ARCHETYPAL
CRITICISM
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." 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." 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 newly 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 Taylor's *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 Grave'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 Fable 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". By 'symbol', Frye means, "any unit of literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention". 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." He has identified three different categories on which the work of human desire manifests itself: the vegetable, the animal and the mineral worlds.

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."

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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{divine world} & \quad = \quad \text{society of Gods} = \text{One God} \\
\text{human world} & \quad = \quad \text{society of men} = \text{One Man}
\end{align*}
\]
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...”

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...”.

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." 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 cannons 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". 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 MYTHOS**

In the glossary of literary terms in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye defines *mythos* 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 mythoi 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”.

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…"

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 aroikos or churlish (the rustic). “These four
types", he says, "form two pairs: the contest of eiron and alazon forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood".

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."

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".

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". To define these stages, Frye uses three stages of ritual described by the Greek terms: i) the agon 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 sparaomos 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 sparaomos 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". They are "like black and white pieces
in a chess game". 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 agroikos
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.
In romance the central theme of the fourth phase is to maintain the "integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience". 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". 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". 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". 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. Inspite 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 loose his freedom. He enters a world "in which existence is itself tragic, not existence modified by act, deliberate or unconscious". 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, 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". In comedy, we have noticed three main types of eiron characters: "a benevolent withdrawing and returning figure, the truly slave or vice, and the hero and heroine". In tragedy, the eiron is the source of nemesis (the natural process of self-righteousness). The eiron 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 bomolochi 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". 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". 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". 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". Shock and horror become the main elements in the sixth phase of tragedy in which "the central images are images of saporamos" 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..." 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".

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 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."

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"; a high-mimetic mode that "mingles the heroic with the ironic", and in which "pity and fear become respectively, favourable and adverse moral judgement, which are relevant to tragedy but not central to it", 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"; 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" 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."

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"; the second phase "is in one way or another the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people"; the third phase is one "in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero's achievement"; the fourth phase involves "the typical fall of the hero through hybris and hamartia"; 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"; the sixth phase represents "a world of shock and horror in which the central images are of sparagmos, that is, cannibalism, mutilation, and torture."

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. 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". 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".
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" 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".

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", 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". 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". 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". 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". 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".

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". 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, 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". 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 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 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, just as every psychological experience is real to the subject.

He thus points out a different plane of reality for the systematicality 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 unclear manner". Thus, the sustenability 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 up to 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.
Chapter Notes


4. Ibid. p. 367.

5. Ibid. p. 141.

6. Ibid. p. 141.

7. Ibid. p. 141.

8. Ibid. p. 141.

9. Ibid. p. 143.

10. Ibid. p. 147.

11. Ibid. p. 149.

12. Ibid. p. 151.

13. Ibid. p. 366.


15. Ibid. p. 171.

16. Ibid. p. 172.

17. Ibid. p. 185.


20. Ibid. p. 195.


22. Ibid. p. 197.

23. Ibid. p. 201.

24. Ibid. p. 201.
27. Ibid. p. 207.
28. Ibid. p. 213.
29. Ibid. p. 215.
30. Ibid. p. 216.
31. Ibid. p. 217.
32. Ibid. p. 217.
33. Ibid. p. 219.
34. Ibid. p. 221.
35. Ibid. p. 221.
36. Ibid. p. 223.
37. Ibid. p. 223.
38. Ibid. p. 207.
41. *Anatomy of Criticism*, p.35.
42. Ibid. p.35.
43. Ibid. p.43.
44. Ibid. pp.35-43.
45. Ibid. pp.35-43.
46. Ibid. pp.35-43.
47. Ibid. p.219.
48. Ibid. p.220.
49. Ibid. p.220.
50. Ibid. p.220.

62. Ibid. p. 229.

63. Ibid. p. 229.


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.

