CHAPTER – 2

Myth as Mode: the rituals of imagination
According to Frye, any narrative, including history, is read diachronically, but is understood, absorbed and analysed synchronically. In the mind of the reader the events of the text, story or happening get unlocked from their chronological seqenciality and are spread out spatially as if all the incidents occurred at the same point of time. Thereafter, the incidents rearrange themselves; the incidents of importance, as perceived by the reader, occupy the center and the other incidents seem to radiate out of that centre in order of their importance. In other words, the muthos (i.e. the temporal or the narrative) is transformed in the process of understanding a text into dianoia (i.e. the spatial or the imagery).

As one applies the same principle to the evolution of Frye’s career, one evinces the very centrality of Anatomy of Criticism in his development as a critic. All his other works seem either to be culminating towards or to be emanating from this seminal text. All most all of his recurrent ideas are contained here-in: his life-long obsession to create a science-like model for literary criticism through his ambitious taxonomic schemata, the Bible as the mythopoeic sub-text of Western imagination, his conception of the unity of human consciousness, the autonomy of criticism and the view that the critic is an artist, whose creativity equals that of the literary genius.
The Anatomy also records his anxiety of influence with Vico, Jung and Fraser, about whom he talks eloquently and with Eliot, about whom he maintains a gingerly protocol of silence. This magnum opus of Frye reveals all his characteristic rhetorical strategy and his very writerly mystifications. An understanding of this work, therefore, is essential to the understanding and appreciation of Frye's critical oeuvre.

This chapter attempts a summary schematic encapsulation, and then a nuanced critique of *The Anatomy of Criticism; Four Essays* (1957).

II

### Fictional and Thematic Types by Mode

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**Spring; Comedy**

1. Existent society remains
2. Criticism of society without change
3. Existent society is replaced by happy society
4. Happy society resists change
5. Reflective and idyllic view
6. Society ceases to exist beyond contemplation
**Summer: Romance**

1. Complete innocence
2. Youthful innocence of inexperience
3. Completion of an ideal
4. Happy society resists change
5. Reflective and idyllic view
6. Society ceases to exist beyond contemplation

**Autumn: Tragedy**

1. Complete innocence
2. Youthful innocence of inexperience
3. Completion of an ideal
4. Individual’s faults
5. Natural law
6. World of shock and horror

**Winter: Satire and Irony**

1. Existent society remains
2. Criticism of society without change
3. Existent society is replaced by happy society
4. Individual’s faults
5. Natural law
6. World of shock and horror.
In the conclusion to his first book, the study of Blake entitled *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye asserts that "a study of comparative religion, a morphology of myths, rituals and theologies, will lead us to a single visionary conception which the mind of man is trying to express." Frye then claims that anthropology and psychology have recently made significant strides toward realizing Blake's version of that unified vision and extending its usefulness to literary study: "many of the symbols studied in the subconscious, primitive and hieratic minds are expanding into patterns of great comprehensiveness, the relevance of which to literary symbolism is not open to question" (424)

These icons of supremely expansive significance, rooted in the elementary mind and excavated through "the study of ritual" and "mythopoeic dreams," constitute Frye's central conception of the "archetype. Frye then makes clear the importance of the analysis of this form for literary study:

"But if we can find such impressive archetypal forms emerging from sleeping or savage minds, it is surely possible that they would emerge more clearly from the concentrated visions of genius. These myths and dreams are crude art-forms, blurred and dim visions, rough drafts of the more accurate work of the artist. ... A comparative study of dreams and rituals can lead us
only to a vague and intuitive sense of the unity of the human mind; a comparative study of works of art should demonstrate it beyond conjecture. (424)

Frye in later writings vigorously poses himself as at odds with Frazerian evolutionary assumptions. But, here his hierarchy of figures, the "crude art forms" of the savage leading toward "the more accurate work" of the civilized artist, are distinctly Frazerian, particularly in their evocation of the future Master-artist whose work is foreseen in those "rough drafts" of the primitive imagination. But perhaps more significant here, the evolutionary rhetoric is extended to the institutional applications of the comparative method itself. The real future Master is the literary critic who clarifies "beyond conjecture" the unity of human mind that is only so hazily suggested, in rough draft form, by the comparative anthropologist and psychologist.

