CHAPTER – 5

Myth as Theory: the games critics play
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Northrop Frye gave to a generation of critics new ways of thinking about the vitality of literature. By bringing all of the genres into relations with each other, by establishing a literary universe, *Anatomy* discovered the seemingly endless sources of symbolic energy. Two central processes of myth and metaphor deliver this energy, which otherwise remains bound up and unreleased, stockpiled in the inert language of the dictionary. Myth and metaphor make the energies of language available. *Anatomy* treats literature as a kind of nature, a living system, a vital nexus. This powerful sense of vitality of literature itself and the life within the symbolic universe are transmitted through the critic's personal style and perception. The inter-animation of words, that Richards discerned in rhetoric, finds here a cosmic structure - literature - in which to act, upon the poem, and upon the reader.

The task of theory is to isolate the myriad ways in which literature aptly expresses the vicissitudes of desire, individual yearnings, communal wish, across the whole social range. It is an ample enterprise, and its pursuit gave to Frye his well-deserved renown. Literature is alive in and for social humanity; Frye's myths of freedom and concern defined the poles of its universal aspiration. To analyse the theory of theory that would correctly describe such a vast enterprise, one can make only the merest suggestions.
Frye's general theory expresses itself through specific literary genre; it nevertheless presents a continuous problem of orientation. From Fearful Symmetry to Words with Power, Frye remained centered on a biblical world-view. He neutralized Christian dogma by arguing that the Bible is radically mythic and metaphorical. This focus upon the ever-changing Word is at heart Blakean and free from particular dogmas. But it still leaves a question: literature appears, in a significant Western sense, always fundamentally pagan. From Homer to the moderns, literature (and all other arts) develop in opposition to the Hebraic-Christian tradition of iconoclasm, with its persistent antipathy to the image. Frye approaches the inherent hospitality of paganism toward the aesthetic continuum. A biblical focus would seem necessarily downgrading to the humanism, with promotion of the problematic hybrid, Christian humanism. It needs to be examined whether this conflict is truly resolved in Frye.

A second orientation raises the question of postmodernism: The view of the current criticism towards Anatomy of Criticism and The Great Code problematises their master-narratives - grands recits - which Lyotard has claimed one cannot continue to believe. Frye, in his preference for mythic structures, is suspected of inventing, or reinventing, the modernist's master-narrative of 'the old story turned self-referential.' The biblical centre is itself the source of Frye's story, a master narrative that begins with Alpha (the Book of Genesis) and ends with Omega (the Book of Revelation). This Hebraic-Christian story suggests that, despite all his protean inventiveness, Frye remains dedicated to ideas of ideological fusion of Blakean revolutionary thinking and the modernist sense that myth, while under attack from irony, is the only lasting source of literary power.
Genealogically, one might say, Frye's critical theory grows out of two essays, 'The Critic as Artist' and 'The Decay of Lying' by Oscar Wilde. These essays, for the twentieth-century modern period, developed a renovated theory of Romantic imagination. Frye's work is a defense of the myth-making imagination. Every myth seeks its most comfortable form or genre; because Frye's theory is, itself, projected as a conceptual myth, his thought is ordered into a larger story. Here the most inclusive form in which Frye expressed his conceptual interests, the 'anatomy', assumes importance. Self-reflexively, this defines for his theorizing the limits of its manner and genre of its organization. The 'anatomy' in its satiric Menippean form 'deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes' (309). The genre has the power to 'handle abstract ideas and theories ... and presents people the mouthpieces of the ideas they represent' Menippean satires, (Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* and Lucian in his *Dialogues*) rely 'on the play of intellectual fancy and the kind of humorous observation that produces caricature' (310). As compared with the normalizing flow of novelistic narrative, in these Menippean works 'the intellect structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in customary logic of narrative.' This literature of 'a conflict of ideas' leads then, to caricatural, even at times farcical, intellectual play. Another aspect of the genre is equally critical to Frye's master narrative: the move toward the encyclopaedic array. He observes that, while novelists excel in analysing human relationships and social phenomena, 'The Menippean satirist, dealing with intellectual themes and attitudes, shows exuberance in intellectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme or in overwhelming his pedantic targets with avalanche of their own jargon' (311).
After citing Athenaeus, Rabelais, Flaubert in (Bouvard et Pecuchet) as well-known cases, Frye observes 'This creative treatment of exhaustive erudition is the organizing principle of the greatest Menippean satire in English before Swift, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy'. Burton makes the word 'anatomy' mean 'a dissection or analysis, and expresses very accurately the intellectualized approach of this form' (311) A paperback reprint of Anatomy of Criticism is adorned with quotes from reviews, one of which calls it 'a brilliantly suggestive and encyclopedically erudite book' while another characterizes it as a 'brilliant but bristling book.' Frye bristles because he insists upon encyclopaedic scope, raising always the question as to how this range and Blakean exuberance affect the task of theorizing.

Anatomy-theory requires the isolation of contoured features in literature, such as the typical rhythmic gestures accompanying a given kind of poem or narrative. Frye's criticism is featural which, in turn, requires constant scanning of the larger literary horizon under any broad heading, Frye rarely gives us a continuous close reading of a text. He, instead, moves back to a middle distance; the detail or feature he is noting will be visible also in relation to other possible features. This offers a scope larger than the one he is momentarily adopting. He not only watches the forest as well as the individual trees; he watches to see what lies beyond the forest.

The consequence of reading in a middle distance is that Frye gains an abstraction, while affirming the vitality of the work inhering in its Blakean details, its features. The organizing strategy becomes one of shifting by analogy, by featural parallels. Every literary category noted in Anatomy is noted as being like or unlike some other category. All parallels have
their contrary motions, their parodies. The quickest way to grasp what occurs in Frye is to recall his lifelong musical involvement, particularly with the works of his favourite composer, Bach. Frye does critical theory on a strictly canonical plan, in a musical sense. whatever he says, here and now, is counterpointed against what he has been saying, these and then. This musical, polyphonic analogizing governs all Frye's work. One cannot help wondering at the fact that two supreme geniuses of musica speculativa and musica practiva living at the same time, in the same culture, same nation, same town. Frye and Glenn Gould were both addicted to Bach, although Frye played Gomenti sonatas, while Gould played Sibelius. The congruence of Gould and Frye is worth pondering in some depth, especially, about the excessive ways in which so-called artistic and aesthetic experience is valued by our commodified culture.

The polyphonic music as a model allowed Frye to find places and planes for literary features, within the work, within the larger scheme, just as the composer finds places and give the correct movements to his or her musical ideas, motifs, or harmonies. Music is a motion that contains; the free play of polyphony is a controlled play where a canonical or contrapuntal development lead to thematic profusion. Frye was aware of this and more than once defends himself, in Anatomy, against what he calls 'apparent inconsistency.' The contrapuntal effect in Frye requires a musician's memory. To indicate how easily such memory lapses might occur Frye says, 'To sum up, when we examine fiction from the point of view of form, we can see four chief strands binding it together, novel, confession, anatomy, and romance. The six possible combinations of these forms exist, and we have shown how the novel has combined with each of the other three' (312). This 'inexcusable
Pythagorism as Sir Thomas Browne might have called it, is as nothing compared to what we need to keep straight, musically, contrapuntally, in 'Theory of Myths' (Essay 3).

Polyphonic complexity reveals at once the strength and, some have said, the weakness of the whole approach. At the very least, the stretto-like complexity of certain theoretical moments in Frye needs to be positioned in the Blakean light of his purposes, which is visionary.

Critics have questioned the strong analogy between the two domains - literature and music. As a character in Gide's *Counterfeiters* remarks, music seems considerably more mathematical than literature, especially the novel, with its real-world concerns. On the other hand, Frye adopts a motivic as well as featural approach, and he constructs the argument of *Anatomy* on an assumption that literature displays large and complex coherences, as nature displays lawful interactions. The method of the anatomizing is to move through system of fourfold order. In this case the four strata of coherences are denoted by the four essays of *Anatomy*. Mode, then, gives the level at which literature articulates power relations; heroes at different modal levels displaying different degrees and kinds of power; most obviously the gods of myth proper are superpowerful as compared with the enfeebled Gullivers and Gregor Samsas of satire and ironic modality.

