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LITERARY HISTORY
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". 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".

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". 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". 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 lanoue 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 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.
Turning to Vico, Frye says Vico suggested that language followed three main phases of cultural cycle:

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 langue hiero
glyphic, 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 hiero
glyphic. 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". 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-Socratic 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". 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". 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".

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 inspite 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.

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". 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". 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". 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 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". 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 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 subconscious 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".

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,

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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 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". 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"
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". 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 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 preceding 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 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:

1) to project that the Bible is a 'unity';

2) that the Bible is 'unique' compared to other forms of literature;

3) 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 describes 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". 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". 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", says Wheeler, and sums up the argument saying that 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". Wheeler further argues that Frye ignores that the Bible contains many different styles "which homogenizes its originals into that special kind of sixteenth-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, 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".

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

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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"—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 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 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 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 McConnel: "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". McConnel 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?"

Referring to Frye as a critic of the Bible, McConnel 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 — justifies the vocation.

Frye's attempts in making the Bible an exemplar book for all our reading is echoed by McConnel 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 the 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 though 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-
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.

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Chapter Notes


2. Ibid. p. 219.

3. Ibid. p. 219.

4. Ibid. p. 219.

5. Ibid. p. 219.

6. Ibid. p. 221.

7. Ibid. p. 221.

8. Ibid. p. 221.

9. Ibid. p. 221.

10. Ibid. p. 221.

11. Ibid. p. 221.

12. Ibid. p. 222.

13. Ibid. p. 222.


15. Ibid. p. 222.

16. Ibid. p. 223.

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17. Ibid. p. 223.
18. Ibid. p. 222.
19. Ibid. p. 224.
20. Ibid. p. 249.
22. Ibid. p. 249.
23. Ibid. p. 225.
24. Charles B. Wheeler, 'Professor Frye and the Bible'
   *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Duke University Press, no.82
25. Ibid. p. 155.
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27. Ibid. p. 156.
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32. Ibid. p. 157.
33. Ibid. p. 158.
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35. Frank McConnell, 'Northrop Frye and Anatomy of Criticism,
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36. Ibid. p.629.
37. Ibid. p.629.
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40. Ibid., p.628.