Frye makes clear in his early writings that the possibilities for archetypal criticism are indeed found in draft form in comparative anthropology and, conversely, are found wanting in the more limited, and limiting, studies of post-Frazerian, field-based ethnography. In a review published in the same year as Fearful Symmetry, of Eranos Yearbooks (edited by Joseph Campbell) Frye makes the claim that "it is possible to revert to nineteenth-century comparative methods now that anthropology and psychology have developed their own structures and are less in danger of being twisted out of shape by an alien interest." (12) And in a review of works by Jung, first published in 1953, Frye claims The Golden Bough to be "a book on literary criticism" rather than "a book on anthropology" because "in extracting a single type of ritual from a great variety of cultures, Frazer has done what the [functional] anthropologist, with his primary interest in
cultural patterns, cannot do ... but he has also done precisely what the literary critic, with his interest in ritual pattern, wants to see done"(14)

In the previous passage—only slightly reworded in its later inclusion in *Anatomy of Criticism*—Frye displaces Frazer's masterwork from anthropology to literary criticism: Fraser's work is of no use to present anthropology but of great import to future literary criticism, as he rejects the anthropological focus upon the multiple traits of the single culture. In the literary sphere that shift translates into a de-emphasis upon explications of single literary works and an emphasis upon the commonalities between literary works of often radically differing periods and cultures.

Robert Denham, Frye's most assiduous critic, comments that Frye "characteristically moves away from, rather than into, the literary work, and thus he emphasizes the thematic, narrative, and archetypal similarities among literary works rather than the explication of single texts(100). Therefore, Frye's celebration of Frazer in one respect serves as a manifesto for his own emergent literary criticism. It promoted ultimate unity of human consciousness by disregarding the boundaries between literary traditions, periods, and particular literary texts much as Frazer argued for unity of mind by traversing the lines between specific native cultures.

The archetypal criticism presaged in Frye's early reviews and in Fearful *Symmetry* came to light, of course, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, published in 1957. The reading public was swept away by Frye's tour de force, much as Frazer's audience was bowled over by the monumentality of *The Golden Bough* over half-a-century before. In both cases the massiveness foregrounded the
author's genius at massive arrangement. Frank Mc'Connell's remembrance of his first impressions of Anatomy, as a graduate student in the Yale English department in the early 1960's: it was "the exhilaration of the enterprise, more than the specific details of the system, that made Frye so intoxicating and ... so suggestive"; and, perhaps an even more telling remark, "Where, you had to ask yourself, had you seen an imaginative scope like this? Where had you come across such a breadth of allusion?"

It is crucial to remember, as, that the revolutionary nature of Frye's project can be appreciated by recalling the preeminent position of New Criticism in that period. Frank Lentricchia rightfully emphasizes that "by about 1957 the moribund condition of the New Criticism and the literary needs it left unfulfilled placed us in a critical void" and that myth criticism for years had prepared an alternative that culminated in Frye's Anatomy (After the New Criticism 4)

Although there are significant filiations between Frye's method and New Critical method, Frye himself and his critics of the time usually described Anatomy as a full-frontal assault against the New Criticism; in its resolute break away from the orthodox method of close reading of single texts and in its turn to a more multidimensional approach of reading "between" texts. In this respect New Criticism, with its self-promoting myth of careful, limited, intensive, scientific prodding, and its general refusal to extend beyond the particular literary text, clearly approximates the modern monograph, with its emphasis upon the particular culture. Frye's description of the 'unusability' of contemporary anthropology, becomes an announcement against the New Critical doctrine of limited close reading.
Central to Frye's rhetoric, is the notion that the method governing *Anatomy* represents the sum of *all* critical methods, the ultimate accretion of all critical approaches. This, in his introduction to *Anatomy*, Frye calls "a synoptic view". In his "Tentative Conclusion" he refers to it as "a comprehensive view of criticism.". In fact, this rhetorical move is crucial to Frye's rank as a myth critic: Frye is foremost in that school precisely because he resists its label, striving instead, for the overarching range of a master comparativist.