Symbol, the subject of Essay 2, is similarly analysed into different existential groups, corresponding with the medieval fourfold symbolic levels literal, allegorical, moral, and analogical. These four ancient categories Frye subsumes under Dante's governing term, the polysemous. But he analytically preserves a fourfold; motif (sign), image, archetype, monad.
Essay 3, on *myth*, which most would call the centre of the whole theoretical map, permutes the same fourfold arrangement general theory of archetypal meaning. Here the degrees and kinds of individual and social empowerment are displayed in their most ancient shapes. Comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony characterize *mythos* of spring, summer, autumn, and winter - and this has nothing to do with actual weather conditions.

Then, moving to Essay 4, on *genre*, we find yet another set of four different fundamental rhythms. Here music shows perhaps most clearly through the surface of the literary argument. The categories epos, prose, drama, and lyric display the rhythms of recurrence, continuity, decorum, and associations. Frye's *Anatomy* is composed according to a contrapuntal, four-part fugato system.

Frye emphasizes that *mythos is* what Aristotle called the soul of literature and then analyses seemingly myriad stories into four basic archetypal shapes of action. He was consciously on guard against misplaced concreteness: the fourfold analysis is to remain theoretically neutral; Frye's anatomizing and his schematic, featural description is to be protected from turning into an allegory of literature. A phenomenological critic is likely to object that nothing as humanly variable, as this-worldly, as actual literary practice can ever be contained in a fugally restricted system of repeated fourfolds; that literature is far less pure and mathematical than the verbal order Frye's *Anatomy* and other essays and treatises seem always to promote.
In a word, the consequence is visionary - without any a priori definition for vision in a literary context, one can say that it involves seeing beyond, seeing through superficial appearances, seeing the hidden interconnections between ideas, images, and reality, seeing 'in' the truth. In a biblical context, vision means either prophecy or apocalypse. In a political or public sphere, it would imply capacity to see through the tangle of conflicting ideas, ideologues, hypocrisies, interests, passions, hopes, fears, and present realities. This usually, is achieved with a clarity not born of slavish calculation, but of a higher order of summation. Richard Feynman said in his Messenger Lectures on the nature of natural laws that the theoretical scientist has often to guess, looking for an emergent order. Anatomy and the other essays and treatises are all studies in emergent order evolving as it does in any complex musical composition.

II

Anatomy "Criticism moves inexorably towards anagogy, as it moves towards the eminent positioning of *Finnegans Wake*, a kind of infinite book, a book seemingly both 'unlimited and cyclical' to use the Borgesian narrator's phrase in Ficciones. The *Wake* is shown to share in the encyclopaedic vitality of the anatomy form itself. Referring to Joyce's 'ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia' Frye links the totality (or infinity?) of *Wake* with his own aim of 'reforging the broken links between action and knowledge, art and science, myth and
concept' a reuniting which will 'appear to be, with increasing obviousness, the social and practical result' of the critic's labours' (354).

There exists, for the West, a kind of 'single volume' to use phrase of Letizia Alvarez de Toledo - the Bible. This work can scarcely be called a work, and even its customary name, the Book, is troublesome to the critic accustomed to volumes of more limited scope. It was to the elucidation of the place, the role, the dynamism, the vitality Bible that Frye gave most of his energy in later years. Frye called, in *Anatomy*, for a 'genuine higher criticism of the Bible'. This he called 'a synthesizing process which would start with the assumption that the Bible is a definitive myth, a single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse' (315). Thus, the Bible is a typological unit; for the Christian reader like Frye, the principle of interconnection between the two Testaments, is not that one allegorizes the other, but that each is a 'metaphorical identification' of the other (315). One might pose that *The Great Code* and its glossing companion, *Words with Power*, belong simply to the Christian theorizing of typological shadows.

But the most cursory examination of the two treatises, *The Great* especially, shows that Frye was taking the Bible to be, not solely the believing Christian's book, but rather the ultimate book of all books, for that mysterious 'Man of the Book' in Borges's story, To understand the Bible in its literary force and form, then, would be to understand literature itself. Literature then becomes, as an infinite library identified metaphorically with the book of all books, the book within book, the book as mystical body.
A critic, he found in the notion of the final book a model for the sort of totality he believed theory should seek to elucidate. All students of literary and cultural theory need, as Fredric Jameson insists with regard to postmodernism, to discover some way of mapping a sufficiently large totality of human actions. Otherwise theory will produce only short-term, essentially vicious profits, based on shrivelled horizons. Instead theory needs a vision of literature wide enough to approach a sufficient totality. This is the criterion met by Frye's constant tendency toward considerations of final causes. At the same time a passion for literature as totality leads, with Frye, to a persistent accounting of featural detail. What seems original in his criticism, is the way he attempts to articulate the idea of imbricated purposes beyond immediate persuasion and representation.

The name Frye has always been a metonymy for serious, systematic but flexible and always developing reflection on the nature of culture, the conditions of cultural creativity, and the fate of our civilization. Frye remarks somewhere that 'the great synthesis of Marx and Spengler has yet to be written.' Whether Frye thought such a synthesis could be written or should even be attempted is difficult to say, but only a scholar with Frye's range of interests and desire to make sense of history could have envisioned such a project. It might be instructive to reflect on some of the implications of his envisioned coupling of Marx and Spengler, the radical and the reactionary, the would-be scientist of history and the Nietzschean aesthete. Presumably, a synthesis of these two 'metahistorians' would have resulted, not in a monstrous mixture of species, but in something quite new and radically different from earlier philosophies of history. It would be a comprehensive theory of history.
that refused either to reduce culture to a function of material determinations, on the one side, or to inflate, spiritualize, and fetishize it, on the other. This is the kind of theory of culture that is implicit in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*.

III

Contemporary practitioners of what has come to be called 'cultural studies' have not on the whole found much of use in Frye's work. In part this is because cultural studies is a neo-Marxist activity, inspired by the example of such figures as Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Jurgen Habermas, and Louis Althusser, adamantly historicist therefore and paranocially hostile to anything smacking of formalism, structuralism, idealism, or organicism. Frye's work is noted by practitioners of cultural studies as an example of these fallacious or misguided, insofar as they are ahistorical, ideologies. He is put down as one who believed that literature was paradigmatic of culture; that culture itself was autonomous vis a vis society and the modes of material production that determine dominant social formations; and that, accordingly, both culture and society can be studied only in an a-historical, synchronic, structuralist, or formal manner. The panorama of historical occurrence is thus supposed to consists of a finite set of forms of cultural expression of which literature is a paradigm. These interact significantly only with one another and not at all with the more mundane world of economic, political, and social praxis. They succeed one another in positions of dominance and subordination cyclically, rather than progressively or developmentally or dialectically.
For Frye, it would seem, everything happens in cycles. Hayden White regards this to be a banal reading of culture, literature and history (to think that history develops in linear, cyclical or spiral forms). However, he does not completely dismiss such a characterization of Frye by these critics: first, because the cultural-studies Marxists who criticize Frye for his formalism, structuralism, idealism, and so on, are not equally prejudiced against Frye's critical practice, his theory of criticism, and his idea of the relation of criticism, literature, and culture. Some of them have read Frye closely; a number are sympathetic to his larger project of systematizing literary studies; and a few even consider him to have provided a viable model for a Marxist theory of culture. In this last category one can place Fredric Jameson in particular. Then, too, it must be said that a good number of conservative critics and students of culture concur with Frye's Marxist critics in their suspicion of his systematicity, the formalist-taxonomic bent of his work, his demystification of tradition, and what appears to be the determinism of those patterns he purports to find not only in literary criticism, but in the historical development of literary styles as well.

