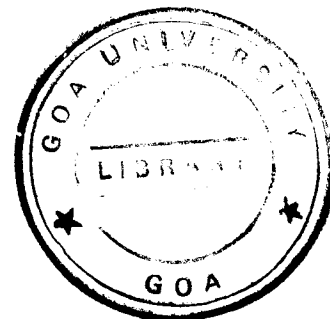
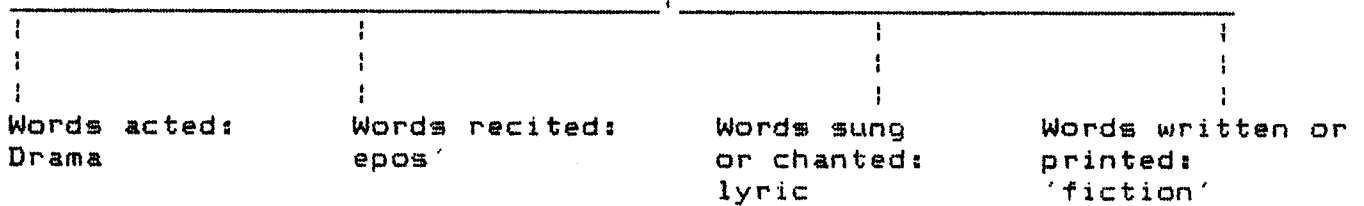


Diagram 5

Rhetorical Criticism
(Relating to theory of GENRES)
(‘radical of presentation’)



The diagrammatic representation of Frye's design helps us understand the scope of his critical method. It becomes clear that he attempts to combine myth criticism with an all-embracing theory of literature. The diagrams give an impression that myth criticism amounts to an all-round theory of literature. The all-pervasive character of his critical scheme prompts him to make a rather spacious claim that "literature imitates the total dream of man; criticism will reforge the links between creation and knowledge; art and science, myth and concept; literature is not the piled aggregate of works but a total order of works." We get an impression that his encyclopaedic knowledge has established him as a scholar to contend with and an author of a profound and different kind. Frye's reputation based largely on his book Anatomy of Criticism makes Murray Krieger maintain that Frye "had an influence - indeed, an absolute hold - on a generation of developing literary critics greater and more exclusive than that of any one theorist in recent critical history."²³

Our study of 'Frye as a Literary Critic' is aimed at focusing on the following features of his works:

1. A study of the methodology of art - criticism used by Frye in his Anatomy.

2. A detailed analysis of the theoretical constructs developed by Frye in each of the four major essays of the Anatomy namely "Ethical", "Archetypal", "Historical", and "Rhetorical" Criticisms. It will also include a study of the

relationship that binds the four essays together into a pattern.

3. A critical study of the intricate scheme of myths, symbols, modes and genres devised by Frye in support of his critical method and a study of its application to actual literary works.

4. An attempt to perceive the harmonious relationship between Frye's applied and theoretical criticisms.

5. A detailed examination of the following four basic literary concepts in Frye's works: a) the notion of critical autonomy or literary autonomy; b) his argument that criticism is a science; c) Frye's critique of value judgments and d) Frye's view of imagination. The study would also consider his claims on the identity of criticism as an autonomous discipline.

6. A consideration of Frye's views on literary history and an assesment of his performance as a literary historian as well as a critic of the Bible.

The concluding part of the thesis would undertake a review of the entire work and bring together the different threads of arguments developed in the preceding chapters. A part of the discussion would cover an overview of the opinions expressed by Frye's critics. It will include references to his appreciative critics like Robert Denham, Murray Krieger, Harold Bloom, W.K. Wimsatt, Frank Lentricchia, Frank McConnel, Walter Allan Bates, Imre Salusinszky and also to his non-appreciative critics like Frederick Crews, Angus Fletcher, Walter A. Davis etcetera, and finally situate Frye in modern critical tradition as a literary critic of great standing.

Chapter Notes

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A R C H E T Y P A L

C R I T I C I S M

CHAPTER II

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM

To understand and estimate Frye as an archetypal critic, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the method called archetypal criticism because Frye's reputation as a literary critic mainly rests on his achievement as an archetypal critic. In this context, it would also be useful to have here an overview of the evolution of archetypal criticism, its historical development since its inception and Frye's contributions to it. An explanation of the notions related to archetypal criticism could also be appropriate.

ARCHETYPE AS A LITERARY CONCEPT

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines an archetype as "a primordial image, character or pattern that recurs throughout literature and thought consistently enough to be considered as a universal concept or situation."¹ C.G. Jung believes that archetypes are "transcendental symbolic forms found universally in the psychic life of man, embodied in a collective unconscious, in which the individual psyche participates."² The definition in Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to a recurring archetypal pattern acknowledged as a universal symbol. Jung's definition too refers to universal transcendental symbolic forms but the Jungian definition locates the symbolic forms in a collective unconscious with which the individual psyche interacts. These definitions

reveal further a kind of kinship between myth and literature in their attempt to study literature by observing the underlying patterns of collective experiences of the whole communities. An archetype was thus seen in both these definitions as a basic model from which the other images in the community derive their definitions and strength.

Thus, it has been observed that every community has its own mythology and authors and artists expressed the mythological beliefs, symbols and images available in that community.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Archetypal criticism which is also sometimes known as myth criticism has its origin in the concern shown by critics for cultural mythology at the beginning of this century. As a new-found concern a number of scholars and critics turned to archetypal criticism to derive help in analysing literary works. Prominent among the works of the early critics are: James Frazer's The Golden Bough (1915); Carl Gustav Jung's Contributions to Analytical Psychology (1928) and Modern Man in search of a Soul (1913) and Edward Taylors' Primitive Culture (1931). True, these works had considerable influence on archetypal criticism of later works written on the lines of archetypal criticism but some other works of this period too have made significant contribution to archetypal criticism. For example, D.H. Lawrence's Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Studies in Classical American Literature (1913); Jane Harrison's Ancient Art and Ritual (1913) also contributed quite

significantly to this field.

Archetypal criticism of the early phase was also influenced by the symbolist movement in poetry. The symbolist movement has shown increasing respect for the symbols, myths and legends of the primitive man and had shown how through the symbols even the modern man can express himself well. Some of the notable works dealing with the study of the symbolist movement in poetry are: Jane Harrison's Themis (1913); Gilbert Murray's Euripides and His Age (1913) and F.M. Conrad's The Origin of Attic Comedy (1914); The Hero: A Study in Tradition Myth and Drama (1937) and Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance (1920).

A definite direction to archetypal criticism was however given by Ernst Cassirer's book The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (1929). In this book Cassirer departs from the Wordsworthian notion of poetry as an expression of the personal emotions of the poet and argues that poetry expresses pure feelings and is an objective perspective for apprehending reality. Cassirer's work was followed by Maud Bodkin's book Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (1934) in which she expresses the theory of primordial images, agreeing with Jung that some poems have special emotional appeal as they stimulate the unconscious forces in the readers' minds which are identified as archetypes. Though Bodkin accepted the main framework of Jung developed in On the Relations of Analytical Psychology (1928) she was skeptical of his position that archetypal patterns are inherited by the individual in the physical structure of his brain. She regards archetypes as symbols of a group tradition and as a pattern of the individual's

emotions that respond to the familiar pattern of a poem.

The period from nineteen forties to nineteen sixties was particularly important for the development of archetypal criticism. In this period, myths and archetypes were studied as constituents forming a pattern for the explanation of motifs expressed in literary works and in the behavioural pattern of individuals.

The other significant work on archetypal criticism of this period include Dr. Hann Sach's The American Imago (1939), Frederick J. Hoffman's Freudianism and the Literary Mind (1945), Edmund Wilson's The Wound and the Bow (1941) and Lionell Trilling's Psychoanalysis and American Literary Criticism (1960).

The Freudian and Jungian perspectives on archetypal criticism are found in Kenneth Burke's book The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941) where she analyses the authority symbols and examines Keat's Ode on a Grecian Urn in terms of the rebirth archetype.

The next decade marked a change in a definite direction by Richard Chase's Quest for Myth (1949) in which Chase asserts that myth is a kind of literature and therefore a matter of aesthetic experience and links with human imagination. The next valuable contribution of Chase is The American Novel and the Tradition (1957). Here, Chase opines that the American Novel is unique for its continued use of romance and melodrama and also for its mythical, allegorical and symbolical form, and that the only characteristic archetypal form of the American Novel is the fall of man from innocence and his initiation into life. The notion

of fall and initiation exerted considerable influence on American practical criticism which concentrated on analysing several literary works. Around the same time, Frye published his Fearful Symmetry: a Study of Blake (1945) which too analyses literature based on ideas or archetypes.

Between 1947 and 1957 some important works on archetypal criticism were published. Robert Graves's The White Goddess (1945) traces the origin of poetry in matriarchal society and draws upon the ancient ritual of cult of the White Goddess and her son. In the same year, in his Jungian work, Henrich Robert Zimmer in The King and the Corpse (1948) opined that the spiritual heritage of archaic man still survives in our soul. J.I.M. Stewart in The Character and Motive in Shakespeare (1949) argues that the realistic way of understanding poetic dramas was through a psychological approach tinged with anthropological insights. He interpretes Shakespearean plays in terms of mythic and ritualistic approach as against the realistic, theatrical and conventional literary approaches adopted by Prof. Shucking, Prof. E.E. Stoll, and Robert Bridges. Francis Fergusson also produced a significant work on myth criticism titled Idea of a Theatre (1949) in which he stated that action is the prime cause of dramatic art. Emphasizing the mythical implication of drama, he located the origin of dramatic action in rituals. Such rituals in his opinion, were voluntary in spirit and correspond to volition which is the initiative spirit of all dramatic action.

The Tragedy and the Paradox of a Fortunate Fall (1953) by

Herbert Weininger advances yet another mythical theory that the deep satisfaction derived from tragic play corresponds to that derived from the ancient rituals of the symbolic combat, sacrifice and resurrection of the divine King. Weininger studies mythical elements and draws parallels between the tragedy on the one hand and ancient myths, rituals of the ancient-Near East, Greece and those of the Middle - Ages on the other hand. The significance of ancient Greek myths in the context of present dichotomy between science and philosophy was brought out by Erwin Schrodinger's Nature and the Greeks (1954). The next great name in the history of myth or archetypal criticism is Leslie Fiedler. Fiedler's An End to Innocence: Essays in Culture and Politics (1955) focuses on the archetypal pattern related to the love of a white man and a coloured man in American fiction. D.C. Hoffman's Form and Fabel in American Fiction (1961) explores the traditions of folklore and popular culture including that of mythology.

The American Adam (1955) by R.W. Lewis elaborates the Adamic myth, while John Spiers studies the motifs and figures in Medieval English Poetry. In 1957, Frye's Anatomy of Criticism was published at a very decisive time which helped bolster archetypal criticism. The debates on archetypal criticism after 1957 are overshadowed by Frye's Anatomy making it a point of departure for archetypal criticism of the recent times.

FRYE ON ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM

In the third chapter of Anatomy of Criticism titled 'The Theory of Myths' Frye gives a detailed theory of Archetypal

Criticism. While discussing the theory, he defines an archetype as "a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify our literary experience"³. By 'symbol', Frye means, "any unit of literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention"⁴. It is, in other words, a convention.

For Frye, an archetype is a repeated symbol which unifies our literary experience and which also make it possible for us to think of a theory of literature. Literary symbols thus play a central role in the archetypal function of literature. Frye believes that it is through the help of these symbols that literature can function and communicate the meaning in its totality.

In developing his theory of symbols, he argues that the unifying symbols become archetypes and monads and provide the basic structural principle to literature and they often associate themselves with literary works which are accompanied by their background-myths. While archetypes give structure to a literary work, myths help it attain its significance.

Frye's theory of archetypal criticism is divisible into two categories: a) Theory of archetypal meaning, and b) Theory of mythos.

THEORY OF ARCHETYPAL MEANING

His theory of archetypal meaning depends upon three types of imageries: apocalyptic, demonic and analogical.

The first two kinds of imageries, the apocalyptic and the demonic, depend on the Biblical metaphor, for Frye locates their

main source in the Bible. He states that apocalyptic world is the "heaven of religion" and "presents the categories of reality in the form of human desire as indicated by the forms they assume under the work of human civilization".⁵ He has identified three different categories on which the work of human desire manifests itself: the vegetable, the animal and the mineral worlds.⁶

The form imposed by human work on the vegetable world, he says, is that of the garden, the farm, the grove or the park. The human form of the animal world is a world of domesticated animals including the sheep, and the human form of the mineral world, the form into which human work transforms stone, is the city.

These three categories, namely the city, the garden and the sheepfold are the organizing metaphors of the Bible and of the Christian symbolism in general. Frye treats them as the very grammar of apocalyptic imagery since "they are brought into complete metaphorical identification in the book explicitly called the Apocalypse or Revelation".⁷

Extending his principle of the archetypal metaphor further, Frye says that each of these categories the city, the garden and the sheepfold - are identical with the divine and human worlds as also with the social and individual aspects within them. Out of these postulations, he draws a summary of the apocalyptic world of the Bible in the following pattern:

divine world	=	society of Gods	=	One God
human world	=	society of men	=	One Man

animal world	=	sheepfold	=	One Lamb
vegetable world	=	garden or park	=	One Tree (of life)
mineral world	=	city	=	One Building, Temple, Stone.

Frye's conception of the archetypal imagery is thus based upon the union of the five-fold division and his purpose in advancing this five-fold division is evidently to maintain that Christ alone represents the union of these elements, for "Christ is both the One God and the One Man, the Lamb of God, the tree of Life..."⁸

Discussing further this point, he applies the same analogy to identify the other two worlds of the apocalyptic imagery, namely the animal and the vegetable worlds. "The animal and vegetable worlds are identified with each other, and with the divine and human worlds as well, in the Christian doctrine of trans-substantiation in which the essential human forms of the vegetable world, food and drink, the harvest and the vintage, the bread and the wine are the body and blood of the Lamb who is also Man and God..."⁹

Demonic Imagery

Frye develops his argument about the second kind of imagery stating "opposed to apocalyptic symbolism is the presentation of the world that desire totally rejects". It is the world of the undesirable or the demonic world. Its structure of imagery is the existential hell or heaven, the world of the nightmare, the scapegoat, the ethos of bondage, rituals of cannibalism, sacrificial kills and so on. Frye makes a further

classification of this category into a) demonic divine world, largely personified by the vast menacing powers of nature and b) the demonic human world, consisting of a society held together by some kind of tensions of egos, loyalty to the group or the leader, and so on. The demonic vegetable world has its counterpart, the demonic animal world. The former is portrayed in terms of the sinister forest as illustrated by Eliot's 'Waste Land'. It is noteworthy that in Bible such "a waste land appears in its concrete universal form in the tree of Death, the tree of forbidden knowledge in Genesis, the barren fig-tree of the Gospels, and the cross." ¹¹ The latter, i.e. the demonic human world, is represented in terms of monsters or beasts of prey, the wolf - the traditional enemy of sheep and the like.

Frye's narratives make a constant reference to the Biblical imagery and Christian symbolism to explain the mystic phenomena of nature. Probably, this has something to do with the early christian influence on him and to his orthodox upbringing within the strict canons of Christian faith, before he was ordained by the United Church of Canada. In an interview with Imre Salusinszky, he states, "My whole training focused on the structure of the Christian Bible because, as I say, my original job was writing about Blake and teaching Milton".

Analogical imagery

Frye further divides this analogical imagery into three classes namely, the analogy of innocence, the world of romance and the analogy of experience.

The structure of imagery corresponding to the analogy of innocence is the divine or spiritual figures - usually parental wise old men with magical powers like Prospero in Shakespeare's Tempest or "friendly guardian spirits like Raphael before Adam's fall"¹². Among the human figures children are prominent, and prominent among the virtues associated with childhood are innocence, chastity and virginity.

The world of romance presents an idealized picture: bravery of heroes, beautiful heroines, villainous villains as also their achievements, frustrations, ambiguities, adventures and embarrassments of ordinary life.

In the analogy of experience, the images are the ordinary images of experience in the daily life.

The three types of imageries discussed by Frye, namely, apocalyptic, demonic and analogic constitute the structural principles of Biblical literature. In Frye's view, these structural principles act as literary symbols and play a central role in the understanding of the archetypal function of literature. In other words, it is through the help of these symbols that literature can function and convey the meaning in its totality.

THEORY OF MYTHOIS

In the glossary of literary terms in Anatomy of Criticism,¹³ Frye defines mythois as "the narrative of work of literature". Frye has identified four categories of such narratives: literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal or anagogic.

In Frye's view, the four seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall and

Winter correspond to four phases in the cycle of individual's life, i.e. youth, maturity, old age and death. He sees the interaction between four seasons of nature with the four phases in human life in terms of two basic patterns or movements: cyclical and dialectical. From these cyclical and dialectical movements, he identifies narrative categories of literature and calls them mythois or "generic plots".

Looked at cyclically, the seasonal cycle, he maintains produces four mythois: comedy, romance, tragedy and irony or satire. Perceived dialectically, the analogy of innocence and experience produces downward and upward movement between nature and apocalypse, the actual and the ideal, the tragic and the comic. This dialectical movement, he believes, decides the movement of the structure of these mythoi from innocence to experience and vice-versa.

Elaborating further these two basic patterns, the cyclical and the dialectical, Frye states that rituals imitate the cyclic process of nature which include the rhythmic movement of the universe and the seasons, as well as the recurring cycles of human life. Literature in its archetypal phase, he believes, imitates nature in the same way. The dialectical pattern, on the other hand, is derived from the world of dream, where desire is in constant conflict with reality. Archetypal criticism, Frye concludes, is based upon these two organizing patterns.

Thus, the theory of mythoi propounded by Frye covers the following four points: i) the manifold narrative aspect in a literary work, ii) the correspondence between nature's four

seasons and the four cycles of individual's life, iii) the interaction between the four cyclic seasons and the four phases in human life, and iv) the effect of this correspondence and the interaction giving rise to two movements namely, the cyclical and the dialectical.

The theory of mythoi differs from his theory of archetypal meaning in that the former relates to man-nature relationship and his cyclic view of life while the latter is chiefly associated with Biblical typology and Christian symbolism.

The two theories together constitute the main plank of his archetypal criticism and gives us an idea that archetypal criticism for Frye is not simply the study or the probe of archetypes but an independent school of criticism in itself having a wide range of practical application since it covers practically all kinds of literary works.

Frye further states that mythois could be sub-divided into four categories: i) mythos of spring and comedy, ii) mythos of summer and romance, iii) mythos of autumn and tragedy, and iv) mythos of winter and irony and satire.

In other words, he connects each of the cyclical seasons of nature to the respective literary genres, namely comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony or satire. A discussion of each of the above categories would help us understand the idea better.

The mythos of Spring and Comedy

Frye believes that basically the structure of comedy as we have today comes from "the plot structure of Greek New comedy as

transmitted by Plautus and Terence... What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is registered by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play, some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will".¹⁴

The comic action, thus, has two centres of interest: first, the blocking of characters, and second, anagnorisis or comic resolution. Focus on the former results in ironic, realistic, satire and mannered forms of comedy, and emphasis on the latter results in the romantic comedy of the Shakespearean kind.

Frye then turns to the characterization in comedy and observes that the archetypal characters of comedy are governed by a structure of drama:

"What a character is follows from what he has to do in the play. Dramatic function in its turn depends on the structure of the play; the character has certain things to do because the play has such and such a shape. The structure of the play in its turn depends on the category of the play..."¹⁵

In other words, Frye emphasizes the interdependence of characters and the structure of drama. The structure of drama is seen as the function of archetypes and what determines the role of the character is the particular shape and category of the play.

Frye categorizes four types of characters of comedy. The first three being the alazons or imposters, the eirons or self-deprecators, and the bomolochoi or buffoons. The fourth comic type is the agroikos or churlish (the rustic). "These four

types", he says, "form two pairs: the contest of giron and alazon forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood".¹⁶

Referring to the structure of comedy, Frye maintains that the comic structure consists of six phases: ironic, quixotic, typical, green-world, arcadian and gothic. These six phases of comedy constitute a sequence of various stages in the life of comic society. Frye explains this point stating:

"Purely ironic comedy exhibits this society in its infancy, swaddled and smothered by the society it should replace. Quixotic comedy exhibits it in adolescence, still too ignorant of the ways of the world to impose itself. In the third place it comes to maturity and triumph, in the fourth it is already mature and established. In the fifth it is part of a settled order... At this point the undisplaced *comedia*, the vision of Dantes' Paradise, moves out of our circle of *mythoi* into the apocalyptic or abstract mythical world above it."¹⁷

In the sixth phase, he says, the comic society collapses and disintegrates itself into individual units. At this point we notice a kind of total withdrawal from the comic action. This implies that the mythoi has run its full course and dies, thus opening a way for the next movement, i.e. the romance.

In Frye's view, the mythos of comedy are not static as they exhibit themselves in a course of movement which runs into six different stages, namely, infancy, adolescence, near-maturity, mature, fully established and finally they reach a stage where

they no longer can hold themselves together. In other words, in their last stage they collapse and disintegrate into individual units. The significance of the transformation of mythoi from spring and comedy to summer and romance lies in the fact that Frye wants to emphasize the cyclic view of nature's seasons and is interested in establishing a kind of correspondence between nature's seasons with the different phases of individual's growth. Indirectly, he attempts to establish a kind of interdependence and an inter-relationship between man, nature, literature and life.

The mythoi of summer: romance

The mythos of summer and romance is the second category of mythoi identified by Frye. The structure of romance, Frye believes, is characterized by adventure as its central element. This adventure is viewed as occurring in two sequences: a minor one followed by a major sequence. While the minor sequence launches the beginning of the adventure it leads up to the major adventure i.e. to "the element that gives literary form to the romance - the quest".¹⁸

For Frye, the successful quest, or the complete form of romance has three main stages: "the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe or both must die; and the exultation of the hero".¹⁹ To define these stages, Frye uses three stages of ritual described by the Greek terms: i) the agôn or conflict, ii) the pathos or death-struggle, and iii) the anagnorisis or discovery. Between pathos

and anagnorisis, he visualizes yet one more ritual stage and calls it the sparagmos or tearing the hero to pieces.

Discussing further this point, Frye says that the agon or conflict is the basis of archetypal theme of romance; the pathos or catastrophe, whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy; the anagnorisis represents the archetypal theme of comedy, and the sparagmos being the archetypal theme of irony and satire.

Characterization in romance, Frye opines, is determined dialectically. The characters, according to him, are either for or against the quest. In other words, "subtlety and complexity are not much favoured".²⁰ They are "like black and white pieces in a chess game".²¹ If they assist the quest, they are idealized as gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are caricatured as villainous or cowardly. Romance has archetypal characters of the eirons, alazons, bomolochoi and agroikos. The contest of eiron and alazon is seen as corresponding to the struggle of the hero with his enemy while the contest of bomolochoi and agroikos²² represents the "refuser of festivity or rustic clown".

Frye then refers to the phases of romance by identifying six such phases. Like the comic structure, these phases of romance form a cyclical sequence in a romantic hero's life. In the first phase, the hero takes birth. Phase two and three consist of his mature exploits and adventures; the fourth phase corresponds to the fourth phase of comedy in that the happier society is more or less visible throughout the action instead of emerging only in the last few moments.²³

In romance the central theme of the fourth phase is to maintain the "integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience"²⁴. What probably Frye wants to convey here is that the world of experience is an evil world, and given an opportunity it will not spare polluting the world of innocence. The fifth phase is, once again, compared to the fifth phase of comedy, and like it, it is "a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above, in which the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place"²⁵. These comparisons and correspondences between the respective phases of comedy and romance are, once again, in keeping with the dialectical view of the structure of imagery of comedy. The sixth phase, or penseroso as he calls it, is the last phase of romance, and like in comedy where the comic society breaks up into small units or individuals, in romance this phase marks the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure.

The mythos of autumn: tragedy.

Tragedy is the third mythoi identified by Frye. Its archetypal theme is the pathos or catastrophe and we will see how it corresponds to the mythos of autumn.

Tragedy differs from both the comedy and the romance in that the characters of comedy are invariably twisted to the demand of a happy ending, the characters of romance are dream-characters while the characters in tragedy are emancipated from dream.

The most significant aspect of tragedy is its structure,

which is also a source of tragic effect; it is mainly concentrated upon an individual rather than upon the whole society; "the tragic fiction guarantees... a disinterested quality in literary experience"²⁶. Here, Frye appears to be importing Kantian notions of disinterested delight while attempting to situate tragedy in the world of literary experience.

In literature, Frye holds "it is largely through the tragedy of Greek culture that the sense of the authentic natural basis of human character comes from"²⁷. Unlike in a comedy, it is mostly concentrated on a single individual rather than upon a whole society. In the beginning, the tragic hero is at the top of the wheel of fortune. He stands halfway between the divine and the human. It is this position which basically imparts him the quality of heroism. And then, as the tragic process gets going, he is seen hanging between fate or external forces often due to violation of a moral law or some disturbing of the order of nature. In spite of foreknowledge of the fall of the hero, the tragic poet gives freedom of action to this hero and the hero, like Adam of Paradise Lost, often uses his freedom only to lose his freedom. He enters a world "in which existence is itself tragic, not existence modified by act, deliberate or unconscious"²⁸. The wheel of fortune, thus begins its inevitable movement downward; and, the tragic hero, who has been inscrutable so far, suddenly becomes a sacrificial image and articulate at the point of death "and the audience, like poet in Kubla Khan,²⁹ revives his song within itself". In other words, Frye's

conception of 'self-discovery' or reaching at the truth is no different from that of Aristotle, whose tragic hero too, after passing through a similar predicament, ultimately reaches the final stage of anagnorisis or self-discovery.

The characterization pattern in tragedy "is very like that of comedy in reverse"³⁰. In comedy, we have noticed three main types of iron characters: "a benevolent withdrawing and returning figure, the truly slave or vice, and the hero and heroine"³¹. In tragedy, the iron is the source of nemesis (the natural process of self-righteousness). The iron thus may manifest and appear either in the form of, say, God the Father in Paradise Lost or in the ghost of Hamlet's father. The tragic counterpart of the tricky slave is the soothsayer or prophet who possesses powers to foresee the inevitable, like Teiresias, while the tragic counterpart of the character alazon is found in the tragic hero himself. In other words, the tragic hero himself corresponds to the character alazon of the comedy. As the bomolochoi reinforces the comic mood in comedy, its counterpart focuses the tragic mood in tragedy. It is often a "suppliant...character...often female who presents a picture of unmitigated helplessness and destitution"³². Ophelia in Hamlet belongs to this group of characters. The tragic counterpart of the churl (agroikos) of comedy is a character who is an outspoken critic of the tragic action, like Kent in King Lear or Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra.

Tragedy manifests itself in six phases. The six phases of tragedy have an archetypal movement from heroic to ironic. Its

first three phases correspond to the first three phases of
 romance, and the last three phases correspond to the last three
 phases of irony. In the first phase of tragedy the central
 character is given the "greatest possible dignity in contrast to
 the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag
 pulled down by wolves"³³. The second phase consists of the
 tragedy of innocence in the sense of experience. In the third
 phase strong emphasis is given "on the success or completeness of
 the hero's achievement"³⁴. In the fourth phase the typical fall
 of the hero takes place due to hamartia. In the fifth phase the
 ironic element increases and the heroic decreases. The ironic
 perspective is attained by "putting characters in a state of
 lower freedom than the audience"³⁵. Shock and horror become the
 main elements in the sixth phase of tragedy in which "the central
 images are images of sparagmos"³⁶ that is, cannibalism,
 mutilation and torture. The sixth phase ends with an undisplaced
 demonic vision. Its chief symbols are the torturing instruments
 of death, like "breaking on the wheel becomes Lear's wheel of
 fire; bear-baiting is an image for Gloucester and Macbeth..."³⁷
 Thus, Frye's classification of the structure of tragedy is purely
 Aristotelian, for "the source of tragic effect must be sought, as
 Aristotle pointed out, in the tragic mythos or plot-
 structures"³⁸.

II

Tragedy has probably been the genre most laboured over by
 the theoretical critics in general. It is the central theme of

the Poetics and the subject of major importance in the Anatomy as well. In Anatomy, Frye aspires to improve on the model by making use of all the relevant doctrines and techniques of criticism developed since Aristotle. At this point a comparative study of both Aristotle's and Frye's own notion of tragedy would help us understand the idea better.

ARISTOTELIAN NOTION OF TRAGEDY

The major ideas in Aristotle's theory of tragedy are too well known to be elaborately discussed. For Aristotle, tragedy is an imitation of an action involving the pitiable and fearful dimensions of human existence. This form of imitation, which he calls mimesis, represents a noble (spoudaios) hero as its object; it uses a kind of artificially enhanced language as its means, and its manner of presentation is dramatic rather than narrative. Its other attributes are: the representation of pity and fear requires that the tragic hero falls from happiness to misery because of some intellectual, not moral, error (hamartia). The effectiveness and appeal of any given tragedy is dependent upon its possessing a plot that is complete, is of the proper magnitude, and is developed in accordance with the laws of necessity and probability. The ultimate goal and essential pleasure associated with tragic mimesis is catharsis. But catharsis is a much disputed concept and has been interpreted in four principal ways, namely

- (i) As a form of medical purgation in which pathological elements of pity and fear are purged from the spectator;

- (ii) As a form of moral purification in which the spectator achieves the proper mean between excess and deficiency in experiencing pity and fear;
- (iii) As a structural process by which the tragic deed of the hero is, in the course of the play, purified of its moral pollution, and
- (iv) As the process of intellectual clarification by which the spectator comes to understand, under a universal heading, the nature of the particular pitiable and ³⁹ fearful events that have been depicted.

Aristotle's goal in defining the idea of catharsis to set forth the conditions under which the essential tragic effect and pleasure are fully achieved. His definition of tragedy is a kind of a "prescription for the creation of an ideal work of art rather than a general statement applicable to all works traditionally included within the limits of the genre." ⁴⁰ Aristotle would consider a work of art ideal only when it would confine itself to the norms and definitions spelt out by him and not otherwise. In short, Aristotle's definition of tragedy is a statement of the ideal conditions for the fulfilment of the tragic form.

FRYE'S CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY

Frye identifies five modes and six phases of tragedy at different stages of his argument in Anatomy. However, he does not treat these in any systematic form. The modes relate to a development downward from stories about heroes who are superior in kind to other men and their environment, to stories about heroes who are inferior in degree both to other men and to their environment. Frye identifies the salient features characteristic of

each level of development of tragedy from the Dionysiac to the elegiac, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic modes.

For instance, in his discussion of the five modes of tragedy we learn that there is a Dionysiac mode that deals with stories of dying gods; an elegiac mode that "presents a heroism unspoiled by irony":⁴¹ a high-mimetic mode that "mingles the heroic with the ironic",⁴² and in which "pity and fear become respectively, favourable and adverse moral judgement, which are relevant to tragedy but not central to it",⁴³ a low mimetic mode in which "pity and fear are neither purged nor absorbed into pleasures but are communicated externally, as sensation and whose root idea is "the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong";⁴⁴ and an ironic mode in which pity and fear are not "raised" but rather "reflected" to the reader and which represents "simply the study of tragic isolation as such"⁴⁵ inasmuch as its tragic hero "does not necessarily have any tragic hamartia or pathetic obsession: he is only somebody who gets isolated from his society."⁴⁶

Frye has thus made an attempt to deal with the greatly varied forms which tragedy has manifested throughout its historical development, but he does not provide any firm and specific criteria by which related forms of tragedy can be compared and analysed.

A similar problem is also encountered in Frye's subsequent

discussion of six phases of tragedy. The first phase is one "in which the central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves";⁴⁷ the second phase "is in one way or another the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people";⁴⁸ the third phase is one "in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero's achievement";⁴⁹ the fourth phase involves "the typical fall of the hero through hybris and hamantia";⁵⁰ the fifth phase is an ironic perspective of tragedy which "presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, not unlike the second phase except that the context is the world of adult experience";⁵¹ the sixth phase represents "a world of shock and horror in which the central images are of sparagmos, that is, cannibalism, mutilation, and torture."⁵²

The six phases of tragedy thus represent a development from the heroic to the ironic world view. His argument in this regard results only in citation and analysis of particular examples and does not evolve itself in any systematic theory of tragedy.

Probably Frye's concern is to establish a critical position that will be both relevant and inclusive enough to bring in its fold the tremendous varieties of works traditionally included within the genre of tragedy. His discussion of five modes and six phases recognizes the full range of manifestations tragedy has taken in the course of its historical development. On the

negative side, however, his analysis still remains "mostly on the level of a perceptive description of the salient features of each mode and phase and does not establish a systematic argument that would demonstrate the organic relationship among these modes and phases.⁵³ In other words, Frye concentrates mainly on such features of modes and phases which are clearly within the easy reach of ordinary perception and he does so at the cost of projecting any organic relationship between them. Besides, he judges the major Aristotelian concepts of pity and fear, hamartia and catharsis to occur only in some dimensions of the tragic experience but not in all and he does not "supply any substitution for them which would organize tragedy as a clearly unified mimesis".⁵⁴ Thus, Frye's version is rather too restricted to admit the variety of concepts.

Though Frye's discussion of tragedy does not provide us with firm and objective criteria by which the various modes and phases of tragedy can be compared and understood, yet it does provide with some perceptive descriptive statements about possible kinds of tragic experience.

As against this, one has to appreciate the strength of Aristotle's theory in that it identifies with precision a central, perhaps the central, theme of the genre. Comparatively, though Frye's approach to tragedy makes a significant contribution toward overcoming this important limitation, yet he too, in turn, fails to provide us with a fixed or rigorous system of standards and criteria through which "the boundaries of the genre can be fixed and its constituent elements analyzed".⁵⁵

A review of the entire discussion on tragedy here would reveal that Aristotle's specific discussion of tragedy centres on the ideal conditions for the evocation of pity and fear which are seen to be the truly tragic emotions. His concern with these ideal conditions is clearly reflected in his famous definition of tragedy which applies only to small number of works. Since the history of tragedy contains many more examples of tragedies, apart from those based on Aristotelian view of tragedy, Frye's attempt seems to be to provide an extended version of the Aristotelian system so that it may overcome the narrowness inherent in the original definition, and secondly, to make perhaps the Aristotelian system truly viable in terms of the history of tragedy.

A question naturally emerges from these arguments. Could any major contribution to the theory of tragedy be made by following Frye's extended version of the Aristotelian view of tragedy? Or to put it differently, could a possible compromise between the two approaches give rise to a new viable theory which is consistent with the Aristotelian notions of the genre and is yet a comprehensive theory of tragedy?

The mythos of winter and irony and satire

The mythos of irony and satire are identified with the mythos of winter and constitute the fourth aspect of the central unifying myth. The archetypal theme of irony and satire is the sparagmos or "the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defect, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world". Thus in Frye's view of irony

and satire, lack of militancy, absurdity and confusion are the contributory factors. There is satire, he says, when the reader is not sure of "what the author's attitude is or what he is supposed to be"⁵⁶ which means that confusion and uncertainty and speculation are also some of the ingredients of satire.

Like the other three movements seen earlier, characterization in satire and irony also runs in six phases and is structurally very close to the comic. So far as the phases of satire or irony are concerned, the mythos of satire have six phases and out of these six phases, the first three are phases corresponding to the first three phases of comedy. In the first phase of irony and satire human society is presented without displacement. Its world is full of anomalies, injustices, crimes, and chaos. Hence the satire of this phase is known as low norm satire. The eirons of this phase takes an attitude of flexible pragmatism as against somewhat rigid dogmatism of alazon. The most popular and elaborate form of low norm satire is the satire of seven deadly sins. Frye has not elaborated his idea regarding the seven deadly sins apart from making a passing reference that they are encyclopaedic in nature and are most favoured by the Middle Ages and are "clearly allied to preaching... a form which survived as late as Elizabethan times".⁵⁷

The second phase of satire is the picaresque novel in which a rogue makes the society look foolish without setting up any positive standards. Here, the satirist presents life by taking

a variety of situations showing how baseless the philosophy of life seems when formulated by leaving out the inconvenient data of life.

The third phase of satire is known as the satire of the high norm. Unlike the low norm satire which defends the pragmatic against the dogmatic, it lets go even ordinary commonsense as a standard. The satirist here shifts the perspective of human life. He would show us the "society suddenly in a telescope as posturing and dignified pygmies, or in a microscope as hideous and reeking giants, or he will change his hero into an ass and show us how humanity looks from an ass's point of view",⁵⁸ that is, Frye refers to the baser aspects of human personality. The fourth phase almost approximates to the ironic aspect of tragedy. However, the satire here differs from tragedy in that in tragedy one looks at the tragic situation from below, in satire one looks at it from above. Besides, in tragedy the catastrophe seems inevitable, in satire it seems avoidable. The works of Tolstoy, Conrad and Hardy, Frye says, mostly belong to this phase.