Frye's claims, *Anatomy* "attacks no methods of criticism . . . what it attacks are the barriers between the methods" (AC 341). And in the explicit discussions of his theoretical aims in his introduction and conclusion, Frye, like Frazer, takes on the rhetorical stance of humbly minimizing his own role as creator of such a compendious system. He, instead, stresses his function as collector, classifier, and synthesizer of those observations garnered from the various readers at work in the field — "The gaps in the subject as treated here are too enormous for the book ever to be regarded as presenting *my* system, or even my theory. It is to be regarded rather as an interconnected group of suggestions which it is hoped will be of some use to critics and, students of Literature". (341)

Frye's representation of a broad spectrum of literary critics approximates Frazer's description of field workers whose critical acumen is realized only when their observations are brought together by a great comparative synthesis. But like Frazer, Frye comes to admit that though all
methods are equal, some are more equal than others. In the Tentative Conclusion he concedes that "in this process of breaking down barriers I think archetypal criticism has a central role, and I have given it a prominent place" (341)

Frye's determined rhetorical pattern of narrowing a profusion of materials and methods to singular principles strikingly resembles his own description of the prose genre of anatomy. The anatomist, Frye notes, "dealing with intellectual themes and attitudes, shows his exuberance in intellectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme" (AC 311; NFCM 117). Frye calls this "encyclopaedic farrago," this "creative treatment of exhaustive erudition," constitutes "the organizing principle" of Anatomy. Frye notes that it "presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern" (AC 310). In his essay "The Instruments of Mental Production," first published in 1967, Frye refers to this steady 'funneling of sweeping vista' in terms of the disciplinary shift from comparativist activity to more limited, field-based social-scientific researches.

"Subjects regroup themselves and other subjects take shape from the shifting relations of existing ones. ... It is in these moments of regrouping that the great genius, with his colossal simplifying vision, gets his best chance to emerge. I wonder if anyone of Freud's stature could emerge from psychology right now…. The Freuds of the future are more likely to emerge, as Freud himself did, from a point of mutation at which psychology begins to turn into something unrecognizable to its scholarly establishment".(8)
Like Freud, and like Frazer, who helped to found a social science on the basis of a merger of classical scholarship and folklore studies, Frye himself is the architect of a virtually new discipline, the "science" of criticism. Frye's figure of the "great genius, with his colossal simplifying vision," strikingly recalls Frazer's evocation of the "master-mind" who "shall arise and survey" the records we have collected and classified and "may be able to detect at once that unity in multiplicity, that universal in the particulars, that has escaped us" (Man, God, and Immortality 31). And it is precisely that quality of simplification and unification that ties Frye most integrally to Frazer.

Frye's rhetoric indicates a disposition fundamental to Frazerian comparativism: commonalities matter more than differences. As early as Fearful Symmetry Frye asserts that "the similarities in ritual, myth, and doctrine among all religions are more significant than their differences" (424), a priority ultimately based on a most Frazerian (as well as Jungian) assumption, that Frye calls "the unity of the human mind" (FS 424). So when Frye in 1953 applauds Frazer's "extracting a single type of ritual from a great variety of cultures," he believes that the extraction proves the aim of archetypal criticism, the "single visionary conception" of man. That is why Frye calls The Golden Bough "a cornerstone of archetypal criticism" (NFCL 123)

In the "Polemical Introduction" to Anatomy Frye begins his treatment of the scientific nature of literary criticism by insisting that pure criticism be defined only by the progression of data to theoretical system that characterizes science: "if criticism exists, it must be an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field. The word 'inductive' suggests some kind of scientific procedure. What if criticism is a science as well as an art?" (7)
Central to Frye's method is what he termed the assimilating of the work into the system. In the Tentative Conclusion to *Anatomy*, Frye keys in on the "analogy" between mathematics and literature. Math for Frye represents the epitome of the move beyond "naive induction" because it "appears to begin in the counting and measuring of objects" but in reality, in practice, it is "an autonomous language, and there is a point at which it becomes in measure independent of that common field of experience which we call the objective world" (350). What excites Frye about the analogy to math is the autonomous and thus appropriative relation of math to its supposed phenomena, the outside world: "Mathematics relates itself indirectly to the common field of experience, then, not to avoid it, but with the ultimate design of swallowing it. It appears to be a kind of informing or constructive principle in the natural sciences: it continually gives shape and coherence to them without being itself dependent on external proof of evidence, and yet finally the physical or quantitative universe appears to be contained by mathematics" (352).