The agreement across such radically opposed ideological positions on the seemingly ahistorical nature of Frye's system complicates the effort to identify his enduring contribution to contemporary cultural studies. For, on the face of it, there is some truth to the charge that Frye's system is ahistorical, in the way Spengler's system, so subtly analysed by Frye in an essay of 1974, is thought to be ahistorical. The alleged ahistoricity stems from what appears to be a cyclical model of literary, critical, and cultural change. In this model progress is measured by an originary displacement of mythic structures of consciousness into a variety of fictional forms, of which literature or poetry is one. Then there is recurrence of a discrete set of modes, symbols, story forms or myths, and genres. The nature of these are defined
primarily in terms of their relationships with one another, rather than with some extraliterary, social, or material causal principle. Nothing would allow us to explain their transformations in other than autotelic terms. Progress in this system consists only in the recombination of a finite, though unbounded, set of discrete elements and a rearrangement of hierarchies of relationships. It renders useless any effort to identify the intentions of individual human agents i.e., authors, or readers. It is immune to the constraints imposed by social and cultural institutions, appealed to as causal forces to explain any given change in the field of literature, and by extension in culture in general.

Changes in modes (from romance through high and low mimetic to ironic), in symbols (from sign through image and archetype to monad), in archetypes (from romance through tragedy and comedy to satire), and in genres (from epic through lyric and dramatic to encyclopaedic) appear to replicate the sequence of the critical practice (from historical through ethical and archetypal to rhetorical). It goes on by never breaking the cycle but only going back to the first in order to permit the pattern to be repeated again - and again. Whence the opinion, often expressed, regarding Frye's similarity not only to Spengler but also, and above all, to Jung.

This understanding of Frye's system can be justified by a reading of his work that focuses on synchronicity for characterizing the structure of literature, culture, and civilization. However, it yields insight into only one aspect of his system and neither the whole nor the essential element of it. Frye was nothing if not a philosopher of human freedom, of artistic creativity, and beyond that of a generally human power of self-creation. This is the Vicenian component in his thought, and it is absolutely essential for an understanding of both his
project and his articulation of it across a very long and very consistent career of intellectual work. Frye often cites Vico's famous formula *verum factum est*. This is usually translated as 'the true is the made' and cited as a tag for Vico's idea that one can truly know only that which one has oneself made or is capable of making. Vico used the idea to distinguish between the kind of knowledge that human beings can have of culture and that which they can have of nature. This theory is called 'maker's knowledge,' and it holds that, since nature was made by God, human beings can never hope to have the kind of knowledge of it that only God could possess. However, the theory also says, since culture is a distinctively human creation, human beings can aspire to a knowledge of culture of a kind and degree utterly different from that which they can have of the rest of nature. And since history is the record of this process of cultural creation, human beings can legitimately aspire to a knowledge both of history and of themselves. As the agents of a specifically historical mode of existence, that is both more true and more certain than any knowledge they can ever hope to have of nature. Historical knowledge, in short, is human self-knowledge and specifically knowledge of how human beings make themselves through knowing themselves and come to know themselves in the process of making themselves.

Vico's theory of 'maker's knowledge' provides an epistemological basis for an ethics and pedagogy of humanism radically different from that of Enlightenment rationalism. Maker's knowledge' is not only a way of characterizing the kind of activity we might wish to call 'poetic'; it is also a way of characterizing the kind of knowledge we get from reflecting on human creativity. It was Vico who, against the emergent rationalist dogmas of the Enlightenment, purported to find the secret of human creativity, of culture, and therefore of
human history. He sought for it not in reason or even in the will, but rather in the imagination, in the human capacity to think in images as well as in concepts, or metaphors. It is a basis for action in, against, and with the rest of nature. Its aim is to humanize nature and make of it a dwelling place adequate to the satisfaction of distinctively human, as against generally animal, needs and desires. Whereas Kant and the Enlightenment in general viewed metaphor as the source of all error, Vico viewed metaphor as the basis of a uniquely human kind of intellection, an intellection that was projective as well as reflective. It is capable not only of registering and combining experiences but of shaping them as well. It is precisely in the same way that the poet shapes language and, in shaping it, revivifies it, remakes it, makes it new. It reveals hitherto un-apprehended potentialities for expression, permitting the world to appear in a new and unexpected light at the same time. For Vico, metaphor and image were not presumed to stand over against concept and perception as madness to reason or error to truth. On the contrary, Vico envisioned a continuity between metaphoric thinking (what he called 'poetic logic' [The New Science, Book III]) and rational or scientific thinking. The former is related to the latter not as an inferior or childish kind of thinking to a superior or adult kind of thought, but rather as an opening stanza of a poem might be related to its final stanza or, more pertinently, as a poetic prefiguration is related to its fulfilled form. This relationship of the beginning of a poem to its conclusion, or of a prefiguration to its fulfilled form, served Vico as a model of the relationship between primitive and civilized consciousness, of that between the earliest age or originary period of a civilization and its latest or decadent period, between the imagination and reason, between popular culture and high or elite culture, and between the human body and the human mind. He did not view the relations thus posited as being either causal or teleological in kind. Those aspects of human
nature and culture conventionally regarded as higher or more advanced were not to be regarded as effects of causes more basic nor were they to be seen as aims, ends, or purposes inherent in things by virtue of genetic endowment, in the manner of an Aristotelian oak-in-acorn. They are, rather, more in the nature of modal transformations of the kind encountered in music or mathematics, with the difference that they exist in things human and historical rather than only in concepts or in algorithms.

Like Vico, and like Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Weber - thinkers who have learned to see dialectically - Frye apprehends continuities and interanimations, rather than oppositions. This is between those phenomena conventionally called truth and error, sanity and madness, good and evil, objectivity and subjectivity, the letter and the spirit, the literal and the figurative, and even between art and life or, within literary art, between poetry and prose, and within each of these, between great, noble, or high forms, on the one side, and their humble, popular, or low counterparts, on the other. Thus envisaged, the world of cultural forms is a stable plenum. Rather than undergoing the kind of change we would call historical, it would seem to resemble more a field of electromagnetic force or a mathematical matrix. It is marked less by evolution than by changing intensities, displacements, and modalities. Certainly, this is the kind of thing suggested by those numerous schemata and descriptions of modular relationships (as between mythic archetypes, genres, modes, symbols, and the like) encountered in works like Anatomy, Words with Power, or the essays collected in Fables of Identity.
But such schemata apply only to those moments in which Frye, drawing back from the panorama of Western cultural history or the history of Western literature from the Greeks and the ancient Hebrews to the present, seeks to view it whole and synchronically. This is to capture its most prominent structural features as if in a kind of still photograph or holographic reproduction. That this system has undergone change and continues to undergo change goes without saying. The crucial role of the concept of displacement in Frye's work from first to last indicates much. But displacement is a concept used to characterize the translation of the structures and imagery of myth into literature; it is a concept that makes it possible to conceive of literature as having a history. While displacement continues within literature— for example, 'displacement in the direction of the moral' (AC, 155) when desire is subjected to 'ethical refinement,' as with the Victorians (AC, 156)— it can hardly be conceived as a principle of qualitative change of the kind we associate with real historical development. The displacement of a genre, mode, myth, symbol, or whatever, from one place to another in the system of literature would be an example of what Spengler called 'pseudo-morphosis.'8 Like another fundamental concept in Frye's system, condensation (the equivalent of Freud's Dichtungsarbeit, in The Interpretation of Dreams), displacement indicates a quantitative rather than a qualitative change. The field of literature, or criticism, or culture undergoes change, but only of either local intensities (condensations) or pseudo-morphosis (displacement).