In the fifth phase of irony, the main emphasis is on the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fortune. Again, it is comparable to the fifth phase of tragedy in that it is less moral and more metaphysical in its interest, and less melioristic and more stoical. Frye maintains that the treatment of Napoleon in War and Peace and in the Dynasts affords a good contrast between the fourth and fifth phases of irony.

The sixth phase of irony portrays human world in terms of unrelieved bondage. It is the world of prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of extinction, and "it differs from a pure inferno... in the fact that in human experience suffering has an end in death"⁵⁹. It is a phase of nightmare, of social tyranny of which the work 1984 is the most familiar example. The hero in this book is tortured into urging that the torments be inflicted on the heroine instead. The phase closes up at a point of "demonic epiphany, the dark tower and prisons of endless pains, the city of dreadful night in the desert, or...the goal of the quest that is not there"⁶⁰. Thus, once again, it appears that the sixth phase of irony closely resembles the last phase of tragedy, of shock and horror and ends with an undisplaced demonic vision.

William A. Johnsen sums up the significance of mythoi in these words: "The study of literature as a whole realizes four archetypal narrative patterns or mythoi, romance, tragedy, irony and comedy, which typify the range of human possibility in the larger non-human world. The typical setting of each mythoi signifies the human power that nature will allow. Man's power is at its zenith in romance; the mythos of summer begins to decline in tragedy; the mythos of autumn disappears in irony; the mythos of winter is reborn in comedy"⁶¹. Continuing his argument further, Johnsen says: "Frye suggests that literature as a whole identifies man's fortunes with the earth's dependence on the path of the sun each day and the cycle of the seasons"⁶². On mythos or

archetypal narratives and literature he comments: "For Frye, rituals attempt a homeopathic correspondence of the human and natural worlds; by the continuous parallel which Frye establishes between fertility rituals and archetypal narratives he suggests that literature is language's own ritual for identifying the human and natural worlds. A young warrior (romance) becomes the king who must be sacrificed (tragedy), disappear (irony), and ultimately be reborn in the spirit of a new society (comedy). Again, the social function of literature and ritual is to accommodate or sublimate our desires to nature's greater power".⁶³

The different phases of satire outlined by Frye are in tune with his general conception of generic classification of all literary works. Frye's purpose in undertaking such an elaborate exercise is to speak not only of art in general, but also to refer to its species and their respective capacities. To achieve this he adopts a "broad deductive program of criticism which approaches literature as a biologist approaches a system of organisms".⁶⁴ Frye's approach thus appears largely justified.

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM: A GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Archetypal analysis offers a delicate critical tool and provides numerous places of contact with art-works. Wilbur Scott states this achievement of archetypal criticism in these words:

Archetypal criticism occupies a curious

position among other methods; it requires close textual readings, like the formalistic, and yet, it is concerned humanistically with more than the intrinsic value of aesthetic satisfaction; it seems psychological in so far as it analyses the work of art's appeal; it is historical in its investigation of a cultural or social past, but non-historical in its demonstration of literatures' timeless value,

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independent of particular periods.

Scott's pointer to the multifaced character of archetypal criticism in his comparison with the formalistic, psychological, historical and trans-historical criticisms appears largely justified.

The formalist critics were not altogether happy that archetypal criticism includes some basic elements of formalism. Thus, Wimsatt objects that archetypal analysis does not pay sufficient attention to the works themselves and encloses them in "simplistic patterns".⁶⁶ The formalists' objections to archetypal criticism were refuted by Leslie Fiedler in his statement

There is no work itself, no independent formal entity which is its own sole context; the poem is the sum total of many contexts, all of which must be

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known to know and evaluate it.

Thus, Fiedler objects to the autonomous status claimed for the texts by the formalist critics by insisting on the inclusion of the sum-total of many contexts in our consideration of a work of art. By underlining the inclusive character of the archetypal criticism Fiedler appears to be scoring a point over the formalist critics.

Another defence of archetypal criticism was made by Wayne Shumaker when he emphasized the significance of the racial past and the memory in one's creative output. He also pointed at the wider and complex function of literature while criticizing the limited perspective of the formalist critics.

The charge of unscientificness on archetypal criticism was refuted by Joseph Campbell in these words:

To criticize the method as unscientific is ridiculous, since objective scholarship in this particular field, has shown itself helpless by definition; for the materials are not optically measurable, but must, on the
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contrary, be experienced.

In his refutation of the charge, Campbell has rightly shown the non-applicability of objective scholarship in relation to myth criticism. His emphasis on experience relates to human experiences of non-scientific nature. A similar belief was expressed by David Bidney in his assertion "... myth is real,
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just as every psychological experience is real to the subject"

He thus points out a different plane of reality for the systematicity of myths. Referring to the type of 'reality' and its character in myths the anthropologist Clyde Kluckhorn maintains that they "do exist cross-culturally, even in an
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unclear manner". Thus, the sustainability of archetypal criticism does not give a superior status in relation to other methods of criticism. However, one can maintain that archetypal criticism has offered a comparatively wider range of possibilities for art criticism and has opened new avenues for art appreciation.

III

We have seen that some motifs, symbols and images in literature express the feelings, both the conscious and the unconscious of the readers and listeners in different kinds of human societies, no matter what their point of origin is. Archetypal criticism makes an attempt to explain these symbols and images available in literature of different societies. Archetypal criticism is, however, fraught with some problems, the main one being the unverifiability of the sources of archetypal images. The very idea of the archetypal criticism depends on instincts related to unconscious life of man and is not open to logical and rational discourse. Some important shortcomings of the method have been already noted by discerning critics. The two most important shortcomings observed by them are:

- (a) the tendency among some critics to give archetypal analysis the credit of being the exclusive form of criticism for the interpretation of all kinds of literary works; and
- (b) the tendency on the part of some critics to practice archetypal criticism not as a matter of conviction but as a matter of fashion.

Critics of the first kind overstate the case of archetypal criticism by extending its limits. In fact, they do not realize that there are times when the myths in a work of art are not especially relevant. Other qualities like rhetoric and intellectual argument ought to be stressed. The critics who take to archetypal criticism as a fashion do not serve the purpose of archetypal criticism at all as they themselves do not seem to be convinced of the efficacy of this critical method.

An overview of the foregoing discussion would make clear the following points about Frye's view of archetypal criticism:

- a) A critic who employs the method of archetypal criticism is primarily interested in myth as a fundamental type of narrative: comic, romantic, tragic or ironic.
- b) The archetypes are not structures but the contents of structures; in fact, Frye sees them as the products of human experience or communicable units of intuitive knowledge.
- c) Literature, by virtue of its archetypal structure, becomes a social fact, a means of communication among men and a part of what Frye considers "a total human imitation of nature that we call civilization".
- d) Criticism on the archetypal level is concerned not just with genre and convention (because it views the symbols as a natural object with a human meaning), its scope is expanded to include civilization. And from this perspective, poetry or art-works become products of a vision of the goals of human work.
- e) The study of archetypal criticism has started with early 20th century critics like Jung who have shown concern for myths and it continued upto the late fifties, though not in a systematic manner.
- f) The task of systematizing the study of archetypal criticism was taken in the late fifties by Frye who gave it a definite direction.
- g) Frye's approach was largely based upon a belief that there is a kinship existing between myths or archetypes and literature. In other words, he believed that a probe into the working or study of myths or archetypes would lead one to understand the 'structural principle' of a given literary work.
- h) Frye's extended exploration in the area of myths and archetypes led him further to discover a link between human emotions and nature's seasons.
- i) In the process of probing this link, Frye attempted to explain the different aspects of literature, linking nature's seasons to different stages of man's growth. In other words, Frye attempted to establish a kind of correspondence, inter-relationship, inter-dependence and inter-action between life, literature and nature.

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Shumaker maintains that
In proportion as reader himself has the creative temperament that is to say, is not cut off from the racial past but potentially a man, capable both of discursive thought and of affective response to his perceptions - he too is stirred and reintegrated. A study of literary language thus supports the hypothesis that the cognitive function of literature, whatever it may be, is not identical with the cognitive function of such intellectual disciplines as

science and philosophy. The range of literature is wider and its function either different or more complex.

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MYTHS AND

LITERATURE

A HISTORICAL

OVERVIEW

C H A P T E R I I I

MYTHS AND LITERATURE : A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.

The significance of myth.

The study of myth assumes great significance in our study of practically all aspects of human life today. The importance of myth today rests on the fact that men everywhere and at all times face the same basic problems and ask the same questions. For example, people want to know why they are and what they are, why nature behaves as it does and how cause and effect are inter-linked. Questions of this nature seek answers which might help us arrive at some explanation of the 'how' and 'why' of the universe. It is true that science has tried to answer some of these questions, but some - like man's ultimate relation to the cosmos, the nature of life-force within and such other metaphysical problems - still remain unanswered. Secondly, man's desire to live in harmony with nature by means of some guidelines compel him to look for some kind of bridge between the outer realities on the one hand, and his hopes, wishes, fears and frustrations on the other hand. In other words, he needs some means to to correlate and understand the simple and known phenomena of nature and the complex phenomena like his defeats, victories, births, and deaths. Thirdly, man actually experiences life at many levels, the two most significant levels being the scientific and the mythological ones. This simultaneous coexistence of the two levels in the same man also

calls for some connecting link in his diverse faculties. Significant answers for some of the fundamental questions and problems of human life and a plausible explanation of nature's illusions is provided by myth in human society.

Myths thus have come to assume a great significance as they play an important part in the life of man. So far as literature is concerned, the study of myths as constitutive of literature was made more seriously only in recent times. Some definitions of myths would help us clarify the notion of myths.

Harry Shaw defines myth as "a legendary or traditional story, usually one concerning a superhuman being and dealing with events that have no natural explanation"¹. Shaw's reference to the traditional story and to the exploits of a superhuman being underlines two facts that he was working within the traditional intellectual contexts.

Alan W. Watts regards myths "as a complex of stories... which for various reasons human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life"². This definition focuses on unravelling the mysteries of universe and of human life and is comparatively more complex than that of Shaw. Mack Schorer sees myths "as fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend"³. Schorer thus emphasizes the spiritual, psychological and metaphysical aspects of human life and unlike the two other

definitions seen above, his focus is relatively on wider areas of human personality and is therefore more comprehensive than the the other two.

These three definitions reveal that basically myths are regarded as tales or traditions that seek to explain the place of man in the universe, the nature of human society, the relationship between the individual and the world that he perceives, and the meaning of several occurrences in nature.

Frye's notion of myth

In tune with the modern awareness about myths and their relationship to psychology, metaphysics, anthropology and so on, Frye naturally gives an important place to myths in his view of the myth and literature relationship. Frye has explained his idea of myth at three different places in his work.

In Anatomy of Criticism, he defines myth as "the narrative in which some characters are superhuman beings who do things that 'happen only in stories', "hence" he says, "a conventionalized or stylized narrative not fully adapted to plausibility or realism"⁴.

Thus, Frye makes two points here. He sees myth as a narrative not fully adapted to plausibility and secondly, he accords a kind of fictional basis to it. Frye's notion of myth here is akin to structuralist perception since he refers to myth as a kind of stylized narrative.

In his essay on Myth, Fiction and Displacement, Frye explains that

by a myth... I mean primarily a certain type of story in which some of the chief characters are gods or other beings larger in power than humanity. Very seldom is it located in history: its action takes place in a world above or prior to ordinary time. Hence, like the folk-tale, it is an abstract pattern. The characters can do what they like, which means what the story-teller likes: there is no need to be plausible or logical in motivation. The things that happen in myth are things that happen only in stories: they are self-contained literary world. Hence myth would naturally have the same kind of appeal for the fiction writer that the folk-tales have. It presents him with antiquity, and allows him to devote all his energies to elaborating its

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design.

Here, Frye sees myths firstly as some kind of abstract stories in the tradition of 'fiction' which are comparable to folk-tales and secondly, a traditional Greek type of stories involving mythological figures like gods and such larger than life super-human beings. And, in 'Myth as the Matrix of Literature,' Frye concludes that "myth is a word I prefer to anchor in its literary context where for me it is essentially and always Aristotle's mythos, narrative or plot, which in turn refers to the movement of literature".

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Thus, though the word myth would mean different things in different fields or situations, "my contribution", Frye says, "is an attempt to explain what the term means in literary criticism today".

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In this context, Frye raises a fundamental question:

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"Why did the term ever get into literary criticism" ? And answers it himself saying: "because myth is and always has been an integral element of literature, the interest of poets in myth

and mythology having been remarkable and constant since Homer's time." ⁹

Frye's assertion that myth has always been an integral element of literature is perfectly justified and acceptable to us since the concept was used in literature even by the ancient Greeks. In fact, it became a technical term of literary criticism since Aristotle's times signifying 'plot' which Aristotle held to be the most important feature of tragedy. It is no surprise therefore that today in literary criticism the concept of myth is finally settling down to mean the formal or constructive principle of literature.

II

MYTH -ART RELATIONSHIP

Based upon his view of myth Frye makes a broad division of all literary works according to the types of myths related to them.

Thus, he places all literary works into two broad categories: i) Fictional and ii) Thematic. The fictional, he believes, comprises works of literature with internal characters and includes novels, plays, narrative poetry, folk-tales and everything that tells a story.

In thematic literature, however, he says, the author and the reader are the only characters involved; this category, according to him, includes most lyrics, essays, didactic poetry and

oratory.

Each category, in Frye's view, has its own type of myth, but Frye's primary concern is mainly with the fictional part of literature and with myth in its more common and easily recognized form as a certain kind of narrative.

Elaborating the notion of myth as a kind of narrative and referring to its use in literary criticism, Frye observes: "When a critic deals with a work of literature, the most natural thing for him to do is to freeze it, to ignore its movement in time and look at it as a completed pattern of words, with all its parts existing simultaneously".¹⁰ This approach, he believes, is common to nearly all types of critical techniques. But in the direct experience of literature, he opines, we are aware of what we may call the persuasion of continuity. It is that power which compels us to turn the pages of a novel and hold us in our seats at the theatre. This continuity, he says, may be logical, or pseudo-logical, or psychological or rhetorical. In other words, Frye aims at justifying the mythic force which sustains consistently this persuasion of continuity. And this way, one feels, he is trying to sustain his claim that myth is the constructive principle of literature.

Extending his idea of myth further, Frye derives an interesting comparison between myths and folk-tales. In Frye's perception, myths and folk-tales have the same kind of appeal for the fiction writer; he however cautions that myths, as compared to folk-tales, are usually in a special category of seriousness: "they are believed to have "really happened", or to have some

exceptional significance in explaining certain features of life,
such as ritual." ¹¹ Again, whereas folk-tales simply interchange
motifs and develop variants, myths in his judgement show an odd
tendency to stick together and build up bigger structure. ¹²

Illustrating this point, Frye maintains that we have creation
myths, fall and flood myths, metamorphosis and dying-god myths,
divine-marriage and hero-ancestry myths, etiological myths,
apocalyptic myths, and so on. "While myths themselves are seldom
historical", he says, "they seem to provide a kind of containing
form of tradition, one result of which is the obliterating of
boundaries separating legend, historical reminiscence, and actual
history that we find in Homer and Old Testament". ¹³

Thus, Frye's definition of myth concentrates more on the use
of myths in literary criticism. It is clear from his various
other observations that his notion of myth is inclusive enough to
permeate and cover not only literary criticism but even the
widest areas of contemporary thought, including anthropology,
comparative religion and sociology.

MYTH AS A FORM OF ART

After discussing some of the characteristics and functions
of myth and its role in literary criticism, Frye goes a step
further and argues that "as a type of story, myth is a form of
verbal art, and belongs to the world of art". ¹⁴ He further
remarks that "the total form of art, so to speak, is a world
whose content is nature but whose form is human; hence when it
"imitates" nature it assimilates nature to human forms. The
world of art is human in perspective, a world in which the sun

continues to rise and set long after science has explained that its rising and setting are illusions. And myth, too, makes a systematic attempt to see nature in human shape: it does not simply roam at large in nature like the folk-tale".¹⁵

Frye's claim that myth is a form of verbal art and that it belongs to the world of art is perfectly acceptable to us, for like art, and unlike science, myth deals, not with the world that man contemplates, but the world that man creates.

Extending the concept of myth further, Frye also argues that "every developed mythology tends to complete itself, to outline an entire universe in which the "gods" represent the whole of nature in humanized form, and at the same time show in perspective man's origin, his destiny, the limits of his power, and the extension of his hopes and desires".¹⁶ This means that the conception which brings together the human form and the natural content in myth is the god, who acts as the driving force in reconciling man and nature in humanized form and helps assimilate nature to human form.

Developing his argument further, Frye holds that the two great conceptual principles which myths use in assimilating nature to human form are analogy and identity. Analogy, he says, establishes the parallels between human life and natural phenomena, whereas identity conceives of a "sun-god" or a "tree-god". "Myth" he says, "seizes the fundamental element of design offered by nature - the cycle, as we have it daily in the sun and yearly in the seasons - and assimilates it to the human cycle of life, death and rebirth".¹⁷ At the same time, he holds, the

discrepancy between the world man lives in and the world he would like to live in develops a dialectic in myth which separates reality into two contrasting states, a heaven and a hell.

Thus, once again, Frye wants to project the role that myth assumes for itself, i.e. of reconciling nature to human form and at the same time assimilating the cycle of nature to the human cycle of life in terms of life, death and rebirth.

As to the use of myths, Frye declares that myths are often used as allegories of science, religion or morality. In the first place, they account for a ritual or a law or parables which illustrates a particular situation or argument. Once established in their own right, they may be interpreted dogmatically or allegorically, as all the standard myths have been for centuries in innumerable ways. A myth may be told and retold, it may be modified or elaborated or different patterns may be discovered in it, Frye holds that "its life is always the poetic life of a story, not the homilectic life of some illustrated truism"¹⁸ This means, in Frye's view, myths do not die or fade in course of time but continue to live even after they lose their connections with beliefs.

In other words, in Frye's opinion myths are not temporal in nature but have a kind of permanent life. But the moot question here is: What happens to those myths which in course of time lose connections with their beliefs? And how do they manifest themselves?

Frye's own answer to this question is: "When a system of myths loses all connexions with belief, it becomes purely

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literary, as Classical myths did in Christian Europe". He further states, "Such a development would be impossible unless myths were inherently literary in structure. As it makes no difference to that structure whether an interpretation of the myths is believed or not, there is no difficulty in speaking of a Christian mythology"²⁰. This means, when myths lose their connections with the beliefs attached to them they assume literary forms on account of their own inherent literary structure.

In this context, Frye further observes that "...literary shape cannot come from life, it comes only from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth"²¹ and then concludes that "literature is a reconstructed mythology, with its structural principles derived from those of myth."²²

Out of these postulates, Frye is led to this conclusion;

Myth thus provide the main outline and the circumference of a verbal universe which is later occupied by literature and is thus the "matrix" to which "major poetry keeps returning"... In every age poets who are thinkers (remembering that poets think in metaphors and images, not in propositions) and are deeply concerned with the origin or destiny or desires of mankind - with anything that belongs to the larger outlines of what literature can express- can hardly find a literary theme that does not coincide with a²³ myth .

In other words, Frye's discussion of myths makes us consider the relationship between mythology and literature.

III

We have seen that Frye is of the view that the structural principle of myth which depends on concepts of analogy and identity have in course of time become the structural principle of literature.

In other words, Frye sees literature as a reconstructed mythology with its structural principles derived from those of myths.

Frye illustrates this idea further by referring to the phenomena of the absorption of the natural cycle into mythology. This absorption, Frye believes, equips myth with two structures: a) the rising movement that we find in myths of spring or the dawn, of truth, marriage and resurrection, and b) the falling movement in myths of death, metamorphosis, or sacrifice. These movements reappear as the structural principles of comedy and tragedy in literature. In this context, he observes that "the dialectic in myth that projects a paradise or heaven above our world and a hell or place of shades below it appears in literature as the idealized world of pastoral and romance and the absurd, suffering, or frustrated world of irony and satire"²⁴ Evidently, Frye tries to show how the influence of myths pervades in different types of literary works, i.e. comedy, tragedy, romance and irony or satire. He then attempts to establish some kinds of relationships between myths and literature in terms of the literary genre and the literary conventions.

MYTHS OF CONCERN AND FREEDOM

In the Anatomy of Criticism Frye is concerned primarily with the formal nature of literature and its confrontation with issues such as the role of literature in society, the ethical ends of art and the social function of criticism, issues which he believes to be essentially a part of the general theory of culture. These conceptions, in turn, have earned him a label of being an exclusively formal theorist. Frye does not admit of this charge. He argues that "As some of those who write about me and are still asserting that I ignore the social reference of literary criticism the subtitle (Essays on Criticism and Society) calls the attention of those who read me to the fact that I have written about practically nothing else".²⁵

Frye has a valid point when he asserts that if one carefully examines the very title of his work The Critical paths: An Essay in the Social Context of Criticism, one will find an expression of his concern for the social element in art. A critical analysis of the book reveals that it is one of the most extensive of Frye's essays in the area of cultural criticism, and its importance can be assessed from the fact that it treats a far-reaching body of topics, including things such as the difference between oral and written culture, Renaissance humanism and the critical theories of Sidney and Shelley, Marxism and Democracy, the idea of progress, advertising and propaganda, social contract theories and conceptions of Utopia, contemporary youth culture, McLuhanism, theories of education and so on. The topics appear

to be rather too diverse, and what holds these apparently unrelated subjects together is perhaps the dialectical framework of Frye's discussions.

A careful examination of the book would reveal that whatever issues he confronts are always set against the background of what he believes to be the two opposing myths of Western Culture: the myth of concern and the myth of freedom. Since these two concepts are invariably found to be recurring too frequently throughout his essays in this book and elsewhere, it would be therefore pertinent to clarify the meaning and the concept of these two myths in Frye's glossary of terms.

The myth of concern

Frye's idea of the myth of concern extends over a large area of human experiences. The origin of this myth is in the oral and the pre-literate culture and it is associated with discontinuous verse conventions and discontinuous prose forms. Frye maintains that "the myth of concern exists to hold society together... For it, truth and reality are not directly connected with reasoning or evidence, but are socially established. What is true, for concern is what society does and believes in response to authority and a belief, so far as a belief, verbalized, is a statement of willingness to participate in a myth of concern. The typical language of concern therefore tends to become the language of belief." He further observes that "In origin a myth of concern is largely undifferentiated: it has its roots in religion, but religion has also at that stage the function of religio, the binding together of the community in common acts

and assumptions"²⁶ And elaborating the concept further he remarks that "it is deeply attached to ritual, to coronations, weddings, funerals, parades, demonstrations, where something is publicly done that expresses an inner social identity"²⁷.

Thus, in his view of the myth of concern, Frye refers to that form of knowledge which is non-scientific in nature, that is, not based on reason or evidence but on beliefs. Frye's main point here is that beliefs play an important role in any given society and, therefore, all societies give rise to the myth of concern to explain the non-scientific form of knowledge available to that society in the form of beliefs or rituals. This also means that in Frye's perception, apart from the two kinds of truth apprehended by positivists and analytical philosophers, i.e. the truth based on analysis and the one based on empirical verification Frye apprehends yet another kind of truth based on beliefs, religion, poetic vision and the like. In other words, Frye includes moral and intuitive perceptions too in the third category of truth identified by him. Clearly, Frye is reacting to the bi-polar view expressed by positivists and analytical philosophers for apprehending the world of truth or knowledge based upon analysis of the outside world of nature.

The myth of concern thus in a way comprises not only everything that is included under scientific knowledge but also a kind of disposition which leads man to uphold communal as against the individual values. A myth of concern thus has its roots in religion, politics, law and literature. Being inherently traditional and conservative, this myth places a strong emphasis

on values of coherence and continuity.

Referring to literature, Frye declares that literature represents the language of human concern and that is not a myth but is always the sustainer of the total range of verbal fictions and models and images and metaphors out of which all myths are constructed. In this way, Frye separates literature from belief. Literature, for him, provides "the technical resources for formulating the myths of concern, but does not itself formulate".²⁸ Probably Frye refers to literature as a whole, a totality of verbal fiction rather than a form of expression.

This argument largely reflects Frye's notion of man's relation to society and social institutions and enlightens us on the role of the concept of myth in his scheme of things.

The myth of freedom

The myth of freedom is the other kind of myth identified by Frye in his exposition of the social context of literary criticism. According to Frye, this myth "stresses the importance of the non-analytical elements in culture, of the truths and realities that are studied rather than created, provided by nature rather than by a social vision"²⁹ He further observes that "the characteristics of this myth are truth of correspondence, objectivity, suspension of judgement, tolerance, and respect for the individual".³⁰

In explaining the myth of freedom, Frye attempts to keep society and the social vision out and brings in man's freedom in relation to nature as the basic requirement of this type of myth and hence he stresses on such values as truth, experience and

knowledge gained directly by an individual in course of his interaction with nature as the main constituent of the myth of freedom. Unlike the myth of concern which involves beliefs, social vision and such other non-scientific forms of knowledge available to the society, the myth of freedom differs from the myth of concern in that it comprises non-analytical elements in culture and values like objectivity, tolerance, respect for individual and so on. In developing the notion of the myth of freedom Frye also stresses on such self-validating criteria as logicity of argument, impersonal evidence and verification as the means to acquire the knowledge or truth. And as the very title of this myth suggests, it is inherently liberal and helps to develop and honour all such values.

Frye sums up the whole idea of these two myths in these words:

There is the world man is actually in, the world of nature or his objective environment, a world rooted in the conception of art, as the environment is rooted in the conception of nature. For the objective world he develops a logical language of fact, reason, description, and verification; for potentially created world he develops a mythical language of hope, desire,

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beliefs, anxiety, polemic, fantasy, and construction.

This means he adduces the logical language of fact, reason, description to the myth of freedom and relates the mythical language of hope, desire, belief, anxiety and the like to the myth of concern.

Frye further maintains that these two forms of myths do not exist in isolation but often interact with each other. The interaction between these two myths, Frye maintains, develops a

kind of dialectic.

This dialectic is best illustrated in Frye's treatment of the two classic defences of poetry, namely those of Sidney and Shelley.

"The conception of poetry in Sidney", Frye says, "is an application of the general humanist view of disciplined speech as the manifestation or audible presence of social authority".³² For Sidney, what is most distinctive about poetry "is the poet's power of illustration, a power which is partially an ability to popularize and make more accessible the truths of revelation and reason".³³

This means, in Frye's view, Sidney equates poetry with other forms of verbal art so far as both serve the general purpose of communication. However, when it comes to displaying 'poet's power of illustration', or to make the 'truths of revelation and reason' more accessible, poetry scores over other forms of verbal communication on account of its distinctive features of expressiveness.

So far as Shelley is concerned, Frye begins by inverting the hierarchy of values assumed in Sidney. Frye puts all the "discursive disciplines into an inferior group of analytic operations of reason. They are aggressive, they think of ideas eluding them, because all arguments are theses, and theses are half - truths implying their own opposites..."³⁴ He further says that "the works of imagination by contrast, cannot be refuted: poetry is the dialectic of love, which treats everything it encounters as another form of itself, and never attacks, only

includes ..." Frye argues that this argument assumes, not only that the language of poetry is mythical, but that poetry, in its totality, is in fact society's real myth of concern, and that the poet is still the teacher of myth..."In Sidney's day", he remarks, "it was accepted that the models of creation were established by God: for Shelley, man makes his own civilization and at the center of man's creation are the poets, whose work provides the models of human society. The myths of poetry embody and expresses man's creation of his own culture, rather than his reception of it from a divine source".

This means, in his reference to Shelley's defence of poetry, Frye finds values such as reason, logicality of argument, impersonal evidence, verification and the like relegated to an inferior position. In other words, he wants to emphasize the mythical aspect of poetry's language where reason, logic or any such evaluative criteria have no place.

Evidently, Frye's sympathies lie on the side of Shelley for i) Frye believes with Shelley that the language of literature represents the imaginative possibilities of concern; ii) both of them seem to be opposed to the view of Sidney that a critic as an evaluator makes a work of art subservient to the established framework of the myth of concern iii) Frye's observations are in tune with his general theory of criticism which scorns at value judgement in art criticism.

When Frye says that literature contains the imaginative possibilities of concern, he means that it displays "the total range of verbal fictions and models and images and metaphors out

of which all myths of concern are constructed". Thus, he sees the images, metaphors and models etcetera as the constituent elements of the myth of concern of which any literature as a whole is composed of. This view, it is felt, is analogous to and in consonance with Shelley's view of poetry which reflects on the primitive and oracular mythology comprising the imaginative possibilities of concern. Frye believes that an ordinary critic looks for such values elsewhere or derives them from the myth of freedom itself. For "the critic qua critic is not himself concerned but detached". Frye here means that a critic should not treat myth of freedom in isolation from the myth of concern, because the myth of freedom subsumes the myth of concern. This can be seen as Frye's attempt to explain the dialectic between the two forms of myths. In the end, Frye is led to the following conclusion:

The basis of all tolerance in society, the condition in which a plurality of concerns can co-exist, is the recognition of the tension between concern and freedom.... Concern and freedom both occupy the whole of the same universe: they interpenetrate, and it is no good trying to set up boundary stones. Some, of course, meet the collision of concern and freedom from the opposite side, with a naive rationalism which expects that before long all myths of concern will be outgrown and only the appeal to reason evidence and experiment will be taken seriously... I consider such a view entirely impossible. The growth of non-mythical knowledge tends to eliminate the incredible from beliefs, and helps to shape the myth of concern according to the outline of what experience finds possible and vision desirable. But the growth of knowledge cannot in itself provide us with the social vision which will suggest what we should do with our

knowledge.

Thus, a review of Frye's argument on the myths of freedom and concern in The Critical Path brings to our notice the following features of these myths:

- (a) The merging of both these myths is possible;
- (b) The merging of the myths of freedom and concern produces the social context of literature;
- (c) In the process of the merger a kind of dialectical tension is produced between the myths of freedom and concern;
- (d) This tension provides a base for Frye's own central myth;
- (e) The cultural phenomena examined by Frye throughout the book are interpreted from the perspective of this tension;
- (f) And finally, Frye wants to lead us to the conclusion that this tension can be diffused only by the pluralism of myths of concern and that such a pluralism of myths can occur only in societies with open mythologies.

Our study of Frye's writing on myth and literature brings into focus the following points:

i) myths have come to assume a great significance in the life of men as they provide answers to some of the fundamental issues in human life and often offer a plausible explanation to the link between men and nature;

ii) the study of myths is not of recent origin but dates back to the times of Homer and Aristotle. This means that myths have a permanent life of sort and do not fade or die with the influx of time;

iii) the importance of myths in the understanding of literature is particularly significant as they aid not only the study of literature as a whole but help in evolving a better

classification of literary works. Frye has amply demonstrated this fact. He showed that literary works are based upon the types of myths involved in them and he even went a step further to claim that myths not only constitute the integrating principle but also act as the very constructive principle of literature. This in itself could be considered an invaluable contribution of Frye to the study of the totality of literature.

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ERRE ON MODES

C H A P T E R I V

FRYE ON MODES

Since the early days of human civilization it was noticed by man that nature behaved in a certain cyclical pattern and this in turn, had a significant impact on his everyday life. However, the idea of the cyclical movement of nature was rather complex and mystical for him as the ordinary notions of perceptions available to him did not help him grasp the exact nature of natural phenomena.

To facilitate the understanding of the natural phenomena, he felt it necessary to have some new means of communication with nature. Furthermore, by breaking the continuum of nature into a kind of discontinuum, i.e. by dividing the entire cyclic nature into different parts or seasons, he hoped to achieve a better understanding of nature. Accordingly, he divided the phenomena of cyclical structure of nature into different seasons and tried to establish a kind of relationship between man and nature by attributing human emotions to nature's seasons.

This achievement of the early man with regard to the cyclical movement of nature helped modern thinkers understand man-nature relationship in a better light. Frye's understanding of literature is a part of his larger understanding of man-nature relationship. In his eagerness to explain literary works and different art-forms on the basis of this notion of man-nature

relationship, Frye developed a theory of literary criticism in his Anatomy of which 'Historical Criticism' and 'Theory of Modes' are two significant parts. Frye's first essay in the Anatomy addresses itself to the problem of 'historical criticism' and to his 'theory of modes'.

In the Anatomy, Frye defines mode as "a conventional power of action assumed about the chief characters in fictional literature, or the corresponding attitude assumed by the poet toward his audience in thematic literature. Such modes tend to succeed one another in a historical sequence".¹

Frye's definition of modes refers to two kinds of modes: a) Fictional and b) Thematic. While elaborating the idea of the fictional category, he attributes power of action to the heroes, which is the defining characteristic of the fictional mode. Thus, a hero can establish his bravery by the acts of heroism only on the strength of his power of action. It is noteworthy that Frye does not refer to the power of action assumed by the hero as a positive value only. On the contrary, he also refers the power of action exhibited by the most villainous character. In other words, so far as the power of action goes, both the hero and the villain stand on the same footing.

In the case of thematic literature, Frye's focus is on the poet's attitude towards the audience. He believes that the possible response of the audience to the poet's works is determinative of the poet's own attitude towards his work of art. By implication, this also means that in Frye's notion of thematic

literature, he expects the poet to anticipate the reaction of the audience and this in turn influences his attitude and consequently shapes his literary work. Whether the audience reaction really shapes the poet's work is essentially the moot question which will be clear to us at a later point. Referring to the modal classification of literary works evolved by Frye, Marshall Grossman observes:

Frye's theory of modes uses the power of action of the hero as the criterion of modal classification. Particular kinds of myths require particular kinds of heroes. Conversely, the hero defines a special plot structure by bringing into play a defined range of possible actions. The classification of modes is, for Frye, historical criticism because the power of action of the hero is assumed to be a surrogate for the power of imagination of the writers and readers who
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create and recreate written heroes.

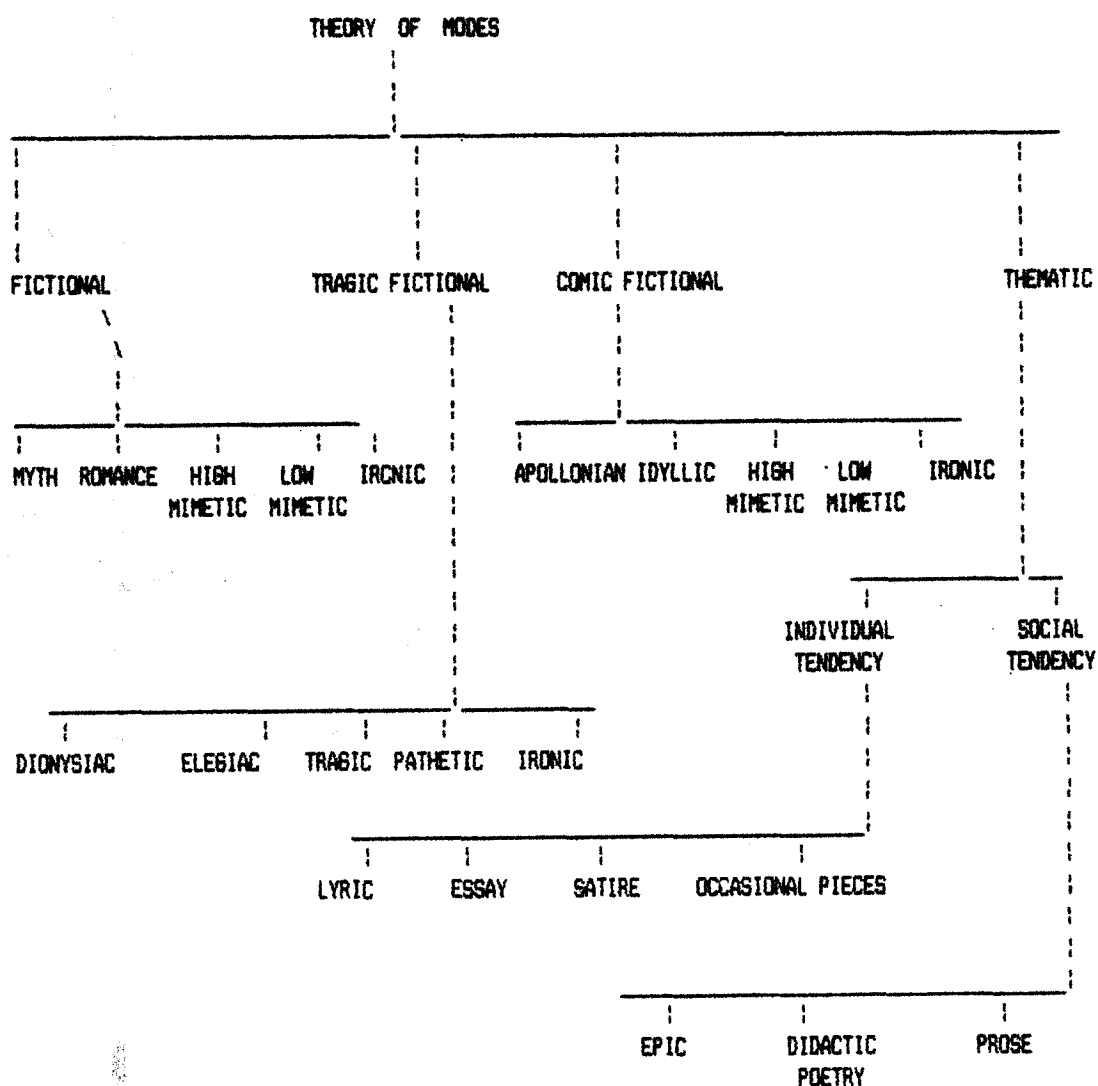
At the basis of Frye's theory of modes we can identify four fundamental categories:

- i) Fictional, ii) Tragic Fictional, iii) Comic Fictional, and iv) Thematic.