The ramifications of literature's autonomy are extensive. Criticism draws from its data (its texts) for its existence and yet is not dependent upon them and finally gives the impression that it shapes, gives coherence to, those works of literature. Criticism, then, shapes the texts to which it appeals. In *Anatomy* Frye establishes the primacy of critical autonomy. In the first place, he defines a dichotomy between "literature" and "criticism" in which, surprisingly, literature appears more dependent upon criticism than the other way around: while "criticism can talk ... all the arts are dumb" (4). The critic becomes the ultimate, and indeed only genuine, interpreter, who "must be" the "final judge" of a poem's "meaning" (5). Frye's insistence here clearly is aligned with the New Critical notion of the intentional fallacy: see, for example, where he notes...
that an interpretation of *Hamlet* by Shakespeare himself would not constitute a "definitive criticism" (6).

Frye takes a twist beyond New Critical dictum to assert that "what is true of the poet in relation to his own work is still more true of his opinion of other poets. It is hardly possible for the critical poet to avoid expanding his own tastes, which are intimately linked to his own practice, into a general law of literature" (6). In a harsh bifurcatory move, in which the figures of Eliot as dominant poet-critic and himself as emergent professional critic are thinly veiled, Frye charts the necessary avenue by which the former must submit his critical speculations to the latter: "The poet speaking as critic produces, not criticism, but documents to be examined by critics" (6).

What comes through persistently in Frye's Polemical Introduction to *Anatomy* is not what we can learn from or about literature but how important it is for criticism to legitimate itself as a field. Frye laments the "absence of systematic criticism" not because its presence would give us a fuller understanding of the workings of literary texts but because that lack "has created a power vacuum, and all the neighboring disciplines have moved in" (12). The urgency in Frye's tone comes primarily out of the concern over institutional power brokering, just as the language brings to mind the rhetoric of corporate takeover.

One of Frye's arguments for autonomy is that relying on an "externally derived critical attitude" tends to "exaggerate the values in literature that can be related to the external source, whatever it is" (AC 7). When a critic adopts a method or attitude originating from another discipline, Frye
claims, "it is all too easy to impose on literature an extra-literary schematism, a sort of religio-political coloration, which makes some poets leap into prominence and others show up as dark and faulty" (7). Frye assumes here that while other fields are integrally connected to ideological positions, criticism must be free of such "coloration" by virtue of its autonomy.

Frye proposes, as a necessary first step toward attaining this autonomy, that we "recognize and get rid of meaningless criticism, or talking about literature in a way that cannot help to build up a systematic structure of knowledge" (AC 18). Such a revamping includes ridding ourselves not only of "all lists of the 'best' novels or poems or writers" but also of "all casual, sentimental, and prejudiced value-judgements, and all the literary chit-chat which makes the reputations of poets boom and crash in an imaginary stock exchange" (18). "That wealthy investor Mr. Eliot, after dumping Milton on the market, is now buying him again; Donne has probably reached his peak and will begin to taper off . . . . This sort of thing cannot be part of any systematic study, for a systematic study can only progress: whatever dithers or vacillates or reacts is merely leisure-class gossip." (18)

Frye's dichotomization of subjective evaluation versus objective criticism is deliberately illustrated through the simplest of examples: "Shakespeare, we say, was one of a group of English dramatists working around 1600, and also one of the great poets of the world. The first part of this is a statement of fact, the second a value-judgment so generally accepted as to pass for a statement of fact. But it is not a statement of fact. It remains a value-judgement, and "not a shred of systematic criticism can ever be attached to it" (20).
Frye claims to unveil the ideologies underlying evaluative criticism in order to erect the possibility of the opposite: a "value-free" criticism that is shorn of ideology" (AC 20). But, ironically, Frye's remark that "every deliberately constructed hierarchy of values in literature known to me is based on a concealed social, moral, or intellectual analogy" (AC 23) applies inevitably, to his own self. Frye rightfully points to the mystification of ideology behind criticism. His error is in assuming that his own system, mainly because of its sheer capacity to systematize on a grand scale, is able to transcend ideology. His comment that "a selective approach," as opposed to his all-inclusive method, "invariably has some ultra-critical joker concealed in it" (23) underlines the assumption that "floating free of cramping ideology is simply a matter of drawing larger circles around one's subjects(24)