But this is as it should be for any builder of a system. A systematization is a spatialization of a process which must, in the nature of its operations, suppress awareness of temporality and change and fix attention solely upon what remains constant. But when it comes to historical phenomena, which is to say, phenomena that have as their fundamental mode of being in the
world their responsiveness to time and its effects, it is necessary to switch from the synchronic to the diachronic mode. This is necessary to theorize a model, not of structure but of sequentiation; for this the notions of condensation and displacement, with their suggestions of intensification, on the one hand, and of movement, on the other, prove to be inadequate.

It is fair to say that Frye had trouble with history. He had trouble with it because, first of all, he believed in it, which is to say, he believed that culture and society did change and changed in qualitative as well as quantitative ways; but, secondly, he believed that the ways in which culture and society changed were quite different from the ways in which nature or different aspects of nature changed. It is fair to say that historical change was a problem for Frye, because unlike, say Freud, he did not believe that things had to be viewed from the perspective of the final entropic ‘blah.’ Nor did he believe, at least as a principle of professional, as against personal, faith, that everything was going to come out all right in the end. What Frye needed was some kind of equivalent to Kant’s idea of the purposiveness of the art object, which is to say, an idea of nonpurposive purposiveness in order. Hence literature and criticism and, finally, culture itself displayed evidence of the kind of progressive closure with reality as promised in the Book of Revelations. This is the idea that reappears, again and again, in Frye’s work, at least since Anatomy, but especially in both The Great Code and Words with Power.

Frye explicitly rejected a conception of historical inquiry directed at a perfect recovery or even minimally adequate reconstitution of the past. In Anatomy, he cited ‘a fascinating little
book called *Repetition* by Soren Kierkegaard, and proposed using 'repetition' as an alternative to the 'Platonic' notion of anamnesis or 'recollection.' By 'repetition,' Frye tells us, Kierkegaard apparently meant, 'not the simple repeating of an experience, but the recreating of it which redeems or awakens it to life, the end of the process... being the apocalyptic promise: "Behold, I make all things new" (AC, 345). 'Without this sense of "repetition,"' Frye concludes, 'historical criticism tends to remove the products of culture from our own sphere of interest. It must be counterpoised, as it is in all genuine historical critics, by a sense of the contemporary relevance of past art' (AC, 346).

In his 'fascinating little book' Kierkegaard used the notion of repetition to characterize those aspects of life in which what otherwise would seem to be mere 'transition' is grasped as a 'becoming.' And he writes: 'Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so-called is re-collected forwards' (*Repetition*, 4).

'Repetition' or 'recollecting forwards' constitutes the basis of Frye's conception of an 'ethical criticism,' a criticism which 'relates culture... to the future, to the ideal society which may eventually come,' just as 'the imaginative element in works of art... lifts them clear of the bondage of history' (AC, 346-7). It is the Utopian impulse that provides Frye with his unique conception of historical change and historical understanding.

It is interesting to note that Frye returns to the idea of repetition again and again over the course of his career, especially in the two late works, *The Great Code* and *Words with
Power. For example, in the former work, he cites the notion as marking a difference between 'a past-directed causality and a future-directed typology. The mere attempt to repeat a past experience,' he observes, 'will lead only to disillusionment, but there is another kind of repetition which is the Christian antithesis (or complement) of Platonic recollection, and which finds its focus in the Biblical promise: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).' Frye goes on, then, to identify Kierkegaard's 'repetition' with 'the forward moving typological thinking of the Bible' (GC, 82). And he argues that the typology is 'essentially a revolutionary form of thought and rhetoric,' the metaphorical kernel of which is the 'experience of waking up from a dream, as when Joyce's Stephen Dedalus speaks of history as a nightmare from which he is trying to awake.' The kind of transition indicated here is like that of waking from sleep: 'one world is simply abolished and replaced by another.' We have revolutionary thought, he says, whenever 'the feeling "life is a dream" becomes geared to an impulse to awaken from it.' It is the 'typological structure and shape of the Bible' which makes 'its mythology diachronic, in contrast to the synchronic mythology characteristic of most of the religions outside' (GC, 82-3). Thus Frye concludes: 'What typology really is as a mode of thought, what it both assumes and leads to, is a theory of history, or more accurately of historical process: an assumption that there is some meaning and point to history, and that sooner or later some event or events will occur which will indicate what that meaning or point is, and so become an antitype of what has happened previously' (GC, 80-1).

Here we get to the crux of Frye's theory of historical change, or what amounts to the same thing, his theory of cultural/literary change. Repetition is not the simple repeating of an experience, but the recreating of it which redeems or awakens it to life. It names the process
productive of the type/antitype relationship by which a later event, text, period, culture, thought, or action can be said to have 'fulfilled' an earlier one. It is in the same way that a figure of speech such as metalepsis or irony can be said to have 'fulfilled' another figure such as prolepsis or metonymy that may have preceded it in a verbal sequence. 'Fulfillment' here is to be understood as the product or effect of a kind of reverse causation. It is a kind of causation peculiar to historical reality, culture, and human consciousness, by which a thing of the past is at once grasped by consciousness. It is then brought into the present by recollection, and redeemed, made new. This is by being put it to a use unforeseeable by human beings responding to the pressure of what Frye calls 'secondary concerns' and having been diverted from their 'primary concerns': food and drink, sex, property, and 'liberty of movement' (WP, 42-6). Fulfillment (or 'antitypicality') is less like the kind of thing that happens as a result of a process of mechanistic causation than the kind of thing that happens when a person fulfills a promise, honours a vow, remembers an oath, or performs a duty. It is a peculiarly human kind of 'construal' of a relationship between a past and a present.

The archetype or paradigm of this process of change Frye found, of course, in the Christian appropriation of the Hebrew Bible (or the whole of ancient Judaic culture in general) treated as a prefiguration (or type) of which the New Testament (or Christianity in general) was held to be the fulfillment (or antitype). Needless to say, his valorization of this process of appropriation as paradigm of cultural creativity did not endear him to critical theorists - both Jewish, like Harold Bloom, and not Jewish, like Barbara Johnson. For them a notion of creativity based on a concept of 'expropriation,' was repugnant. Thus, for example, Bloom feels 'moved to reject... idealized modes of interpretation... stimulated [by the historical
triumph of Christianity], from the early typology on to the revival of figura by Erich Auerbach and the Blakean Great Code of Frye.

No text,' Bloom informs us, 'fulfills another text and all who insist otherwise merely homogenize literature' ("Before Moses Was," 13). Bloom's criticism of Frye's typological or figural model of historical change seems unduly harsh inasmuch as Bloom's own theories of the 'anxiety of influence,' or 'misprision,' and the necessarily 'agonistic' nature of all writing can legitimately be viewed as another version of the prefiguration-fulfillment model. And far from leading to an 'idealized mode of interpretation' which promotes the notion of a 'homogenized literature' (or history, for that matter), the prefiguration-fulfillment model provides a way of construing the processes of cultural production which we call 'historical'.

For this notion of the relation obtaining between the earlier aspects or periods of a culture's history and later ones allows us to take into account the fact that - in history at least - there is no such thing as creation ex nihilo. It dispels thereby the myth of a creativity without violence. Moreover, it allows us to conceptualize the problem of the relationship between tradition (that body of cultural artifacts inherited from the past) and the kinds of cultural innovation which, though manifestly different from what had come before, still appear to be linked in some essential, but nongenetically determined way to the past. The prefiguration-fulfillment model, indeed, provides a notion of genealogical affiliation as an historically responsible alternative to the physical and biological conception of a genetic relationship. Finally, the prefiguration-fulfillment model of cultural change, with its notion of retrospective expropriation of the products of past creative efforts, reminds us of the 'fallen'
nature of any exercise of merely human creativity. It is always an exercise of power. It redeems itself only in the extent to which it 'makes new' the cultural artifacts used as the material cause of its own operation.