By fictional Frye means the one which relates to literature in which there are internal characters, apart from the author and his audience. Depending upon the prevalence of tragic or comic characters in the works, he classifies the works as comic fictional or tragic fictional. Frye's thematic modes relate to "works of literature in which no characters are involved except the author and his audience, as in most lyrics and essays or to works of literature in which internal characters are subordinated to an argument maintained by the author, as in allegories and

parables". This also means that thematic modes are opposed to fictional modes.

Frye makes a further sub-division of each of these categories into some smaller units. A tabular representation of Frye's entire scheme of modes would help us have a clearer idea of his theory of modes.



Fictional modes

It seems that Frye's idea of fictional modes is inspired by Aristotelian notion of literary fictions given in the second paragraph of Poetics. Aristotle maintains that in some fictions, the characters are better than we are, in others worse, in still others, on the same level. This means, the differences in works of fiction are caused by the different elevations of characters in them. Likewise, Frye also argues that "in literary fictions the plot consists of somebody doing something. The somebody, if an individual, is the hero, and the something he does or fails to do is what he can do, or could have done, on the level of postulates made about him by the author and the consequent expectations of the audience".³ This implies that Frye's idea of literary fictions is based upon the hero's power of action and his relative capacities which, "may be greater than ours less, or roughly the same".⁴ Accordingly, Frye postulates a five-fold classification of literary fictions into myth, romance, high-mimetic, low-mimetic and ironic.

If superior in kind both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a myth in the common sense of a story about a god. Such stories have an important place in literature, but are as a rule found outside⁵ the normal literary categories.

Frye's notion of the mythic mode of life here corresponds to that of the hero of myths, i.e. the divine beings having larger than life statures and gods. This means, they are closer to the type of heroes usually referred to in the traditional myths.

Such heroes had their own importance in pre-medieval, classical and epic type of literature, and are unconventional in the sense that they fall outside the normal literary categories.

If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have
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been established.

Frye identifies the hero of the romance as a human being whose actions are marvellous, full of courage and endurance and having qualities which impart him a degree of superiority compared to other men and his environment. The movement of the hero of romance is from that of myth to that of legend, folk-tale and the like.

If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the high mimetic mode, of most epic tragedy, and is primarily the kind of hero
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that Aristotle had in mind.

The power of action of the hero of high-mimetic mode in Frye's opinion is superior to us but not to his natural environment. Frye places this hero ahead of us by attributing qualities such as authority, passions, and powers of expression.

However, his powers are limited by constraints such as social censure and the order of nature. Evidently, Greek heroes of the Sophoclean type would belong to this category of mode.

If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This is the hero of the low mimetic mode, of most comedy and of realistic
8
fiction.

These postulates make it clear that the hero of low-mimetic mode is neither superior to other men nor to his environment, which means his status is comparable to ours. Clearly, heroes of most comedies and of realistic fiction are placed in this category of mode.

If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a sense of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the ironic mode. This is still true when the reader feels that he is or might be in the same situation, as the situation is being
9
judged by the norms of a greater freedom.

The hero of ironic mode thus has neither power nor intelligence comparable to ours and in the hierarchy of the placement of the heroes in terms of their power of actions he belongs to the last category. Since frustration and absurdity become a part of his lot, we tend to look down upon him with pity and sympathy.

In his 'Theory of Modes' Frye thus uses the power of action of the hero as the criterion of modal classification. His list of five types of heroes is arranged in a descending order. This

means, at the top of the scale we find the hero as a divine being who can do what he pleases; his freedom is unqualified. Then comes the hero who moves in and out of natural order; in his world "the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended".¹⁰ As we move fully into history witnessing the diminishment of heroic power, down through high-mimetic and low-mimetic modes, we notice the fully imprisoned anti-hero of the ironic mode who, as unfree, seems less than human.

Frye's idea of five kinds of heroes will be clear if we refer back to his notions of mythoi in which he has ascribed certain kinds of heroes to certain mythois. It is noteworthy that in Frye's scheme of modal classification of literary works the hero too defines the specified plot structure of a given work of art by bringing into play a defined range of possible action.

Tragic fictional modes

We will now consider the second category of modes described by Frye as tragic fictional modes in his 'Theory of Modes'.

Frye argues that the theme of the tragic fiction is the pathos, which is the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves is broken by a conflict between the inner and outer world, or with the conflict of inner and outer life.

The type of character involved in the tragic fictional mode is named by the Greek word alazon, which means an imposter, or someone who pretends or tries to be something more than he is. For Frye, the most popular types of alazon in this category are

the miles gloriosus, the learned crank or the obsessed philosopher.

In tragic fictional modes, Frye identifies altogether five sub-categories:

- i) Dionysiac
- ii) Elegiac
- iii) Tragic
- iv) Pathetic and
- v) Ironic.

The first such type is the Dionysiac and by Dionysiac Frye means "tragic stories when they apply to divine beings".¹¹ Frye illustrates this idea by referring to the stories of dying gods "like Christ dying on the Cross and marking with the words "Why has thou forsaken me?". Unlike the mythic hero of the fictional category, the dionysiac mode concerns itself with the stories not of any mythical heroes having a well defined power of action but of divine beings and dying gods. Frye's reference to dying gods like Christ and his dying words implies that the chief characteristics of this mode is the sense of exclusion, isolation and so on. In a way, the dionysiac mode can be said to correspond to the mythic mode of the fictional category discussed earlier.

The elegiac is the second type of the tragic fictional mode. By elegiac, Frye means tragic stories involving hero's death or his isolation from society. "The hero's death or isolation" he says, "thus has the effect of a spirit passing out of nature, and evokes a mood best described by elegiac".¹² In the elegiac mode he thus places a kind of diffused, resigned, melancholy sense of

the passing of time, or the old order changing and yielding place to a new one.

The tragic is the third type of mode identified by Frye in the five-fold scheme of the tragic fictional modes. For Frye, the tragic mode represents "the fiction of the fall of a leader"¹³ and his isolation from the society. He further states that "tragedy belongs chiefly to the two indigenous developments of tragic drama in fifth-century Athens and seventeenth-century Europe from Shakespeare to Racine".¹⁴ Frye's idea of tragic is thus not restricted to the Greek view alone but extends over the notion of tragedy evolved during Shakespeare's times. Like the tragic hero of the medieval times, Frye's hero too "has to be of a properly heroic size, but his fall is involved both with a sense of his relation to society and with a sense of the supremacy of natural law, both of which are ironic in reference",¹⁵ i.e. in keeping with the heroic stature of the tragic fictional hero Frye wants to project the heroic predicament in terms of the contest between the supremacy of the natural law and the helplessness of the hero.

On the point of death of the tragic hero, Frye compares the tragic mode with the elegiac saying that "in elegiac romance the mortality is primarily a natural fact, the sign of his humanity,; in high mimetic tragedy, it is also a social and moral fact".¹⁶ This means he sees the death of his tragic hero as not only a natural phenomenon but one having a kind of social and moral sanction behind it. The difference in the two types of death

referred to here is rather inconsequential for under the ordinary notions of perceptions, every natural death is also a social and moral fact.

The pathetic is the fourth kind of tragic fictional mode discussed by Frye. Referring to this mode, Frye says that "the root idea of pathos is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong. Hence the central tradition of sophisticated pathos is the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves is broken by a conflict between the inner and outer world, between imaginative reality and the sort of reality which is established by a social consensus."¹⁷ Thus, in the pathetic mode we meet a hero who is isolated by a weakness which appeals to our sympathy because it is on our own level of experience and his personality, broken by personal and social conflicts, compels him to keep himself isolated from the society around him.

Frye observes that the type of characters involved in the pathetic mode is known by the Greek word alazon, which means imposter, i.e someone who pretends to be or tries to be something more than he is. He further adds that the most popular type of alazon is the miles gloriosus and the learned crank or obsessed philosopher. Clearly, themes around domestic tragedies would belong to this category of mode.

The ironic is the last category of the mode in the five-fold classification of the tragic fictional modes. Frye makes his

idea of the tragic irony clear in these words: "The conception of irony meets us in Aristotle's Ethics, where the eiron is the man who deprecates himself, as opposed to alazon... Tragic irony, turns to be simply the study of tragic isolation. Its hero does not necessarily have any tragic hamartia or pathetic obsession. He is only somebody who gets isolated from his society,"¹⁸ and concludes the argument saying "the central principle of tragic irony is that whatever exceptional happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character."¹⁹ Frye's view of tragic irony is largely derived from Aristotelian conception of eiron, i.e. the man who belittles himself and is concerned with problem like the isolation of the hero from his society, and so on. Tragic irony differs from the tragic fictional modes in that we observe in it the absence of tragic hamartia; it differs from the pathetic mode as the pathetic obsession is absent in it. The absence of these two tendencies, the tragic hamartia and the pathetic obsession imparts the hero of the ironic mode a character of a pharmakos, i.e. a kind of scapegoat who is victimised for no fault of his own. Illustrating the idea of ironic further, Frye says that irony manifests itself in two ways: a) the incongruous and b) the inevitable. In the incongruous category he places the archetype of Christ in whom Frye sees the guilt of humanity transferred. He sees Christ as a kind of reservoir which absorbs the sins of humanity. In his view, the archetype of the inevitable ironic is Adam, a being destined to the sentence of death and expulsion from Eden. Probably, Frye's purpose in taking such a polar view of the ironic mode is

to avoid, as far as possible, the exclusion of any kind of literary work falling in the peripheral range of the ironic mode.

Comic Fictional Modes

This is the third category of literary mode identified by Frye. In Frye's scheme of modal classification of literature, the theme of comic is the integration of society, which, he says, usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it. In keeping with his historical-chronological sequence of identification of literary modes, Frye propounds five sub - types of comic-fictional modes: a) Apollonian, b) Idyllic, c) High-mimetic, d) Low-mimetic and e) Ironic.

The Apollonian mode thus is the first such mode and it concerns with the story of how a hero is accepted by the society of gods. Frye illustrates this idea by referring to two types of literature, the Classical and the Christian.

In Classical literature, he says, the theme of the acceptance forms part of the stories of Hercules, Mercury and other deities. This means the theme concerns itself with how the stories of these gods and deities were accepted by the society of the time. In Christian literature, he observes, it is the theme of salvation and of assumption, i.e., the typical Christian theme around the story of Christ's death, resurrection, and so on. Thus, the Apollonian mode serves the purpose of analysing the comic literature that deal with comic stories of mythical gods, deities and Christ-like figures. The two-fold classification of classical literature helps in incorporating different mythical

themes.

The idyllic mode is the second category of mode belonging to Frye's modal classification of comic-fictional literature. As its name suggests, the idyllic mode deals with the romantic comedy. Its chief vehicle, is the pastoral. Because of the social interest of comedy, the idyllic is concerned with the "theme of escape from society to the extent of idealizing a simplified life in the countryside or on frontiers".²⁰ It associates closely with animal and vegetable nature such as sheep and pleasant pastures, cattle and ranches and so on. This kind of myth and imagery is usually found in the Bible, particularly in the theme of salvation. The idyllic corresponds to the elegiac in the tragic-fictional category of modes.

The high-mimetic is the third category of mode in Frye's scheme of the comic-fictional sub-division of modes. It deals with the traditional Greek comedy of Aristophanes type. In this category, usually a central figure constructs his own society confronting all the opposition, "driving off one after another all the people who come to prevent or exploit him, and eventually achieving a heroic triumph, complete with mistresses, in which he is sometimes assigned the honour of a reborn god".²¹ This means, the hero of the high-mimetic is a kind of self-opinionated man who knows exactly what he wants and knows how to achieve it too. Hence, he does not admit of any impediments in the pursuit of his goals. No wonder therefore that sometimes he is assigned the honour of a reborn god.

The low-mimetic comedy as a mode concerns with the domestic type of comedy. The action of the comedy, Frye holds, "moves towards the incorporation of the hero into the society that he naturally fits. The hero himself is seldom a very interesting person: in conformity with low-mimetic decorum, he is ordinary in his virtues, but socially attractive"²². This means, the hero of low-mimetic comedy does not belong to a high or elite class. He is just an ordinary person belonging to a middle class culture. Frye maintains that Renaissance literature of the periods of the dominant middle class culture belongs to this category of mode.

The ironic is the last mode identified by Frye in the hierarchy of the comic fictional modes. In this mode, Frye includes all forms of melodrama, detective stories, the modern literature of advertising, of propaganda, parodies, the comedy of manners in all ages of modern European languages as also the contemporary rising literary art of science, fiction, thriller, murder stories and so on. This means, everything that is excluded in the first four types of comic fictional modes constitutes the ironic mode.

Thus, the five-fold subdivision of comic fictional modes, namely Apollonian, idyllic, high-mimetic, low-mimetic and ironic represents the themes of 'acceptance of gods' and gradually moves down to the 'pastoral' type. Then from the 'adventurous' to the man in 'ordinary in virtues,' until finally the hero settles down to the modern detective type in the ironic mode.

The comic fictional mode, with its theme of the integration of society by incorporating a central character into it helps, to classify comic fictional writing according to the order and contextual framework developed by Frye. It thus help us appreciate a literary work of art better.

Thematic modes

In the exposition of the modal theory of literature, Frye expounds yet another category, i.e. the thematic modes. Frye maintains that thematic modes relate to "works of literature in which no characters are involved except the author and his audience as in most lyrics and essays or in works of literature in which internal characters are subordinated to an argument maintained by the author, as in allegories and parables".²² This means, Frye distinguishes two kinds of works in thematic literature. In the first category, he places literary works like lyrics and essays having no internal characters apart from the author and audience, and in the second category, he includes literary works like allegories and parables with internal characters having a limited role of keeping themselves subordinated to the author's argument. Thematic modes are thus distinguishable from the fictional ones which relate to literature having internal characters in addition to the author and the audience.

In his futher exposition of the theory of thematic modes, Frye postulates two thematic tendencies: a) individual and b) social.

The modes dependent on individual thematic tendency give

rise to four kinds of literature, namely, lyric, essay, satire and occasional pieces. On the other hand, the mode dependent on social tendency gives rise to three kinds of literature, i.e. epic, didactic poetry and prose. In addition to identifying these two tendencies, Frye also postulates another category of modes, i.e. encyclopaediac and episodic.

In the encyclopaediac mode, he says, the poet may devote himself to being a spokesman of his society, which means that the poet gives vent to his poetic knowledge through his expressive power which is otherwise latent in him. Such an attitude, he says, produces poetry which is educational in the broadest sense. Epic, didactic poetry, prose, encyclopaedic compilation of myth, folklore and legend belong to this kind of mode.

In the episodic mode, he maintains, the poet may emphasize the separation of his personality and the distinctiveness of his vision, and his tone is that of protest, resentment or revolt. This attitude, Frye maintains, produces most lyrics, essays, satire, epigrams and occasional pieces generally.

But the distinction between fictional and thematic is not so rigid and it cannot be pushed too far. Frye observes that "every work of literature has both a fictional and a thematic aspect, and the question of which is more important is often simply a matter of opinion or emphasis in interpretation"²⁴ He supports this argument by saying that "it is easy to say that some literary works are fictional and others thematic in their main emphasis. But clearly there is no such thing as a fictional or a

thematic work of literature, for all four ethical elements, the hero, the hero's society, the poet and the poet's readers are always at least partially present. There can hardly be a work of literature without some kind of relation, implied or expressed²⁵ between its creator and its auditors".

Clearly, Frye's theory of thematic modes does not seem to rest on any solid ground as he himself dilutes his stand adopted initially. In other words, the division of literary modes in terms of the different types appears to be more a statement of tendencies or attitudes rather than a rigid or specific criterion of distinction. In fact, the concluding para of Frye's statement referred to above makes it amply clear that his criterion lacks rigidity of sort.

Thus an overview of the modal classification evolved by Frye in the first essay of the Anatomy, 'Historical Criticism: Theory of modes' would reveal that Frye classifies fictions according to the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same". The list of five types of heroes is arranged in a descending order. At the top is the hero as a divine being, who can do what he pleases: his freedom is unqualified. Then comes the romance hero who moves in and out of the natural order; in Frye's words the 'ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended'. As we move fully into history witnessing the diminishments of heroic power down through high mimetic and low mimetic modes, at the bottom of the list we find the fully imprisoned anti-hero of the ironic mode who, as an unfree being,

seems less than human: 'If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustrations, or absurdity the hero belongs to the ironic mode'. The elaborate classification of modes into different categories evolved by Frye, with an assist from Aristotle, helps us to understand better the different categories of literary works, namely comedy, tragedy, romance, satire and so on because Frye's 'modal' hero defines the specific plot structure of a given work of art by bringing into play a defined range of possible action.

In Frye's analysis narratives begin with mythic tales and then move to romance, high mimetic, low mimetic and finally ironic forms. The hero in myth is superior to his environment whereas the protagonist in ironic forms is inferior to both, inferior to us as we imagine ourselves, both in power and intelligence. The other modes are arranged between this two extremes according to the hero's powers of action. This suggest a sort of progression from the myth, in which the hero stands somewhat outside the natural order, through the high mimetic mode and the low mimetic mode of comedy, to the ironic mode, in which the hero is inferior in power and intelligence to the reader. This means, when attention is centered on literature as mode, the mimetic nature of its representation is stressed. Secondly, Frye's concept of mode, which characterises the hero's power of action from classical to modern literature, suggests that man's power in the natural world has been decreasing. This means, the

movement from classical to modern literature, from the mythic to the ironic mode implies the declining power of the human over the natural world.

Frye uses the power of action of the hero as the criterion of modal classification of literary works. While classifying literary works into different genres such as tragedy, comedy et cetera, Frye has made a radical shift from the traditional Aristotelian notions. For Aristotle, the presence of hamartia or typical mental-traits or mental make-ups determined the classification of literary works into a tragedy or a comedy. Instead of identifying character-traits of a hero, Frye preferred to concentrate on the actions of hero when he encounters a human or a natural situation. This means, particular kinds of literary narratives require particular kinds of heroes. Or, to put it differently, Frye's hero thus defines a special plot structure by bringing into play a defined range of possible action. Thus, Frye's method of classification of modes contributes to our understanding of modal classification of literature because the power of action of the hero is assumed to be a surrogate for the power of imagination of the writers and readers who, in the words of Marshall Grossman, "create and recreate written heroes".

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Chapter Notes

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.366.
2. Marshall Grossman, 'The Vicissitudes of the Subject in

Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol.24, No 3, Fall 1982, p.316.

3. Anatomy of Criticism, p. 33.
4. Ibid. p. 33.
5. Ibid. p. 33.
6. Ibid. p. 33.
7. Ibid. p. 34.
8. Ibid. p. 34.
9. Ibid. p. 34.
10. Ibid. p. 33.
11. Ibid. p. 36.
12. Ibid. p. 36.
13. Ibid. p. 37.
14. Ibid. p. 37.
15. Ibid. p. 37.
16. Ibid. p. 38.
17. Ibid. p. 39.
18. Ibid. p. 40.
19. Ibid. p. 41.
20. Ibid. p. 41.
21. Ibid. p. 43.
22. Ibid. p. 44.
23. Ibid. p. 367.
24. Ibid. p. 53.
25. Ibid. p. 53.
26. Ibid. p. 33.

FREE ON SYMBOLS

CHAPTER V

FRYE ON SYMBOLS

Symbol means something used for or regarded as representing something else. Harry Shaw defines symbol as "a word, phrase, or other expression having a complex of associated meanings". He further says "a symbol is viewed as having values different from those of whatever is being symbolized"¹. This means, while defining his idea of symbol, Shaw stresses the representational aspect, and secondly on the complexity of the meaning associated with the thing in question and lastly, on the difference in values attached to the subject-matter and the object proposed to be symbolized.

For M.H. Abrams, "a symbol in the broadest sense of the term is anything which signifies something else". "In this sense," he observes, "all words are symbols"². Elaborating further on this point, he comments: "As commonly used in discussing literature, however, symbol is only applied to a word or set of words that signifies an object or event which itself signifies something else, that is, the words refer to something which suggests a range of preference beyond itself"³.

Both these definitions reveal that basically the term symbol is used to give a kind of representation to a thing or an object proposed to be symbolized through the medium of words or set of words.

FRYE'S CONCEPTION OF SYMBOLISM

Like many of Frye's literary terms, symbol for Frye has a broad range of reference. In the context of his critical theory outlined in the second essay of Anatomy titled 'Ethical Criticism' symbol is the first of the three basic categories used by Frye to differentiate the five phases from one another, the other two being mythos and dianois.

By symbol, Frye means "any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention".⁴ Thus, "a word, a phrase, or an image used with some kind of special reference are all symbols when they are distinguishable elements in critical analysis".⁵ This means, any form of communication bearing a special kind of reference or significance would constitute a symbol provided it has a distinct element to serve the needs of critical analysis. Frye then concludes that criticism as a whole, in terms of this definition, would begin with and would largely consist of the systematizing of literary symbolism.

This broad definition of symbol permits Frye to associate the appropriate kind of symbolism with each of the five phases of literature identified by him in the explanation of his theory, and thereby to define the given phase at the highest level of generality. By phases Frye means contexts within which literature has been or can be interpreted; they are primarily meant to describe critical procedures rather than conventional literary types, which is to say that the phases represent perspectives from which to analyze meaning.

Frye believes that these five phases of symbolism have historical parallels with the five modes discussed in the earlier essay, namely myth, romance, high-mimetic, low-mimetic and ironic and correspond to his classification of the five ages of literature. Thus the literal phase having symbol as motif, is peculiar to the 20th century and its symbolist schools of French Parnassians represented by poets like Mallarme, Rimbaud, Valerie and Baudelaire. In the descriptive phase, sign is the dominant symbol and is used by 19th century realism and naturalism; in the formal phase image, which is the prevalent usage of neo-classical art is the dominant symbol; in the mythical phase archetype which is peculiar to the primitive and popular writings of the bygone ages becomes the dominant symbol and lastly, anagogic phase monad which corresponds to the ages of scripture and apocalyptic revelation in literary history becomes the dominant symbol. And, this in turn also explains why modern ironic literature abounds in conventionalized literalism; descriptive symbolism furnishes the language of low-mimetic modes; formal symbolism that of high-mimetic Renaissance and neo-classical poetry; archetype and anagogic are the symbolic matrices of romance and myth respectively.

Frye's attempt to systematize literary symbolism leads him on to a search for a theory of literary meaning, the obvious place for which, he believes, is the literature itself. He thus begins his argument by advancing a new concept, i.e. the notion of polysemous meaning of a work of art. This means, a work of art is believed to possess not one but a multiple set of meanings.

In Frye's view, on account of the simultaneous development of several different schools of modern criticism, each school makes a distinctive choice of symbols in its analysis and hence, the student is often faced with the task of making one of the two choices: that is i) he must either admit the principle of polysemous meaning in an art-work or ii) choose one of the different schools and then try to prove that all others are less legitimate. In his view the first choice, i.e the principle of polysemous meaning is the way to scholarship while the second is the way to pedantry, i.e it gives a wide choice of goals such as myth criticism, historical criticism, contentious learning, and so on. In other words, the principle of polysemous meaning admits of a pluralistic position in that it allows a work of art to be interpreted in a number of ways, while the way of pedantry considers the possibility that there is a finite number of valid critical methods and that they can all be contained in a single theory.

The polysemous meaning Frye refers to has another dimension too. Frye observes that the meaning of a literary work forms part of a larger whole. This means, in Frye's view the meaning or dianoia is only one of the three elements of an art-work of which it is composed, the other two being the mythos or narrative and ethos or character. All the three elements taken together form the main constituents which define a work of art and help us have a better understanding of the different phases of literature. Thus he says, "it is better to think, therefore not simply of a sequence of meanings but a sequence of contexts or

relationship in which the whole of literary art can be placed, each context having its characteristics mythos and ethos as its dianoia or meaning. I call these contexts or relationship⁵ 'phases.'" Clearly, in Frye's view one can achieve a better understanding of a literary work not only in relation to the sequence of meaning that it is capable to convey but with reference to the sequence of contexts and relationships constituted by the mythos, ethos, and dianoia. In other words, not only in terms of its meaning alone but by taking recourse to other two contextual elements like the narrative and the character in an art-work.

Since the five phases of symbolism identified by Frye constitute the main plank of his theory of symbols, it would be worthwhile discussing here in some detail the different notions of symbolism in each of the five phases.

Literal is the first of the five phases identified by Frye in course of the exposition of his theory of symbols. Frye observes that traditionally the phase 'literal' or 'literal meaning' refers to a kind of descriptive meaning that is free from ambiguity. And this sense of the term comes down from medieval times, probably due to the theological origin of critical categories. For example, in theology, he says, the literal meaning of scripture is usually the historical meaning, its accuracy as a record of facts or truths. He however cautions saying, "But this conception of meaning as simple descriptive⁶ meaning will not do at all for literary criticism" for "an

historical event cannot be literally anything but an historical event";⁷ so also, "a prose narrative describing it cannot be literally anything but a prose narrative".⁸ This means, what is true in scriptures or history may not necessarily hold good in literary criticism. In literary analysis, the concepts 'literal phase' and 'literal meaning' are used in a different context. Frye explains the idea of literal phase as the one which has motif as its basic symbol, i.e Frye also clarifies that "verbal elements understood inwardly or centripetally, as parts of a verbal structure, are, as symbols, simply and literally, as parts⁹ of a verbal structure. We may... call such elements motifs". This means, in Frye's scheme of literal phase the prevalence of motif as a symbol determines two things: a) that the phase is literal and b) that the direction of meaning is necessarily inward or centripetal. Frye then concludes the argument on this point saying, "Literal meaning may best be described... as hypothetical, and a hypothetical or assumed relation to the external world is part of what is usually meant by the word¹⁰ 'imaginative'". In other words, Frye makes two points here: one, that the literal meaning is hypothetical in nature and two, that the hypothetical nature of literal meaning has its base in the faculty of imagination. This way Frye strikes a kind of relationship between the literal meaning of a work of art and the imaginative faculty in man which produces it and then sums up his whole idea of literal meaning by making the former depend upon the latter. The descriptive is the second category of literal phase in Frye's scheme of the classification of symbols.

Frye believes that when the final direction of meaning is outward, it gives rise to descriptive or assertive writing. In this type of phase, the verbal structure is intended to represent things external to it and it is valued in terms of the accuracy with which it does represent them. This means, the criteria which decide whether a particular writing is descriptive or not depends upon the direction of the direction writing and on how accurately it represents the things in question, which is to say that in case of descriptive type of writing this direction is necessarily external. These two modes of understanding, i.e. the literal and the descriptive, Frye concludes, are equally important in that both of them take place simultaneously in all reading and help us give a more perfect understanding of a given work of literary art.

Frye then turns to the third category, i.e. the formal phase. The formal phase, as the very title suggests revolves round the idea of form in a work of art. Frye's idea of form is explicitly expressed in these words: "The word form has normally two complementary terms, matter and content, and it perhaps makes some distinction whether we think of form as a shaping principle or as a containing one. As shaping principle, it may be thought of as narrative. As containing principle it may be thought of as meaning, holding the poem together in a simultaneous structure". This means, in Frye's view, matter gives the shape and the content decides the structure and both together contribute towards the formal aspect of an art-work. Secondly,

whether a literary work is a prose piece or a poem can only be known by its shaping principle to which Frye calls narrative. So also the content decides the structure of a work of art and its relationship to other similar works. In other words, in Frye's conception form can be interpreted in two senses. In the first sense, it relates to the aspect of structural unity of any artwork, and in the second sense, it relates to the expressive aspect of a given work. Frye illustrates this notion further saying that "the poem is not natural in form, but it relates itself naturally to nature"¹². Clearly, Frye attempts here to project a more unified conception of narrative and meaning on the lines of idealists school of thought.

The mythical is the fourth phase in the five-fold classification of the theory of symbols. This phase uses symbol as its archetype. Frye defines the concept of archetype in the mythical phase as "a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience"¹³. Thus, the definition of the term archetype in the mythical phase reveals that Frye lays more emphasis on the unification and integration of our literary experience, and secondly, on the archetype as a communicable symbol in literary works. It is to be noted that the concept of archetype used in the mythical phase differs slightly from the one given by Frye in his theory of archetypal criticism. In his theory of archetypal criticism, Frye defines the term archetype as "a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be

recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole".¹⁴ In this definition, Frye's main emphasis is on the recurring nature of the symbol, which, in turn, makes it a point of attention in one's literary experience. Thus, unlike his definition of archetype in the theory of archetypal criticism where the notion of archetype centres round its frequent recurrences in literary works Frye's view of archetype in the mythical phase is more specific in that he regards it as the communicable unit which helps unify and integrate our literary experience. The latter view of symbol as archetype appears to be more in tune with his general theory of literature which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Another endeavour of Frye in the direction of exposition of the mythical phase is the important observation he makes on art as a form of imitation of nature: "The archetypal critic", he says, "studies the poem as part of poetry, and poetry as part of the total human imitation of nature that we call civilization. Civilization is not merely an imitation of nature, but the process of making total human out of nature, and it is impelled by the force that we have... called desire".¹⁵ This means, in Frye's view, poetry as a form of art, is a manifestation of human imitation of nature and this process is motivated by human desire, which, acting as the impelling force behind all kinds of progress, makes way for what we call civilization. In other words, desire is the driving force behind civilization. Human desire, in Frye's scheme, thus, is not a simple response to needs

but a kind of energy that leads human society to develop its own form. Arguing further on this point Frye observes, "Desire in this sense is the social aspect of what we meet on the literal level as emotions, an impulse towards expression which would have remained amorphous if the poem had not liberated it by providing the form of its expression. The form of desire...is liberated and made apparent by civilization. The efficient cause of civilization is work, and poetry in its social aspect has the function of expressing, as a verbal hypothesis, a vision of the goal of work and the forms of desire"¹⁶. This means, Frye links desire and expression as the two complementary aspects of an artwork, like a poem, in which the poet provides the form to his poem. In other words, the desire is the impelling or motivating force which makes the poet give vent to his expression, and that this desire, when thus liberated contributes to what Frye calls civilization. To put this in simpler terms, civilization for Frye is a manifestation of human desire giving vent to man's natural impulses. Frye's idea of a work of art is based on this idea of civilization.

Having re-defined the concept of archetype and its role in the mythical phase of symbolism, Frye turns to other important concepts like myth, ritual, and dream and then shows their interconnections in the mythical phase.

Referring to myth, he says "the union of ritual and dream in a form of verbal communication is myth"¹⁷. This means, the myth accounts for and makes communicable the ritual and dream.

The idea of myth in the mythical phase thus only slightly differs from the one given by Frye in his glossary of literary terms where he defines myth in terms of narratives in which some characters are superhuman beings who do things that 'happen' only in stories... and so on. Frye too admits the different senses in which the concept of myth has been used, for "This is a sense of the term myth slightly different from that used in the previous essay"¹⁸. But defends himself once again saying "...the ambiguity is not mine but the dictionary's"¹⁹.

Referring to the other two concepts, the ritual and the dream to define the concept of myth in the mythical phase, Frye says, "Ritual, by itself, cannot account for itself: it is pre-logical, pre-verbal, and in a sense pre-human. Its attachment to the calendar seems to link human life to the biological dependence on the natural cycle which plants, and to some extent animals still have"²⁰. This means, in Frye's view rituals have no logical base, they are instinct oriented and have roots in the natural cycle just like plants and animals. Given the nature of rituals observed by man and the beliefs he attaches to them, one cannot deny the fact that Frye has a valid point here. In Frye's belief, "Everything in nature that we think of having some analogy with works of art... grows out of synchronization between an organism and the rhythms of its natural environment, especially that of the solar year"²¹, i.e. natural cycles are produced out of solar variations, which in turn, give rise to seasons. The seasons, in Frye's view, have an effect on

literature, in other words on different literary art-works. In sum, Frye sees a significant relationship between works of art and the natural environment. Likewise he argues that "dream, by itself is a system of cryptic illusions to the dreamer's own life, not fully understood by him... but in all dreams there is a mythical element which has a power of independent communication"²². Evidently Frye wants to underline the role of myths in dream, for myth "not only gives meaning to ritual and narrative, it is the identification of ritual and dream, in which the former is seen to be the latter in movement"²³. Or to put this in Frye's own technical language, ritual is the archetypal aspect of mythos and dream the archetypal aspect of dianoia.

The mythical phase is particularly important for our discussion because apart from clarifying certain key concepts like archetype, myth, ritual and dream, Frye has explained his views on the nature of a work of art in the concluding part of his essay. For example, in its archetypal phase, "art is a part of civilization we defined as the process of making a human form out of nature. The shape of this human form is revealed by civilization itself as it develops: its major components are the city, the garden, the farm, the sheepfold, and the like, as well as human society itself. An archetypal symbol is usually a natural object with a human meaning, and it forms part of the critical view of art as a civilized product, a vision of the goals of human work"²⁴.

The anagogic is the last one among the five phases of

symbolism identified by Frye. This phase has monad as its symbol by which Frye means a symbol in its aspect as a centre of one's total literary experience.

In explaining the concept of anagogic in detail, Frye observes that the form of literature most deeply influenced by the anagogic phase is the scripture or apocalyptic revelation. Hence, a clear understanding of the concept of apocalypse becomes imperative at this stage.

Frye observes that "by an apocalypse I mean primarily the imaginative conception of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body which, if not human, is closer to being human than being animate".²⁵ In other words, in Frye's belief, apocalypse stands for complete transformation of both nature and human nature into the same form, and that, apocalyptic reality is the reality in its highest form. It is what the human imagination can conceive at the extreme limits of desire. Frye believes that it is only in the apocalyptic world that nature can be humanized and man liberated- and both are achieved at the same time by, what he calls, the principle of radical metaphors. Frye's conception of apocalypse is based upon a disjunction between what is perceived by sensory perception and what is apprehended by the reach of imagination or, to use his own terminology, between the 'fallen' and 'unfallen' worlds. The concept of apocalypse has thus a great significance in the anagogic phase.

Frye's idea of anagogy is also explicit in the following

passage: "When we pass into anagogy, nature becomes, not the container but the thing contained, and the archetypal symbols, the city, the garden, the quest, the marriage, are no longer the desirable forms that man constructs inside nature but are themselves the forms of nature. Nature is now inside the mind of an infinite man who builds his cities out of the Milky Way".²⁶ This means, in the anagogic phase the 'content' of nature transforms itself into form. As a result, the archetypal symbols too cease to be manifestations of human desire; instead, they assume a different kind of representation, i.e. by turning themselves into 'forms' of nature. Probably, by projecting the 'form-content' relationship and the transformation of one into another Frye wants to stress the basic underlying idea of unity in literary works.

In much the same way, he relates poetry as a form of literary art to the place it holds in the anagogic phase. Thus, "The god, whether traditional deity, glorified hero, or apotheosized poet, is the central image that poetry uses in trying to convey the sense of unlimited power in a humanized form... We see the relation to anagogy also in the vast encyclopaedic structure of poetry that seem to be a world in itself, that stands in its culture as an inexhaustible storehouse of imaginative suggestions and seems... to be applicable to, or have analogous connections with every part of the literary universe".²⁷ This means, at the level of the anagogic phase, poetry transcends itself and attains a kind of metaphysical

reality. This kind of transcendence enables poetry to absorb and reflect not only the apocalyptic and encyclopaedic manifestations of nature and universe but even what human imagination is cable of conceiving at that level at its extreme limits of desire.