Frye freezes temporal flow by placing time zones next to each other in such a way that their conceptual similarities are suggested. The analogy to the Frazerian comparative method is obvious, as is the relation to Eliot's concept of "mythical method." Rahv observes that the myth criticism of the 1950s replicates Joseph Frank's notion of the spatial form of high Modernist literature, which is defined by Frank as "a continuum in which distinctions of past and present are obliterated . . . past and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity" (quoted in "Myth and Powerhouse" 115). Frye, like other myth critics, found quite useful the side of Eliot that suggests carefully orchestrated suspension of various cultures, periods, and texts.
Frye justifies his essentially antihistorical frame by representing his subject, art, as oppositionally related to history. "The imaginative element in works of art," Frye claims in his Tentative Conclusion, "lifts them clear of the bondage of history" (347). It is rare, Frye claims in the more recent Critical Path, that "literature is itself an active part of the historical process" (24) This separation enables Frye to carve out an autonomy for literature that separates it from history while enabling it to partake of time's materials. Literature, Frye states in The Critical Path, is "a coherent structure, historically conditioned but shaping its own history, responding to but not determined in its form by an external historical process" (24).  

Frye's dichotomization of literature from history is in one sense simply a separation of the supremely general or identical from the merely particular or different. In The Educated Imagination Frye states that the poet's job is "not to tell you what happened, but what happens... He gives you the typical, recurring, or what Aristotle calls universal event." Eagleton in this respect holds that Frye's "modes" and "myths," what constitute his "substitute history," are themselves "transhistorical, collapsing history to sameness" (Literary Theory 92). And Fredric Jameson's assertion that "the driving force of Frye's system is the idea of historical identity" suggests the comparativist nature of Frye's surrogate history, in which we are led on a grandly multidimensional, diachronic search for monochromatic identity.
Frye's bifurcation of history from literature takes on special purport in his treatment of the Bible. In this respect Frazer's rendition of the Bible as not "science and history" but rather "noble literature" (*Passages* viii) looks forward to Frye's denigration of the historical or factual interpretations of the Bible and his promotion of its literary and mythical aspects. In the "Theory of Genres" section of *Anatomy*, Frye holds that "the priority of myth to fact is religious as well as literary; in both contexts the significance of the flood story is in its imaginative status as an archetype, a status which no layer of mud on top of Sumeria will ever account for" (325). And in *The Critical Path* Frye, claiming that the Bible endures not "because it is historically accurate," asserts that the Book of Job is "avowedly an imaginative drama" that is "more significant" than the "begats" which "may contain historical records" (112-13).

In *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (1982), Frye, assuming that "the Biblical myths are closer to being poetic than to being history," suggests that "perhaps the myths of the Bible should be read poetically, just as we read Homer and the Gilgamesh epic poetically." Frye's thesis doubles Frazer's intent, in his own book on the Bible, of disengaging the aesthetic gems of the Bible from their setting in history so that they can be appreciated for the literature that they constitute. Now Frye does not simply maintain that the Bible is pure poetry. Indeed, he states that "trying to reduce the Bible entirely to the hypothetical basis of poetry clearly will not do" (*TGC* 47). However, Frye does not base his qualification on the premise that what is nonliterary about the Bible is thus historic. Rather, he explains that there are "two aspects of myth: one is its story-structure, which attaches it to literature, the other is its social function as concerned knowledge, what it is important for a society to know" (47). In this latter, important sense, the Bible functions as "a program of action for a specific society" (49). And,
significantly, what the social function of a myth has in common with the story-structure is its dichotomizing relation to history: "a program of action," Frye states, "while it cannot ignore history, often sets itself in opposition to history" (49).

Frye's point on the social function of myth's opposition to history leads him to the conclusion that time-bound particulars—places, peoples, cultures, dates—appear in the Bible not because they are historically true but because they serve important social purposes. Hence the significance of ancient Egypt in the Bible is not tied to historical accuracy but to the values expressed through it: "the symbolic Egypt," the vessel for the exportation of those values, "is not in history: it extends over past, present, and future" (TGC 49).