IV

Pondering the legacy of Northrop Frye necessarily leads to the recognition of its scope, which goes far beyond the study of the literary system alone. This in turn entails recognizing the philosophical status of his thoughts. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, once he had established the specificity of the critical activity among intellectual disciplines, Frye showed little interest in the labels others would apply to his own sphere of activity: critic, or historian, or theorist, or philosopher. In practice, however, he always dealt, explicitly or by implication, with the whole universe of human culture, emphasizing the role of works of imagination within it. The philosophical dimension of Frye's concept of literary historicity will also lead us to discover what implications his transformation of historicity harbours for overcoming the perpetual hesitancy of literary studies between the more and the less historical, and how these implications extend to the conceptualizing and writing of literary histories of the present and of the future. Histories are stories; histories of literature, it should not be forgotten, are the stories of stories (like myth, fable, or, romance), and as such they will continue to be written because nations and sometimes even the international community, aspire to have their cultural icons enshrined in continuous narratives.
In our own time, the emphasis on identity and otherness has refocused attention upon the individual, the unique, that which is most difficult to reduce to system. It needs to be examined whether Frye's thought respond to this need. The answer to this question lies, in part, within his concept of historicity and the manner in which it is able to capture the time-bound and the unique within the coherence of a total history.

The structure of Frye's literary system manages to incorporate time without isolating any part of the system in a temporal ghetto in which it could no longer relate to, and be compared with, any other part of the system. On many occasions he calls forth phenomena from immensely distant temporal and spatial, as well as cultural, horizons in order to emphasize their relatedness. But he does so without negating these distances, without eradicating the historical character of each element. If we consider, as an example, Frye's ordering of the phases of satire, we see that it defies rigid periodizations. In that sense it may appear separate from chronology. Yet in itself it tells of a concatenation of changes which tells a continuous story of relations that can be either sequential or paradigmatic at a given time, or both. The sixth phase of satire, which 'presents human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage' (AC, 238) and may feature prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of execution, as well as forms of social tyranny, goes back a very long way to Dante's Inferno, manifesting itself as well in Baudelaire's Les fleurs du mal, Kafka's Penal Colony, and Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. Granted, the archetypal framework of these groupings is designed for transhistorical comparability of narratives severed from their mythical backgrounds; but even as they intersect and communicate they create a time of their own - call it mythical or literary - which relates metonymically to human states.
Specific literary histories, often based on preset periodizations, tend to colour literary phenomena in terms of those periodizations. Frye, on the other hand, demonstrates commonalities of phenomena that may be either distant or close in time as well as space; whether close or distant, history is what their relations engender. In short, his universals work synchronically as well as diachronically. Obvious examples of this process are shown in *The Secular Scripture*, where the hierarchy of four verbal structures - highly mythical ones such as the biblical or the Platonic; nonliterary, serious verbal structures; 'relatively serious' ones in agreeable, popular forms; and 'literature designed only to entertain or amuse, which is out of sight of truth' (21) - is shown to operate for centuries, indeed millennia. The past tense Frye uses in these universalizing, broad-brush statements indicates that they are meant historically. For example, the severely Platonic distinction between truth-oriented and enjoyment-oriented verbal structures became eroded, partly on account of 'Aristotle's more liberal conception of mimesis,' so that in the subsequent tradition 'literature did succeed in gaining a real place in the Christian social order. As its place was essentially secular, the imaginative standards came to be set by the fabulous writers, and the mythical ones had to meet those standards' (21). That these should be statements about the past made in the past tense is only natural, since they are meant to summarize and organize immense corpora of the past in such a way as to orient the analysis of story-telling in modern times; as well they do not contradict detailed intellectual and aesthetic histories dealing with the relationship between truth-claim and form in various temporal layers of the Western past. The point here is that these glimpses over the past from the stratosphere of a certain present have become
For Frye, the periods of cultural history are elementary facts of life, which can be taken for granted. The history of literature ‘seems to break down into a series of cultural periods of varying length, each dominated by certain conventions’ (28). In contradistinction to the kind of literary history from which Frye distances himself, these cultural periods are not containers of dead storage. At all times any part of the system can gain renewed life if a critical reading lifts it from the past into a new transhistorical relationship. That critical reading itself enters literary history. It is this ongoing conversion of the ‘merely’ historical into the live contemporaneity of the literary system which distinguishes Frye among all critical thinkers. It explains his own practice and also paves the way for new work capable of overcoming the handicaps of literary history – which Frye, Rene Wellek, and many others have identified by incorporating a renewed historicity into the system itself. By the same token it helps to overcome the opposition, which had long divided the entire field of literary studies, between the historical and the theoretical attitude, one situating the truth about texts in various aspects of their genesis, the other in a timeless continuum or, more recently, in the discontinuities of individual reading experiences.

To read Frye is to encounter, at every step, statements that provocatively describe the vast historical landscapes resulting from this vision; invariably, the reader is challenged to probe the universality of their scope. At the intersection of the 'everywhere and always' of literary symbolization as it appears in times and cultures very distant from one another, and of the
irreducible and irreplaceable 'here and now' of each work, Frye calls attention to this encounter of the universal and the particular. The first thing that *Anatomy of Criticism* creates is precisely this radical transformation of historicity, rather than a denial of it. We should heed A.C. Hamilton's warning: 'For those who had not read Frye's earlier articles, it must have been surprising that he should base his poetics on a new literary history that reveals the specific historicity of all literary works - so surprising that the essay was misunderstood then and remains so now' (*Northrop Frye*, 45). From this perspective, the system introduced by *Anatomy* constructs a new literary history. By and large, early readers and critics emphasized the new history less than Frye's demolition of traditional literary history. *Anatomy* initially seemed to coincide most easily with the various forms of New Criticism and with literary structuralism. Yet in whatever way a thinker decides to deal with works of the imagination in relation to history, literary works cannot be severed from the cultural processes linked to their birth. These cultural processes are internal to literature; they are 'history within literature' (*CP*, 24), rather than what the French call *histoire guenementielle* with its presumed causative effects upon literature.

To sum up, the internal order of literature invoked by Frye excludes neither history nor literary history nor, most importantly, historicity itself; it includes them within its own articulation. Its specific temporality has to do, in Proustian terms, with the 'time regained' of the literary system rather than with the 'time lost' of past occurrences. One of the first consequences of this is that chronology will not be the ordering principle of literary history reborn. According to A.C. Hamilton,

the new discipline will 'go beyond a chronological survey of literature to an awareness of its total order' (*Northrop Frye*, 55), incorporating the diachronic within the synchronic.
The fictional modes which form the core of the chapter on historical criticism in *Anatomy* constitute an overarching example of such a total order, with a temporal succession broadly applicable to literatures anywhere. This is because all have sacred beginnings and portray gods and heroes before descending from romance to high mimetic, low mimetic, and finally ironic modes. As with any evolutionary theory - and one must remember that Frye's Spenglerian antecedents predispose him to think in evolutionary terms - there is danger in claiming universal validity for such broad schemata. Though it might be tempting to portray it so, history cannot be predetermined. Metahistory, as Hayden White calls it, is not a system of insuperable rules but a place of reflection, of watching for the crises and creations of human consciousness, of possibilities for interpretation. This is particularly important in the case of literatures that have not been fully inventoried and codified, such as emerging literatures, minority literatures, literatures written in exile.

Frye introduces among literary phenomena an order of succession. Throughout his work, he has left countless indications of the way in which literary works (or aspects of works, or groupings of works) enter this order and, by the same token, adumbrate directions for future literary historiography. To show the continuity of Frye's attitudes, let us examine *The Great Code* to see if, in this respect, it coherently echoes the much earlier *Anatomy*. In defining the relationship of the poetic and the historical, the essential movement consists in purifying the former from all circumstantial history. In biblical stories such as the Exodus, 'when we move into what looks like actual history, to which we can attach some dates and supporting evidence' Frye writes in *The Great Code*, 'we find that it is didactic and manipulated history' (40). Or again: 'The priority is given to the mythical structure or outline of the story, not to the historical content' (41). The Bible is composed of 'mythical accretions' rather than
identifiable 'facts': 'It is the bits of credible history that are expendable, however many of them there may be' (42). And finally: 'Homer's sense of history does not mean that he is writing history. Similarly with the Bible' (42). Granted, these statements deal with myth in the Bible and are grounded in what Frye calls the metaphorical phase of language. But this is precisely what makes them so seminal: it is the very prototype of literature, the model of models, that derives its literary nature from being mythical and not depending on historical evidence in the factual sense.