Frye then concludes this point saying, "such works are definitive mythos, or complete organization of archetypes".²⁸

In the concluding part of his theory, Frye makes an important observation:

But the anagogic perspective is not to be confined only to works that seem to take in everything, for the principle of anagogy is not simply that everything is the subject of poetry, but that anything may be the subject of poem. The sense of the infinitely varied unity of poetry may come, not only explicitly from an apocalyptic epic, but implicitly from any poem. We said that we could get a whole liberal education by picking up one conventional poem Lycidas, for example, and following its archetypes through literature. Thus the center of the literary universe is whatever poem we happen to be reading. One step further, and the poem appears as a microcosm of literature, an individual of the total order of words. Anagogically, then, the symbol is monad, all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol

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which is... total creative act".

Thus, in Frye's view, it is not that poetry is written only on some subject only but that anything in the world may be its subject-matter; secondly, that a poem represents a microcosm of all literature, and thirdly that in the anagogic perspective, the symbol takes the shape of a monad i.e. a kind of centre of one's total literary experience.

In the end, Frye draws a close connection between the modes and phases of symbolism. In Frye's own words:

...the reader, may have noticed a parallelism gradually shaping up between the five modes of our first essay and the phases of symbolism...Literal meaning ... has much to do with the techniques thematic irony...and with the view...that poetry is primarily (i.e. literally) an ironic structure. Descriptive symbolism... seems to bear a close connection with the low mimetic, and formal symbolism ...with the high mimetic. Archetypal criticism seems to find its center of gravity in the mode of romance... The last phase of symbolism ... will be concerned... with the mythopoeic aspect of literature... and themes relating to divine or quasi-divine beings and

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powers".

This means, Frye connects i) the literal symbolism with irony, ii) descriptive symbolism with low mimetic, iii) formal with high mimetic, iv) archetypal with romance and v) anagogic with the mythopoeic aspects of literature and literary works dealing with divine, quasi-divine beings and powers.

On the same analogy, Frye also connects the literal phase to the theological origin of critical categories and adduces the motif as its basic symbol. He identifies the descriptive phase with the 'outward' or 'external' direction of meaning and uses its symbol as sign. The formal symbol relates to the idea of form in an art-work and uses the symbol as image. The mythical phase concerns itself with the aspect of unification and integration of literary experience and has its symbol as archetype. And lastly, the anagogical phase, which concerns itself with the scripture or apocalyptic revelation uses the symbol as monad.

The close connection derived by Frye between the five-modes and the five phases of symbolism is to project his idea of the

underlying unity which he believes all literary art-works to possess. In Frye's view literary art-works share at their base a kind of mythic relationships among themselves and that each literary work in its individual capacity, though distinct from other art-forms, represents a microscopic unit of the larger whole.

By connecting each historical mode with a phase of symbolism Frye thus establishes the fact that a kind of connecting thread exists in substratum of all the literature in general. This view is also in tune with his general view of literature contained in his dictum "Literature is not the piled aggregate of works but an order of words".

Thus, Frye's theory of symbols aims at explaining the nature of literary language. Symbols function as motifs, signs, images, archetypes, and monads. Each of the symbolic types is found to be paired with one of the modes in historical criticism.

Frye's purpose in outlining his theory of symbols appears to be to project the underlying unity which he believes all literary art-works to possess. This is evident from the fact that the 'phasal' relationship evolved by him, includes practically all kinds of literary works. In sum, whether Frye has succeeded in touching upon other basic issues such as to evolve any fresh definition of art of literature, or, whether his theory is adequate enough to explain the origin, characteristics, or function of art is still too early to conjecture. This aspect is will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

Frye's theory of symbols is comparable to that of Cassirer's

and one can trace a fundamental pattern of similarity between the two theories. Commenting on Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Frye observes

The 'philosophy of symbolic forms' is a philosophy which states by looking at the variety of mental constructions in human life. These include science, mathematics, philosophy, language, myth and the arts, and in the aggregate are called culture. Each of these constructions is built out of units called symbols which are usually words or numbers, and which, approximately, owe their content to the objective world and their form to the categories of human consciousness... We may... divide these constructions into a logical group and another group which is either pre- or extra-logical, and which consists mainly of language, myth and the
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arts.

This means in Frye's view, Cassirer's conception of 'mental constructions' is derived out of words or numbers and are built out of units called symbols. Frye identifies a two-fold classification of these mental constructions in Cassirer's analogy: logical and pre- or extra-logical. In the logical group he places science, mathematics and philosophy while the second group concerns with the language, myth and the arts in general. In other words, in Cassirer's system the mind in its symbolizing powers becomes a constitutive agent, man constitutes his reality and culture its reality manifesting through the symbolic structures that he creates.

One feels inclined to agree with Frye's observations on Cassirer's analogy. Cassirer's symbolic forms are neither subjective nor objective. They hold an intermediate position in that they take their structures from the mind and the content

from the phenomenal world. This view, it is felt, is similar to the one advanced by Frye, for he too makes a similar observation while defining the concept of symbol. Symbol for Frye is "any unit of any work of literature which can be isolated for critical attention. In general usage restricted to the smaller units, such as words, phrases, images etc."³² Clearly, both Frye as well as Cassirer view symbol basically as an effective means of communication or expression.

Like Cassirer's general conception of symbolic form, Frye too attempts to define the relation of myth to language on the one hand and of myth to literature on the other hand. Frye's views on myth-literature relationship have been elaborately dealt with in chapter three, hence it is proposed to discuss in some detail Cassirer's views on myth-language relationship as seen by Frye. While commenting on Cassirer's argument about myth-language relationship Frye observes:

The relation of grammar to logic may provide us with a useful analogy. Logic grows out of grammar, the unconscious or potential logic inherent in language, and we often find that the containing forms of conceptual thought are of grammatical origin, the stock example being the subject and predicate of Aristotelian logic... One wonders, for instance, about the parallelism between the parts of speech and the elements of thought in our Classical-Western tradition, where nearly all the important languages belong to the Aryan group. There is surely connection between the nouns and the conception of a material world, the verb and the conceptions of spirit, energy and will, the adjective and universals, the adverb and value, the conjunction and relation, and

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so forth...

This means, while illustrating Cassirer's conception of relationship of myth to language Frye draws upon logic as a derivative of grammar and holds that our conventional ways of thinking are necessarily grammatical in origin. In support of the argument, he cites a) the use to which parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions are made in practical speech and b) the sense or the ordinary meaning implied in the grammatical elements. Frye concludes his argument on the relationship of myth to language saying:

Cassirer shows how language begins in spatial mythopoeia and the projection into the outer world of images derived from the human body. He does not show how these metaphors organize our writing and thinking as much as ever today: nearly everytime we use a preposition we are using a spatial myth or an

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unconscious diagram.

True. Cassirer may not show the organizational role of metaphors or the manner in which they assist our thinking pattern or writing. But neither does Frye. The moot question thus remains still unanswered: Is it the metaphors that aid or organize our thinking and writing as claimed by Frye, or is it thinking and writing which necessitate the evolution of the metaphors as a proper means of effective expressiveness? Frye too seems to be silent on this point.

Referring to the relationship of literature to myth, Frye opines that myths are "communicable ideogrammatic structures of literature." Elaborating this idea, Frye refers to the comparison of literature to mathematics thus:

Literature resembles mathematics, and differs from other structures in words, in that its

data are hypothetical. Mathematics appears to be a kind of informing or constructive principle in the natural sciences: it continually gives shape and coherence to them without being itself involved in any kind of
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external proof or evidence.

In other words, Frye differentiates literature from mathematics on the basis of constitutive data. Secondly, the constructive principle of mathematics is hypothetical whereas literature relies on myths and on imaginative faculties of human mind, for, "the bulk of what is distinctive in the twentieth-century thought, in the non-mathematical division, has been
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constructed around the word myth."

Frye's observations on mathematics and its differentiation from literature is quite convincing. Unlike literature the structural or constructive principle of mathematics is rooted more in the hypothesis and less in the imaginative faculties. Secondly, unlike works of mythical nature, mathematics does not depend upon any non-rational or non-provable criteria. Thus, it is not difficult to notice a fundamental similarity between Cassirer's 'mythical thought' and Frye's 'structure of the literary verbal universe.'

Though Frye's notion of symbols in art bears a close similarity to that of Cassirer's, he seems to depart quite radically from the philosophical ideas about symbolism expressed by Suzanne K. Langer, who believes that the function of art is to objectify feeling by creating symbols for it. Frye holds that

there are two opposed but equally indefensible views about the relation of art to reality. One is the vulgar conception of 'imitation' as directly reproducing the outer world or an

inner experience. According to this view painting is essentially representation, dancing the direct expression of what the dancer feels, and so on. The other conception of art as make-believe or magic which produces a trance-like state by a deliberately raised

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hallucination.

This means, Frye perceives the art-reality relationship in two ways: a) in its 'mimetic', 'imitative', 'representational', or 'reproductive' aspects and b) the magical and on trance or hallucinatory inducements. Apart from these two modes, Frye does not seem to conceive any other mode of perceiving art-reality relationship.

As against these two methods of understanding the art-reality relationship perceived by Frye, Langer advances yet another category and calls it the 'semblance or illusion'. Langer's third method could be said to hold an intermediate position between Frye's two modes of art-reality perception. Frye states

The golden mean of Mrs. Langer's argument is a conception that she calls semblance or illusion, and identifies both with the German term Schein and with Aristotle's mimesis. She avoids the word because, she says it is too close to the representational fallacy. One would think that "illusion" was at least as close to the trance-fallacy, but Mrs. Langer seems to be content with it, and distinguishes the trance - fallacy as delusion. Thus painting is a spatial art, but it is neither a representation of real space, which is not pictorial, nor does it belong in a separate spatial world which is not real. It is the illusion or semblance of space, or

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what Mrs. Langer calls "virtual" space.

This means, in Frye's view Langer classifies major works of

art according to the virtual fields that they occupy. Painting, for example, presents virtual space, music presents virtual time and so on. Similarly, verbal art or "poesis" is seen by her either as literature proper or drama.³⁹ The former, she holds, reflects "a semblance of the past, or virtual memory",⁴⁰ while the latter is seen as "a semblance of the future, virtual act or destiny".⁴¹ So also, sculpture is seen by her as the "semblance of organic form";⁴² architecture is called by her "ethnic domain"⁴³ and dance "a field of virtual power: it represents the illusion of human life as a force or physical energy, which explains why it is so dominant an art in primitive society, where the mysterious powers of gods or of magic are central data of imaginative experience". Similarly, film for Langer is a new art⁴⁴ which presents "a virtual dream, the semblance of apparition".

Frye differs with Langer's philosophy of symbolism in art and is not happy with her claim that the function of art is to objectify feeling by creating symbols for it. That Frye's views on symbols in art are at variance with that of Langer is clear from the following passage:

The work of art is its own object, standing for itself, and unattached. Just as a name like James or John can be understood as a name apart from the people it may belong to, so a work of art can articulate or express a feeling which is a part of our total experience, whether it happens to be exactly the feeling that artist or his audience has recently been preoccupied with or not. Understanding symbolism on this level is the prerogative of human consciousness, and the work of art is the emotional counterpart of the discursive or logical symbol on which

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reasoning is based.

Thus, unlike Langer, Frye believes that the feeling which a work of art can express or articulate is a part of our total experience. This feeling may neither be evoked nor apprehended in isolation. It may or may not be the same as the one shared by the artist or the audience. Frye sees art as a manifestation of human consciousness and symbols act as an aid to human reasoning power. Indirectly, so far as the role of symbols in art is concerned, Frye stresses their educative function and does not merely discuss it in terms of objectification of feelings.

Besides differing from Langer on the role of symbols and the function of art Frye also rejects Langer's view that art represents an 'illusion' or 'semblance'. Langer seems to overstate her point when she argues that "all forces that cannot be scientifically established and measured must be regarded, from the philosophical standpoint, as illusory." Frye rejects the argument of Langer on this point saying:

As every poet knows, one cannot use a word without being affected by its traditional associations, and as long as "illusion" is used as a central idea about art, it will have the overtones of something opposed to "reality", and will not cut itself loose from

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delusion or the appearance of the unreal.

Commenting further on Langer's view Frye maintains,

the question involved here is not her taste in using the word, but her conception of "art", which seems to me to have something of what is called misplaced concreteness about it. Conceived as objectified feeling alone, art is seen only as something that interrupts or displaces reality, not as a permanent part of a world constructed by humanity out of

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reality.

This means, if the work of art is seen as an 'illusion' it

would mean 'something opposed to reality'. Frye's idea is diametrically opposed to Langer's view of art as illusion. For Frye, art represents a 'permanent part of a world constructed by humanity out of reality' and not something that displaces or is opposed to reality. In other words, Frye is not prepared to accept Langer's abstract notions of defining art in terms of 'illusion', 'semblance', 'displaced reality', 'something opposed to reality', or the 'appearance of the unreal'.

Frye thus differs with Langer on two main points i) on the function of art (Langer had stated that art objectifies feelings by creating symbols for it); and ii) on the nature of art (Langer regarded art as a delusion of sort).

It is remarkable that Frye's notion of art is both 'concrete' and valuable in that he sees art as a 'permanent part of a world constructed by humanity out of reality', and a 'manifestation of human consciousness'. He thus explains the nature of art in very concrete terms and secondly, he tends to go closer to the Aristotelian perspective of art as representation and mimesis. This point is further stressed in Frye's reference to Aristotle when he states,

If we think of such words as culture or civilization, we can see that we do in fact live in the world created as an artistic image. It is because of its clear reference to the two orders of nature in human life that Aristotle's word mimesis seems to me a safer guide than the most cautious use of illusion

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or semblance.

Frye's preference for the Aristotelian notions of mimesis is based on the fact that like Aristotle Frye too believes in the

'two orders of nature' namely the natural world that man ordinarily perceives and the world created in the 'artistic image' that man apprehends. Frye's views on art - appreciation and his preference for Aristotelian notion for the understanding of art-works appear to be convincing.

An overview of the entire argument of Frye on Cassirer's and Langer's views on art reveals the following features:

a) Both, Frye and Cassirer agree on the functional aspects of symbols in art. Symbols for them act as representational agents acting as aids or means of communication and making the act of verbal expressiveness possible;

b) Frye agrees with Cassirer that disciplines like mathematics, science, philosophy, language, myth and the arts constitute a 'variety of mental constructions'. These 'mental constructions' are represented by words or numbers, which in turn are called symbols.

c) The 'mental constructions' derive their content from the objective world and are constituted from the 'categories of human consciousness'. This means, the mind in its symbolizing power function as constitutive agent for the 'mental constructions'.

d) Both Frye as well as Cassirer believe that our thinking pattern is 'mythical' in its origin and notion.

e) Frye differs quite radically with Langer's approach to the study of symbols in art. He refutes quite successfully the basic argument of Langer, namely that 'the function of art is to objectify feeling by creating symbols for it' and that art represents 'illusion' or 'semblance.'

f) Frye puts stress on the educative function of symbols and thus enlarges the scope of symbols so far as their role in art-interpretation is concerned.

The foregoing argument also makes it clear that while advancing his views on art, art-symbolism and art-interpretation Frye does not depend upon abstract notions such as 'illusion',

'delusion', 'semblance', or for that matter on the role of metaphors to organize our thinking and writing pattern. Rather, Frye stresses on two important elements in perceiving and appreciating art-works namely, the 'form' and 'content'. By giving more weightage for the form-content relationship and by inclining towards the Aristotelian model about the nature of art Frye seems to strive for 'completeness', 'concreteness', and clarity in his view of art and thus seems to gain better insight in art than both Cassirer and Langer. His views on art are more comprehensive and inclusive than that of Cassirer or Langer.

* * *

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FRYE ON GENRES

CHAPTER VI

FRYE ON GENRES

The term genre means a 'kind' a 'type' or a form of literature such as poetry, novel, epic et cetera. Harry Shaw defines genre as "a category or class of artistic endeavour having a particular form, technique, or content."¹

The term genre is used somewhat loosely and generally and it may further be subdivided into major and minor categories such as lyric (incorporating elegy, ode, song, sonnet); narrative verse, tragedy, comedy, history, short story, autobiography, and so on.

The concept 'genre' however is of recent origin. Even as late as in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, no proper attempt was made to discriminate between the diverse criteria involved in differentiations such as, subject-matter, structure, language, tone or audience. The study of any work is impossible without choosing the traits we are to discuss, or the angle from which the work is to be approached. It was impossible for early critics to make any useful comparisons between particular works by referring to their constitution.

Till the end of the eighteenth century genres or forms of literature were regarded as relatively fixed entities, i.e. they were supposed to be written according to certain rules. In other words, classical genre theory was regulative and

prescriptive in nature and was based upon certain fixed assumptions about psychology, and social differentiation. It is possible to find examples of theory of genres in Milton's Lycidas, Samson Agonistes and in Paradise Lost. Later on, with the emergence of New Criticism on the scene, a new impact was felt. The rigid way of classification of works of art was gradually given up and a beginning of modernism was made in literature. In the present century, a systematic attempt was made by Russian formalists such as Roman Jakobson, and critics like W.K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brook paid much attention to this aspect of literature by their continuing and persistent efforts to link literary kinds to linguistic structures.

However, it is still difficult to pinpoint precisely the principles of differentiation of different forms of genres. Perhaps, the most significant modern contribution to genre theory is that of Northrop Frye who presents quite a comprehensive typology of genres in the Anatomy.

II

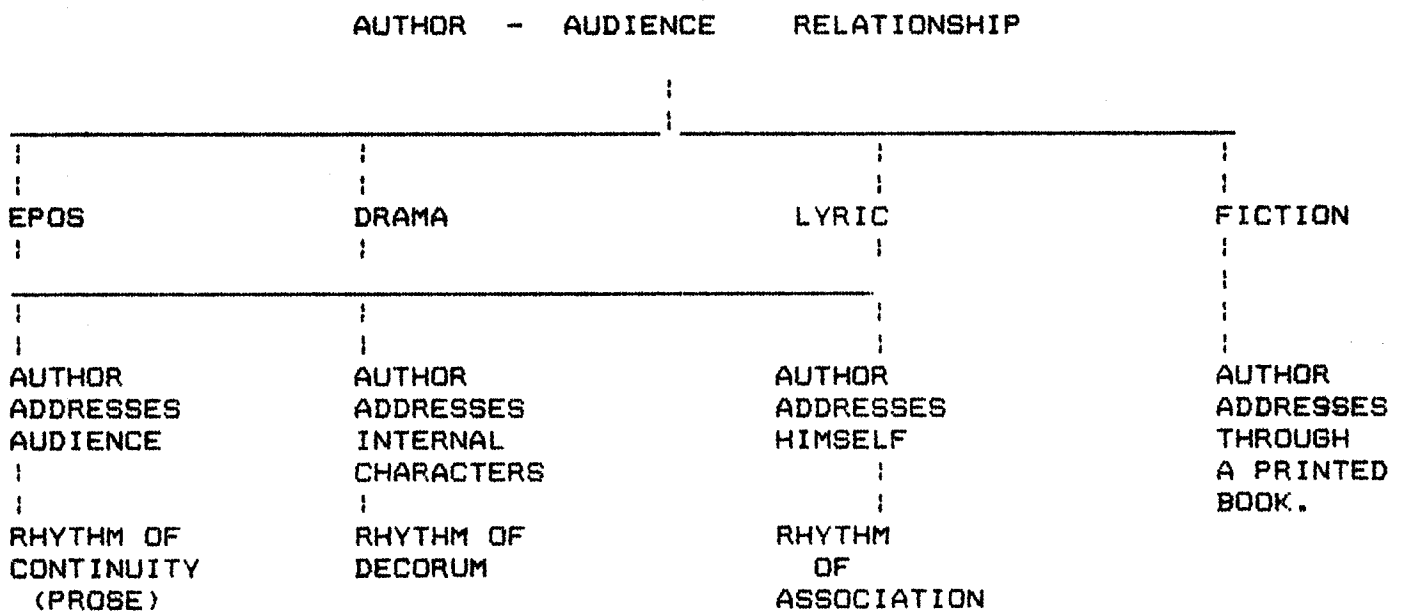
FRYE'S THEORY OF GENRES

Frye presents his theory of genres in the last chapter titled 'Rhetorical Criticism' of Anatomy, basing the generic distinction in literature upon what he calls "the radical of presentation,"² i.e. the conditions set up between the poet and the audience.

Frye makes a distinction between four kinds of genres by

employing the author-audience relationship. In epos or an epic, he finds that the author addresses his audience directly, in drama he addresses the internal characters and in lyric the poet addresses himself, in other words in lyric the author himself represents the audience. So far as the fourth genre is concerned, Frye found that there was no corresponding term in Greek poetics for a genre which addresses its readers through a printed book. Frye has therefore used the term 'fiction' for it. After this, he has advanced a postulate that epic, drama and lyric, though available in print are meant for oral presentation. This means that fiction is not available for oral presentation.

A diagrammatic representation of Frye's theory of genres would look as under:



The epic is the first category of genre Frye refers to in the exposition of his theory of genres. By epos Frye means "the literary genre in which the radical of presentation is the author or minstrel as oral reciter with a listening audience in front of him"⁴. In other words, Frye uses the term epos or epic to define the works in which the author addresses his audience orally. He further observes that in epos "the author confronts his audience directly, and the hypothetical characters of his story are concealed. The author is still theoretically there when he is being represented by a rhapsode or minstrel, for the latter speaks as the poet, not as a character in the poem. In written literature both the author and his characters are concealed from the reader"⁵. This means, epic involves direct confrontation between the author and the audience; evidently, the internal characters are concealed or relegated to background. The presence of author in the epic is in the form of a poet or a minstrel addressing the audience rather than a participating character. In other words, so far as the role of the author is concerned, the epic stands far in contrast to drama where the author is totally concealed from the audience.

The drama is the second category of genre among the four literary genres Frye refers to. His own idea of drama is explicit in these words;

In drama, the hypothetical or internal characters of the story confront the audience directly, hence the drama is marked by the concealment of the author from his audience. In every spectacular drama, such as we get in many movies, the author is of relatively little importance. Drama, like music, is an

ensemble performance for an audience, and music and drama are most likely to flourish in a society with a strong consciousness of itself as a society, like Elizabethan England. When a society becomes individualized and competitive, like Victorian England, music and drama suffer accordingly and the written word

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almost monopolizes literature".

Thus, in explaining his views on dramatic art, Frye makes four points. Drama, according to him, involves i) direct confrontation of the internal characters with the audience, ii) the author is relegated to a background position and his role is of little importance; iii) drama can flourish in a homogeneous kind of society having a strong consciousness of its own social norms and values; and iv) the society (by which Frye means the audience) should not turn 'individualized' or 'competitive'; consequently, the dramatic art tends to be taken over by the written word.

Frye's views on the dramatic form of art are quite convincing. He however seems to be taking a rather idealized or compartmentalized view of the society, both homogeneous and fragmented. In fact, it is difficult to draw a rigid line between 'a society with a strong consciousness of itself as a society' and contrast it with a society which has become 'individualized' and 'competitive'.

The lyric is the third type of genre in Frye's scheme of generic classification of literary works. Traditionally, lyric is regarded as the genre in which the poet, like the ironic writer, turns his back on his audience. In Frye's view, lyric is "a literary genre characterized by the assumed concealment of the

audience from the poet and by the predominance of an associational rhythm distinguishable both from recurrent metre and from semantic or prose rhythm".⁷ Frye's definition thus not only covers the traditional notion of lyric but goes a step further to stress the rhythmical aspect of poetry distinguishing it from the two rhythms namely the recurrent and prose rhythm. Frye offers quite a comprehensive explanation of this genre in the following words:

The concealment of the poet's audience from the poet, is presented in the lyric. There is, as usual, no word for the audience of the lyric: What is wanted is something analogous to "chorus" which does not suggest simultaneous presence or dramatic context. The lyric is... pre-eminently the utterance that is overheard. The lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else: a spirit of nature, a Muse,... a personal friend, a lover, a god, a personified abstraction, or a natural object. The lyric is... the poet presenting the image in relation to himself: it is to epos, rhetorically, as prayer is to sermon. The radical of presentation in the lyric is the hypothetical form of what in religion is called the "I-Thou" relationship. The poet... turns his back on his listeners, though he may speak for them, and though they may repeat

some of his words after him".⁸

This means, in lyric the audience's presence is rather in a concealed form. The poet talks either to himself or to someone else who could be either a spirit, a god, or some other kind of abstraction. The poet becomes immune to the reaction of the listeners, if any, even if they attempt to repeat some of poet's own utterances after him. Secondly, Frye compares the lyric to the 'chorus' in Greek tragedies. In the tradition of ancient Greeks, chorus played an important part in the drama. It

depicted, among other things the denouement in the course of the dramatic events to follow in a choral sequence, though the choral participants themselves would not have any active dramatic role. Likewise, Frye believes that lyrical utterances of the poet are analogous to the chorus in Greek tragedies.

III

THEORY OF RHYTHM

Rhythm is a concept derived mainly from the musical arts. It means uniform recurrence or repetition of beat or accent. In literature however, it is "the measured flow of words in verse or prose".⁹ Rhythm in verse is most often established by a combination of accent and syllables. In prose, rhythm is marked by variety of movements. In other words, rhythm is contributed by balanced sentences, variety in sentence structure and length, and so on.

Based upon the four-fold generic classification of literary works made by Frye on the basis of author-audience relationships, he identifies four different kinds of rhythms, associating each one of them with a literary genre. Thus, the recurrent rhythm is associated with epos; rhythm of continuity with prose; rhythm of decorum with drama, and rhythm of association with lyric.

Of all the rhythms referred to above, the rhythm of recurrence, he believes, is central to every work of art, and further points out that metre, quantity, and stress are the

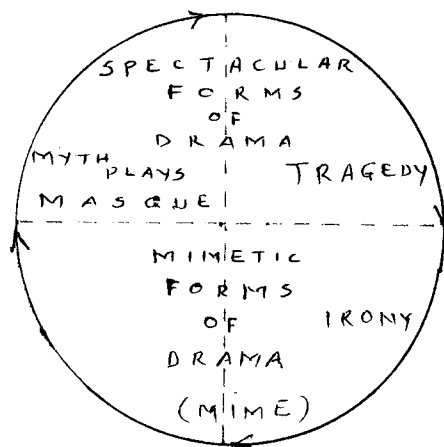
organizing principles of rhythm in epos. Frye elaborates this concept further by taking a survey of the whole English poetry, and observes: "When in poetry we have a predominantly stress accent and a variable number of syllables between two stresses, we have a musical in poetry, that is poetry which resembles in its structure the music contemporary with it".¹⁰ In other words, he introduces the idea of 'musical' in poetry by referring to some technical components of a poem such as the stress, accent and so on, and differentiates this 'musical' aspect from the other attributes of the poem, especially its 'sentimental' aspect. To its 'sentimental' aspect, Frye adduces attributes such as soft and soothing syllabus, smooth musical flow and a semblance of harmony. For a practical illustration of these ideas, Frye makes a comparison between Tennyson's poetry and that of Browning's, saying that the latter is a musical poet in the technical sense and the former is the sentimental type. It is to be noted, however, that Frye's observations here appear to be somewhat general and his classification is rather too rigid in nature, for it is not difficult to find elements of music as well as sentimentality in the poetry of both Tennyson and Browning as well; and secondly, neither of them wrote their poetry keeping in their minds any such aspects.

The rhythm of continuity has its genre in prose. Frye explains this rhythm saying "In every poem we can hear at least two distinct rhythms. One is the recurring rhythm, which we have shown to be a complex of accent, metre, and sound-pattern. The other is the semantic rhythm of sense or what is usually felt to

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be prose rhythm." Elaborating the same idea further he observes, "We have verse epos when the recurrent rhythm is the primary or organizing one, and prose when the semantic rhythm is primary".¹² This means, he identifies two kinds of rhythms in every poem, the recurring and the semantic. The former is the outcome of verse epos and the latter, of the prose epos. He then concludes that literary prose results from the use within literature of the form used for discursive or assertive writing, whereas treatises in verse are invariably classified as literary.

The rhythm of decorum is the third type of rhythm identified by Frye in course of his exposition of the theory of genre. This type of rhythm has drama as its genre. By decorum, Frye means the suiting of style to an internal character or subject, or to put it simply, appropriateness of style to content and character. In Frye's view, decorum is in general the poet's ethical voice, the modification of his own voice to the voice of character or to the vocal tone demanded by subject or mood. And "as style is at its purest in discursive prose so decorum is obviously at its purest in drama, where the poet does not appear in person".¹³ In other words, the rhythm of decorum constitutes the crucial characteristic of drama. The dramatist has to maintain the decorum of style, that is, he is not free to use his distinctive voice within the text of the play. His voice has to be rendered through the dialogues of his characters, which means that he has to adapt his style to the demand of the characters and the general tone of the play.

The rhythm of association is the fourth category of rhythm Frye refers to in the concluding part of the essay on 'Rhetorical Criticism' in the Anatomy. The rhythm of association has lyric as its genre. The lyric, according to Frye, "is the genre in which the poet, like the ironic writer, turns his back on his audience. It is also the genre which most clearly shows the hypothetical core of literature, narrative and meaning in their literal aspects as word-order and word-pattern."¹⁴ This means, in lyric there is no author-audience relationship and the author addresses himself. The lyrical writing has to conform to a certain musical word-order and also to a fixed word-pattern. It emerges from the coincidence of the sound pattern. Because its creative process is an associative of rhetorical process, its rhythm is necessarily 'associative'. The discussion of generic rhythms in the Anatomy is followed by the complex analysis of generic forms within each genre. It is to be noted that Frye does not neatly classify all the species of particular genres, but roughly counts the species of that genre, better known by their traditional names in critical analysis. We propose to discuss here one such genre i.e. drama.



The first quadrant is occupied by the species of forms known as myth-plays. Myth-plays take on the mood of the myth it represents. According to Frye, the characteristic mood and the resolution of the myth-play are pensive, and pensiveness in this context implies a sort of continuing imaginative subjection to the story. Frye also maintains that the myth plays emphasize dramatically the symbol of spiritual and corporeal communion. He quotes scriptural plays associated with Corpus Christi and children's plays as the examples from this category.

In Frye's view, myth-plays take on three forms: in the first form, he places literary works like legends; in the second, he puts the sacred auto and cites the drama Japanese No as an illustration of this form; and in the third, he places the secular auto and quotes dramas like Tamburlaine as one of the examples in this form. Frye clarifies that by the term auto he means dramas in which the main subject is sacred or sacrosanct legend such as miracle plays and so on.

Referring to the term auto Frye says that auto is "a form of drama in which the main subject is sacred or sacrosanct legend, such as miracle plays, solemn and professional in form but not strictly tragic."¹⁵ He further clarifies that "when there is no clear-cut distinction between gods and heroes in a society's mythology, or between the ideals of nobility and the priesthood, the auto may present a legend which is secular and sacred at once."¹⁶ And finally, he concludes that "in the auto, drama is at its most objective the audience's part is to accept the story without judgment".

Frye makes three points: firstly, that auto is a kind of drama or legend on a religious subject-matter but without any tragic overtones; secondly, auto can assume both a secular as well as sacred character in given circumstances such as when in a given mythology there is no differentiation between divine and human beings or when feudalism and priesthood share the same ideals, and lastly, unlike the tragedy, where in the last analysis there is invariably a kind of judgment on the part of audience, in the auto, Frye expects the audience to display objectivity, i.e. to accept the story on its own face value.

The second and third quadrants are occupied by tragedy, irony and comedy. It is remarkable that in the normal course, each of the second and third quadrants should have been occupied by the two genres tragedy and comedy respectively. Frye's reasons for including the ironic in these two quadrants are clear from the following passage:

but the association of heroism with downfall is due to the simultaneous presence of irony. The nearer the tragedy is to auto, the more closely associated the hero is with divinity; the nearer to irony, the more human the hero is, and the more catastrophe appears to be a
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social rather than a cosmological event.

To put this in simpler terms, the presence of irony ensures the downfall of the hero. This also means that so far as the aspect of downfall of the hero is concerned, Frye's notion of tragedy is in tune with the Greek view where the hero in the last analysis invariably falls from the position of prominence and meets his doom. However, Frye's view of tragedy differs from

that of the Aristotelian tradition in that in Greek view the catastrophic fall is a predetermined fact and follows naturally as a matter of course, whereas Frye incorporates concepts like auto and ironic to ensure the downfall. In Frye's scheme, auto and ironic have an indirect bearing on the nature of tragic drama, i.e. when the tragic drama resembles auto, the hero is associated with divinity; on the other hand, if it resembles irony, the human is the hero.

The last quadrant in the upper half is occupied by masque. In Frye's glossary of literary terms, masque is a "species of drama in which music and spectacle play an important role, and in which the characters tend to become aspects of human personality rather than independent characters".¹⁹ This means, in masque the characters shed off their representational aspects and resemble actual human beings. Elaborating the idea of masque further, Frye argues that in masque the "plots and characters are fairly stock, as they exist only in relation to the significance of the occasion... The members of the masque are accordingly disguised members of the audience, and there is a final gesture of surrender when the actors unmask, and join the audience in a dance".²⁰ Thus, in Frye's scheme, the characters in masque have a limited role; they are made up for the 'occasion' and the plots too are accordingly designed to have a restricted role. More often, the participants come from the audience itself and they return to their normal selves when they rejoin the members of the

masque the audience is given superior position to look at the things as spectacular entertainment while in auto, the audience has to be objective and obedient. The sub-genres of masque are farce, morality play, ideal masque and archetypal masque.

Frye differentiates generic criticism from other forms of art-criticism, more particularly the structural and historical forms. He voices his opinion in these words, "Generic criticism... differs from structural criticism... which is concerned with such matters as myth and ritual. It separates the structural from the historical critic, and enables the former to get clear of the tyranny of historical categories. The structural critic does not need to establish a solid historical tradition all the way from prehistoric fertility rites to the nature myth..., or take sides in the quarrel of Classical scholars over the ritual origin of Greek drama: he is concerned only with the ritual and mythical patterns which are actually in plays, however they got there. The study of genres, which takes all drama as contemporary and deals with categories prior to historical varieties should help to disentangle problems of structure from
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problems of origin."

This means the task of a structural critic is not to go back to history to establish or support his ideas, theories or patterns. The structuralist critic, in Frye's view, would not participate in the origin of ideas or patterns. He is concerned only with the actual use of the pattern and mythical or ritualistic traditions. In other words, a structuralistic critic

builds up the established structure of an art-work based upon the established and accepted norms, without concerning himself with the 'why' and 'how' and the origin of pattern or ideas, or the history behind them. Hence, Frye finds it convenient to adduce generic criticism a superficial role of a mediator between the historical and structural forms of criticism and thereby expects it to 'disentangle' or solve the problems of structure from problems of origin of art-work. Frye's argument here seems to be quite sound and we have no difficulty agreeing with him on this point.

Frye's theory of genres has attracted mixed responses from different critics. For instance, commenting upon the achievements and importance of his typology of generic criticism, Wayne A. Rebhorn observes, "Since 1957, when Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism... appeared,... over thirty-five books and articles have poured forth... One reason for this deluge has been the rise of genre criticism in this period; [and] in this mass of material, Northrop Frye's work stands out above the rest".²² He further concludes that "while it would not be accurate to call him a genre critic, if only because his notion of the 'mythos' of comedy is pregeneric, he nevertheless has provided genre criticism with many useful tools. What is more, he has spearheaded the revaluation of the 'low' subjects of comedy and romance, thus aiding the efforts of students of popular culture".²³ The following passages too are a part of the mixed response invited by Frye's genre criticism: "Mr. Frye has

tried to give the conventional genres new import by seeing them as modes of vision and, even more, by seeing them as vestiges of mythology, concrete archetypes which involved a typical conception of man as actor, a typical setting all interdependent and coherent. This method has done a great deal to deflect criticism from its repetitive demonstration that everything that lives is organic, particularly because it has an elaborate circulatory system of images. It has redirected attention to the larger, more than verbal structure of literature"²⁴ Further, "Mr. Frye has been most ingenious in creating new categories. He has related the traditional genres to each other as the cycles of seasons might be charted, and each genre admits several levels of style that are uniform from one another. The task of the myth critic is to place a work so that we may see its context fully."²⁵ Similarly, Mr. Frye has been far more imaginative than any other genre critic we have had, but he has also produced a system of the kind that occupied the scholastic mind to the point of impoverishment. Such a system testifies nobly to the impulse to find unity; but its a "drive toward a 'verbal circumference of human experience' may shrink up our perception of diversity and novelty".²⁶

In the face of such criticism, Frye argues,

...our conspectus of genres..... does not pretend to answer every conceivable question, but it attempts to add a few more letters to the critic's hornbook..." Finally, Frye concludes his argument on this point saying, "We may close with a final warning that generic criticism is not an attempt at

classification or pigeon-holing, but at the systematic study of
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the formal causes of art".