Frye uses similar rhetoric in his discussion of the value of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. In a 1959 radio broadcast in which he discusses Frazer's significance for our century, Frye claims that *The Golden Bough* is "more a book for literary critics than for anthropologists" in that it "isn't really about what people did in a remote and savage past; it is about what the human imagination does when it tries to express itself about the greatest mysteries" (NFCL 88, 89). *The Golden Bough* 's significance as a prime symbolic vessel of cultural import, revealing fundamental truths about the imagination, is complemented by its value as a literary product—the "poetic" element of myth that is "re-created in literature" (TGC 49). According to Frye, Frazer went wrong when trying to prove broader, timebound evolutionary theories but succeeded as a writer whose poetic figurations were recreated in modern literature. Frye describes Frazer as "a devotee of what he thought was a rigorous scientific method who profoundly affected the imagery of modern
One of the reasons why Frazer affected poets and antagonized others, Frye states, is quite simply that he wrote well:

he autonomous nature of literary criticism reflects not only the belief that the critic ought to be elevated to the status of artist, but that the critic, like Frazer the anthropologist, actually can assume the artist's position. It is not accidental that Frye states in *The Critical Path* that "students of mythology often acquire the primitive qualities of mythopoetic poets" and gives as "the greatest" of such students Frazer and Freud.

VI

A century ago, many scholars, influenced partly by a naive identifying of evolution with progress, assumed that mythological thinking was an early form of conceptual thinking. This of course led immediately to the discovery that it was an erroneous conceptual attitude. Fraser observed "By myths I understand mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature." This was obviously part of an ideology designed to rationalize the European treatment of "natives" on darker continents, (TGC 38)

Frye's departure from Frazer on the nature of mythological thinking is crucial to our understanding of the myth criticism of the mid-century. The Frazer who exposed the world to cyclical and king-killing rituals was essential to those who looked to myth and ritual as the structural, and often originary, principles of all of literature. However, Frazer who branded mythical thinking as "bad reasoning" on its way to becoming better was found to be of little use.
to those who desired to ground criticism in an original mystical mentality: the "social science" of Jung and Levy-Straus was more appropriate toward that end.

Frye, like Hyman, Campbell, and a host of other myth critics, found it necessary to preserve the realm of myth from the infringement of science and give to the former a separate and at the least, equal status. In *The Stubborn Structure* he inscribes that separation by the claim that "science is its own world-view, and should be distinguished from the mythical one"; indeed, he goes so far as to say that "the physical sciences have never contributed anything to the mythopoeic world-picture except through misunderstanding and misapplication" (18).

Frye's insistence upon this division may at first seem contradictory to his own application of science to mythic structures in literature. But his rhetoric resolves the seeming inconsistency by insisting that the "science" he imports is the pure method that enables structural analysis of mythic patterns: it does not penetrate or change the actual mythic structures. Thus Frye's system reveals but does not alter the myths that tell a culture "what it is and how it came to be, in their own mythical terms." Reading myth aright, then, means, on a basic level, reading culture."21

The developmental schema of Frye's mythical system, in which simpler cultures produce simpler myths, and so forth, recalls Frazerian evolutionism. This legacy is especially noticeable, in Frye's figuring of the uniform progression of "primitive" mythologies into civilized literatures. In *The Stubborn Structure*, for example, Frye holds that the plots of folktales show "a clear line of descent from the myths of early mythologies, and illustrate [literature] as a cultural descendent of mythology" (64). And in *The Educated Imagination* he
asserts as his "general principle" that "in the history of civilization literature follows after a mythology" (110).

Here Frye replicates the ritualist assumption, first brought to light by Frazer and then propounded by the Cambridge Hellenists, that the ritual represents the primal "thing done," the originary imitation of the physical universe. In fact, in Anatomy Frye characterizes ritual as the "pre-logical, pre-verbal" imitation of the yearly round: "Its attachment to the calendar seems to link human life to the biological dependence on the-natural cycle" (106). The evolutionary nature of Frye's schema comes clear when this most primal of human imitative actions is perceptively perceived in the most "primitive" of dramatic forms; and, importantly, Frazer's work is celebrated as the classic work that, in archaeological fashion, "reconstructs" the primal imitation, burrowing back to the originary site of ritual.