Thus, not unlike many formalists and structuralists, Frye assigned secondary importance to the genesis of literary phenomena, and primary importance to the understanding of their relations and structures. However, his opposition to older concepts of literary history did not stem from any diffidence towards historical change as if it were an intellectual impurity. Rather, in his eyes, the potential for intellectual impurity lay in failing to understand the necessary severance of literary works from their origins. In the history of Russian formalism, which at first excluded temporality, the return of temporality by dint of the concept of evolution as expounded by Tynianov was hailed as a breakthrough. As a postwar structuralist Levi-Strauss, in *Tristo tropiques*, proudly reinstated the very diachrony that he had banished both for instrumental and for epistemological reasons. For Frye, the relevance of literary temporality is obvious. But he does not stress it when bringing together comparable elements within the system, which might originate in widely separate times and places. The distinction the French scholars have long made between *histoire littéraire* (the history of writers and institutions) and *histoire de la litterature* (the temporal unfolding of literature itself) receives in Frye's theory, as well as in his practice, its fullest embodiment ever.
An example drawn from one of Frye's unpublished notebooks might serve to illustrate the manner in which his mind transmuted phenomena into the history that was to become *Anatomy*. Notebook 39 contains materials concerning English poetry of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. Frye, as a very young teacher, structured the outline of his presentation of Renaissance English poetry up until Donne. It is by no means devoid of background information about social life in the Renaissance, such as descriptions of class tensions between the aristocracy and new oligarchy, the rise of capitalism, the geographical explorations or about the state of the English language, inasmuch as it conditions the evolution of poetry. In discussing Sidney, Frye included plans to deal not only with his poetry and poetics, but also with his personality as a 'complete man' and his position among the writers of his time.

However, such contextual elements are scarce in the outline, which privileges the description of each writer's poetry, though not solely its formal characteristics;

the 'mental outlook' of Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*; and genre groupings, with names of poets attached to them: the lyric, the pastoral, sonnet cycles, the didactic, etc. It is also interesting to note that this minimal, compulsory list of topics is followed by a menu of two subjects, between which Frye intended to choose 'if there is more time' Either he would dwell longer on the formal and thematic study of Donne's poetry or he would develop, first, the intellectual presuppositions of sixteenth-century thought through Plato, Augustine, Calvin, Machiavelli, Montaigne, and even cynical and pessimistic tendencies, and, second, Renaissance ideals, including medieval and Gothic ones still held in Elizabethan England. Thus, while helping undergraduate students begin to understand how Renaissance poetry was born, Frye structured his course according to the requirements of the poetic system itself, and
if this were to be called history, it would be strictly that of the unfolding of the genre, with very few biographical or contextual elements intervening.

Notebook 39 was to serve two purposes: right-hand pages were to be used as lecture notes and left-hand pages, as material for 'the book'. Clearly that book, which was to be a sequential, chronologically-ordered history of English Renaissance poetry, was never written. This exemplifies Frye's gradual but energetic departure from a merely chronological ordering towards a multidimensional vision of English poetry within English literature as a whole, and within the literature of the world, as unveiled in *Anatomy of Criticism*.

All concepts basic to Frye's critical theory deal, in one way or another, with temporal becoming. The case of the five fictional modes with their respective types of protagonists is perhaps the most obvious: 'Looking over this table, we can see that European fiction during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list' (AC, 34). Other sequences are of course possible in a world perspective; but, given Frye's premises, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which the mythical would not have anteriority over the literary. In fact, the identification of the mythical and of the literary on Frye's terms rests upon that anteriority, and seems irreversible. Anteriority can be logical rather than temporal; but the process of displacement whereby the myth is transformed into literature necessarily occurs in time. Drawing its structural unity from its mythical origins, the infinite diversification of literature in the world develops as a history. The conventions, genres and archetypes of literature do not simply appear: they must develop historically from origins or
perhaps a common origin' (CP, 34). It is, furthermore, a historicity specific to literature itself:
'I wanted a historical approach to literature, but an approach that would be or include a
genuine history of literature, and not simply the assimilating of literature to some other kinds
of history' (CP, 23). It is this specific; literary historicity that forms part of the framework of
critical activity: 'Instead of fitting literature into a prefabricated scheme of history, the critic
should see literature as a coherent structure, historically conditioned but shaping its own
history ... This total body of literature can be-studied through its larger structural principles'
(CP, 24). Clearly, this; vision encompasses existing historical studies that respect the
specificity; of literature, as well as a variety of possible future historical studies written in a
similar spirit. In other words, the historical aspect of Frye's thought does not disqualify or
destroy literary history as a mode of Intellectual discourse, but sets out for it certain
theoretical standards governing inclusions and exclusions. And, above all, it demands
coherence of inquiry.

The coherence of the inquiry presupposes coherence of the literary system itself; that
is, the kind of spatio-temporal interrelatedness that Frye devises for it. Literary works are
studied independently from origins and their original settings. 'Nearly every work of art in
the past had a social function in its own time... It may have been originally made for use
rather than pleasure, and so fall outside the general Aristotelian conception of art, but if it
now exists for our pleasure it is what we call art' (AC, 344-5). Like Todorov in Les genres du
discours, Frye sees genre initially identified with the speech acts that gave them birth.
Moving away from these original contexts and functions, literary works enter into their own
history, in which their functions relate only to the functions of other literary works; *one of
the tasks of criticism is that of the recovery of function, not of course the restoration of an original function, but the recreation of a new function in a new context' (AC, 345).

We might remember, for example, that post-colonial readings of *The Tempest* are now themselves part of our cultural history. Similarly, every new appropriation makes cultural history in its own time and place. The life of the literary work continues to *make* history. The culture of the past is not only the memory of mankind, but our own buried life. The study of it leads to a recognition scene, a discovery in which we see, not our past lives, but the total cultural form of our present life. It is not only the poet but his reader who is subject to the obligation to "make it new." Without this sense of "repetition" [in the Kierkegaardian sense] historical criticism tends to remove the products of culture from our own sphere of interest' (AC, 346).

Our understanding of Frye's concept of historicity would be distorted were we to neglect the underlying link between literature as history and the manner in which the present responds to history. By definition, the literary system moves forward in time to receive new creations. But to say this is still to describe it in mechanical terms which would totally betray Frye's sense of the role of literature in society and of the role of the reader in giving life to the literary work. It would not be an exaggeration to say that literature enters history precisely inasmuch as it becomes literature; the process of its creative severance from its original circumstantial history strangely resembles its creative severance from truth "claims and
ideologies, a severance without which it could not add new dimensions, new visions, new riches to the history of humankind.

V

One radical difference (which for Frye is not to say opposition) between, Frye and the deconstructionists lies in their contrary working assumptions about the origins of literary language. For Frye literary language, which is to say, the language of myth and metaphor, has its origins in the Logos, or Word, understood as kerygma (DV, 18). This is a word which he borrows from Rudolph Bultman and which he carries as meaning-voice, proclamation, revelation, divine breath, apocalypses. For many deconstructionists. Here one thinks particularly of Derrida, Lacain Kristeva, and de Man, though ignoring their differences and stressing on their Freudian bias - literary language has its origins not in spirit but in flesh, more specifically, as in the case of Kristeva, in the biologic mother's tactile intercourse with her infant. This intercourse beginning orally at the breast, spreads erotically throughout the infant's body in a manner which Freud described as polymorphous perverse.