Thus, from the different lines of argument raised in favour of and against Frye's typology of generic criticism, it is clear that Frye's system has been able to contribute positively towards a better understanding, interpretation and appreciation of different literary genres, and secondly, on the systematic study of the formal causes of art-works.

* * *

Chapter Notes

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3. Ibid. p. 246.
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5. Ibid. p. 249.
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7. Ibid. p. 366.
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13. Ibid. p. 269.
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24. A. Litz, 'New Critical Essays' The Yale Review, Vol. 53, Summer, 1964, p. 592.
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FRYE ON LITERARY

CRITICISM

C H A P T E R V I I

FRYE ON LITERARY CRITICISM

Frye maintains eclectic position as a critic as he refuses to commit himself to any exclusive or dogmatic theory of literature such as psycho-analytical, neo-Aristotelian, biographical, historical or any such kind. He could more aptly be described as a syncretist who has attempted to work out a rational synthesis of various principles and techniques in literary criticism. All the four essays comprising his poetics, The Anatomy of Criticism, i.e. Historical Criticism, Ethical Criticism, Archetypal Criticism and Rhetorical Criticism deal with criticism in its larger context and conform to his idea of scholarship which is defined by him in these these words, "by criticism I mean the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture or the study of the humanities".¹

The most important reason for rating his work as outstanding is that no other contemporary critic has tried to rehabilitate literary criticism the way Frye did as an independent activity - an activity which may indeed be said to be related intimately to larger human perspectives. In this

context, we may refer to his introductory chapter, "Polemical Introduction", where he makes two important claims about criticism:

(a) his first claim relates to the autonomy and the scientific nature of criticism, and

(b) the second claim relates to the status of value judgements in critical theory.

As the 'Polemical Introduction' is a very important document for an understanding of Frye's theory of literature, it is proposed to discuss these two arguments here in some details.

FRYE ON CRITICAL AUTONOMY OR LITERARY AUTONOMY

Frye explains the idea of autonomy in these words:

The fact that literature consists of words, makes us confuse it with talking verbal disciplines. The literature reflect our confusion by cataloguing criticism as one of the subdivisions of literature. Criticism, rather, is to art what history is to action, and philosophy to wisdom: A verbal imitation of a human productive power which in itself does not speak. And just as there is nothing which the philosopher cannot consider philosophically and nothing which the historian cannot consider historically, so the critic should be able to construct and dwell

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in a conceptual universe of his own.

Frye makes four points here:

- i) Criticism should not be confused or equated with any other verbal discipline;
- ii) it should not be considered as a sub-division of literature;

- iii) its relation to literature is what art is to history and philosophy to wisdom, and
- iv) since its concepts are different from other disciplines, critics can regard it as an independent discipline in its own right.

Frye is more or less right in holding criticism as an independent and autonomous subject having its own conceptual apparatus. In The Critical Path, while discussing the relationship of criticism to other disciplines, he says: "I have always insisted that criticism cannot take presuppositions from elsewhere, which always means wrenching them out of their real context, and must work out its own".³ Frye voices a similar opinion in his 'Polemical Introduction' too when he raises these four points:

- i) he cautions against the use of literature for the purpose of documenting some sociological, religious or psychological thesis and thus upholds the autonomy of literature;
- ii) he expects the critic to retain his objectivity, and for this, he must derive his principles solely from his inductive survey of literary works;
- iii) he considers such a survey as the first step the literary critic should take, and
- iv) he identifies different 'neighbours' to criticism and expects the critic to enter into relation with them in any way that guarantees his own independence.

Thus, though in the Anatomy of Criticism he builds up his case for the independence of criticism from other disciplines and of literature from life, Frye also recognizes the fact that

criticism cannot enjoy total independence. He wants critics to realize that criticism has a variety of 'neighbours' too and hence expects a critic to enter into relationship with these neighbours. For Frye, criticism is a discipline which cannot be alienated totally from other disciplines. In other words, he wants to establish the identity of criticism as an autonomous discipline and at the same time holds that a critic should restrict his relationship with other disciplines to the extent of guaranteeing his own independence.

In this context Robert Denham echoes a similar belief when he observes:

His argument against deterministic approaches is much less absolute in the Critical Path than in the Anatomy. We find, for example, that he does not condemn all biographical approaches as deterministic - only those which assume that biography is the 'essential key' to poetic meaning. Moreover, only 'some' centrifugal methods are badly motivated " and documentary approaches must be used by the centripetal critic with 'tact', not banned

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altogether

In the 'Tentative Conclusion' to the Anatomy, however, Frye adopts a more pragmatic approach. He neither endorses the view that criticism is finally autonomous nor accepts the idea that literature is aesthetically self-contained. He speaks of the necessity for criticism becoming "more aware of the external relations of criticism as a whole with other disciplines",⁵ of the "revolutionary act of consciousness"⁶ involved in the response to literature, and of the obligation of criticism to

recover the social function of art. Stressing this point further, it is "hardly honest" he says, for criticism "to shrink altogether from these issues".⁷

Frye's argument for critical independence is based on his observation that criticism has attached itself too much to the conceptual frameworks from other disciplines or ideologies. "Critical principles", he says, "cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science, or any combination of these".⁸ Frye is against such an assimilation of criticism to another discipline such as politics or philosophy for in his view it will amount to giving "one the illusions of explaining one's subject while studying it".⁹ In addition to identifying the fallacy of determinisms Frye has identified many such determinisms in criticism such as Marxism, Freudianism, Existentialism, Jungianism, neo-classicism and so on, which use some framework external to literature as its conceptual base.¹⁰ This, he feels, is "partisan". While refuting the ideological or 'partisan' readings of literature he states:

To subordinate criticism to an externally derived critical attitude is to exaggerate the values in literature that can be related to the external source, whatever it is. It is all too easy to impose on literature an extra literary schematism a sort of religio-political color-filter, which makes some poets leap into prominence and others show up a dark and faulty. All that the disinterested critic can do with such a color-filter is to murmur politely that it shows things in a new light and is indeed a most stimulating contribution to criticism. Of course, such filtering critics usually imply, and often believe, that they are letting their literary experience speak of itself and

are holding their other attitudes in reserve, the coincidence between their critical valuation and their religious or political views being silently gratifying to them but not explicitly forced on the reader. Such independence of criticism from prejudice, however, does not invariably occur even with those who best understand

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criticism

Frye's enunciation of critical terminology as 'partisan' or ideological should not make us overlook the fact that he himself liberally appropriates terminology from psychology such as projection, displacement, dream; from Biblical symbolism such as anagogic phase, and from cultural anthropology such as ritual, myth, archetype and so on. Frye however, has a justification for deriving insights and frameworks from disciplines like psychology and religion. In answer to his critics, Frye maintains that he is a "terminological buccaneer"¹² meaning thereby that he has used words like 'archetype', 'displacement', 'mythos' or 'initiative' without retaining their original meaning in Jung's psycho-analysis, Freudian psychology, or for that matter in Aristotle or Coleridge respectively.

Though Frye maintains eclectic position by refusing to commit himself to any other known schools of criticism, he does not seem to impose his views on others. "I think that criticism as a whole is a systematic subject. But I do not think that a the criticism of the future will be contained within the critical system, a tutti-frutti collection of the best ideas of the best critics... The genuine critic works out his own views of literature while realizing that there are also a great number

of other views, actual and possible, which are neither reconciliable nor irreconciliable with his own. They impenetrate with him, and he with them, each a monad as full of windows as a Park Avenue building".¹³ By implication, he means, in criticism argument is functional and that disagreement cannot be ruled out. But disagreement, Frye maintains, should not be confused with rejection, for "disagreement is one thing, rejection is another, and critics have no more business rejecting each other than they have rejecting literature".¹⁴ Evidently, in Frye's view, every work of literature establishes its own value and it would be futile to try to reject or minimize the significance of these values. From the foregoing argument it is clear that in Frye's view literary values are not established by critical value judgements.

FRYE'S CRITIQUE OF VALUE JUDGMENTS

Frye's idea of value judgements is based upon a fundamental assumption that the two concepts namely knowledge and experience are two distinct identities and are separable from each other, and that literature is not directly concerned with value judgements. To make this argument about value judgement clear, we will try to explain first the notion of i) value judgement based upon knowledge; ii) value judgement based upon experience, and iii) value judgements proper.

So far as the values based upon knowledge are concerned, Frye maintains that they have no place in literature at all because such values are based firstly, upon a prior knowledge of the thing in question, and secondly, are subjective in nature. On the other hand, he maintains that values based upon experience are established by critical experience. This means, subjective, values are based upon sense experience whereas literary values belong to experience itself.

Frye thus makes a clear distinction between literary values or values based upon experience (literary values too belong to this kind), and value judgements. Such a distinction is warranted by the fact that "the humanistic and liberal pursuit of literature" ¹⁵ is often associated by critics with value judgements.

Frye's idea of value judgements would be clear to us from the following passage where he makes four points:

- i) Every value judgement contains within it an antecedent categorical judgement, as we obviously cannot tell, how good a thing is until we know what it is.
- ii) Inadequate value-judgements nearly always owe their inadequacy to an insufficient knowledge of what the categories of literature are.
- iii) Categorical judgements are based on a knowledge that can be learned and which should constantly increase; value judgements are based on a skill derived only from such knowledge as we already have.
- iv) Therefore, knowledge or scholarship, has priority to

value judgements, constantly corrects their perspective, and always has the power of veto over them, whereas subordinating knowledge to value-judgements leads to impossible pedantries.

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This means, in Frye's view experience has a priority over value judgements, and hence, he is trying to establish the primacy of experience over the value judgements. In sum, Frye holds that since value judgements have their base in experience, experience is important than value judgements in appreciating or evaluating a given literary work.

Continuing his observations on value judgements, Frye identifies two kinds of value judgements: i) comparative and ii) positive. Further he divides the comparative value judgements into two kinds i) biographical evaluations which view a literary work as a product and ii) tropical evaluations which view the literary work as a possession. These two kinds of comparative judgements, he believes, are rhetorical in nature. In the case of the first kind, questions about the greatness of the author's personality become relevant. In the second case, the issues are related to the style and rhetoric of the writing. But in either case the basis of appeal of literary work for Frye is some "concealed, social, moral, intellectual analogy".¹⁷ These analogies lie behind attempts to make evaluative comparisons. Frye argues that efforts on the part of critics to promote or demote authors are to be understood as belonging to the history of taste rather than to criticism and concludes the argument

saying that "Comparative estimates of value are most valid when silent ones, ... from critical practice, not expressed principles guiding its practice."¹⁸ Frye then turns to the second kind of judgements namely positive value judgements. These positive evaluations treat the goodness or genuineness of a poem and are derived in part from one's direct experience of literature rather than from an extraliterary perception. Frye regards them as somewhat less suspect than the comparative judgements, because he is of the view that positive values are born of "informed good taste",¹⁹ i.e. taste founded on both experience and knowledge. He however cautions the readers that positive value judgements cannot totally serve the purpose of criticism firstly because "it is superstitious to believe that the swift intuitive certainty of good taste is infallible. Good taste follows and is developed by the study of literature; its precision results from knowledge, but does not produce knowledge. Hence the accuracy of any critic's good taste is no guarantee that its inductive basis in literary experience is adequate".²⁰

Frye's caution is based upon his conviction that experience of literature can never be substituted by good taste. In his view, positive value judgements depend on good taste which in turn depends on disinterested knowledge. He holds that however important to criticism the experience of literature may be, artistic experience is invariably "like literature itself, unable to speak and therefore can never be captured by critical terminology".²¹

Thus, Frye's explanation of three kinds of judgements, namely judgements based upon knowledge, experience and subjective value judgements has its roots in his assertion that literary or artistic experience is never translatable into experience or judgements of another sort. He therefore upholds the primacy of literary experience over all other activities related to literary criticism and literary evaluations.

FRYE ON IMAGINATION

Imagination alongwith understanding is a significant faculty of human mind. William Benton in Encyclopaedia Britannica describes imagination as "the power that synthesizes raw experience into concrete images, that apprehends order and form and that fuses contrary elements of feeling, vision, and thought with a unified whole".²²

Frye attaches a great significance to the notion of imagination in his literary criticism. Frye's notion of a work of art is rooted in his view of imagination and is based largely on the idea of imagination held by the Romantics. It would be pertinent therefore to discuss first the Romantic view of imagination.

Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge believed that making a poem was not a part of the rational process. They tried to ascribe the source of creativity to something other than reason. Coleridge, for example, came to identify the creative power with

the faculty of imagination, the highest faculty in man. In Biographia Literaria he expresses his idea of imagination in these words:

The Imagination, then, I consider as primary or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and Prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate, or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as
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objects) are essentially fixed and dead".

Coleridge here identifies two kinds of imagination:

- i) the primary imagination which he believes aids the perceptive faculty of man and helps him perceive things with his senses and
- ii) the secondary imagination by which man perceives nature and its manifestations at large. For example, bringing sensations into a unity or giving them a form would constitute in Coleridge's view an act of primary imagination, whereas recreation or reproduction of an image and the creative acts in general are held by Coleridge as works of secondary imagination.

I

Like the Romantics, Frye too equates the faculty of

imagination with the creative force in mind. However, Frye's notion of imagination distinguishes itself from the Romantic view on the point of the structuring power of imagination. Frye makes his idea of imagination clear in the following words:

Imagination creates reality, it creates culture out of nature, it also produces literary language. The most important thing it creates is not the surface texture of literature but its deeper structures and designs ... What it has produced is everything that we call nature and civilization. It is the power of transforming a sub-human physical world into a world with a human shape
24
and meaning.

Imagination, thus, has much greater significance in Frye. He regards imagination as a force that transforms perceptions of nature into cultural products, and thus views imagination as a constitutive of reality. Further, imagination is held responsible for creating deeper structures and designs in mind and has the capacity to transform the sub-human physical world into a human world having concrete shape and meaning. Frye thus accords a much more significant role to imagination in his art-criticism.

In the Anatomy, Frye makes a distinction between the scientific mode which perceives an objective nature and the poetic mode which perceives transformed world of nature available to human mind. In Fearful Symmetry, he speaks of three basic modes of perceiving the world: i) the world of memory which is responsible for egocentric perception of the unreal world, reflection and abstract ideas; ii) the world of sight, i.e. the ordinary perception of the world we live in, and iii) the world

of vision, i.e. the imaginative perception of the world we desire and want to create.

In the Anatomy, Frye's approach to the understanding of a work of art is binary in nature as he makes, like the Romantics, a clear distinction between the scientific and the poetic perceptions. In the Fearful Symmetry Frye goes a step further by adopting a tripartite approach for the understanding of the human mind, namely the world of memory, the world of sight and the world of vision. This multivalent approach evolved by Frye for the understanding of the working of the human mind and for perceiving the world of art makes his position on imagination more comprehensive and complex in nature.

In the same book Frye also maintains that imagination is a perceptive faculty which is open and common to all men. Stressing the openness and the universality of the human imagination Frye argues,

What makes the poet worth studying at all is his ability to communicate beyond his own context in time and space... It is here that Blake comes in with his doctrine that "all has originally one language, and one religion". If we follow his own method, and interpret this in imaginative instead of historical terms, we have the doctrine that all symbolism in all art and all religion is mutually intelligible among all men, and that there is such a thing as an iconography of the
25
imagination.

Frye seems to be agreeing with William Benton on the

universal character of imagination. At this level he contemplates mutual intelligibility, symbolism, and iconography having a moral communicability.

Continuing the argument further, Frye observes,

Neither the study of ritual nor of mythopoeic dreams takes us above a subconscious mental level, nor does such a study, except in rare cases, attempt to suggest anything more than a subconscious unity among men. But if we can find such impressive archetypal forms emerging from sleeping or savage minds, it is surely possible that they would emerge more clearly from the concentrated visions of genius... A comparative study of dreams and rituals can lead us only to a vague and intuitive sense of the unity of the human mind; a comparative study of works of art should demonstrate it

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beyond conjecture.

The universality of the human mind and the subconscious mind aid us in the understanding of the 'subconscious unity' shared by all men. A comparative study of works of art as the products of imagination can just give us a more certain knowledge of the universal pattern common to human minds.

Explaining further the role of imagination in literature Frye observes,

Literature, we say, neither reflects nor escapes from ordinary life: what it does reflect is the world as human imagination conceives it, in mythical, romance, heroic, and ironic as well as realistic and fantastic terms. This world is the universe in human form, stretching from the complete fulfilment of human desire to what human desire utterly

repudiates, the quo tendas (i.e. anagogic, "what you should be going") vision of reality that elsewhere I have called, for reasons rooted in my study of Blake, apocalyptic... some religions assume that such a world exists, though only for gods, other religions, including those closer to us, identify it with a world man enters at death, the extremes of desire becoming its heavens and hells; revolutionary philosophies associate it with what man is to gain in the future; mystics call it the world of total or cosmic consciousness. A poet may accept any of these identifications without damage to his poetry; but for the literary critic, this larger world is the world man exists and participates in through his imagination. It is the world in which our imaginations move and have their being while we are also living in the "real" world, where our imaginations find the ideals that they try to pass on to belief and action, where they find the vision which is the source

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of both the dignity and the joy of life.

Desire, in Frye's criticism and also in contemporary theory, has a wider significance and is seen as the motivating force for the thoughts, human actions and so on. It is a kind of metaphysical entity. In Frye's view, imagination helps us understand this mythical category. The different perceptions of imaginative literature become possible or apprehensible for us on account of the faculty of imagination.

Imagination, thus, has wider significance in Frye's scheme of things, for i) he equates imagination with the creative force in mind ii) he regards imagination as a force that transforms perceptions of nature into cultural products and view it as a constitutive of reality and iii) he holds imagination responsible for creating deeper structures and designs in mind,

with capacity to transform the sub-human physical world into a human world having concrete shape and meaning. No wonder, therefore, that imagination plays a significant role in Frye's scheme of art-criticism.

FRYE ON CRITICISM AS SCIENCE

After establishing that criticism is not a sub-division of literature or any other discipline, Frye expresses his view that criticism is a science and a discipline deserving its own theoretical structure. Frye's view of criticism as science has two different meanings.

In the first sense, Frye begins his argument by proposing "an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field".²⁸ He suggests that such an examination can and should be scientific.

By 'scientific' Frye means that a critical inquiry should be systematic, inductive, and causal as opposed to random and intuitive; he wants criticism to be self-contained rather than dependent upon the principles of other disciplines and that it should attempt a coherent and progressive consolidation in organizing its materials. He thus wants critical inquiry to be based on rational and systematic analysis and on some general system of ideas.

While making a claim that criticism is a science, Frye points out that considered historically criticism still exists in

a state of naive induction whereas other disciplines such as physics, history, biology and astronomy have moved beyond primitivism and have acquired the status of pure science. He explains that this transition from naive induction to a status of pure science is accomplished when a discipline rather than conceiving the data of immediate experience as its explanatory and structural principles, conceives the data themselves as the phenomena to be explained. Physics, for example, "began by taking the immediate sensations of experience, classified as hot, cold, moist, and dry as fundamental principles. Eventually physics turned inside out and discovered that its real function was rather to explain what heat and moisture were".²⁹ So also, he believes that the study of history has passed through a similar revolution. Frye argues by analogy that criticism is currently in a state of naive induction because its practitioners insist on treating every literary work as a datum which needs to pass beyond the primitive state to a scientific one. He concludes his argument saying that this can be accomplished only when criticism seeks to explain literary works in terms of conceptual framework which is independent from the datum itself.

Expressing his awareness that criticism has not yet attained the scientific rigour he explains that it needs "to keep to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems to be badly in need of co-ordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology will

see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole".

Frye's claim regarding literary criticism as a science and his search for a co-ordinating principle of literature are based on his belief that literature is an order of words. He states that

We have to adopt the hypothesis, then, that just as there is an order of nature behind the natural sciences, so literature is not a piled aggregate of works, but an order of words. A belief in an order of nature, however, is an inference from the intelligibility of the natural sciences, and if the natural sciences ever completely demonstrated the order of nature they would presumably exhaust their subject. Similarly criticism, if a science, must be totally intelligible but literature, as the order of words which makes the science possible, is, so far as we know, an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries, and would be even if new works of

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literature ceased to be written.

This means, in Frye's view literature in its totality is an order of words and this order is analogous to the order of nature which forms the basis for the understanding of natural sciences. Similarly, he feels, the 'order of words' which constitute the totality of literature ought to explain the 'science of criticism'. But whereas our belief in the order of nature is based upon hypothetical inferences from the natural sciences, such limitations would not apply to the study of literature because literature, unlike natural sciences, is creative and evolutionary in character besides being 'an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries'. Frye's argument here seems to be quite convincing.

Commenting on Frye's views of literature Marshall Grossman states,

Frye wants to make criticism a science, and a descriptive taxonomy is not sufficient to this call. Frye's science seeks also to establish causes, and man surely stands in a causal relationship to literature. Frye's interest in literature as a product is classificatory... It views literature synchronically, seeking to relate work to work, genre to genre, according to criteria internal to the literary system. But his interest in literature as production, as the work of human desire, produces a shadowy system that cannot be integrated into the tabular classification because its essentially temporal development projects a different sort

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of discourse...

Thus, an overview of discussion on Frye's views on literary criticism, value-judgements, imagination and critical autonomy would reveal that Frye was concerned in giving literary criticism the scientific rigour enjoyed by disciplines like mathematics, physics and other pure sciences. By raising criticism to the level of pure sciences Frye expected to introduce some orderliness in the field of literary criticism. To achieve this, he thought a) a check on value-judgements in evaluating a work was imperative; b) elimination of value-judgements from the sphere of criticism would contain unscholarly, unnecessary and stray opinions and thus the practitioners of literary criticism would become more objective in their approach; c) a restraint on free opinions and debates would check violation of established and accepted literary norms and practices and lastly d) a disciplined approach of the kind he had envisaged

would influence and give a proper orientation to the faculty of imagination in one's mind.

Though Frye's propositions may appeal to us in principle, they do not seem to be sound in practice. For instance, total elimination of value-judgements from the domain of criticism would create problems of evaluation. Secondly, Frye has not given an alternative method for evaluating a work of art. As regards his claim on the critical autonomy, Frye himself has admitted that total autonomy is not possible. Frye is aware of the fact that literary criticism or for that matter discipline of whatsoever nature cannot be totally segregated from the others or studied in isolation. Hence, he conceded that literary criticism should borrow form other disciplines only to a limited extent, in other words, it should restrict its relationships with other disciplines to the extent of ensuring its own independence.

* * *

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APPLIED CRITICISM
OF ERYE

CHAPTER VIII

APPLIED CRITICISM OF FRYE

This chapter discusses Frye's application of the theory of myth criticism and of the general principles enunciated in the Anatomy of Criticism to actual literary works. Of course, a comprehensive study of the application of his theory would be an exercise beyond the limits of this study. It is therefore proposed to restrict our discussion to Frye's criticism of three major English poets, namely Milton, Shakespeare and Eliot.

I

FRYE ON MILTON

At the outset, the reasons for selecting Frye's discussion of Milton for understanding Frye's application of myth criticism to his works are: i) Milton is undoubtedly one of the poets whom Frye has studied extensively, and ii) secondly he has written at length on him. This can be seen in Frye's early references to Milton's concept of the fallen state of man in Fearful Symmetry (1947), in his archetypal criticism of Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Spiritus Mundi (1976) and in his full-length book, The Return of Eden: Five Essays on Milton's Epics (1965) where Frye examines the mythos and dianoia of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Secondly, the essay,

"Literature as Contest: Milton's Lycidas" in Fable's of Identity (1963) is equally significant for our present purpose. Besides, it is not difficult to discern frequent references to Milton's works in Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, The Critical Path and other critical works.

Frye's study of Milton concentrates mainly on three aspects, namely i) the pattern of imagery in Milton corresponding to Frye's notion of Dianoia, ii) the narrative rhythm in Milton corresponding to Frye's idea of mythos and iii) the different genres in Milton's complete works.

II

Imagery

The pattern of imagery corresponding to Frye's notion of dianoia is discernible in Milton's vision of the fallen world that since the fall of Adam and Eve, the world is caught in the remorseless grip of Satan and his hordes. Here, Frye sees the possibility of redemption only after regaining the vision of Adam and Eve before the Fall.

Referring to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, Frye maintains that they are mythopoeic in nature. In them the imagery of the Bible is reflected in "the animation of nature from the singing hills of Isaiah to the dragons of the deep praising God in the Psalms".¹ The four cyclical seasons of the year form the mythos of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. It is through the cyclical structure, Frye comments, "Milton thinks of himself as young in

L'Allegro and the growing old and contemplative in ILL Penseroso as spending his lively day in the sunshine and his pensive ones at night".²

On the same line, Frye draws our attention in the essay "Literature as Context: Milton's Lycidas" in Fables of Identity. This essay is based on the following four principles: i) convention (meaning reshaping of poetic material); ii) genre (involving choice of appropriate form); iii) archetypes (pattern of meaning), and iv) the autonomy of literature.

Convention (reshaping of poetic material)

Frye declares that the convention in the Lycidas is that of pastoral elegy. It takes its material not only from the English elegies but also from Greek, Latin and Italian traditions. Frye draws a comparison between Lycidas and other forms of literature when he argues that Lycidas is not merely a literary form used for expressing his sorrow at the death of Edward King, but a "conventional or recurring form of the same family as Shelley's Adonis... the Daphnis of Theocritus and Virgil and Milton's own Damon".³ And so far as the generic aspect of the poem is concerned, Frye does not mention here that the tragic form of lyric is based on the tragic associative rhythm as discussed by him in the Anatomy of Criticism.

Archetype (pattern of meaning):

Elaborating his view of the imagery of Lycidas, Frye observes that it is entirely archetypal in nature. Lycidas for him, is an archetype of a poet, a young man, and a priest. He

sees the myth of Adonis as the one on which this poem is based and so he is led to use the archetypal imagery used by other poets. Milton has thus used the myth as a structural principle in his poetry.

On autonomy of literary form:

Examining the Lycidas from the angle of the autonomy of literary forms, Frye concludes that the poem has taken only one historical incident, i.e. the drowning of Edward King. So far as the rest of the material is concerned, i.e. the structure, the imagery and the form are all provided entirely by the context of literature. Yet another full-length study of Milton by Frye is The Return of Eden. As Denham puts it, it is "a typical example of his work and one that specifically applies many of the principles set forth in Anatomy of Criticism." ⁴ In this book, the structural principles such as the dianoia, mythos, genre and mode of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained are set forth. In both these epics, one can discern both the patterns of meaning and narrative pattern. The central theme which Frye has identified in Milton's epics is the return of Eden, representing the state of freedom to which man aspires. The central myth in these epics is loss and recovery of Eden. Frye has considered the theme and structure of the book in two ways: temporally (in the narrative movement in time) and spatially (in the static structure of imagery).

On genre:

With regard to genre, Frye believes that Milton's ideal of an epic was "a poem that derived its structure from the epic

tradition of Homer and Virgil and still had the quality of a universal knowledge which belonged to the encyclopaedic poem and included the extra dimension of reality that was afforded by Christianity".

Continuing his discussion of genre, he says that Paradise Lost follows the Biblical pattern from Creation to the last Judgement of the encyclopaedic epic as specified in the Anatomy. As regards the form of the poem Frye adds that it follows the conventions of prose forms like Platonic dialogue, the debate on the ideal commonwealth and the educational treatise. The speech of Raphael and Adam is under this influence. He further adds that Milton's drawing upon the epic convention dating from Homer and Virgil is evidenced in the division of Paradise Lost into twelve books.

Thus, after specifying the genre of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained he places them in the category of encyclopaedic forms in the high mimetic mode. Frye then turns to the episodes in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained and draws out the symmetry in these epics in dialectical and cyclical orders.

What is remarkable is that the events described in both these epics take place around the presence of God. God is invariably a personified image in Milton's scheme. Frye exploits this mythical image of God and wants us to "visualize the presence of God in a clock where the figure of 12 is". The figure 6, which is dialectically opposed to the figure 12, represents the position of Fall of human order. Around these two

figures, he distributes the events of Paradise Lost as follows:

1. First epiphany of Christ: generation of Son from father.
2. Second epiphany of Christ: triumph over three-day Creation.
3. Establishment of the natural order in the Creation.
4. Establishment of the human order: creation of Adam and Eve.
5. Epiphany of Satan, generating sin and death.
6. Fall of human order.
7. Fall of natural order.
8. Re-establishment of the natural order at the end of the Flood.
9. Re-establishment of the human order with the giving of the law.
10. Third epiphany of Christ: the Word as Gospel.
11. Fourth epiphany of Christ: the apocalypse of Last Judgement.

It is to be noted that his elaborate exercise as regards the interpretation of Paradise Lost is not in conformity with Milton's own scheme. Rather, it is based on Frye's own intentions of identifying these cyclic phases in Paradise Lost on the basis of generic form.

Thus, in Frye's diagram, the dialectical movement represents the pattern of imagery and the cyclical movement the narrative of the poem. And with the cyclical pattern of the movement or events, Frye combines the hierarchical Renaissance-paradigm of four levels of existence: divine, angelic, human and demonic. Referring to Milton, Frye says that Milton conceives God as the only source of real action, "the act of creation and recreation

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or redemption after the fall of man".

Commenting on the angelic level of existence he says that angels derive their power from God; they lack free will and cannot act on their own. On the other hand, the human act, he believes, is negative in that it is either a surrender of the power to act or refusal to act at all. The demonic act is a parody of the divine act, destructive rather than creative. Thus, God, in the end, turns out to be the only source of action, and he alone can be called heroic in action. And this is one of the reasons why Frye defines Paradise Lost as a thematic encyclopaedic form rather than a form of fiction in the tradition of the high mimetic mode. And it is this concept of heroism which, Frye believes, has made the Paradise Lost "an anti-romantic and anti-heroic poem".

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From the concept of heroism in Paradise Lost Frye moves on to the concept of freedom or free intelligence. According to Frye, Milton's conception of free-intelligence lies in detaching oneself from individual ego and the world. This view, it is felt is close to the conception of Nirvana in Hindu philosophy which believes that in order to attain salvation one has to renounce all kinds of worldly possessions and attachments. Milton's perceptions are also similar to this in that in order to reach at the ideal state one should "unite oneself to the totality of freedom and intelligence which is God in man".

8

This in turn, he believes, leads us to participate in our Creator's view of the world which he has made and has found good. Milton also wants his readers to believe that this was the view which related Adam

and Eve to Eden before their fall. This is also implicit, at least partly, in the para "every act of return of Eden, a world in the human form of a garden where we may wander as we please but cannot lose our way".⁹

Cosmology of Milton.

Frye then takes up the discussion of the structural myth of Paradise Lost. Frye's claim is that since the cosmology of Milton is a part of the myth, its study is essential, particularly for understanding the theme of the Fall.

He summarizes Milton's cosmology as follows:

1. The order of grace or heaven (the place of God's presence)
2. The "Proper" human order (symbolized by Eden and the Golden Age).
3. The Physical order.
4. The order of sin, death, corruption.

Frye is in total agreement with the cosmological order of Milton. The only difference, he observes, in Milton's hierarchical and cosmological order is that Man's place in the latter is not restricted only to the third human order. Man is initially born into the physical order. It is left to him either to rise or fall. In other words, he can either rise above this order into his "proper" human order, or sink into the world of sin and corruption. Commenting on the relationship between man and God, Frye points out that the Creator God "moves downward to his creatures, in a power symbolized by music and poetry which is

called in the Bible the Word, releasing energy by music by
creating form".¹⁰ The tendency in the creature is to move upward
towards its creator, obeying the voice of God within himself.
Elaborating the discussion further, he says that the demonic
parody of the upward human movement is represented by the
"gunpowder" plot, and the downward one of the Creator represented
by the devil's descent into hell. The view advanced by Frye in
the Anatomy, that even Galileo's function in Book I is demonic
derives from his basic assumption that Milton's cosmology runs
all through the poem. And that is a view of fallen man pulling
humanity away from its centre ... from Eden within.

In this cosmology of four levels of existence Frye
identifies a three-level hierarchy of human soul in Paradise
Lost.¹¹ It consists of reason "which is in control of the soul";
will, the agent for carrying out the decrees of reason, and
thirdly, the 'appetite'. In an unfallen state, reason controls
the soul, the will enjoys the state of freedom because it is one
with reason, and the appetite is subordinate to both. This order
is reversed in the fallen state. This means, the appetite takes
the topmost place, becomes a passion and ultimately results in a
pull towards death.

Corresponding to these three levels identified by Frye in
Milton's intellectual framework, Frye has discovered yet two more
additional levels consisting of revelation and fantasy. He
situates revelation above reason and fantasy below the appetite,
and adds that revelation and reason cross each other at a point

when

discursive understanding begins to be intuitive: the point of the emblematic vision or parable, which is the normal unit in the teaching of Jesus. The story of the fall of Satan is a parable to Adam, giving him the kind of knowledge he needs in the only

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form appropriate to a free man.

The emblematic vision of Milton, according to Frye, is similar to the anagogic vision, discussed in the Anatomy in which the poet becomes a critic of the doctrine of imagination. For Frye, Milton falls in the category of fifth-phase symbolic poets who are poets and critics in one person. He also sees some similarity between Milton's mythopoeic vision and that of romantic poets. He proposes to turn the inside out in Paradise Lost in order to see "God sitting within human soul at the centre and Satan on a remote periphery plotting against our freedom". Perhaps this is what Blake meant when he said that "Milton was a true poet and of devil's (i.e. revolutionary) party without knowing it".

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Opposite to the emblematic revelation, Frye situates the fantasy (day-dreaming). The fantasy takes up the role of illuminating appetite from below, as in the case of Eve's dream. This continues upto the Fall. After the Fall, this hierarchical order is reversed. The appetite is illuminated by fantasy from above and becomes greed, lust, fraud and force at the demonic level. Frye makes use of this reversed model to explain Milton's concept of sin and death, with fantasy at the top and revelation at the bottom.

Referring to the narrative pattern of Paradise Lost, Frye uses the terms 'dramatic', 'conceptual' and 'tragic' to describe the dianoia and mythos of the poem. It is not clear why Frye has departed from his conventional usages of the terms 'fictional' and 'thematic' to define the dianoia and mythos of this epic. Probably, Frye assumes that the Fall of Adam and Eve contains all the potentials and ingredients of the tragic conflict and tragic resignation. Or to make this more clear, Adam's desire to live with Eve, and at the same time not to leave heaven is dramatic. On the other hand, his inherent flaw, inability to act in spite of his foreknowledge of the consequences of the Fall is obviously tragic. Lastly, for Frye, Adam's will to live with Eve is wrong both conceptually and theologically, but it is right 'dramatically' because it appeals to human sympathy. Frye's argument here sounds far from convincing and rather inconsistent with his own postulates in the Anatomy so far as his notions of different genres such as tragedy and comedy are concerned.

Structurally, Frye sees both the epics Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained as two separate parts of one action. The myth in these epics bears the mythos of the loss of Eden, followed by a quest for its recovery. This quest is fulfilled only through the heroic action. But the heroic action conceived by Frye is not the same as in any other dramatic pattern. It is purely conceptual in that it lies not on the theatrical stage shows but in the consciousness of the presence of God 'within'. Besides, the movement of the hero's journey portrayed by Frye is rather cyclical and circular. This means, the journey begins and ends

"not precisely at the same point, but at the point renewed
and transformed by the heroic action itself".¹⁴

Notwithstanding these problems, it is clear that in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained Frye has quite thoroughly applied the theory of myth criticism set forth in the Anatomy of Criticism. Further, a critical review of the application of his theory would also reveal that he has focussed more on the pattern of imagery, myth and cosmology of Milton. Comparatively, he has paid very little attention to the generic and narrative forms in these epics. Thus, in understanding Frye, one feels tempted to agree with Robert Denham's view that "it is not easy to distinguish the biographical and historical from the archetypal approaches in The Return of Eden...".¹⁵ Yet in another essay "Agon and Logos" in Spiritus Mundi, Frye postulates his notions on the patterns of comedy and tragedy in Paradise Regained and Samson Agnotistes. Frye's view in these epics is that Milton has quite successfully established the conquest of Christian forms upon the Classical forms. Frye compares the mythos of Samson Agnotistes with that of Paradise Regained and concludes that both these epics belong to the form of divine comedy. This also means that Frye sees nothing tragic in Milton's world. As a corollary to this, one feels inclined to conclude that, for Frye, tragedy is merely an accomplishment or imposition flowing from the will of the Creator.