Frye, like Eliot, while hardly promoting the poet's return to the "savage" state, nonetheless recognizes the appeal of the return to primitivist coherence. When commenting on "the quality of primitive simplicity . . . that keeps eluding the poets of a more complex society," Frye notes: "One might start drawing morals here about what kind of society we should reconstruct or return to in order to achieve such simplicity, but most of them would be pretty silly. I merely stress the possibility, importance, and genuineness of a response to the arts in which we can no longer separate that response from our social context and personal commitments" (SM 121).
In *Anatomy* Frye finds the ultimate unity of those primitive words in the metaphor that distinguishes poetry. There he defines metaphor "in its radical form" as "a statement of the identity of the 'A is B' type" (123). Frye posits this process as mystical and prelogical: "In the metaphor two things are identified while each retains its own form. Thus if we say 'the hero was a lion' we identify the hero with the lion, while at the same time both the hero and the lion are identified as themselves" (123). Eliot, discussing Levy-Bruhl's example of the Bororo tribe who have a mystical identification with the parrot, makes the following observation: "In practical life, the Bororo never confuses himself with a parrot, nor is he so sophisticated as to think black is white. But he is capable of a state of mind in which we cannot put ourselves, in which he is a parrot, while at the same time a man."27

Frye then provides Pound's version of Fenellosa's ideogram as an example of radical metaphorization, in which metaphor is manifested in "simple juxtaposition" and civilized "predication" is removed. According to Frye,"in Pound's famous blackboard example of such a metaphor, the two-line poem 'In a Station of the Metro,' the images of the faces in the crowd and the petals on the black bough are juxtaposed with no predicate of any kind connecting them. Predication belongs to assertion and descriptive meaning, not to the literal structure of poetry" (AC 123). But Pound's poem functions as merely a scattered Modernist recreation of fusion of identity. Frye's real interest lies in bringing into existence an all-encompassing form of primal identificatory metaphor, which he calls the "anagogic phase of meaning" (AC 124). There, according to Frye, "we are dealing with poetry in its totality, in which the formula 'A is B' may be hypothetically applied to anything. . . . The literary universe, therefore, is a universe in which everything is identical with everything else" (124). Frye's evocation of this radical metaphorical
state, in which distinctions between subject and object, matter and energy, and noun and verb cease to matter.

Like Frazer and the Cambridge Hellenists, Frye charts a development which begins in the figure of nondifferentiated fusion, proceeds through the simulacrum of primal identity that obscures essential difference and progresses towards attribution of anthropomorphic qualities to nature. In *Anatomy* Frye states that the "identifications of gods with animals or plants and human society form the basis of totemic symbolism" (144). And in *The Educated Imagination*, Frye constructs a classic "If I were a horse" rendition of the development of the primitive imagination.

This conception of primitive god is of course integrally tied to the metaphorical process. In *The Educated Imagination* Frye states that these god-nature weldings, born out of the "impulse to identify," are "really metaphors" (39). And in *The Great Code* he holds that "the central expression of metaphor is the 'god,' the being who, as sun-god, war-god, sea-god, or whatever, identifies a form of personality with an aspect of nature" (7). Finally, in *Anatomy* Frye poses Christ himself as the ultimate metaphor, as he "unites all these categories [of 'divine,' 'human,' 'animal,' 'vegetable,' and 'mineral'] in identity: Christ is both the one God and the one Man, the Lamb of God, the tree of life, or vine of which we are the branches, the stone which the builders rejected, and the rebuilt temple which is identical with his risen body" (141-42).

While Christ is identical to all elements, Frye nonetheless poses a hierarchic arrangement that charts, in backward order, the evolution from mineral to man to god. His progression brings to
mind the drive toward the godhead in *The Waste Land* but recalls even more strikingly the gradual but resolute separation of the god from the lower elements envisioned by Frazer and the Cambridge Hellenists. Frye's replication of this developmental schema perhaps takes its most significant and overt form in *Anatomy*, where he speaks of "undisplaced myth" as "total metaphoric identification" and underscores the tendency of romance, as a less extreme form, "to displace myth in a human direction" (136—37). Actually, Frye places romance between the extremes of myth and realism: whereas in myth a word such as *sun-god* functions as an example of "pure ideogram," indissolubly fusing the god to the element in the act of "implicit metaphorical identity,". The realism at the other extreme functions as the more developed and yet less powerful "art of extended or implied simile," in which "what is written is *like* what is known" (136).