Frye, on the other hand, focuses on what he calls 'a conception language in which words were words of power, conveying primarily sense of forces and energies rather than analogues of physical bodies' (GC 17; emphasis added). Frye's theory is father-oriented, patriarchal, in the archetypal, rather than biological, sense. Language at its archetypal source is God speaking, proclaiming, revealing, unveiling, and finally incarnating himself as the 'I am that I am,' or, as Frye prefers, "I will be what I will be" (GC, 17) which is to say, 'what I will become.' God being what he will become is, Frye argues, God becoming human,
humanity being the supreme instrument of his becoming. Though for Frye God becomes what he is in Christ and the Christ who he becomes is potentially present in all of us.

This potential presence finds its metaphorical and mythical embodiment in literature, or quintessentially, in romance which assembles unto itself Frye's four mythoi of literature. Literature thus becomes what Frye calls the secular scripture. If Christ is in the spiritual sense the incarnate or literal body of God, literature is his metaphorical body. Metaphor and myth, that is, bind literature fictionally to the Logos, or Word, in a state of suspended disbelief which Coleridge calls 'poetic faith' (Biographia Literaria, chap. 2, 6). Christ, on the other hand, binds us actually to God in a state of active belief or religious faith.

For Frye, as for Coleridge, poetic faith is the secular displacement of religious faith. It 'does everything that can be done for people except transform them' Frye writes in The Double Vision. 'It creates a world that the spirit can live in, but it does not make us spiritual beings' (16). Literature provides in the world of the flesh a home for the spirit. To inhabit that home, to take up here and now a temporal residence in it, one must first become a spiritual being. The process of becoming spirit so as to inhabit 'a world the spirit can live in' requires religious, rather than poetic, faith. Suspended disbelief depends for its suspension upon a mental act of displacement in which what is demanded by belief relaxes into play. 'It is' Frye writes of poetic faith, 'at once a world of relaxation, where even the most terrible tragedies are still called plays, and a world of far greater intensity than ordinary life affords' (DV, 16).
And because it is a world of relaxation and play 'it would be absurd' declares Frye, 'to see the New Testament as only a work of literature' (DV, 16). Literature subordinates its moral and spiritual demands to the operations of the pleasure principle. “I have even compared the literary universe to Blake's Beulah, where no dispute can come' Frye told the members of the English Institute, 'where everything is equally an element of a liberal education, where Bunyan and Rochester are met together and Jane Austen and the Marquis de Sade have kissed each other.’

Beulah is Blake's threefold imago of the married land in which the absence of dispute resides in the pre-Oedipal incestuous bonding of the madonna and child. This is a bonding which in its undisturbed state renders the father imago a shadowy figure which has, like the mythical Joseph in relation to Mary and Jesus, no obvious or explicit biological role to play. Though Frye focuses as a literary theorist upon the secular scripture as the mythical and metaphorical displacement of the Logos, or Word, at the same time he renders it answerable to the Word.

More than that, he identifies the secular scripture archetypally with the mother imago even as he identifies the Bible archetypally with the father image. Beulah as at once the married land and 'the literary universe where no dispute can come' contains an ideal vision of the union of the Bible and literature in and through their shared language of metaphor and myth. Frye, in his Christian commitment to literature, casts himself as the offspring of this marriage. As a pleasurable world of relaxation and play, literature gratifies at an adult level certain abiding infant desires constellated in a maternal myth of the madonna and child in which the father imago assumes no active role.
As a literary theorist, however, Frye renders the pleasure principle operative in his aesthetic response to literature answerable finally to the Logos in which the father imago assumes the dominant role. Though engaging on one essential level in the erotic play between the mother imago and her offspring in a Beulah. Frye's ultimate goal is at-one-ment with the Father. Frye, like Milton before him, understood the 'unceessant care' which rendered 'spoil with Amaryllis in the shade' answerable to 'all-judging Jove' (Lycidas, 64-32).

Deconstruction, on the other hand, operating within language itself, disrupts the harmonious relations between the parental images which govern Frye's verbal universe. Identifying metaphysics with the Logos or Word, Derrida, in 'Structure, Sign and Play argues that there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics.' 'We have' he explains, 'no language no syntax and no lexicon which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest' (Writing and Difference, 280-1). To deconstruct the Logos as a metaphysics of presence, to contest its authority as the authority of what Lacan calls the symbolic or the name-of-the-Father. This is an order which, he argues in Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, envelopes as culture and civilization the life of human beings from the instant of their conception to the moment of their death and even beyond their death (42), is not to slay the Father, destroy the law, overthrow culture-It is, rather, to recognize that the symbolic is, in Shelley's phrase, 'pavilioned upon chaos' (Hellas, 772).
Dismemberment for the deconstructionist is not death. For Paul de Man the decaying corpse of Shelley inscribed on the last manuscript of his unfinished *The Triumph of Life* is itself the paradigm of all texts which necessarily suffer the mutilation that is language. It may seem a freak of chance/ he writes in 'Shelley Disfigured' 'to have a text thus moulded by an actual occurrence [the drowning of Shelley in the Bay of Lerici], yet the reading of *The Triumph of Life* establishes that this mutilated textual model exposes the wound of a fracture that lies hidden in all texts. If anything, this text is more rather than less typical than texts that have not been thus truncated' (*Rhetoric of Romanticism*, -120-1).

For the deconstructionist a literary text is not, as Frye's an organic unity mirroring the unity of the Word. It is always already fractured or dismembered. Deconstruction is not an action performed upon the text. It is, at least for the deconstructionist, an action which literary language by its very nature performs upon itself. Thus the Freudian deconstructionist, Julia Kristeva, like Lacan, a psychoanalyst, describes the dismemberment within poetic language as the traces of the mother's body which she calls the 'semiotic' (*Desire in Language*, 40-2). Prosody, she argues in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, derives from the infant's pre-Oedipal, incestuous bonding with the mother's body, a bond. She describes it as a flow of relatively unorganized 'energy' charges or drives as well as 'psychical' marks which articulate what she, borrowing from Plato's *Timaeus*, calls a 'chora: 'a nonexpressive totality formed by drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated' (25). For Kristeva, therefore, the madonna and child as an icon of what Frye, following Blake, calls
Beulah is not a place of peace and harmony; it is the subversion of the Logos, the Lacanian symbolic, the place of revolution and overthrow.

Analysing in *Desire in Language* a series of madonnas and child by Giovanni Bellini, Kristeva shows the way in which Bellini's madonna, as 'the aggressive phallic mother who ravishes her child, threatens it with castration' (237-70). The role of the mother image is perpetually to challenge the authority of the Logos, Lacan's symbolic or name-of-the-Father. It is perpetually to diffuse the power of the father archetype which, according to Derrida, has from Plato to Hegel enshrined the authority of language itself as the custodian of meaning with its power to make present the will of the divine. Beulah, far from being passive, is the aggressive arena for the overthrow of the Logos understood as patriarchal power.

The chief literary figure to which many deconstructionists, including Derrida and de Man, naturally gravitate is Rousseau, whose *Essay on The Origin of Languages* fully articulates the myth of a maternal source which is gradually usurped by the Logos, or Word. 'To the degree that needs multiply' Rousseau writes, 'that affairs become complicated, that light is shed [knowledge is increased], language changes its character. It becomes more regular and less passionate. It substitutes ideas for feelings. It no longer speaks to the heart but to reason. For that very reason, accent diminishes, articulation increases. Language becomes more exact and clearer, but more prolix, duller/ and colder' (quoted in Derrida's *On Grammatology*, 244).