Frye's choice of Milton's epics for applying his theories of myth criticism is not difficult to guess. In Milton's works,

Frye sees a vast reservoir of myths which makes his task of hunting for them quite easier. Secondly, in Milton's works he finds the basic tenets of Christianity and christian myths more extensively explored, particularly in the mythic stories of Adam and Eve, their fall, and the proverbial garden. All this, undoubtedly tunes well with Frye's own religious sensibility and his leanings towards the christian religion in particular. Thirdly, for obvious reasons, Frye does not appear to favour any of the modern poets. His studies are quite selective and this also justifies his preference for mythopoeic poets like Milton, Shakespeare and Eliot.

Lastly, Frye's purpose in undertaking such an elaborate exercise is to sustain and reinforce his own belief that all literature is basically mythic in nature - an assumption he clearly established in the Polemical Introduction of the Anatomy and from where he proceeds on to maintain it consistently throughout his poetics.

Thus, Frye's efforts in establishing the mythic structure of Milton's works is quite commendable since it is a new approach besides being a lasting contribution to Milton criticism. Undoubtedly myth criticism stands enriched by Frye's contribution.

FRYE ON SHAKESPEARE

Frye holds an important place among the modern critics of Shakespeare's comedy and romance. Ofcourse, earlier studies such as those made by H.B. Charlton, D. Dover Wilson, J.R. Brown and the works of Knight, Tillyard, Mack and Righter, to name only a

few, have significantly affected the direction of that thought, but the impact created by Frye's approach to the comedies has been such that even a critic like Wayne A. Rebhorn feels tempted to remark that Frye is "the starting point for modern criticism of Shakespearean comedy and romance".¹⁶

Frye's concerted views on Shakespearean comedies are found in A Natural Perspective (1963). The book consists of a compilation of four different lectures delivered at Columbia in 1963, and is subtitled The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance. Frye's attempt here is two-fold: i) to rehabilitate the comedies as texts for critical attention, and ii) to show how these comedies as well as other works of Shakespeare lead inevitably to the consummation of final romances.

II.

Frye's approach to the comedies of Shakespeare is largely based on his general theory of literature. He perceives all works of imaginative writing as conventional structures, or, to put it in other words, structures of convention. That means, they have no meaning apart from convention. Convention for Frye represents what is left over from myth when people stop believing the myth, just as myth in turn is what is left over from magic when people stop performing magical acts such as to induce say, fertility or stave off disasters and the like. Frye thus apprehends the progress of literature in terms of movement from magic to myth and from myth to convention, and discerns the role of the artist to refine and manipulate this convention to suit his desired

purpose. In a way, and obliquely though, this also throws some light on Frye's notion of what constitutes a work of art.

In the context of this theoretical premise, Frye places the works of Shakespeare and says that Shakespeare's plays are invariably conventional.

One may agree with Frye here, for it is not difficult to notice that Shakespeare's plays, aside from their rhetoric, are invariably full of oracular voices, changed or disguised identities, people risen from graves, interpolated masks and revels, and so on.

To support his argument further, Frye takes recourse to the theme of Shakespeare's comedies and remarks that they are versions of regenerative myth, each having three phases, namely,

- a) an opening, in which society is characterized as tyrannous and irrational;
- b) a middle, in which social chaos prevails (for example, mixed or confused identities, frustrated courtships, imprisonments, exiles, etc); and,
- c) an ending, in which a stylized revel (say a multiple wedding) signals the birth of a new society.

Given the nature of Shakespeare's plays and repeated occurrences of such incidences in them no one would deny the fact that Shakespeare's plays are conventional in the sense that they have a kind of tripartite structure, i.e. an opening, a middle and an ending. However, Frye's observations on the structure of Shakespeare's plays or comedies appear to be rather inflexible

and have the effect of reducing Shakespeare to simply a fabricator, an entertainer. Secondly, Fry seems to say that his plays have no meaning and thirdly, that the poet had no aim in writing them beyond the creation of conventional structures.

Though one may agree with Frye on the tripartite structural pattern of Shakespeare's works, he seems to underplay the basic aspects of Shakespeare's incomparable intellectual prowess.

Frye disregards the fact that Shakespeare is the poet who could reach the deepest recesses of human mind and heart and is acknowledged to have worked with the whole span and depth of emotional values. Arguing further on the same lines Frye remarks:

The assumptions of a dramatist or the expectations of his audience may readily be translated into opinions or propositions or statements. If we do this to Shakespeare's assumptions, they turn into the most dismal commonplace. Hence the feeling expressed (by many critics) that, great poet as Shakespeare was, his philosophy of life, his opinions, standards, and values were bewilderingly shallow. The obvious answer is of course, that Shakespeare had no opinions, no values, no philosophy, no principles of any thing
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except dramatic structure".

Here also Frye seems to take a rather extreme view. It is a commonplace knowledge that Shakespeare was not a mindless poet, dead to everything but the conventions of his art.

It is not clear why Frye takes a rather uncommon and sectarian view of Shakespeare's works. In fact, such remarks could perhaps befit the mouth of Bernard Shaw, whose penchant for mocking and defiling those who cut above him is a well known fact.

At one point, Frye even resorts to the remark that Shakespeare wrote purely for money, and that when he had made his pile he quit and returned to the country. It is difficult to agree with Frye on this point too. It is a well known fact Shakespeare was a highly successful playwright and that he could as well retire many years earlier and return to the country with his later romances still unwritten.

III

It is customary to identify Frye as an archetypal or anthropological critic. Following the Cambridge anthropologists namely Harrison, Cornford, and Murray, Frye too sees comedy and, in fact, all literature as a displacement from ritual and myth, which he characterizes primarily in terms of their plot configurations or structures. In ritual and myth, Frye argues, the individual strives to influence the natural world, while in literature that magical link gets broken. Nevertheless, Frye says,

The bumps and hollows of the story being told follow the contours of the myth beneath, and as literature develops greater variety and independence of expression, these mythical shapes become the conventions that establish the general framework of narratives. Hence literary convention enables the poet to recapture something of the pure and primitive

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identity of myth.

Frye thus makes it amply clear that because of the mythic

origin of literary conventions one can account for their persistence; and secondly, this also explains why some of the works have a strong effect even on sophisticated audience and makes possible the universal acceptance and accessibility of more conventional and popular works.

Elaborating further on this point, and defending the serious value of comedy because of its particular closeness to myth, Frye speaks out against the modern prejudices about the serious value of comedy in these words:

We live in an ironic age, and we tend to think in Freudian terms of 'wish-fulfillment' as confined to dreams, a helpless and shadowy counterpart of a "reality principle." In watching tragedy we are impressed by the reality of the illusion... In watching romantic comedy we are impressed by the illusion of reality... In the action of Shakespearean comedy, however, the kind of force associated with "wish fulfillment" is not helpless or purely a matter of dreams. It is, in the first place, a power as deeply rooted in nature and the reality as its opponent; in the second place, it is power that we see, as the comedy proceeds taking over and informing the predictable world.¹⁹

Thus, in his observations on comedy, Frye makes an important point. He sees a dialectical relationship between comedy and tragedy; in comedy, he sees the 'illusion of reality' whereas in tragedy he observes the reverse, i.e. the 'reality of the

illusion'. Frye observes that comedy represents a sort of power which is deeply rooted in nature with the reality as its opposite. This means, he does not treat comedy in a light-hearted manner but accords it the same kind of seriousness and gravity that tragedy has traditionally been enjoying. Secondly, just as in tragedy the audience has a foreknowledge of the tragic end, so also, he feels, in comedy one can easily predict the end which in the normal course results in a happy ending.

Clearly, Frye accords equal billing for both the genres; in the words of Rebhorn "comedy has as much dignity as the perennially favoured tragedy".²⁰

Frye's writings have attracted the attention of a good number of critics. By and large, most of the critics tend to agree with his basic notion concerning the theory of structures of conventions. Among those who support Frye include C.L. Barber, Leo Salinger, Philip Edward, Thomas McFarland, and so on, whereas critics like Ralph Berry, E.M. Tillyard almost reject Frye's approach to the study of Shakespearean comedies.

Like Frye, Barber's analysis of the Shakespearean comedies implies a tripartite comic structure:

Characters leave or are forced out of their normal social world; they enter on festive world of games, play, and comic confusion, where they can release the energy normally used to maintain social inhibitions and through that release achieve clarification, a heightened awareness of man's link to nature; finally, since the license of misrule is by definition temporary, they return to the everyday world which is beneficially rendered as a result of the experience they have been
²¹
through.

Evidently, this is close to Frye's tripartite structure of comedy observed earlier in the opening paras of this section. However, there are certain minor points distinguishing the two: whereas Frye concentrates on his analysis of comedy through structure, Barber gives prominence to such aspects as festivity, tone or mood. Secondly, from the point of view of definition too, Frye focuses on the opposition between hero and villain or such blocking figure, while Barber's definition centers on the clown and buffoons and goes even to the extent of regarding festivity and comedy as synonymous. Nevertheless, despite these minor limitations, Frye's theory still remains more appealing and comprehensive of the two.

Yet another critic who shares with Frye as well as Barber the conviction that comedy is related to seasonal festivities celebrating the renewal of life is Leo Salingar referred to above.

Salingar makes a significant point when he observes: "the festive end of a comedy really derives from all the characters and not just the clowns". He further claims that these endings are not mere wish-fulfillment but reflections of a less sentimental belief: "if men can fashion their own happiness, they cannot make their happiness unaided but depend for that on society, and on something beyond human society as well, on Nature, or Fortune or Providence".²²

One feels like agreeing with Salingar here who looks at festivity from a slightly broader angle, i.e. not just from the

baser behaviour of clowns or jesters but by including all the other characters who equally contribute towards it, not to speak of factors beyond human society such as Nature, Fortune or Providence.

Another book which relies extensively on Frye for its treatment of Shakespearean comedies is Philip Edward's Shakespeare and the Confines of Art (1965). Unlike Barber and Salinger, who concentrate mainly on festivity, Edward begins by claiming that art creates order and thereby offers its audience consolation for the incompleteness and chaos of existence. Shakespeare, he claims, was conscious of this function of art which he was determined to fulfill.

Edward's opinion, though at variance with Barber and Salinger is very much within the framework of Frye's general notions of art, who regards the entire Nature as a big artifice and every aspect of it as well as everything confined in it as a manifestation of the same.

Thomas McFarland, in his Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy elaborates a theory quite close to that of Frye though his approach is slightly different from Frye. McFarland begins by setting comedy in opposition to tragedy. Both genres, he believes, deal with man's fear of death, the ultimate form of isolation; but whereas tragedy does so by elevating the hero beyond society, comedy turns to marriage, generally immersing the individual in society. McFarland also observes that comedy adopts the perspective of the social group and aims at humbling

the pretentious ones and ridiculing the out-laws or the deviant types.

Thus, though McFarland treats comedy and tragedy almost as dialectically opposed, by implication this also means that he accords both the genres equal billing - an assertion which Frye too has been consistently making in his theory of structure of conventions. Frye further claims that one genre cannot be seen as inferior to, or subsuming the other. This means, he wants to give equal, if not higher status, to comedy as compared to tragedy.

Probably, Frye's thinking that tragedy enjoys a comparatively higher status than comedy rests on the belief that the former genre is most extensively discussed and dealt with in practically most of the literatures of the world, and hence, he feels obliged to rescue the comedy and place it on the level of tragedy. But McFarland does not think so. For McFarland both the genres deal with man's fear of death, the ultimate form of isolation. He regards comedy and tragedy as two different approaches to life and to the domain of art. Thus, Frye's attempts of comparing the two genres does not match with McFarland's notions of generic distinction.

A fact that clearly emerges from the foregoing discussion is that these critics, by and large, depend upon Frye's postulates for the interpretation of Shakespearean comedies. But critics like Ralph Berry and E.M. Tillyard, as we have observed earlier, think otherwise and almost reject Frye in toto.

In his Shakespearean Comedy and Northrop Frye, Berry directs his attack on Frye's tripartite schema for the structure of comedy. He accepts Frye's middle phase of confusion and release but rejects the two phases in Frye's analysis, viz. the initial phase dominated by an anticomic society and by the tyrannical persons or laws, and the final phase with its discovery of personal and social identity. For instance, referring to Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Berry claims that the law at the start of the play is neither harsh nor unreasonable because Theseus accepts it and most of Shakespeare's audience would have approved of parents having some control over their children's marriage. Yet, Theseus himself later in the play sets aside the very law he seems to support at the start. So also, in plays like Love's Labour Lost, Berry observes, the hero and heroine are opposed by tyrannical fathers, rulers, or laws, but often it leads to a foolish resolution in the end. Berry thus establishes his two points and concludes that Shakespeare's comedies are merely presentations of problems in realistically conceived human relationships and that their endings do not solve problems. In other words, Berry rejects the idea of constructing a generic model for the plays and emphasizes realistically conceived situations for determining the structure, and sees the endings merely in terms of balance of contending forces.

It is difficult to agree with Berry's argument in toto here. Berry takes a somewhat one-sided and extreme view of Shakespeare's comedies. It is a commonplace knowledge that Shakespeare treats almost all the absurd and comic characters in

his plays with compassion and tolerance. Berry also does not seem to appreciate the fact that comedy allows the audience a detached, wide, tolerant view of stage full of characters and that Shakespeare deliberately uses artistic devices such as multiple plots and shifting of interests.

Like Berry, E.M. W. Tillyard also does not approve of a folkloristic approach to the interpretation of Shakespearean comedies. In his Shakespeare's Early Comedies (1965), Tillyard declares that a festivity must have some sort of practical result if it is to be significant, and since Shakespeare's plays do not have such results, they cannot be festive. He also claims that festivities were merely periodic amusements which had become a minor element in English life by the time Shakespeare started writing his early comedies.

Frye's contribution to the study of Shakespearean comedies has been quite significant, firstly, because he tried, quite successfully, to accord an equal weightage for both comedy and tragedy. Literary critics, by and large, concentrate more on tragedy and comedy is not given the same status as that of tragedy. Frye has almost rehabilitated comedy, firstly by placing it on a par with tragedy, and secondly, by refusing to make any significant differentiation between the two genres, i.e. the comedy and the tragedy while perceiving or postulating that all works of imaginative writing are 'structures of convention'. This way, Frye has quite successfully rehabilitated the status of comedy which hitherto had been a theoretically neglected genre.

FRYE ON ELIOT

After concluding our discussion of 'Frye on Shakespeare' in the preceding section, it is proposed to take up Frye's study of Eliot's writing. This study is organized in two sub-sections: the first one deals with the application of Frye's theories to Eliot's critical works in general; the second one concerns with some of Eliot's individual works, with particular reference to The Waste Land, Ash Wednesday, Four Quartets, Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman.

I

Frye's book titled T.S. Eliot (1963) assumes a special significance for us, firstly, because in the third and fourth essays entitled "Unreal City" and "From Fire By Fire" of this book, Frye discusses the patterns of imagery and symbols in the major poetical works of Eliot, and secondly, he addresses himself to the problem of generic classification of Eliot's works.

Frye starts the third essay by analysing the diancia formed by the pattern of imagery of Eliot's works. It is remarkable that he does not use his favourite technical terms like 'image', 'motif', 'sign', 'archetype' and 'monad' while discussing any of Eliot's works. Instead, like a formalistic critic, he devotes himself to the study of imagery in Eliot's works.

Eliot's imagery, Frye believes, is a consequence of the cyclical and dialectical movement of the narrative pattern of Eliot's poetry. He observes that Eliot's poetry displays four

main phases of the natural cycles as identified by him in the Anatomy. Frye states:

The December setting of Murder in the Cathedral, the cold March of The Family Reunion, the mid-winter spring of Little Gidding are deeply wrought into the texture

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of the imagery.

In his comments on The Waste Land, Frye says that the cyclical and dialectical movement is also seen in this poem. The opening lines of The Waste Land start with April, and going through the season of summer and rains, complete the cycle with winter in the end. Similarly, he identifies a dialectical opposition in spring and winter; youth and old age; dawn and darkness, rains and sea. In his opinion, so far as the imagery in Eliot's works is concerned cyclical and dialectical movements constitute an important aspect dominating Eliot's poetry.

Another set of imagery that Frye finds throughout the works of Eliot in general is that of "secret garden". The images associated with the "secret garden" are childhood, spring, flowers, rains, a young girl and innocence.

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Yet another aspect of archetypal imagery is noticed in Frye's observation that the meeting of Dante with the young girl Matilda in Eden after renewing his innocence reflects the archetype of all such images in Eliot.

Frye's book on Eliot stresses the use of imagery revolving around "two figures the youth or girl killed or betrayed or deserted in fullness of life, and the weary old or middle-aged man who dreams of life in an after-dinner sleep" .

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To the first group, he associates characters such as the

Burbank in "Burbank with a Baedeker", while Tiresias in The Waste Land, the bewildered Magi, and the speaker in "Lines from an Old Man" belong to the second group. Frye thus classifies imagery in Eliot's works in two broad categories:

- a) the vision of innocence, and
- b) the vision of experience.

The vision of innocence

Frye believes that Eliot's imagery of innocence is similar to the analogical imagery discussed in the Anatomy. In this imagery, Frye sees a dialectical pull, one towards the works of paradisaical imagery and the other towards the infernal imagery. Since in Frye's scheme notions of innocence and experience are dialectically opposed, every image which belongs to the vision of innocence also belongs dialectically to the vision of experience.

The image chiefly associated with innocent characters is that of water. We find the symbolism of innocence in the waters of the sea in Eliot's The Waste Land, in the passage where the Thames carries the filth of London in it. Here we also meet the drowned Phoenician sailor Phlebas representing the feelings of suffering and unrelieved bondage in his image. The healing waters of the sea returning in the form of rains correspond to the symbolism of baptism in Christianity. Dialectically opposed to the images of the vision of innocence are the threatening images of the animate world of birds and animals. For example, tiger, for Frye, symbolizes the image of Anti-christ, of wrath in "Gerontion". The raven appearing soon after the vision of love

in The Family Reunion symbolizes desertion. In The Waste Land the scratching up of corpses by the dog symbolizes consciousness which is opposed to the stupor of lying buried in darkness.

The image of the girl with "her arms full of flowers," deserted by her man, the 'hyacinth girl' in The Waste Land and the "rose garden" of Harry in The Family Reunion belong to the imagery of innocence.

Referring to Eliot's Burnt Norton Frye remarks that the episode of the rose-garden in Burnt Norton is the most concentrated of all visions of a lost or transitory state of innocence. One can see here the water of life, the rose and the lotus, the tree of life, the parental guardian figure "dignified, invisible", as it was in the Garden of Eden, before the fading of the vision.

The vision of experience

The vision of experience, Frye believes, is often ironic. The elements of irony is an ever present factor in it. Frye quotes "Prufrock" and "Gerontion" as illustrative of the same. This vision attains tragic proportions when the characters feel alienated from their environment and deserted by their creator. The situation is best depicted in the "Hollow Men" who respond passively to the winds, "behaving as the wind behaves".

II

Frye has accorded a complete section in his essay on The

Waste Land to indicate a four-fold pattern of imagery prevailing in the poem: static, dynamic, cyclical and dialectical.

"The Waste Land", he says, "is a vision of Europe, mainly of London at the close of First World War, and is the climax of Eliot's infernal vision".
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Its setting is civilization in winter, completing the natural cycle. He links winter with past. (In Frye's scheme, 'past' represents the world of paradisaical imagery. Here, in the present context, it includes the London Bridge also). Thus, winter, the "brown land" as he often refers to, is set to ruin every moment of the past. This is a world of subterranean existence, a world of shadows, corpses, and buried seeds. No growth is discernible in such a state. Like seeds buried in Winter, people too do not wish to grow, and like the three-day rhythm of the resurrection of Christ, we sink into the lower world of the "unreal city" in "Burial of the Dead".

The next two sections of the poem take us to the underworld: Section titled "Death by Water" symbolizes physical death and burial in earth symbolizes spiritual death. The imagery of physical death is followed by imagery of the rebirth of those who can die into new life at the command of thunder and those who are rejected and die like a sterile seed. The concluding section depicts the resurrection of the dead in an image of a streaming crowd, "hooded horses swarming". Frye points out in The Waste Land that the world to be redeemed is under water and under the earth. The Fisher King of Eliot, sitting gloomily at the shore with the "arid plain" behind him, represents the human figure of

Adam who cannot redeem himself. The essay in Frye's book T.S. Eliot, titled "From Fire by Fire" deals with the later poems and plays of T.S. Eliot.

These essays, according to Frye, belong to Eliot's "purgatorial" visions. Eliot's Ash Wednesday (1930) portrays the imageries of desert, garden, and stairway. The images of stairways in Ash Wednesday Frye points out, are analogous to winding mountains of Dante's purgatorio. Of all the imagery depicted in Eliot's works, Frye points out, the one which is prevalent throughout the works of Eliot is the imagery of stairway. Eliot has included this imagery even in an ironic context e.g. failure in love. So also are the symbols of garden and desert. Each symbol has been identified by Frye in Ash Wednesday itself. Frye's purpose in turning to the same kind of imagery is in tune with his leanings towards Biblical imagery. Five of these symbols, namely Adam, Israel, Israel in exile, the world of vanity and "the burden of the grasshopper" are obviously from the Bible. The sixth symbol is from commemoration of temptation (i.e. of Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years) and the seventh symbol is from Dante's Purgatorio.

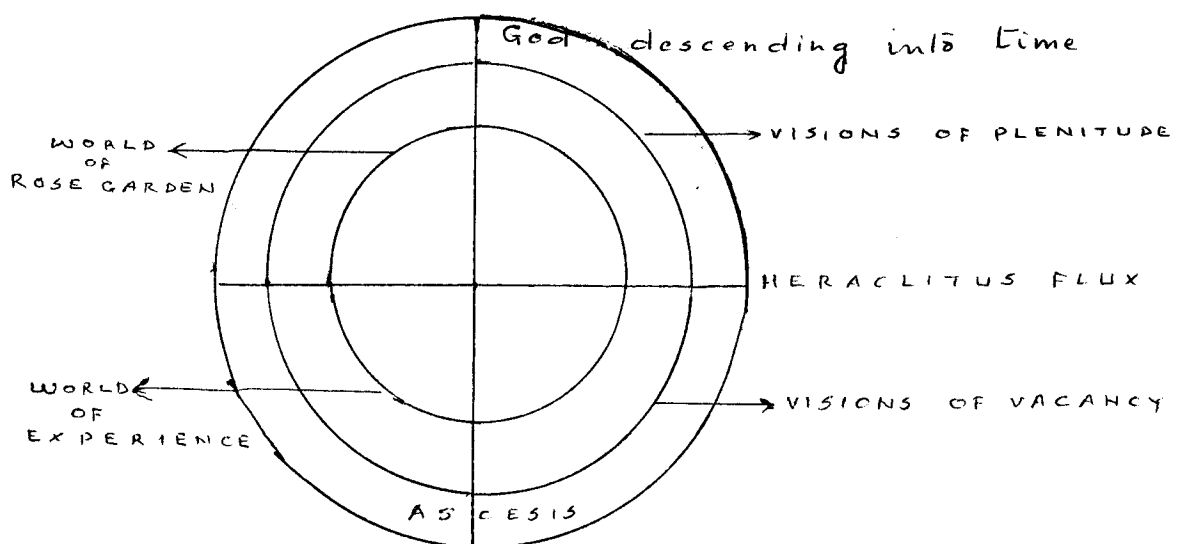
The images of desert in Ash Wednesday, Frye says, symbolize an alienated individual in spiritual life. It is the place where the three dreams of waking consciousness, memory and dream proper occur to the narrator. Commenting on the different levels of the narrator's experience Frye states that

- a) the first is a world of identity where the individual is one with his community.

- b) the second is a world where the experiences are linked by memory and impose a sadness on life,
- c) the third represents one's encounter with ordinary experiences, and
- d) the fourth depicts one's concentration of consciousness in order to break up the illusion of individual ego.

The poem, in Frye's view, represents the predicament of a middle-aged man, who is fed up with carnal desires and has reached a point to throw away his ego to the dust. He dreams of ascending the stairway and yearns for reaching the garden. But each time his dreams are overtaken by desires and memory. Ultimately, he gives in by succumbing to the dreams of the white lady.

When Frye turns to Eliot's Four Quartets, he uses the two categories of innocence and experience to describe its imagery in terms of a circular diagram:



The horizontal diameter of the diagram represents the clock time, 'the Heraclitus Flux'. The vertical diameter shows the presence of God descending into time, 'and crossing it at the incarnation forming the 'still point of the turning world'".²⁷

The smaller circle encircles the centre and is situated inside the bigger circle, thus representing the world of rose-garden at the top-half; while the bottom-half depicts the world of experience, of the subways. The top-half and the lower-half of the larger circle are visions of plenitude and vacancy respectively.

Experience related to the lowest part of the diagram is that of ascesis or dark night. The movement of The Four Quartets is cyclical beginning and ending at the same point. Frye holds:

The archetype of this cycle is the Bible which begins with the story of man in a garden. Man then falls into a wilderness or waste land, and into a still deeper chaos symbolized by a flood. At the end of time he is restored to his garden, and to the tree and water of life
²⁸
that he lost with it".

The narrow movement of every Quartet is described in terms of the imagery of the rose garden, subway and the dark night. The intricate movement of the concepts of time and eternity dominates the rest of the argument. The rose garden and the yew trees constitute the recurring symbols of Four Quartets. The former symbolizes a world up, the upper region of plenitude, while latter takes us down to the dark night, to the state of ascesis. The turning wheel of time makes the two worlds look identical at the moments when eternity descends upon the

individual visions. As a whole, the theme of Four Quartets, in Frye's opinion, is the theme of divine comedy.

The imagery of Murder in the Cathedral is based upon the dialectical and purgatorial aspects of the comic action depicted in miracle plays. The action begins in 'experience' and does not rise up to the vision of the rose garden. Frye has not shown clearly the pattern of tragic action in this play. It is noticeable that even the basic principles of his own poetics have not been applied to the play.

So far as The Family Reunion is concerned, Frye maintains that it is central to all the tragic plays of Eliot. In all the plays of Eliot one finds invariably a central figure who through a process of spiritual purgation attains a vision of the four worlds discussed earlier. But in the process he is isolated from other people and his audience. The action of the play is tragic followed by a scapegoat ritual in the end... the ritual of rejection, the life of ego for the life of the rose garden. In other words, sacrifice by the individual for removing the guilt of the family.

Another example in this category is The Cocktail Party which has a structure parallel to that of Euripides's Alcestis. In this play, the conflict is represented by Celia, the central figure, who is haunted by a profound sense of original sin. She starts on a mission of spiritual journey and is crucified ultimately in Africa.

In The Confidential Clerk it is possible to discover the

device of anagnorisis in the long lost parents of the hero and heroine. Frye compares the plot of this comedy to that of Menandrine's New Comedy. Throughout the comedy an atmosphere of demure farce prevails, symbolizing somewhat a distorted but self-consistent world. The imagery of the suburban garden and the city discerns the lower world of experience while the upper world is depicted by marriage.

The Elder Statesman is based on the theme of sin and redemption. Lord Claverton, the central figure, is a retired person and has dedicated his life to social causes. Gomez and two of his Oxford chums come to remind him of his previous misdeeds. They are instruments of grace to him, like the Furies of Harry. Ultimately, the persona of the elder statesman breaks up and he confesses his misdeeds to his daughter.

Frye finds mythoi of heroism in two poems on Coriolanus, namely "Triumphal March" and "Difficulties of a Statesman". Coriolanus is a person of great integrity. He is in the state of innocence. But his inability to "operate the social machinery of tact and compromise keeps him imprisoned in that integrity". It results in the isolation of the hero and isolation of his ego. Frye compares the hero of "Triumphal March" with Arjuna of Mahabharata facing a dilemma and in doubts about what he is doing in an archetypal situation.

Frye also makes a brief mention of the dramatic monologues of Prufrock and Gerontion in the context of his critical analysis. These monologues, he says, are studies of self, romanticizing ego. They are in the form of a self-meditative

verse in which a romantic illusion finds itself strangled in a visionary conscience.

Frye's preference for the works of Milton, Shakespeare and Eliot is justified at least on three counts:

Firstly, because their works are too esoteric and complicated enough to enable even a lay critic to offer a wide and differing range of meaning and interpretation.

Secondly, the works of these authors are full of mythical elements which can easily be explored and analysed. In fact, some of Eliot's works discussed above and Milton's epics treated in the preceding section are cases in point. Since in Frye's scheme, myth finally constitutes what he calls the 'matrix of literature,' his preference for Milton, Eliot and Shakespeare is self explanatory in character.

Thirdly, in some aspects, Frye's religious sensibility appears to be quite in tune with that of the authors he has selected for applying and testing the tenets of his critical theories.

To sum up, Frye's work on Eliot "possesses all the virtues of all Frye's writings: it is strong in relating image to concept".²⁹

Chapter Notes

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7. Ibid. p.28.
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9. Ibid. p.31.
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LEWIS CLINTON
LIBRARY

CHAPTER IX

FRYE ON LITERARY HISTORY

Frye begins his discussion of Literary History by saying that "When I first became interested in problems of literary history, I became very impatient with the kind of literary history that told me nothing about the history of literature, but was simply ordinary history specializing in names and dates of authors".¹ Thus, Frye was not content with the conventional approach to history of literature in which names and dates of authors and periods of literary history were central concern of literary historians. The deficiencies of current historical approach to literature prompted Frye to adopt an altogether different approach. He felt "genuinely literary history, I thought, was largely concerned with conventions, and genres, and as I looked further into it, it began to take on two aspects, one diachronic, the other synchronic. Diachronically, it showed a kind of Darwinian pattern, throwing mutations out more or less at value. The survival value was derived largely from the ideologies of the ascendant classes, and in each age there was a popular literature which had the special function, for the historian, of indicating what the ascendant conventions would be in the next age".²

In the passage referred to above, Frye identifies two

aspects, one diachronic and the other synchronic. So far as the diachronic aspect is concerned, he derives his notion of survival value relying on the Darwinian concept of the survival-of-the-fittest and postulates that the ideologies and conventions left by the ascendant classes would decide what would be the ascendant conventions in the next age. He illustrates this point by saying that "in Elizabethan times the ascendant conventions of prose fiction were exhibited by Lyly's Euphues and Sidney's Arcadia, while Deloney's more popular stories showed what fiction would be like when the class addressed by Deloney came to power, which it did around Defoe's time".³ Clearly, Frye's views here appear to be close to Marxist's perception of class differentiation, particularly when he refers to the aspect of 'survival value' and links it to the 'ideologies of the ascendant classes'.

Commenting on the synchronic aspect of the language he says, "every modulation in convention seemed to throw up much the same patterns as before, so that the genres of comedy and romance, for example, maintained an extraordinary similarity through all the centuries of social change"⁴ This means, though conventions and ideologies of the ascendant and elite classes were the determining factors for the literary genres in general, so far as the genres of comedy and romance are concerned there was no appreciable change in that they maintained a similarity through all the centuries of social change. In other words, the genres of comedy and romance were not affected either by the conventions or ideologies of the elite classes.

Frye's interest in the study of the development of language through the process of time compels him to turn to the study of The Bible, as he regarded The Bible as the ultimate point of reference for the study of any language. Frye's views on the authority of The Bible are explicit in the following passage.

I have lately begun to turn my attention to the Bible, not so much as a work of literature but as what Blake calls "Great Code of Art", a kind of model for the reading and study of literature. Dante used scripture as a model for literature, including his own poetry, in a similar way. But with the Bible a different kind of historical question arose which I had not thought much about previously. This question arose out of one of the first problems confronting me: In what language has the Bible been written? The factual answers, Hebrew and Greek, hardly do justice to a book which has exerted most of its cultural influence in translation, whether Latin or vernacular. But this, to use a convenient French distinction, applies only to the langue of the Bible, not to its Language. It seemed to me that there was a history of language to be considered as well and this naturally took me to Vico, the first person to think
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seriously about such matters

Thus, Frye sees the Biblical scripture as a model for the reading and study of literature. Secondly, Frye's interest in the Bible is not merely with the language in which the book is written but also with the history behind this language. And thirdly, the fact that the Bible has been able to exert most of cultural influence even through its translation compels him to make a deeper study of the history of the language. Naturally, he turns to Vico to enlighten him on such historical aspects.

II

Turning to Vico, Frye says Vico suggested that language followed three main phases of cultural cycles:

- i) the age of the gods,
- ii) the age of the heroes, and
- iii) the age of the people.

After these three phases a ricorso, probably meaning recurrence, occurred and started the cycle over again. He called these three phases of language hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic. These three terms refer to different kinds of writings, because Vico believed that men communicated by signs before they could talk. Frye believes that these three stages of language development through the process of time have a close link with the pattern in Biblical scripture. We shall discuss this aspect in a separate section in this chapter.

The first phase:

The first phase of language he identifies is hieroglyphic. By hieroglyphic, Frye does not mean sign-writing, but using words in place of signs. In this phase, the word echoes the image: it is believed to be an active force, a word of power, involving a magic latent in it which can affect, even control some operations of nature. In this category, Frye places the reaching at the New Year's Day ritual in Babylon the poem of creation, Enuma Elish; this reading, it was believed, helped to sustain and encourage

the order of nature whose origin it described. Besides, puns and popular etymologies involved in the naming of people and places were thought to affect the character of what is given the name. So also, the beliefs that spirits could be controlled by verbal formulas, and, the acts of boasting by the warriors before beginning their battles were thought to give the warriors special powers, and so on. Frye also cites the example of Onian's monumental study of Homer's vocabulary as showing how intensely physical such conceptions as soul, mind, time, courage, emotion, thought and the like in his poems. Another set of belief is the operations of the human mind which are controlled by words of power, formulas of the type called mantras in Indian religion.

Arguing further on this point, Frye maintains that, prose in this phase, is discontinuous, "a series of gnarled epigrammatic statements which are not to be argued about but must be accepted and pondered, transformed into words of power".⁶ In other words, Frye emphasizes the aspect of discontinuity usually found in statements conveying authority or orders for compliance. Finally, Frye concludes that Bible is the classic manifestation of this kind. For the Bible contains prose kernels of the discontinuous kind:

- i) Law and commandment in the opening books;
- ii) proverb and aphorism in the wisdom literature.
- iii) Oracle in the prophecies; and,
- iv) Pericope in the Gospels.

In much the same way, he also says that Pre-Socrates philosophy is mainly communicated in discontinuous aphorism.

The second phase:

The second phase of language is identified as hieratic. The hieratic form of language is produced by the intellectual elite. In this phase, the word is believed to express the idea, and the verbal structure involves an ordering of ideas in a long sequacious march from premises to conclusions.

This phase of language, he believes, is more individualized and regards work as primarily the expression of thoughts. "It comes into Greek culture with the dialectic of Plato and is associated by Eric Havelock with the development of writing itself".⁷ In this category Frye includes the period of the vast metaphysical and theological system that dominates thought from Plato to Hegel. Commenting further on the relationship between the first and second phase Frye argues "The compelling magic of the previous phases is sublimated into a magic of sequence or linear ordering".⁸ This means, the first phase blends into the second by giving way to a kind of sequence or linear ordering. Frye illustrates this point by quoting Descartes: "I think, therefore, I am. The operative word is therefore, and it provides, to quote Frye again, "an antecedent belief in the connectability of words"⁹

Elaborating his argument further, he says:

Similarly with the ontological proof of God, which reduces itself to "I think, therefore God exists". Many notions much more bizarre

than these, such as extreme Calvinist views of predestination, may be clung to in spite of what seems to be commonsense because of the strength of the feeling: if you accept this, then you must, and so forth. It is a highly intellectualized form of language, but its tendency is not so much to reasoning as to rationalizing, expanding agreed-on premises into verbal armies marching sequentially across reality. Its central conception is not the god but God, the infinite reality of the person, and its controlling figure is metonymy, which expresses the analogy of the finite verbal world to an infinite God".¹⁰

Thus, in classifying further the second phase of language Frye observes that it is a highly intellectualized form and emphasizes in particular the aspect of rationalizing than reasoning. The other attributes he highlights are; the controlling figure in metonymy and the central conception in God meaning thereby that the final verbal world has a common source, and that is, the infinite God. In other words, he highlights the aspect of the unity of God since everything flows from Him and hence, everything ought to finally converge in Him.

He concludes his argument saying that the second phase of language comes closest to the first phase in the genre of oratory. In other words, both the phases come together in the genre of oratory because oratory is also hieratic in character in the sense that it draws an audience into a closer unit of agreement. This is also the reason why, he believes, historically from Cicero's time to the Renaissance, at least, the orator was regarded as the user of words par excellence. Frye's historical view now takes us to the third phase of language.