Frye is careful not to pronounce romance a genre that is evaluatively weaker than or subsequent to myth. Still, we sense in Frye's rhetoric the barely concealed attempt to enshrine mythic metaphorical identity and denigrate the falling-off from "undisplaced" originary form that is exemplified by romance. The metaphor is a mystical fusion and the romance a mere comparison. This becomes clear in *Anatomy* when Frye declares: "The central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like. In a myth we can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees" (137). Frye's reference to "romance, where the hero is still half a god" suggests that romance is positioned mid-way on the Great Chain, between realism dangling at bottom and myth poised at top.29
The affiliations of Frye's metaphoric schema to anthropological theories of totemism are strong. Indeed, Frye reads the metaphoric process as a linguistic version of the totemic march articulated by Frazer, in which spirits residing in the natural elements evolve into gods merely "associated" with those same elements. In *The Great Code* he refers to the "social development in which subordinate gods move from local cities of woods and rivers and fields into an analogy of a human aristocracy like the Olympian gods of Greece" (70).

Also like Frazer and Harrison, Frye sees this progression as concomitant with the evolution from polytheism to monotheism. In *The Great Code* Frye speaks of "the polytheistic gods" as "metaphors begotten of man's close association with nature and his sense that nature has a life and energy identifiable with his own" (67). He also holds that "the mythology of paganism . . . begins with local epiphanic gods and moves on to departmental gods with established functions"; from there we move to "an imperial monotheism," politically motivated by earthly rulers, in which "local cults" are regarded "as manifestations of a single god" (*TGC* 93). Like Frazer, Frye works this progression both ways: appealing to the fluid primitivist aura that begins it but pointing as well to the comprehensive historical inexorability by which the many are ultimately and always reduced to the one.

In *The Great Code* Frye borrows from Roman Jakobson when he recasts mode of thinking of metaphor as at bottom a matter of slippages, ruptures, and discontinuities. In the appropriately entitled *Stubborn Structure*, he appears to contradict his other statements on the irreducibility of "meaning" in literature when he states that "I do not see how literature can ever lose its kernel of
externalizable meaning" (46). In fact, Frye laments that this transparency is not greater, for the opaqueness of literature limits "the capacity of words for informing other disciplines......Compared with mathematics at least, words are incurably associative: multiple meanings lurk in them and the structures of grammar twist them into non-representational forms" (46)

Clearly Frye fears the indeterminacy of words, their resistance to being comfortably pegged and thus appropriated for institutional and personal ends. This is strikingly illustrated in The Stubborn Structure when, after mourning the associative tendency of language, Frye states: "When I read or try to read Heidegger I get the same feeling that I get when trying to read Finnegans Wake, of language dissolving into a mass of associative puns, and language of this kind is surely heading in the direction indicated by the squeals and groans of electronic music" (47). The need for the secure destination of the word explains Frye's gravitation toward Blake just as it clarifies his unease with Joyce (and rock music), for Frye in his concluding paragraph of Fearful Symmetry proclaims that "to Blake there are no puns for ambiguities or accidents in the range of the meaning of word,' but a single and comprehensible form" (428).

Blake's system is celebrated by Frye because, along with the Bible, it represents an ultimate attempt to make the universe into man's image. In this turn of his rhetoric Frye clearly asserts that the return to a state of identificatory mana, though desirable, is not possible: instead we use verbal fictions, within the limits of "the conditions of grammar" (CP 119), to create full-bodied, systematic approximations of higher realities. In holy works, according to Frye, "God speaks, by hypothesis, in accommodated language, putting his thoughts and commandments into a
humanly comprehensible form" (120). In fact, Frye states elsewhere, "where a divine personality is presented, the only possible literary form would be that of a discontinuous sequence of epiphanies."

While Frye openly accedes to the limits of the linguistic system, the ever-present veil between god and word, he, like Eliot, gains great authority by pointing toward the semantic open space where truth is not conditional or screened by his own anthropomorphic figurations. In *The Stubborn Structure* Frye proclaims that "all poet or critic can do is to hope that somehow, somewhere, and for someone, the struggle to unify and to relate . . . may be touched with a radiance not its own" (89). The curtain drawn between god and human approximation in the word is underscored at the conclusion to *The Secular Scripture*, where Frye holds that "the real silence is the end of speech, not the stopping of it" (188).

Like Eliot and Frazer, Frye gains in authority through the revelation of limitation: his corpus, like *The Waste Land*, derives its power from invoking what cannot be imagined: the perfect, ultimate originary unity of things.