In his deconstruction of Rousseau's essay in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argues that Rousseau uses the maternal myth of the origin of languages, a myth which renders 'voice as *pulsion*/* infant cry, or what Derrida calls 'animal language not only prior to writing but even superior to writing (142). Writing, Rousseau suggests, is the silencing of the mother, the repression of the infant's bodily contact with her by the Logos, by the logocentric increase of knowledge.
What Derrida sees in Rousseau is the coining into consciousness of what, from Plato onwards, remained a hidden struggle of writing with itself. It is a struggle in which words as signifiers enacted the absence of what they signified. It is an absence which, he writes, no metaphysical or ontological concept can comprehend (246). Confronting the living, speaking corpse of Rousseau in *The Triumph of Life*, Shelley enacts, as de Man suggests, the struggle with the mother *imago* who, as a dancing 'shape all light' (352), blots out with her feet 'the thoughts of him who gazed on them' (384). The 'figure all light is deconstructing language, which is, as language, language deconstructing itself. 'Figures ever new' declares the Shelleyan narrator who acts as the poet's other.

'Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;

We have but thrown, as those before us threw,

Our shadows on it as it past away,' (249-51)

Shelley reading Rousseau is deconstructing a text which neither he nor Rousseau, but writing itself, is writing. De Man describes the process as 'the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn. 'No degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words' (*Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 122). For the deconstructionist, 'the madness of words' resides in the absence of the signified. It lies, as Lacan argues, in desire denied its
object because the symbolic, the name-of-the-Father, has, like the Freudian super-ego, repressed it. For Frye, the Logos, far from repressing desire, fulfills it by carrying it, as Plato's dialectic carries it, to its metaphysical object.

To write, Derrida argues, deconstructing the logocentricism of Plato, is to deface, to forget, to erase. A Derridean text, Tilottama Rajan suggests, is 'a perpetual contesting and cancelling of its own meaning, :: and hence a projection of its own nothingness' (*Dark Interpreter*, 17n). This is too severe. Nothingness for Derrida signifies the absence of the thing to which it conventionally points; it is not in this literal sense a sign, a view with which Frye himself would in part agree in arguing for the autonomy of the Word. The contesting of meaning does not cancel meaning. Rather, it locates meaning in the perpetual contesting of it, even as in Blake meaning is located in ceaseless 'Mental Fight' (Preface to *Milton*, plate 1). Resolution into meaning would, in this sense, be the defeat of meaning, reducing it to closure, to a corpse. This is for deconstruction what every text threatens to become. The task for the poet writing is to keep the corpse speaking, as Shelley keeps Rousseau speaking. His task as poet is to keep writing; writing, the meaning of a text being another text as the meaning of *Paradise Lost* is for the Romantics their ceaseless (re)writing of it.

In a cover story for *Maclean's*, Frye told Mark Czamecki that the Bible, as his mother taught it to him at home until he first entered school in the fourth grade, was 'a load of crap' ('The Gospel/ 42). His lifelong effort to make logocentric sense of the Bible was his attempt to release it from the literalist reading, his mother insisted on, a reading which he more and more experienced as a Jonah being swallowed by a whale. Frye's struggle to break free of this literalist reading through, among other things, an understanding of myth and metaphor,
which bound literature to the Bible without endowing it with the authority of the Bible. It was a liberating experience which he described as the liberal knowledge available to the educated imagination; 'It is the schematic thinker, not the introspective thinker' Frye told the members of the English Institute assembled in 1965 to assess his work, 'who most fully reveals his mind in process, and so most clearly illustrates how he arrives at his conclusions.' One, here, is able to catch a glimpse of the 'introspective thinker' whom Frye for obvious reasons kept not hidden, but well in the background. Particularly because of its Freudian bias, deconstruction opens up, especially in its maternal myth of language origin, a contesting of Frye's logocentric criticism. It is a contesting which, far from cancelling its meaning, serves, to further complicate it by bringing into focus a mental struggle hidden within the system itself. Deconstruction enacts the unconscious operative within Frye's system which the system as system fails as struggle to engage. That struggle is between the fathering of the word as the operations of the Logos and the mothering of the word as relaxation and play from an introspective point of view, which invites a nonschematic approach to what Frye calls 'his mind in process,' Frye's scheme enacts the struggle of the Logos to transform the mother *imago*, who is the subversive phallic mother presiding over deconstruction.

While Frye said he learned more about Christianity from Blake than from any other poet, the left-wing Protestant Milton remained his favourite. 'Jesus returns to his mother's house at the end of the temptation,' Frye writes in The Revelation of Eve' commenting upon the concluding lines of *Paradise Regained*, 'but leaves it again to be about his father's business when he starts on his ministry, or work in the world proper.'-" Like Jesus at the conclusion of Milton's brief epic, Frye, it may be argued, also returns to 'his mother's house' in His
experience of literature as the relaxed play-world of Beulah. Like Milton's Jesus, however, 'he leaves it again to be about his father's business when he starts on his ministry, or work in the world proper/' Frye remarked that, though ordained, he had never really been a minister except for a few months as a student circuit preacher in Saskatchewan. 'The Puritans he said to David Cayley, 'distinguished between a congregation and a church and I feel that I am a fully active member of the congregation although my field of activity has been the university and my writing' (NFC, 185-6).

Frye goes on in The Revelation of Eve to explain Milton's Puritan understanding of the return of Jesus to his mother's house. The mother, he points out, must be understood archetypally as 'the female principle complementing Jesus' (43), which is not the mother in the literal or biological sense, but the redeemed mother of the imagination, the secular or human counterpart of divine grace. Understood in this sense, the redeemed mother becomes what Frye interpreting Milton calls 'the redeemed Bride or Church,' 'Christians' Frye continues, 'should think of their Church as a bride, a young virgin, still under tutelage' (43-4). The mother as 'redeemed Bride' is for Frye the transformation rather than the repression of Kristeva's semiotic by the Lacanian symbolic. Through the metaphor-making power of the imagination that transcends the incest taboo of the Freudian libido, the traces of the mother's body become Frye's verbal universe. One metaphor of the kind is Blake's Jerusalem, at once a city and a bride.

In the context of Frye's ministry or field of activity as a literary theorist, literature becomes metaphorically his church, which is to say, his bride. His relation as literary theorist to literature itself thus becomes a secular version of Christ's relation to his church and Adam's unfallen relation to Eve. In its severest formulation, which Frye in 'The Revelation of Eve'
identifies with his own left-wing Protestant reading of Paul, this means that 'the Word, the male principle, should have "absolute rule"; the Church, has only to murmur "unargued I obey"' (44). 'Absolute rule' and 'unargued I obey' are Milton's words, not Frye's. Frye's employment of them, however, makes his essential and reiterated point abundantly clear: literature like nature is dumb; she cannot explain herself; she therefore remains dependent upon the Logos, 'the male principle' critical theory, to release her meaning from the silence she otherwise maintains, like Keats's 'still unravished bride' in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.'

When the notion of an autonomous literature, which claims the authority to teach the Word, is identified with the Puritan notion of an autonomous church as an unfaithful bride or harlot, Frye's implicit critique of deconstruction begins to surface. Divorcing language from the operations of the Logos, the deconstructionist views literature as the perpetual subversion of what Frye calls 'the male principle' by a phallic mother who forever remains by her very nature a harlot or unfaithful bride. Deconstruction fully inhabits a fallen world which language always already unredeemably enacts. The mother's house to which Jesus returns is not for the deconstructionist the house of 'the redeemed Bride' over which the Logos presides. It is, rather, far closer to the Freudian scene of the warring parents-in-coitus which renders absent the object of tantalized desire. Frye's attempt to transform the is, for the deconstructionist, always already subverted by the recalcitrance of matter or mater. This, in fact, is the recalcitrance of the language itself.

Far from cancelling Frye's logocentric system, deconstruction both complicates its dynamic and, more importantly, releases it from the closure which otherwise as system continues to threaten its ongoing life. Radically opposed to the tyranny of closure - 'no writer who is not
completely paranoid wants his house to be either a fortress or a prison' (Krieger, 28). Frye, rather than opposing deconstruction, viewed it as acotrary nessary for progression. 'I think criticism becomes more sensible when it realizes that it has nothing to do with rejection, only with recognition.ˆ(29)