Third phase of language

The third phase of language corresponds to Vico's demotic phase. Frye says that this phase begins theoretically with Bacon in English literature and more effectively with Locke. Here words are regarded as, what he calls, "the servo-mechanisms of sense experience, and the mental operations which attend sense experience"¹¹. Frye describes this as a conception of language which is primarily descriptive of nature, and is at the opposite extreme from the first phase: "instead of the words evoking the image, the image evokes the word"¹². This approach to language avoids figuration, whether metaphysical or metonymic. "Such devices", he affirms, "are regarded as merely verbal, and the ideal in style is framed on the model of truth by correspondence"¹³. This means that a verbal structure is set up beside what it describes and is called true if it seems to provide a satisfactory correspondence to it. As compared with the second phase, it still employs continuous prose. The demotic writer, he believes, by avoiding all figures of speech appeals only to the consensus of experience and reason.

After describing in some detail the main features of these three phases, namely hieroglyphic, hieratic and demotic corresponding to the three phases of cultural cycle identified by Vico as the age of gods, the age of the heroes and the age of the people, Frye sees the union of these three phases in the Bible:

The Bible belongs primarily to the first phase of language: its chief second-phase features are its metonymic or monotheistic God and its

constant use of oratorical devices. There are no true rational arguments even in the New Testament, which for all its late date is still astonishingly close to the first phase. What look like rational arguments, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, turn out on closer analysis to be disguised forms of exhortation; in other words, oratory. In the Old Testament, metaphors, puns, and popular etymologies occur so frequently that they clearly represent the dominant mode of verbal thinking. In the Gospels Jesus defines his nature and function primarily in terms of metaphor (I am the door and so forth), and many even of the central doctrines of post-biblical christianity, such as the Trinity or the real presence, can be grammatically

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formulated only in metaphor.

Frye then, sums up his argument saying that literature adapts itself to the dominant phase of language, mainly through allegory in the second phase and realism in the third. "But it is the primary function of poetry, at least," he insists, "to keep recreating the first phase of language and insisting on it as a valid form of linguistic activity during the domination of the other phases".¹⁵ Thus, he adduces the role of primary functions to poetry to keep recreating the first phase of language during the domination of the other phases. In Middle Ages, he says, such a dominant role was played by the Bible.

Referring to the second-phase, he maintains that hieratic writing and thinking tends to deconstruct such metaphysical structures as the Bible and assimilate them to its own metaphors and metaphorical structures. In other words, in hieratic form of language, metaphors and metaphorical structures are simplified and made easier to facilitate interpretation and understanding. This is usually done through allegory. By

allegory, he means a technique of continuously paralleling metaphorical with conceptual language. Thus, he makes use of allegory as a special form of analogy between metaphorical structures and ordinary language. He elaborates this idea, saying:

The tendency of allegory is to smooth out and reconcile an originally metaphorical structure by making it conform to a consistent conceptual norm. In this it is greatly aided by its distinctive rhetorical tool of continuous prose, and by the quality inherent in continuous prose of being able to reconcile anything with anything else... The Bible, in this phase, is wrapped up in thicker and thicker coverings of commentary, until finally it loses most of its effective authority apart
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from the commentary.

Frye's observations here are two-fold: he gives a distinct role to allegory, that is, to reconcile the metaphorical structure with the concept it purports to represent; secondly, that excessive commentary has the effect of diluting and even distorting the original concept of any given form. Or to put it the other way, its essential truth is regarded as being better expressed in the form of the commentary itself.

Frye then turns to the third phase and remarks that since the conception of language in this phase is descriptive, allegorical commentary tends to disappear in favour of a direct confrontation with the work itself, either as an object of knowledge or as an object of experience. This means that as an object of knowledge it is studied in relation to its own time and historical context, whereas, as an object of experience, it is

studied in relation to its relevance for us. In this context, Frye makes an important observation:

A tendency began with the protestant reformation to scrap the accretions of tradition and try to confront the Bible directly, although of course in practice this meant mainly a reabsorbing of it into the rationalizing constructs of the Reformers. A historical criticism gradually developed as a by-product of this tendency, which is now the dominant form of biblical scholarship. After that, archaeology opened the door from the biblical to the pre-biblical, and since then the Bible has been increasingly studied as a mass of traces of pre-biblical activity... When criticism gets so far back in time that there is no longer any documentary evidence to support it, it has to turn psychological, as the scholar's own subconscious is all that is left which is sufficiently primitive to work on.

In this passage, Frye advances his notions as to how historical criticism came to be developed: it resulted as a consequence of the attempts on the part of the Protestants to study the Biblical text directly, without resorting to any of the traditional methods of commentary. And this historical criticism, at least so far as the study of the Bible is concerned has come to stay, for today, as he observes, it has become the dominant form of biblical scholarship. Secondly, referring to the pre-biblical times, he maintains that this study is carried on by archaeology. Beyond pre-biblical times, there is no documentary evidence for criticism to support itself. At this point, Frye believes, the critic or the scholar has to turn to his own sub-conscious as the only primitive tool to rely upon. This point thus marks the beginning for yet another field of

study, and that is the psychological criticism.

Frye's discussions on metaphorical structures and their myriad historical facets is followed by a short commentary on verbal structures and their relationships with the three phases of literature.

Verbal structures, he says, are organised in narrative sequences, or mythoi. In the first metaphorical phase of literature, these mythoi are mainly stories; in the second, metonymic phase, they are mainly conceptual myths or arguments, which again can be related by analogy to the story-myths preceeding them. In the third phase the narrative sequence 'is conventionally assumed to be provided by whatever in the external world is being described'.

After undertaking such an elaborate exercise on the Literary History, running from the age of the gods and travelling through the age of the heroes and encompassing within its fold the Biblical as well as pre-biblical times, Frye reaches the age of the people with the following conclusion: "In our own day we seem to have reached the end of gigantic linguistic cycle, but a failed spiral, and instead of entering a Viconian ricorso and going around the cycle again, we should surely start another one on at a higher level. It is one of the few genuinely reassuring features of a contemporary culture that there should be so heavy an emphasis on resources and capabilities of language itself, apart from whatever it embodies itself in. It seems to be... an essential aspect of this study of language that it recognizes the

equal validity of all three phases without trying to make any one culturally dominant, as they have successively been in the past".
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Thus, in Frye's view, we need not enter what he calls the Viconian ricorso again but on the contrary, come out of the cycle and start another one at a higher level. Frye does not make his point clear what this higher level means nor does he provide any concrete grounds on how to reach at it, apart from saying that the resources and capabilities of language are sufficient to meet these needs and that, unlike in the past, all the three phases of language today co-exist and equally valid in that one does not prevail upon the other or make one culturally dominant or subservient to the other. Probably, Frye refers to those three ages, the age of the gods, the age of the heroes and the age of the people and attributes to them the degrees of 'high' and 'low', treating one as the ascendant and the other as descendant in course of their historical movements from the age of the gods to the age of the people.

In the concluding paras of his treatise on literary history, Frye shifts his focus from literary structures of the narratives to verbal structures. Thus,

Verbal structures, are organized in narrative sequences or mythoi. In the first, metaphorical phase of literature, these mythoi are mainly stories; in the second, metonymic phase they are mainly conceptual myths or arguments, which again can be related by analogy to the story myths preceeding them. In the third phase the narrative sequence is conventionally assumed to be provided by

whatever in the external world is being described. This involves a good deal of rhetoric ingenuity, much of it unconscious, to conceal the fact that is not, but is being generated by, the linguistic movement itself, like the narrative structures of the earlier phases. In fact, narrative structures show very little essential change throughout the three phases, though the characteristics of each phase are still largely unexplored. There is no narrative structure that began in historical times, any more than there is any human being whose ancestry began in historical times. Hence every myth can be traced back until it disappears from view in the Tertiary

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Age, and traced forward to our own time.

Evidently, Frye's analogy of the verbal structures is, to a large extent analogous to the structures of language in the three phases discussed earlier. These verbal structures, he says, are organized in narrative sequences, or mythoi. These mythoi express themselves in the form of stories in the first metaphorical phase; the second metonymic phase consists of myths or other kinds of verbal arguments, while the narrative sequence imported from the description in the external world forms the third phase. Unlike their structures in the three phases of language referred to earlier, the narrative verbal structures are not prone to any cyclic changes and remain constant throughout the three phases of their historical movement.

Referring to the passage cited above, Frye says: "This basis supplies us with a number of critical axioms".²⁰ And then, he proceeds on to apply these critical axioms as under:

First, all argumentative or descriptive verbal structures, he believes, can be studied diagrammatically as analogous to

story-myths. This means, he sees a possibility of studying these two kinds of structures in terms of their relationships with each other. Frye illustrates this aspect of study in the title of Gibbon's history saying that the phase "decline and fall"²¹ indicates the mythical shape, the principle on which he selected his material and arranged his sequential narrative. Similarly, the shape of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, he holds, is the same Eros mountain-climb that we have in Dante's Purgatorio, and so on. Secondly, he says, a myth means 'everything that it has been effectively made to mean.' In other words, in this system he defines myth in terms of whatever it purports to mean. Frye illustrates this in The Dark Night of the Soul saying that what St. John of the Cross did to the song of songs cannot be dismissed as a strained allegorical wrenching of the theme, but is an integral part of its historical development.

Third, the profoundest 'meanings' of a myth, he assumes, are not necessarily in its very early manifestations. He finds this example "in the profoundest treatment of Winter/Summer contest to be more likely in Shakespeare's Winter's Tale than in St. George folk play, though the latter may display the skeleton of the myth more clearly"²² i.e. though it is more obviously clear in the latter than in the former.

Fourth, he argues that we need not worry about doing violence to the 'uniqueness' of a work of literature by studying its mythical ancestry and descent. What is called content, he believes, is the structure of the individual work as distinct

from the structure of the convention of genre it belongs to.

After elaborating in some detail his attempts in the practical application of his critical axioms, Frye undertakes a review of his entire treatise on literary history, and in the light of his observations gives vent to his deeper insights on criticism in the final para of his thesis.

It seems to me that the central conception involved in the historical sequence of literary works is the conception of recreation. A reader recreates everything he reads more or less in his own image; a poet recreates something in previous literature; perhaps a text does not exist at all except as somebody's recreation of it. In all recreation there is a son/father relationship which has a double aspect: an Oedipus relation where the son kills the father and a Christian relation where the son identifies with the father. This is similarly the relation of gospel to law at the centre of the Bible, and in fact we cannot trace the Bible back to a time when it was not recreating itself. Similarly, when we study works of literature, there is an effort to annihilate tradition by isolating them, and simultaneously an effort to identify with tradition by studying them in their context, historical or contemporary. Out of this paradox criticism is born, 'where we stumble all night over bones of the dead', in Blake's phrase, and find in the morning that a

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living organism has rearticulated itself.

Thus, Frye sees the act of recreation as the central conception around which the activities of the reader, the poet and the 'text' revolve. He explains this by employing the analogy of the incestuous relations around which Sophocle's Oedipus is woven and also discusses the relations concerning gospel to law in the Bible. This idea is also implicit in his

statement that a text does not exist at all except as somebody's recreation of it. Along the same lines, he also observes that when we study works of literature, our tendency works both ways: to annihilate tradition by isolating them, and simultaneously, by identifying with tradition by studying the works in their context. This is a kind of paradox, he believes, out of which criticism takes its birth.

In retrospect, Frye's views on literary history reveal that he depends heavily on Vico for whom society begins in an age of gods where laws are assumed to be of divine origin and are interpreted by oracles and divination; it then moves into an age of heroes, where laws are drawn up in the interests of an ascendant class, then to an age of the people, where man is assumed to be responsible for his own laws, and finally to the various stages of ricorso which starts the sequence over again.

III

FRYE ON BIBLE

As we have seen in the preceeding sections, the Bible had been a subject of interest for Frye even before he published his Anatomy in 1957. That Bible had a special place in Frye's scheme of things is obvious from the ambitious design he has set for himself: he makes the Bible the very basis for determining the productive value or usefulness of any literary work. Charles B. Wheeler expresses this view in these words:

... we were given to understand that Frye intended ultimately to apply himself and his characteristic theories to the criticism of the Bible, a subject that he had been interested in all along, with the implication that the ultimate usefulness of any critical system depended on how it could come to terms with this greatest literary movement of

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Western Culture.

Thus, Frye's main attempt here was to make the Bible an ultimate point of reference, at least so far as the basis of evaluative criteria of any work of art is concerned. And to achieve the purpose, he has organized this ambitious project in The Great Code, sub-titled The Bible and Literature with four initial chapters: "Language", "Myth", "Metaphor", and "Typology". The Book is further divided into two halves: the second half is an application of the principles established in the first half, though the theory and application are mixed throughout the second part.

In The Great Code Frye has adopted the following strategy:

- i) to project that the Bible is a 'unity';
- ii) that the Bible is 'unique' compared to other forms of literature;
- iii) that the Bible is its own author and hence, should be free and immune from any critical attacks.

This section attempts to study Frye's view on the Bible and wishes to come to a decision towards the validity or reasonableness of his theoretical constructs.

Frye's study of the Bible begins with a view of language which was identified by the critic Charles B. Wheeler, as a

familiar romantic view of language and human consciousness. According to this view, language is believed to have evolved over a period of time, passing through certain specific stages, corresponding to the stages in the evolution of the way people look at the world. Using a time sequence, Frye identifies three stages of evolution of language and describe them as the 'metaphoric,' the 'metonymic', and the 'descriptive' stages. Offering his comments on the three stages of language identified by Frye, Wheeler argues: "Language is said to move from expressing a kind of primitive integration of the self and the outside world to a state in which it reflects the clear separation of the two into subject and object, adapts itself to scientific description, and submits to the canons of truth and falsity"²⁵. Thus, the romantic view of language maintains a dialectic perspective of language and shows how language evolves through a process of integration, disintegration and re-integration or thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis.

Frye does not stop at the culmination of the dialectic movement of language expressed by Romantics. He points out a special stage of development of language and argues that it stands in the temporal sequence and combines the characteristics of the first two stages, namely those of metaphoric and metonymic and calls it Kerygma meaning 'proclamation', which is represented by only one document, and that is, The Bible. Thus, he claims a unique status for The Bible. This way, he stresses on the transcendental character of The Bible in relation to the

dialectical development of language which is based on integration, disintegration and re-integration. Secondly, 'proclamation' in this context represents a divine word and Frye wants to establish the non-challengeability of the divine word. He wants to show the transcendence of The Bible not only in theme but also in language. Though Frye admits the dialectic movement of the language in terms of the integration, disintegration and re-integration of the society with the outside world i.e. in terms of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, so far as the Bible is concerned, Frye places it a step ahead of this dialectic movement. This also means that in Frye's view, The Bible should not be regarded as an ordinary document which can be subjected to the ordinary canons of critical view.

Chapter I of the book states that "the language by which Frye means vocabulary, is used as evidence of the mind behind the language which is then used to explain the language itself".²⁶ In other words, Frye refers to the dialectic of the language and believes that one has to take recourse to mind, for mind is the seat of the language from where everything emerges - a view held by the idealist school of thought. When we move to the second chapter on myth, we encounter a more sound argument and fewer technical problems. Frye sees myths in two ways: in a general and primary sense, and in particular and secondary sense. Referring to the general sense he observes that myths are sequential structures of language; however, the particular and secondary sense of myths makes him consider myths as stories that

tell a society what is important for it to know, whether about its gods, its history, its laws or its class structures. This binary perception of myth enables Frye to regard the Bible as a kind of myth only. By myth he does not mean something which is false. For people like Frye myth is a basic achievement and hence the Bible for Frye is a higher achievement of sort. Wheeler however, points out that Frye's ascription of the uniqueness to the Bible is expressed in the sub-title of the Book The Great Code, Bible and Literature. Wheeler draws our attention to the fact that Frye's book leads to a point that Frye never equated the Bible to literature and hence did not title his book the Bible as Literature.

The third chapter on metaphor restates the unity of the Bible in terms of language. The language of the Bible is full of metaphor. Metaphor is indeed "One of its controlling modes of thought",²⁷ says Wheeler, and sums up the argument saying that²⁸ the Bible is "a simple, gigantic, complex, metaphor".

Wheeler's reasons for regarding The Bible as a 'gigantic metaphor' is based on the fact that metaphorical language is a rich language, containing a hidden and multivalent meaning. Besides, metaphorical language is a superior language as compared to any other language or any other form of communication. Wheeler's argument here appears quite sound. In fact, metaphor means substitution and behind the metaphor one finds invariably a kind of latent meaning.

From Frye's point of view the Bible being a metaphor enables him to separate it from the context of ordinary language, because metaphorical language, is "centripetal". This means, it does not depend on the correspondence or confirmation of the meaning of the words or concepts to anything external or any external criteria. On the contrary, one has to turn to and look for the meaning of the words and concepts within the canons of the biblical scriptures itself.

So far as the argument on the unity of the Bible is concerned, Wheeler disagrees with Frye's position on the unity of the Bible and argues that Frye ignores the fact that the Bible "is a collection of disparate materials composed over many centuries and brought together by historical process that had a good element of chance in them"²⁹. Wheeler further argues that Frye ignores that the Bible contains many different styles "which homogenizes its originals into that special kind of sixteenth-²⁰ century English that we have learned to accept as biblical". Wheeler's argument about the heterogeneous character, historicity and the lack of unity are adequately sound argument to prove that some of Frye's claims about the unity of the Bible are exaggerated in nature.

In the fourth chapter titled typology Frye defines the term typology as "the procedure of pairing up narrative elements (persons, places, objects, events) separated in time, on the ground that the latter member of the pair somehow echoes,³¹ fulfills or reduplicates the former". Wheeler explains this

through an illustration by saying that "the synoptic gospels record that Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness after his baptism, which is the so-called antitype of the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness during the exodus, the "type". Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount for the author of Mathew was the antitype of the law which Moses received on Mt. Sinai".

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Thus, Frye's concept of typology is concerned with the identification of the social group with its leader, and is not a typological process implicit in the usual definition. And this fact is still more clearly noticeable in the subsequent chapter of the book where he sets up seven main phases in the dialectical sequence of biblical revelation: creation, revolution or exodus, law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel and apocalypse. These types are arranged in such a way that each phase is a type of the one following it and the antitype of the one preceding it.

From the foregoing argument, it begins to be evident that what Frye has done is nothing more than identify most of the standard biblical literary genres. Perhaps his only contribution worth mentioning here is the attempt to tie them to a narrative sequence corresponding somewhat to the actual pattern of history and making each of the genres causally related to all the others. Before his concluding chapter, he has undertaken a conventional study of biblical imagery, concentrating upon images of water, trees, animals, food and fire. And in the last but one chapter, he returns to the structure of the Bible. The Bible, he

believes, has a roughly U-shaped narrative structure, "one in which man... loses the tree and water of life at the beginning of Genesis and gets them back at the end of Revelation. Within this great U is a series of ups and downs which, though they seem to reflect the actual fortunes of the people of the Bible and thus to be tied to historical events, for Frye they are "mythoi"-³³ imaginative constructs, chapters in a narrative". So once again, as we have observed earlier, Frye has been attempting to draw connections and tie down historical events with narrative sequences and vice-versa.

In the final chapter, Frye returns to language and to the topics of authorship and style. Frye's strategy here is clearly to get rid of the issue of individual authorship. By ³⁴ implication, this would mean that the "Bible wrote itself".

It is true that in most of the cases we do not know or may not be able to conjecture correctly who these writers were, but should their anonymity sentence them to non-existence? Frye is not clear on this point.

As regards the Bible as a unity, Frye holds "... the unity of the Bible as a whole is an assumption underlying the ³⁵ understanding of any part of it". In other words, for him, the Bible has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity. It exists only because ³⁶ it has been compelled to exist". It is difficult to agree with Frye in toto on this point. Frye's views on the unity of the

Bible do not seem to be well founded. His argument that 'the Bible has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a 'unity' appears to be a hypothesis and an unexamined conjecture.

It would be pertinent to note in this context the observations of Frank McConnell: "Like the great Martin Buber Frye assumes that the Book is the Book, and that if we cannot hypothesize a single author for it, that is our problem, not the Book's".³⁷ McConnell then, poses a question: "Can we read the Bible as the product of a single, surely transpersonal imagination, or must we read it as the fragmented record of a people's attempt to inscribe their history?"³⁸

Referring to Frye as a critic of the Bible, McConnell observes:

...his reading of the Bible in the Great Code, if it does not tally with most of current biblical scholarship, nevertheless completes and harmonizes his whole life as a literary critic, and - for those of us who were informed and inspired by his work -³⁹ justifies the vocation.

Frye's attempts in making the Bible an exemplar book for all our reading is echoed by McConnell in these words:

If Frye in the Anatomy insisted that the whole of literature could be read...as the creation of a single, universal mind, Frye in the Great Code insists that the Bible can, and should be read as the model of all our reading, the single great literary utterance that teaches us to read the rest of the⁴⁰ world.

An overview of Frye's discussion on literary history would reveal that Frye has adopted an altogether unconventional approach to the study of literary history. Frye's concern was not so much with the study of names, dates of authors or writers or any such particulars but with the different periods and the social factors which influenced the course of the different periods of literary history.

Frye approached the problem of literary history by concentrating on the conventions and genres of literature because he believed that the social values and ideologies of the elite and the ascendant classes had a direct influence and bearing on the conventions and genres of any given period. The influence of values of elite and ascendant classes was so strong and pervasive that a literary historian could easily determine not only the conventions and genres of the given period but also could forecast what would be the conventions and genres of the next age.

Frye's 'value-based', 'generic' approach to the study of literary history however, had a serious limitation. Frye observed that the genres of comedy and romance remained unaffected through all the centuries of social change. In other words, the conventions or ideologies of the elite and ascendant classes had no effect on the genres of comedy and romance and hence were inadequate for the explanation of other aspects of literary history. To make up this deficiency in understanding the development of language through the process of time, Frye was compelled to shift his focus from the conventions and ideologies

to the study of Biblical scriptures. He thus made the Bible as the ultimate point of reference. However, Frye's attempts to project the importance and the role of the Bible in literature in general do not seem to be well founded. For instance, he claims that the Bible is a 'unity', that the Bible is 'unique' compared to other forms of literature and that the Bible is its own author and hence should be free and immune from any critical attacks. While upholding Bible's position Frye seems to disregard the fact that practically every religious book imports the same characteristics of 'unity', 'uniqueness' as Bible do. As regards his other claim that the Bible should be free from criticism, Frye seems to be overstating his case for the originality and greatness of the Bible.

Notwithstanding his own scorn for value-judgements in literature and his attempt to free the Bible from the domain of criticism, he himself seems to make value judgments while upholding the Bible's status, not to speak of his attempt to shield the Bible free from the critical attacks. Secondly, his argument has yet another dimension. While attempting to protect the Bible from criticism he wants to enhance the value and creditworthiness of the Bible. In other words, if Frye were to be judged from this angle, his efforts at enhancing the value or creditworthiness or placing the Bible at a higher pedestal also have the same effect of self-contradiction. Similarly, Frye's attempts to make the Bible the very basis for determining the value or usefulness of any literary work do not seem to be well-

founded.

Nevertheless, though Frye's interpretation of literary history is based largely upon Vico's tripartite phase of cultural cycle, namely the age of the gods, age of the heroes and the age of the people, Frye's approach to the study of literary history based upon social values of a given period is quite a commendable contribution in that it helps a literary historian to view literary history in a new light and in a new perspective. In other words, by showing preference for a historical study based on 'ages' he gains a point over the traditional method of literary history that relies on names, dates and periods. Frye thus, has not only simplified but even enlarged the very scope of studying literary history in that a student of literary history is saved the tedium of going through particulars and personal details related to the lives of authors which may contain subjective influences and may eventually turn out to be of limited value for the study of literary history as a whole. Secondly, by preferring the study of social values, norms, conventions and ideologies Frye has touched upon a totally new ground in that the social values, norms, conventions and ideologies of any period are determinative of the social sensibility of a given age, since these social factors are the outcome of the social conditions, social behaviour, historical evolutions, events and happenings, political system and the like, and thus afford a better peep into the working and evolution of the history and the civilization as a whole. Similarly, the

study of these social factors of a given age would also help forecasting the norms, values, conventions and ideologies of the next age. Undoubtedly, the new approach to the study of literary history advanced by Frye is more safe and objective in character and definitely scores over the limited perspective afforded by the traditional method of studying history of literature.

* * *

Chapter Notes

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CHAPTER X

C O N C L U S I O N

We have seen that Frye's entire critical enterprise centres on four essays in the Anatomy of Criticism namely, Historical Criticism, Ethical Criticism, Archetypal Criticism, and Rhetorical Criticism.

The first, which can be considered his basic essay, 'historical criticism', presents a theory of modes, mode being defined as "a conventional power of action assumed about the chief characters in fictional literature, or the corresponding attitude assumed by the poet toward his audience in thematic literature"¹. The modes, whether tragic fictional, comic fictional, or thematic, tend to move in historical sequence, thus: myth, romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic generally succeed one another in time.

Frye's second essay, 'ethical criticism' develops a theory of symbols, and underlines the necessity of polysemous meaning, of a sequence of contexts or relationships in which to place a literary work for consideration of its narrative and meaning. In chapter number five, we have seen that by symbol Frye means "any² literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention". In modification of the 'medieval scheme,' Frye classifies five

contexts or "phases" of meaning: literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal, and anagogic, and connects these phases to ironic, low mimetic, high mimetic, romantic, and mythical modes respectively. The symbol, working upward through the five phases, is treated as motif, sign, image, archetype, and monad.

Frye's third essay, 'archetypal, criticism' demonstrates the usefulness of the above mentioned categories. In this essay, Frye imparts clarity to the dark area of literary criticism that has been concerned with "myth", "archetypes", and "ritual". The "archetype" for Frye, is literary, and not primordial. It is "a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole."³

Frye divides his essay on archetypal criticism into two parts: theory of archetypal meaning and a theory of mythos. Mythos represent an archetypal narrative such as comic, romantic, tragic, or ironic. The archetypal meaning is explored by Frye in terms of its imagery: apocalyptic, demonic, analogical. The structure of this imagery, its diancia, is set forth largely in Biblical typology. Frye examines these structures in different movements in the mythoi, in their cyclic succession of the Spring of Comedy, Summer of Romance, Autumn of Tragedy, Winter of Irony and Satire.

Frye's final essay, 'rhetorical criticism', presents the Theory of Genres, basing the generic distinctions in literature upon what Frye terms "the radical of presentation",⁴ i.e. the

conditions set up between the poet and his audience. In this theory, a rhythm of recurrence is used to define different epos; of continuity, prose; decorum, drama; and association, lyric. The encyclopaedic forms - scripture, quest, ironic, epic - constitute Frye's categorizing vision, with its predilection for largeness and completeness.

Beginning with a simple aim of presenting a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism, the above referred four essays systematically map out, in Frye's own terminology, the hypothetical verbal structure of literary criticism as an autonomous humanistic discipline. In the words of Harold Bloom, the four essays constitute "an attempt at pure critical theory, a trial summary of ten years labor by an imagination whose power and discipline are unique in contemporary criticism".⁵

This ambitious enterprise helps Frye 1) to put forth his vision of the unity and autonomy of the arts; 2) to establish the necessity of interpreting art-works without the aid of deterministic or extra-artistic beliefs; and 3) to base the structure of criticism upon a total experience of literature itself.

The theoretical grammar evolved by him in this context serves both as a useful handbook for the study and analysis of literature and literary criticism as well. In his review of Anatomy, Harold Bloom remarks, "The major value of Frye's Anatomy

is constructive, based as it is upon the inductive survey of the whole of literature... The minor value is descriptive, and equally relevant: a clear introduction to the structural principles of literature.....⁶ Comparing Frye's poetics to Tovey's 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' Bloom observes that "like Tovey, Frye has given a rational account of the structural principles of a Western art in the context of its heritage, Classical and Christian in the case of literature. But unlike Tovey", he further says, "Frye has had to work alone, for the primitive science of literary criticism, still in its state of naive induction, has not yet got round to the naming of parts".⁷

Bloom thus sees Frye's poetics as a kind of compendium, a reference book to the practitioners of archetypal criticism and even to other forms of art-criticism. Among the beneficiaries he includes those who are motivated by the desire to have a rational account of Western art in the context of its own heritage.

II

Archetypal criticism in Frye's view provides an effective means of knowing the structural principles of literature because it deals with literature in its larger contexts. Proceeding from this assumption, Frye has attempted an elaborate theory of literary criticism, giving archetypes a central place in his criticism.

The literature-archetype relationship contemplated by Frye has earned him the label of an archetypal critic, though Frye himself refuses to commit to any known school of literary criticism. As a literary theorist, Frye's objectives have been firstly, to rehabilitate criticism as an independent activity related intimately to larger human perspectives; secondly, to formulate a comprehensive and systematic theory of criticism independent from value judgements, and thirdly, to raise criticism to the status of physical sciences, by enlarging the scope of criticism itself. He states, "by criticism I mean the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture, or the study of the humanities".⁸

These broad objectives and his commitment to the pursuit of 'liberal education, culture and the study of humanities' enabled Frye to make spacious claims not only about literature, but also about the role of the literary critic. Frye thus claimed that "Literature is not the piled aggregate of works but an order of words".⁹ Literature imitates the total dream of man...";¹⁰ Poetry unites total ritual, or unlimited social actions, with total dream, or unlimited individual thought".¹¹ Secondly, in his introductory chapter titled 'Polemical Introduction' of the Anatomy, he presents quite a convincing argument concerning the role of literary critic:

When Ibsen maintains that Emperor and Galilean

is the greatest play and that certain episodes in Peter Gynt are not allegorical, one can only say that Ibsen is an independent critic

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of Ibsen.

This means an artist, however objective in his approach, may never be an authentic critic of his own work; he may either be misleading or indifferent. In a way, Frye presents the critic with a destiny of his own, and not "as a parasite or artist manque", nor does he restrict the art of criticism to "ritual masonic gestures, to raised eyebrows and cryptic comments and other signs of an understanding too occult for syntax".

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Convictions such as the ones outlined in the above passage probably prompted Frye to take a broad and somewhat inclusive view of art-criticism:

I should want the discussion to be as uninhibited as possible...I have no itch to demonstrate that my views are 'right' and that those who disagree with me are 'wrong' ... Nor do I wish to correct others for 'misleading my position'. I dislike and distrust what is generally implied by the word 'position'. Language is the dwelling-house of being, according to Heidegger, but no writer who is not completely paranoid wants his house to be

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either a fortress or a prison.

Evidently, Frye wanted to uphold his eclectic position by refusing to be attached to any 'position' and he did not want to be branded as a champion of one or the other kind of critical schools. This also makes it clear that he wanted to establish a system of his own in the tradition of Aristotle though in the opening pages of the Anatomy he remarks that the book "forced itself" on him when he was trying to write something else.

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Considering the magnitude of the impact of his work and the influence it wielded on the contemporary generation of critics, Frye's statement on this point appears to be rather too modest. Commenting upon the ingenuity and originality of critical vision of Frye, Robert Denham observes: "The ambition to write on such a broad front, as Frye himself points out, makes a critic particularly vulnerable to objection. But in Frye's case the risk has been worth taking: a great mind has produced a great body of knowledge which will continue to instruct and delight so long as critics ask questions and dream dreams".¹⁶ We have no difficulty in agreeing with this observation of Denham. Frye himself has stated that "The irrefutable philosopher is not the one who cannot be refuted, but the one who is still there after being refuted".¹⁷ Frye is still there even after being refuted!

Given the quantum of critical strictures Frye's works have attracted over the years, it is no wonder that many scholars and critics were particularly impressed by the non-judgemental quality of Frye's system. Frye's pursuit of 'liberal education, culture or his study of humanities' and his admitted propensity to spatialize literature and his genuinely humanistic approach which proclaims that an understanding of literature is indeed of great human importance have led critics and scholars, in their turn to spatialize him. At this point, a reference to some appreciative remarks on Frye showing the respect that Frye's work commands as against the strictures passed by some discerning critics against Frye's system would help us understand Frye's

estimation among critics better.

III

It is possible to identify and place the critics of Frye in two broad groups. Among those who approve of Frye and his methodology of art-criticism are Robert Denham, Murray Krieger, Walter Jackson Bate, Harold Bloom, Steve Polansky et al. It is proposed to consider the opinion of these critics first.

Making a 'provisional' assessment of Frye's works Denham observes

First, Frye's work is of practical value, a system of terms and doctrines and a method which can be used to answer one kind of critical question. Second, his criticism is a creative achievement in itself: it has final as well as instrumental value. And third, his writing taken together forms what might be called a metacriticism, reaching far beyond literature itself in an effort to account for and defend all the products of human culture. In this respect, Frye provides a meaningful apology for the humanities and a way of doing
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criticism on a grand scale.

And continuing his comments upon Frye's reputation as a critic, he further observes: "... the editors of a recent anthology of modern criticism refer to Frye as an "indispensable" critic, linking him with Eliot, Pound and Richards as the "major" critics of our age. "More than any other critic" they say, "he stands at the center of critical activity".
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Denham also defends Frye against "those who have found Frye's work to be the New Criticism writ large"
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..." In Denham's view, those critics "have

committed the error of misplaced emphasis. "My own view," he says, "is that Frye will be seen historically as having moved far beyond the New Critical assumptions because he is primarily interested in asking questions different from those of the New Critics".²¹ In other words, Denham does not agree with critics who support the formalism of New Criticism whose approach to art-criticism was text-oriented in that it reduced criticism to explication or close analysis of the text. Secondly, they entertained a belief that these were the pre-eminent tasks of any critic. As against this, Denham maintains that "Frye has helped us to see that there are other ways of talking meaningfully about literature".²²

Denham, thus, seems to be favouring the multivalent approach adopted by Frye in analysing a literary work.

Another influential critic who studied Frye's works and wrote substantially on him is Murray Krieger. In his general assessment of Frye's critical methodology, Krieger makes the following observations:

There has first been complaint that he neglects and at times flatly denies, the critic's task of evaluation; but the complaint is often accompanied by the acknowledgement that he sometimes speaks about taste and judgement. There has, secondly, been the complaint that in centering upon the literary relations of literature, he irrevocably separates literature from its relation to life, from its mimetic responsibility, but the complaint is often accompanied by the admission that he, sometimes uneasily, wants it tied to life, even in the name of mimesis. It has thus been charged that, while he emphasizes now one and now the other of these

desirable opposites, he cannot fuse them systematically; that he has not shown, "the actual being only a part of the possible". "Literature... neither reflects nor escapes from ordinary life". There has, thirdly, been the complaint that Frye's archetypal interests cheat the individual work of its uniqueness by seeing it only as another translation of the universal story; but this complaint should be accompanied by an awareness that Frye does attend to detailed meaning-functions in the more minute levels of "phases" which he attributes to the many-sided literary symbol.

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The convictions outlined in the above passage indicate that by and large critics have taken divergent views and have often resorted to contradictory views about Frye's methodology of art-criticism. Frye's capacity as a system-builder, his vision and his power of imagination have perhaps been best articulated by Krieger himself when he concludes:

Frye's incomparable power among many of us may well be traced, as Geoffrey Hartman suggests to his universalism, his system making daring, his unmitigated theoretical ambition, his unlimited reach—even where some would say it has exceeded his grasp. His power may be traced also, as Angus Fletcher and Hartman both suggest, to his revitalizing the flow of a romantic sensibility and vision that the critical tradition after Eliot, with the austerity of its would be classicism, had too

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long congealed.

Krieger's observations on the transcendental aspects of Frye's 'incomparable power', his 'universalism' and 'theoretical ambitions' find support in Denham's comments too, when he states that "Frye's ideas had far reaching consequences. "An entire generation of literary critics", he says, "has found his work to

be useful and challenging. The practical effect of his criticism, however extends far beyond its application to individual literary texts, having influenced the nature of curriculum and provided model for educational programs in the humanities".²⁵

Similarly, commenting upon the pervasive influence of Frye's works, Walter Jackson Bate observes that "...Frye's work represents one of the most impressive achievements in the recent history of criticism. He is probably the most influential critic in English since the 1950s. Certainly, in the English-speaking world", he further maintains, "Frye's importance since 1957 is unique".²⁶

Echoing a similar belief, Harold Bloom too remarks: "Frye is the legitimate heir of a protestant and Romantic tradition that has dominated much of British and American literature, the tradition of the Inner Light, by which each person reads scripture for himself or herself without yielding to a premature authority imposed by Church or state or school. This is Frye's true greatness, and all who teach interpretations are indebted to him for precept and for example". Continuing his argument he remarks that Frye "has earned the reputation of being the leading theoretician of literary criticism among all those writing in English today".²⁷ And Steve Polansky speaks of Frye's influence on Bloom saying:

It is my contention that Frye's is a profound and pervasive influence on the theory of criticism and poetry Bloom is later to develop; an influence that works both positively and negatively, and that extends, clarifying and demystifying as it goes into the reaches of Bloom's theory that seem most

arcane".

In his review of Anatomy of Criticism which he called "A New Poetics", Bloom said of Frye, "his is an imagination whose power and discipline are unique in contemporary criticism".²⁹

Along the same lines, George Woodcock too remarks that..."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".³⁰

Donald R. Riccomini argues that although Frye's theory is more complete and comprehensive than that of the structuralists because it submits "the displaced substituted text to the archetypal centre, the diachronous to the synchronous", it shares with structuralism a common participation in the 'metaphysics of presence'.³¹

Critics like Krieger have charged Frye for being too schematic. Krieger observes that "the educational possibilities of his work have been largely responsible for the reduction of certain isolated aspects of his theories into fixed and simplified programs. His large-scale categorizing, the tendency to outline, the invention of a nomenclature - all have misled the pseudo-scientific among his followers into making of him a framework for teaching and for literary study".³²

Frye's own answer to this charge is:

Every critic tries to be coherent and

consistent, and to avoid contradicting himself. Thus he develops his insight into literature out of a systematic framework of ideas about it. But some are better at concealing this framework than others, especially those who are unconscious of it, and so conceal it from themselves".

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In support of his own argument on the 'schematic' nature of his writings, Frye continues further:

The system was there for the sake of insights it contained: the insights were not there for the sake of the system".

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And finally moderates his defence saying:

Actually I am grateful to be read on any terms, but the role of system and schema in my work has another kind of importance. Whatever light it throws on literature, it throws a good deal of light on me in the act of criticizing. It is the schematic thinker, not the introspective thinker who most fully reveals his mind in process, and so most clearly illustrates how he arrives at his conclusion.

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Frye's penchant for systematization is based on his concern for coherence, consistency, and avoidance of self-contradiction in his writings; secondly, he was aware of the fact that his critical enterprise was the outcome of the insights he himself had gained in the early part of his literary career. In order to translate these insights into practice and to concretize his vision into a commonly perceptible and acceptable form, he had to evolve a definite methodology; thirdly, Frye wanted others to accept him on his own terms, like some critics who create taste by which their works are to be judged. Given the magnitude of his critical enterprise and the influence it wielded among the contemporary

critics and scholars, Frye's efforts in building or evolving a system of his own by which he could make himself convincing to others or, 'to most fully reveal his mind in the process' is perfectly justified.

Impressed by Frye's achievements, critics like Frank McConnel have gone to the extent of comparing Frye's works to those of Darwin, Descartes, Noam Chomsky and Einstein. A mere glance at some expressions of admiration, linking Frye with such personalities would make this clear. For example, comparing Frye's methodology with that of Darwin, McConnel comments, "The great initial panache of Frye's work was that he seemed to have discovered and articulated a true science of criticism, in the sense that Darwin had developed and articulated a science of biological change. In the "Polemical Introduction" to the Anatomy, Frye sometimes attains an almost Darwinian synthesis of diffidence and breathless revelation".³⁶

McConnel further compares Frye with Descartes saying "... This makes sense of the assertion by many reviewers that the Anatomy caused a "Cartesian revolution" in criticism.... For, like Descartes in the Discourse on Method, Frye managed to take an objective intellectual structure (criticism, or comparative religion or anthropology - or all three at once) and make a matter of the encounter between that structure and the individual adverting mind..."³⁵ Similarly, he compares Frye to Noam Chomsky and observes that Noam Chomsky "effected the same revolution in linguistics that Frye had performed in literary criticism.

Chomsky's attempt to render linguistics "scientific" not only redirects the course of modern language theory: it also is deeply humanistic, with its daunting array of trappings that resemble symbolic logic".³⁸ And reverting to Einstein, McConnel observes: "In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye effectively presents a unified field theory of literature. Just as Einstein believed that the four (Frye's magic number) elementary forces could ultimately be explained by a single formula, so did Frye in the Anatomy argue that all texts, even the most vulgar and most unofficial, ultimately find their place in the canon of literature".³⁹

According to A. Walton Litz, Frye "shares with his modern predecessors a post-Romantic view of the poem as an autonomous organism, which exists independently from the intentions of its creator"⁴⁰ A similar view is also shared by Steve Polansky when he argues that Frye's critical apparatus is inclusive enough to deal not only 'Romantic' tradition but even with any literature outside it, for "while Frye seems most comfortable with this 'Romantic' tradition, his theory is useful in treating works of almost any genre or period".⁴¹

Commenting on Frye's inclination on Romantic sensibility and his contribution to the study of Romanticism, McConnel observes: "In his book Fearful Symmetry (1947) Frye had magisterially established William Blake as one of the major intellects in English Literature, a man who willed himself to see all previous writing as a single mighty text in whose continuing organic

growth he could participate. And in his later criticism Frye himself acted out his central perception of the Blakean imagination".⁴² McConnell concludes his argument saying that "Frye taught us... that we have the right to know, and to employ, all available information about the structure of human consciousness, and furthermore he taught us that this is not an arbitrary subjectivism, but is in fact the proper task of criticism altogether".⁴³

Thus, a consideration of the foregoing argument raised by the appreciative critics of Frye would reveal that, by and large, they tend to agree on the following points:

- i) Frye has quite successfully put forth and established his vision of the unity and autonomy of arts;
- ii) art-works are to be interpreted without the aid of any extra-artistic beliefs or deterministic methods;
- iii) Frye's method is of practical value and a creative achievement in itself;
- iv) Frye has moved far beyond New Critical assumptions so far as literary analysis of any art-work is concerned;
- v) Frye has been responsible for revitalising the flow of Romantic sensibility and vision, particularly post-Eliotian critical tradition;
- vi) Frye has exemplified that literary criticism is primarily a creative process, and
- vii) Frye's system has been responsible for providing a useful model for educational programs in the humanities.

We have no reservation whatsoever in agreeing to the basic points raised by the appreciative critics in praise of Frye's system. It is not a mean achievement on Frye's part to deviate

from the 'traditional Anglo-Saxon commitment to interpretation' or, 'from the dominant critical tradition - from Hulme through Eliot to the New Critics' as argued by William Rieger and Murray Krieger, or, to 'upset the whole basket of New Critical, Eliotic, "neo-classical" literary values that preceded him' as opined by Imre Salusinszky, and 'still be there' even 'after being refuted' by his non-appreciative critics! However, some of the claims made by critics like Frank McConnell have the effect of pushing Frye's critical system to its extreme. For instance, McConnell eulogizes Frye for causing a kind of 'Darwinian', 'Cartesian', 'Chomskian' and an 'Einsteinian' revolution in literary criticism. Such tall claims made by McConnell seem to be rather exaggerated in nature.

Given the inclusive nature of his critical enterprise in that it covers and makes place for the analysis of practically every kind of literary work and, considering the spate of sweeping statements of admiration from critics like Harold Bloom, Murray Krieger, Robert Denham, Frank McConnell, Frank Lentricchia, Walter Jackson Bate, Steve Polansky and so on, Frye could perhaps be called a system-builder in his own right in the tradition of Aristotle and Kant and could more appropriately be called the Aristotle of contemporary literary criticism.

Critics of the second group, namely, Frederick Crews, Catherine Ellis, Jonathan Culler, Richard Finholt, Murray Schwartz, Walter Davis, Angus Fletcher and Tzvetan Todorov do not agree with Frye's

critical system. A study of their view-points on Frye's methodology would make this clear.

Crew's objections to Frye's critical method are based largely on the assumption that contemporary criticism has paid too little attention to the direct experience of literature. Crews turns to psychoanalysis for the explanation of his theoretical foundations. Crew's insistence on direct experience of literature compels him to give utmost significance to the creative process and the response of the audience. For him, the psychoanalytic explanations of the nature and origin of art is as significant as any study of the work itself. He criticizes Frye's Anatomy for not properly conceiving the function of art and calls it "anaesthetic", thus,

A criticism that explicitly or implicitly reduces art to some combination of moral content and abstract form and genre conventions is literally an anaesthetic criticism. It insulates the critic and his readers from the threat of affective disturbance.... All literary criticism aims to make the reading experience more possible for us but anaesthetic criticism assumes that this requires keeping caged the anxieties that the
44
artist set free and then recaptured.

This means, in Crew's view, criticism should aid the reader's perceptions by making 'the reading experience more possible for us', whereas the 'anaesthetic' criticism, as he calls it, does just the opposite, i.e. it runs away from experience. Crew attributes Frye's system to the latter kind, 45
i.e. a "procedure for cataloguing various forms of the contest". Crews concludes his argument on the point maintaining that a "psychoanalytic oriented criticism would be a better method for

interpreting responses".

Thus, it is easy to see that Crew's position as regards using an extraliterary framework, one that is neither derived from literature nor primarily meant to apply to literature, is diametrically opposed to that of Frye who believes that critics should not stray outside literature in developing their fundamental principles.

Crew's main complaint is that Frye does not give importance to the affective or pleasure function of art and his overemphasis on procedure, schematization and various forms of the contest is at the cost of feeling and experience, the two vital ingredients in the appreciation of any art-work.

Much in the same way, Murray Schwartz too argues: "Frye's style of impersonal categorization amounts to the commission of Whitehead's "fallacy of misplaced correctness" because it posits the reality of literature as "outside" of the actively synthesizing personalities of individual readers".⁴⁷ This means, in Schwartz's view Frye ignores the total response of the individual reader.

Walter A. Davis maintains that in Frye's theorizing "the universality of the system has been purchased at the cost of the phenomenon and of any meaningful principle of artistic individuation, let alone the possibility of man's existential and historical integrity".⁴⁸

Davis's objections to Frye's system are similar to that of Schwartz in that he too believes that in Frye's methodology of art

appreciation "particularity is sacrificed and concreteness of
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artistic individuation is ignored."

Evans Watkins sees Frye's theory as "representative of a
preoccupation with method in contemporary criticism which reduces
the felt intimacy of human activities to a mere model which is
embarrassingly vague at best and is motivated by a desire to evade
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aesthetics and philosophy." Louis Mackey argues "for the
ironic fictionality of Frye's Anatomy through a critique of
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criticism as difference".

William K. Wimsatt declared that "the mode and myth schemas
of Anatomy of Criticism to be so muddled, incompatible and
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mutually-contradicting as to be an "embarrassment", whereas
Tzvetan Todorov argues that "Frye's classifications are not
53
logically coherent, either among themselves or individually".
Commenting on Frye's critical system, Angus Fletcher argues that
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"Frye lacks a developed phenomenology of reading". Along the
same lines, Marshall Grossman opines that "... Frye's four essays,
with their proliferation of polarities, which generate implicit
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maps, and tables, are notoriously resistant to paraphrase".

In his essay 'Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism' Wimsatt
charges Frye with inconsistency; "He can and is willing to
distinguish 'ephemeral rubbish', mediocre works, random and
peripheral experience, from the greatest classics, the profound
masterpieces in which may be discerned the converging patterns of
the primitive formulas. At other moments however, he says that

criticism has nothing whatever to do with either the experience or the judging of literature. The direct experience of the literature is central to criticism, yet somehow this center is excluded from it".⁵⁶ The effect, Wimsatt concludes, is that the reader remains unsure whether Frye "wishes to discredit all critical valuing whatever, or only the wrong kinds of valuing".⁵⁷ Thus, in Wimsatt's objection, one can trace two lines of argument. In the first argument he charges Frye for discriminating great works from not-so-great-works. In the second argument he criticizes Frye for maintaining that criticism has nothing to do with judgement of literature. This puts us in an ambiguous frame of mind. Finally we are left in the lurch. After such disparaging evaluation Wimsatt however comes to a moderate position. This in a way becomes a self-defeating exercise.

Wimsatt develops another objection related to Frye's preoccupation with myth, conventions and isolation of literature from its social context. He accuses Frye for ignoring history and "imprisoning literature in a timeless vacuum of archetypal myths".⁵⁸ Wimsatt articulates this objection in the following words:

The Ur-Myth, the quest Myth, with all its complications, its cycles, acts, scenes, characters, and special symbols, is not a historical fact. And this is so not only in the obvious sense that the stories are not true, but in another sense, which I think we tend to forget and which mythopoeic writing does much to obscure: that such a coherent, cyclic, and encyclopaedic system, such a

monomyth, cannot be shown ever to have evolved actually either from ritual, anywhere in the world, or ever anywhere to have been entertained in the whole or even in any considerable part. We are talking about the myth of myth. As Frye himself, in his moments of cautionary vision, observes, the 'derivation of the literary genres from the quest myth is 'logical', not historical. [but], if we take Frye at his word and attempt to deduce his system 'logically' we will reject it, for the structure which he shows us is... divided between, truisms and ad libitum fantasy.

Wimsatt's scathing attack on Frye's system that 'such a monomyth cannot be shown to have evolved either from ritual, anywhere in the world, or ever anywhere to have been entertained in the whole or even in any considerable part' goes to the very roots of Frye's theoretical foundations. One may agree partially with Wimsatt's observations that Frye's methodological structure of art-criticism cannot be empirically proved.

We also accept the argument of Wimsatt that in his overemphasis of myths and conventions Frye overlooks the history part in the artistic experience and seems to be evolving a historical argument. This objection is valuable, but then, Frye's argument is also valid for the myths, conventions and patterns identified by Frye are equally significant. Frye justified quite convincingly in giving much importance to myths and conventions and patterns in the understanding, analysis and appreciation of any literary art-work in a way that no other critic has done so far.

William Righter believes that Frye's work,

Turns away from the traditional Anglo-Saxon commitment to interpretation. It has been an almost unchallenged presupposition of our critical thought that criticism is some sort of second-order language which comments on, explicates, or explains something quite distinct from itself: a literary work which is assumed to be an imaginative creation of the first order. Frye violates this presupposition in two important ways. First, in spite of individual insights of the greatest interest he is hardly concerned, especially in the Anatomy with particular literary works and their interpretation. He almost reverses the process.... The literary work acts as the explanation of a symbolic scheme, making the critical work the first order of a language on which the example acts as the commentary.... Secondly, his lack of concern with particular literary works and his breadth of concern with literature as a whole have created his own intensely personal form of metacritical language, perhaps of a third order, working at a higher level of abstraction than we normally expect of critical thought.

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Thus, Righter seems to strike at the root of Frye's critical system when he raises following four points.

- 1) Frye deviates from the traditional system of literary analysis of a given work, including the one adopted by the New Criticism. New Criticism is a text-oriented approach which upholds the autonomy or self-sufficiency of literature and prescribes a close analysis of a literary text to arrive at an understanding of configurations underlying it. In Righter's view, Frye is 'hardly concerned with particular literary works and their interpretation'.
- 2) Frye's lack of concern with the study of particular literary works and their interpretation is of a sharp nature, though these works may provide 'individual insights of the greatest interest'.
- 3) Frye is concerned more with literature as a whole rather than any particular literary work. This

turn, compelled Righter to say that Frye has developed a 'form of metacritical language of a different critical order'.

- 4) Frye's system works 'at a higher level of abstraction' meaning thereby that it deviates from the established conventions set up by the practitioners of literary criticism.

Probably, the reason why Frye differs quite radically from the traditional practitioners of literary criticism is that Frye views criticism as a creative process. In fact, he has quite frequently emphasized this aspect when he argued on the necessity of breaking down the barriers that separate the artist from the critic and "become more detached from the romantic mystique

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ones". This view is also explicit in the two passages quoted below from the Anatomy:

The conception of the critic as a parasite or artist manque is still very popular, especially among artists. It is sometimes reinforced by a dubious analogy between the creative and procreative functions, so that we hear about the "impotence" and "dryness" of the critic, of his hatred for genuinely creative people, and so on. The golden age of anticritical criticism was the latter part of the nineteenth century, but some of its

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prejudices are still around.

If I have read the last chapter of Finnegans Wake correctly, what happens there is that the dreamer, after spending the night in communion with a vast body of metaphorical identifications, awakens and goes about his business forgetting his dream, like Nebuchadnizzer, failing to use, or even realize that he can use, the "Keys to dreamland". What he fails to do is therefore left for the reader to do. The "reader suffering from an ideal insomnia, 'as Joyce calls him', in other words the critic. Some such activity as this of forging the broken links between creation and knowledge, art and science, myth and concept, is what I envisaged

for criticism".

The two quotations cited above from the opening and closing pages of the Anatomy, amply demonstrate that Frye never regarded criticism in any way either as sub-creative, or, in contrast to the creative forms of writing such as poems and novels. In fact, this view is also explicit in the last chapter of Anatomy where he argues that literature can be viewed from one of two principal perspectives, the Aristotelian or the Longinian. The difference between the two, according to Frye, is whether art is seen fundamentally as product or as process. In the Aristotelian tradition, nature has reference to the physical order, or to structure and system. In the Longinian tradition, it refers to the total creative process. Frye argues that criticism, like literature, can also be discussed in terms of either product or process, either detachment or participation. "The disinterested critical response", he says, "is fundamental, but never an end in itself,"⁶⁴ for the ultimate aim of "literary education is an ethical and participating aim".⁶⁵ Evidently, Frye believes in the Longinian tradition of criticism as a creative process.

But Righter is not the only critic who dubs Frye for turning away from the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon commitment to interpretation.' Krieger too expresses a similar belief when he argues that

"...Frye's flight from the dominant critical tradition—from Hulme through Eliot to the New Critics...preceded the fervent revolution he perpetrated. His departure accounts for the

seen making a downward movement to the work and the world.... The critic too moves through the lowering displacements of the individual work, the limitations placed on its measurings and movements by its discreteness, its persistent attempts to become a unique self-enclosure. As man, the critic makes a similar downward movement through the unresponsive realities of the unelevated ⁶⁷ the unresponsive world". In other words, Krieger describes the critic as making two movements. In the first movement, he has, as a critic descended to the work. But in course of his second movement, the upward return, the critic need not relate work and world to one another "since both are to be dissolved into something higher"⁶⁸ That 'something higher' in Krieger's view, is the world of literature, of culture, of dream and so on. This means, in the last stage, both critic as critic and critic as man return to the imaginative world, to the world as man wills to have it. Krieger then concludes that "Frye and the modern critical tradition then should, in their opposition, come to be recognised as utter alternatives"⁶⁹.

Thus, it is easy to see that by fielding Frye as an 'utter alternative' to modern critical tradition, Krieger wants to raise Frye to the highest pedestal in the field of literary criticism. By implication, this also means that Frye's 'revolutionary theory' is quite unique, complete in itself and capable of withstanding all kinds of strictures and indictments against it.

We have no difficulty agreeing with Krieger's elevation and

fielding of Frye as an 'utter alternative' to modern critical tradition, or with Righter's dubbing of Frye for turning away from the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon' commitment to interpretation. However, we would find it difficult to agree with Righter's concluding remarks on Frye's achievements that Frye's work is a "perversity of invention", and an "eccentric episode in literary history".⁷⁰ On the contrary we feel tempted to share the note of optimism aired by Krieger himself when he states that "...critics who tried to take Frye whole could not... put him to their uses; they could only apprehend him aesthetically as having the unusable completeness of a poetic entity..."⁷¹ He further argues that as critics, "we have been using him by putting him to our tests, we have not paused sufficiently to accommodate ourselves to him or him to the total march of critical theory. Few except the most faithful (and these therefore too uncritically) have selflessly tried to uncover the source of his power, together with the cost—the expense in theoretical soundness—which that power extracts".⁷² Krieger concludes his argument on this point saying "we must attempt that critical search, however, with a daring if not, alas, with a wit that matches his wit".⁷³

A summary of the argument put forward by the non-appreciative critics of Frye would centre on the following points:

- i) Frye's overemphasis on procedure and schematization is at the cost of feeling and experience; in other words, he does not give importance to the affective or pleasure function of art and thus ignores the total experience of the reader.

- ii) In Frye's methodology of art-appreciation, 'particularity and concreteness of artistic individuation is sacrificed'.
- iii) The myth and mode schemas of Frye's system are mutually-contradicting and logically incoherent either among themselves or individually.
- iv) Frye lacks a developed phenomenology of reading and his 'coherent', 'cyclic', 'encyclopaedic' system has no historical foundation.
- v) Frye turns away from the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon commitment to interpretation' and from the 'dominant critical tradition - from Hulme through Eliot to the New Critics'.

Notwithstanding all the critical strictures against his system, like the 'irrefutable philosopher' determined to be there even 'after being refuted' Frye continues to defend, in the face of such critiques, the underlying continuity and validity of his systems. Stating his case quite forcefully and with a pointed reference to the Anatomy he affirms in the process that his hypotheses have an empirical foundation:

Anatomy of Criticism presents a vision of literature as forming a total schematic order, interconnected by recurring or conventional myths and metaphors, which I call "archetypes". The vision has an objective pole: it is based on a study of literary genres and conventions and on certain elements in Western cultural history. The order of words is there, and it is no good trying to write it off as an hallucination of my own. The fact that literature is based on unifying principles as schematic as those of music is concealed by many things, most of them psychological blocks, but the unity exists and can be shown and taught to others, including children. But, of course, my version of that vision also has a subjective pole: it is a model only, colored by my preferences and limited by my ignorance. Others will have

different versions, and as they continue to put them forth the objective reality will

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emerge more clearly.

Frye's claims on the 'unity' of his system and his 'subjective pole' underlining his personal preferences are perfectly justified. As to his second claim that 'others will have different versions' is quite evident from the myriad expressions of admiration offered by the discerning critics on Anatomy. For instance, A. Walton Litz opines that "...Anatomy of Criticism is a major work of enduring importance... it is the first great work of English or American literary criticism not produced by a practicing artist, and signals a decisive turn toward the continental model".⁷⁵ Rene Wellek argues that "Northrop Frye's immensely influential and highly ingenious Anatomy of Criticism wants to abolish all critical judgment in favour of a concept of literature that makes it an organ of myth-making, a part of man's dream of self-definition. The result is that he can discuss any fairy tale, legend or detective story as if it were on an equal footing with the greatest works of Dante, Shakespeare or Tolstoi".⁷⁶ Continuing his argument further, he opines: "In Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, the cycle of nature rules over all literature. The book does much more than the title seems to promise. It is a theory of literature as existing in its own universe, no longer a commentary on life or reality, but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationships".⁷⁷

Commenting on the impact created by the Anatomy in the English curriculum, Salusinszky observes: "...as the most systemic

treatise on poetics since Aristotle, the Anatomy was one of the great forces behind the establishment of the field now called "critical theory" - a field which has since grown so crowded that periodic crises can be announced in it. The Anatomy demonstrated that, even if we cannot agree about critical methodology, we can at least disagree about critical methodology, and the institutional effects of this demonstration can now be seen in the English curriculum of every major university in the world".⁷⁸ Salusinszky concludes his observation saying, "There can be little argument about the fact that Frye has been the most influential critic since the Second World War".⁷⁹ Hazard Adams believes that "The most comprehensive effort to gather the strands of romantic and postromantic literary theory together under the guiding terms "symbol" and "allegory" has been Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism."⁸⁰ Fletcher observes that "The Anatomy combines multiple techniques and outlooks". He further maintains that "The Anatomy is useful to literary history and more narrowly to literary history, because it can take the form of utopia... By analogy the Anatomy would present a vision of the end toward which criticism tends, especially if criticism is conceived as a socially complex enterprise". He then concludes the argument saying, "The Anatomy of Criticism is indeed its authors' own mental analogy and presents his thoughts as a single intellectual pattern. More exactly this is a Blakean mind informed by mythopoeic prophecy..."⁸¹ Lentricchia opines that "The consistency of Frye is the consistency of an idealism in extremis. Anatomy of Criticism is poised crucially in 1957, looking at once backward to traditions in

poetics of which it is the culmination, and forward to post-
modernist responses to those traditions".⁸²

IV

The first chapter of the thesis is aimed at introducing Frye. While doing it we traced his background, followed his literary career, referred to the early influences on him and recorded his achievements as a major critic. The chapter further gave an outline of New Criticism against which Frye had developed his critical theories by pointing out the inadequacies and shortcomings in the New Critical practice. It was maintained that Frye's critical system emerged as an appropriate response to Formalism and New Criticism.

The second chapter traced the historical evolution of the archetypal criticism and evaluated it in the light of critical observations by various critics on the subject. A discussion on Frye's view of archetypal criticism is followed by a study of his theory of archetypal meaning and mythos. The chapter thus attempted to situate and evaluate Frye as an archetypal critic.

The third chapter began with a historical overview of Myth-Literature relationship. It focused on the study of myth, elaborated Frye's notion of myths and referred to his classification which was mainly based on the linkage shown by him between specific myths and specific literary genres or forms. In the concluding section of the chapter a discussion of Frye's two central notions, the myth of concern and the myth of freedom was

done elaborately to show that they relate different literary genres to these two central forms of myth.

Chapter five discusses Frye's theory of symbols which shows his division of five phases of myths namely literal, descriptive, formal, mythical and anagogic. The chapter further refers to Frye's emphasis on the need for polysemous meaning of text and considers his attempt to situate a literary work in its narrative context or in its narrative sequence of meaning.

Chapter six examines Frye's theory of genres which is founded on the generic distinctions in literature termed by Frye as 'the radical of presentation, 'the condition set up between the poet and his audience'. The chapter further discusses Frye's theories of four types of generic rhythms namely, recurrent rhythm, rhythm of continuity, rhythm of decorum and rhythm of association.

While dealing with Frye's views on literary criticism, chapter seven throws light on the following four basic literary concepts in Frye's critical framework: i) his views on critical autonomy or literary autonomy; ii) his argument that criticism is a science; iii) Frye's critique of value judgments, and iv) Frye's view of imagination. The chapter deals with Frye's attempt to establish the identity of criticism as an autonomous discipline and examines his claim that criticism should restrict its relationships to other disciplines by upholding its own independence.

Chapter eight studies the applied criticism of Frye. By focusing on Frye's study of three authors, namely, Milton,

Shakespeare and Eliot, it is argued that Frye's applied criticism is quite in tune with his theoretical criticism and that there is a commendable harmony between his theoretical and practical criticism.

Chapter nine deals with Frye's writings on Literary History. It develops an argument that Frye did not lack a historical perspective as claimed by critics like W.K.Wimsatt. The second part of the chapter studies Frye's writings on Bible and Literature.

The concluding chapter brings together the different threads of arguments developed in nine chapters that precede it. It takes an overview of some basic questions raised by several critics of Frye and finally attempts to situate and evaluate Frye as a literary critic of great standing.

V

Frye's work marks a definite, indeed a total break with the main endeavour of Anglo-American critical theory. Unlike Eliot's 'impersonality theory', Richards's 'scientific method', Arnold's 'class-configurations' or Murry's 'inner-voice' and 'mystical experience', Frye preferred to develop a more comprehensive theory of art. He attempted to work out, like a syncretist, a rational synthesis of various principles and techniques of literary criticism by taking for consideration the whole phenomena of literary experience, isolating in the process each genre, myth and archetypal literary symbol and then relating them back to literature as a whole. He organized his findings

into specific categories and finally came up with four critical approaches that would eventually form the basis of his four central essays, namely, 'Historical', 'Ethical', 'Archetypal', and 'Rhetorical' criticisms. The first of it, 'Historical Criticism' deals with the modes in literature; the second essay, 'Ethical Criticism' studies symbols in literary works; 'Archetypal Criticism', the third essay, relates to myths, images and archetypes; and finally, 'Rhetorical Criticism' concerns with the genres and generic classification of literary works. Frye ascribed each of these four approaches a definite place in his hypothetical structure but put a particular emphasis on literary archetypes and their relationships to myths.

Impressed by Frye's pre-occupation with archetypes and myths, Wayne Rebhorne was tempted to remark, "... Frye's penchant for plunging beneath the surface of particular works to bring up the pearls of their mythic structures has been both a source of wonder and the cause of many raised critical eyebrows".

Frye began with the simple aim of presenting a 'synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism' and wrote 'A Polemical Introduction' and a 'Tentative Conclusion' to defend this aim. Frye's four critical essays also systematically map out the hypothetical verbal structure of literary criticism as an autonomous humanistic discipline. Published together in book form in 1957, these essays comprise his poetics, Anatomy of Criticism, a non-judgmental theory of literature, a book that established beyond doubt not only Frye's

own brand of 'Archetypal Criticism' as a force to reckon with, but also as "existing in its own universe, no longer a commentary on life or reality, but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationships".⁸⁴

Though the four essays of the Anatomy constitute the main plank of Frye's entire critical enterprise and each essay in itself constitutes a distinct school of thought, Frye has consistently maintained his eclectic position quite admirably by refusing to be branded as a champion of one or the other schools. His pre-occupation and over-emphasis on archetypal interest however, have clouded his approach to individual texts and secondly, earned him the label of a Jungian critic. But this seems to be only a partial assessment of Frye in which his total achievement as a critic is not taken into account. When Frye speaks of archetypes, he is referring not the Jungian concept of racial consciousness, but to certain typical images such as the sea or the forest that recur repeatedly in poetry. Frye believes that in literature, the repetition of such common images of physical nature cannot be explained away as mere coincidences. In his view, each is an "archetype" or a "symbol" which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience".⁸⁵ Besides, Frye himself warns us quite specifically that his use of the terms "myth" and "archetype" should not be taken as an indication that he is Jungian like Maud Bodkin, "whom... I resemble as much as I resemble the late Sarah Bernhardt".

Frye's greatness as a literary critic is to be gauged not only from his achievements alone, but also from the strategies that he had employed to achieve critical precision. Like a visionary who saw "the truth early and has found no reason to change his mind in any important respect", Frye discovered the following four things.

(a) the art of literary criticism was not only misunderstood but was also in disarray mainly on account of a gap in communication among the critics;

(b) in order to bridge this gap, it was felt necessary to develop "a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole".⁸⁶

(c) each critical school had its own specific theory but there was no general framework to measure it by; and

(d) the measure he wanted to devise had to be broad enough to include, in the words of Denham, "the dialectically opposite emphasis: the moral and social reference to criticism, taste and "positive" value judgments; the centrifugal aspect of literary meaning; ideas about the autonomy and the scientific nature of criticism, about value judgments and about literature as self-contained, and ...a breadth of reference which permits him to discuss literature in both its poetic and its more-than-poetic contexts".⁸⁷

No other critic, we believe, has so far attended to such intricate questions more uncompromisingly than Frye. In a way,

this itself marks his invaluable contribution to the field of literary criticism. The passage cited above also implies that Frye's critical plan was extremely ambitious. No wonder that critics and scholars found his achievements too colossal and often too "resistant to paraphrase".⁸⁸ Milind Malshe, even while eulogising Frye's critical enterprise comments over this aspect quite convincingly when he states,

One of the most important polycentric schemes developed in the twentieth century is that of Northrop Frye. It is impossible to discuss briefly the intricacies of a scheme as complex as the one presented in the Anatomy of
⁸⁹
Criticism.

Nevertheless, a few instances where Frye has displayed the originality of his critical vision are worth mentioning here.

In chapter two, while discussing the idea of tragedy, we have observed that the task of rehabilitating comedy and placing it on par with tragedy was taken up for the first time by Frye. Frye has established that "comedy has as much dignity as the⁹⁰ perennially favored tragedy". Impressed by Frye's unique contribution in this regard, critics like Rebhorne realized that Frye is not only "...the starting point for modern criticism of Shakespearean comedy and romance" but that "Frye's approach to the comedies is the inevitable point for all subsequent criticism which amounts anything at all".⁹¹

Secondly, Frye has quite successfully established the importance of myths in the understanding of literature. He postulated that the study of myths helps us in classifying literary works in a better manner. They constitute not only the

integrating principle but also act as the very constructing principle of literature.

Thirdly, as regards the study of literary history, Frye postulated an altogether different method by showing preference for social values, norms, conventions and ideologies for the study of literary history of any particular age. Frye not only simplified but even enlarged the scope of studying literary history. Frye's method of studying literary history is thus more safe, objective in character and inclusive in nature. It helps a student of literature develop an objective and descriptive approach to the study of literature.

Fourthly, while classifying literary works into different genres such as tragedy, comedy et cetera, Frye has made a radical shift from the traditional Aristotelian notions. For Aristotle, the presence of hamartia or typical mental traits or mental make-ups determined the classification of literary works into a tragedy or a comedy. Instead of identifying character-traits of a hero, Frye preferred to concentrate on the actions of hero when he encounters a human or a natural situation.

In the ultimate analysis, how is one to judge such an 'intricate', 'complex' theory of art-criticism, the trial summary of ten years' labour? What criteria should one apply to evaluate a theory which not only scorns value-judgments but itself claims to be non-judgmental? Has Frye's 'enthymemic', 'polycentric' scheme made any significant contribution to the understanding of art in a way hitherto unknown? These questions

lead us to the question concerning the origin, nature, function, and characteristics of art.

For Frye art has its origin in nature. Frye's understanding of literary arts is a part of his larger understanding of man-nature relationship. In Frye's view, different forms of literature (comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire) and different phases of man's growth (youth, maturity, old age and death) have a link with nature's seasons (summer, spring, autumn and winter).

In his eagerness to explain literary works and different art-forms on the basis of his notion of man-nature relationship, Frye correlated the different genres of literature with different phases of mythology of seasons.

In Frye's view, nature enjoys a supreme position. All forms of art have necessarily to conform to the ways of nature and its effects on the life of man. Frye made an attempt to establish that it is possible to explain the complex phenomena of nature in a scientific manner. He has substantiated his arguments by giving us an elaborate classification of art-forms into drama, lyric and so on which is necessarily based on the linkage he had established between the seasons of nature and the human situations. These classifications establish beyond doubt nature's influences on art-forms and art-works and explain the nature of art conceived in a characteristic manner by Frye.

As regards the function of art, Frye believes that basically art has mainly two functions a) aesthetic and b) social. His stress on these dual functions of art (aesthetic and social)

distinguishes him from his predecessors such as the New Critics, the autonomists and the non-autonomists who took extreme and contending positions on the function of art. By emphasizing and merging the twin aspects (social and aesthetic) of art, it was possible for Frye to develop a more inclusive and educative approach to the problem of function of art.

VI

Fifties mark an important critical juncture in the history of literary criticism. New Criticism, the mainstream 20th century literary criticism, proved to be a spent-force by this time as it was unable to meet the literary challenges of the times. The approach of New Critics was essentially text-oriented as they upheld the autonomy or self-sufficiency of literature and prescribed a close analysis of a literary text to arrive at an understanding of configurations underlying it as the pre-eminent task of the critic. In their eagerness to believe that the critic's appraisal must not contaminate an understanding or experience of art by moral, social, historical or other material, they overlooked even the two most important and basic aspects of art, namely, the aesthetic and the social. Gradually, on account of their own inherent weaknesses, New Critics reached a point of exhaustion and by 1950s they were almost in a moribund condition.

At this critical juncture, an 'anti-New Critic', 'dissident', 'anti-academic' voice was needed to play a historical role: to 'salvage' literary criticism and restore it to its proper track.

Like a historical force cut out to play this historical corrective, Frye emerged on the scene at the precise historical moment and achieved this task in a clean and scientific manner. This was indeed, one of the greatest achievements in the history of literary criticism.

Unlike the autonomists, the non-autonomists or any of his predecessors, Frye did not take an extreme position but preferred a middle and a more reasonable path. He was not interested in studying literature per se, but was interested in dealing with it on its own terms and on its broader contexts. He viewed literature in two aspects, aesthetic and social and believed that it is possible to link the aesthetic aspect with the social aspect with the help of certain universals. Frye thus turned to myths and archetypes as his universals for the analysis of literature. Myths and archetypes, he noticed, could work not only as the substratum of art-works but they can also be considered as the foundations of literature. Secondly, by turning to myths and archetypes Frye was able to integrate not only the social and aesthetic perspectives but also could touch upon practically every significant aspect of literature. He observed that myths and archetypes were not limited by categories of specific time or specific space. They had a perennial life of their own, in other words, they would not fade away with the times. At the most, they could simply be "displaced or covered with the veneer of realism, making the new work credible, logically motivated, or morally acceptable to its audience". Frye thus, proved true to his own proclamation in the Anatomy that a person "can get the whole

liberal education simply by picking up one conventional poem and following its archetypes as they stretch out into the rest of literature". No wonder that his own original critical vision, i.e. his commitment and critical concern for "the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is variously called liberal education, culture or the study of the humanities" became not only a source of inspiration and influence "on a generation of developing literary critics greater and more exclusive than that of any one theorist in recent critical history" but a "model for educational programs in the humanities".

Frye's achievement as a literary theory theorist was aptly described by Denham in these words: "A great mind has produced a great body of knowledge which will continue to instruct and delight so long as critics ask questions and dream dreams."

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