

Frye's Anatomizing and Anatomizing Frye

The motive for Northrop Frye's writing is metaphor. He has, since he began studying William Blake in the 1930s, explored what Robert Denham has aptly called "the iconography of the mythopoetic imagination" (1990, xiv). That is, Frye has examined the conventions of writing — the metaphors, myths, images, symbols, genres, and worlds found in literature. Throughout his career, Frye was concerned with the transhistorical communication that literature makes possible, the forms of writing or genres, the social function of literature, criticism, and education, the way literature is made from literature, the workings of mythology, the attempt to find unity and redeem the division of language and literature (one way of looking at this problem was through metaphor), and the power of the imagination. Frye was a romantic critic who placed the redemptive qualities of the imagination at the centre of his critical universe. But Frye was more than a visionary critic. He wrote a great deal about education and the debt Western literature owes to the Bible. There is a religious residue or emanation in Frye's criticism. He is interested in resurrecting unity and presence from the broken text, shoring up the fragments against the ruin, not in stopping in the absences as traces of "presence" with which deconstruction occupies itself. He is also interested in the question of freedom and is an unabashedly bourgeois liberal critic, and a humanist. These terms have changed over time, and Frye accepts with some irony the unpopularity of being a liberal during his lifetime (1991, 9). After 1980, Frye was interested in discussing ideology and in using modern theorists, like Jacques Derrida, to support local insights. But Frye places mythology before ideology (Denham in Frye 1990, xvi-xvii). The three parts of this essay are concerned respectively with Frye's essays in *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays 1974-88* (1990), his last book, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (1991), and A.C. Hamilton's *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of his Criticism* (1990).¹ In the last seventeen years of his life Frye continued to anatomize literature and criticism, and Hamilton's book is an ambitious reading of that anatomization until 1990. Frye's last

1 Northrop Frye, *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays 1974-1988*. Robert D. Denham, ed. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia 1990. Pp. 386. No price), Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (University of Toronto Press 1991. Pp. 85 Can\$ 10.95), A.C. Hamilton, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of his Criticism* (University of Toronto Press 1990. Pp. 294 Can\$ 45.00).

statement on religion is perhaps his most expansive and explicit consideration of a topic close to him and for which, rather parochially, some have criticized him. Frye cannot be "reduced" to a clergyman, however hard adversaries may try, which is the kind of insidious *ad hominem* professional bigotry that makes a scapegoat or pariah out of Marxists, feminists, deconstructionists or whatever bogeyman or witch one can imagine (Aitken xiii-xiv). The works of Frye I am discussing are derived from public lectures, perhaps his most persistent form of writing and one that is related to the other laboratory that he used to test his ideas — the classroom.

MYTH AND METAPHOR

Robert Denham, who has done a great deal to collect and keep Northrop Frye's work before us, organizes the collection of Frye's essays in five sections: the building blocks of literature (myth, metaphor, symbol, cosmology); the relation of literature and mythology to social concern and ideology (including two essays on education); literature, the visual arts, and the recurring metaphors of the stage and journey; the literary shape of the Bible; and Frye's interpretations of particular texts from More to Joyce. Here is Frye the oral poet: all but one of the essays were oral addresses (xvii-xviii).

The collection begins with myth. Frye discusses it in the context of literary criticism, so that "myth means *mythos*, story, plot, narrative" (3). Frye's view of possessing the total structure of a story is open-ended because in a Shakespearean play or any "classic" there is an indefinite series of these final apprehensions. As soon as we reach an understanding, we become dissatisfied and try to come to a better understanding, in a process that can last a lifetime (6). Frye says that myth and metaphor are inseparable because myth annihilates the space between A and B in time and metaphor does the same in space: we are here and now even as we speak about the past or the future. Both myth and metaphor are counterlogical (7-8). Much of this essay, "The Koine of Myth," has to do with the relation of story to history, with "metahistory," a term that Hayden White, with some debt to Frye, made so current in the 1970s and early 1980s. The content of the form, with perhaps some feedback from White, concerns Frye in his discussion of works such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*. In addition to discussing historical narrative, Frye comments on philosophical narrative or dialectic, which like its fictional and historical counterparts, does more than narrate; it stops and suggests how the world looks to the writer at that time. The Bible is a religious discourse in which God speaks through the prophets and scribes, that reaches a climax in the Incarnation and points to an apocalypse or the ultimate vision of creation (10). Frye observes that narratives lead up to an emblem, which can be visualized, a narrative or myth that can be "frozen" into a complex metaphor

(11). Frye discusses the metaphor of the middle earth, which implies spatial metaphors of worlds above and below us, and cites numerous examples from the Bible, myth, and literature, including the Mesopotamian *ziggurat*, the Tower of Babel, Jacob's ladder, and trees, ladders, staircases, and mountains in Dante, Milton, Hegel, Eliot, Yeats, Joyce, and others. He notes that these are images of the vertical dimension connecting this world with other realms below and above it — the *axis mundi* — about which, Frye says ironically, we can say two things: it is not here and it will not go away (12-15). This metaphor has no independent being but is part of a creative language from China to Peru that "nothing affirmeth," as Sidney might say, and cannot be refuted, and that unifies the subject and object, the personal and natural. Poetry keeps alive, in Frye's view, the metaphorical habit of mind, and gods are metaphors. The New Testament represents the ultimate human life as that which is a self-narration, where action and awareness of action no longer clash. Any study, Frye says, that will become an important part of human consciousness will have to have a verbal shape that informs other arts and sciences and brings them together in a unity of thought and action (15-17). Here is Frye's visionary unity. Here is the reason that Frye, the critic who identifies with poetic creation, can allude to Derrida, the critic of philosophical separation, but cannot ultimately adopt his method.

One of Frye's central concerns is education. In an ironic inversion, Frye takes "postliteracy" to be the responsibility and freedom of choice that occurs only after we move, with the help of teachers, beyond the passive "literacy," the ability to read signs and do arithmetic, which society is comfortable with (18). The question that interests Frye most is the question of the social authority of the writer and of the critic. Writers are torn between their vision and society's demands and thus often suffer persecution and death for ideological reasons. Frye is not naive about the power of ideology but he refuses to celebrate it:

Around us today we see a great variety of social groups, Christian, Moslem, anarchist, liberal, conservative, all of them full of hard-liners who simply deny, in the interests of their own dogmas, that poets have any authority except what they might derive from whatever ideology the dogmatist himself wants to advance. Their confident and self-hypnotized assurance has influenced many of the more timid critics to believe or assume that if there is any value the study of literature, it cannot inhere in literature itself. (20)

Frye reiterates his concerns with myth. The primary concern is the primitive view that life is better than death, freedom better than bondage, happiness better than misery. The secondary concern is ideology, or loyalty to one's place in religion, society, politics, and class structure. Ideology has always, in Frye's view, had more power and prestige than primary concerns.

To survive, we must now choose, for the first time in history, primary over secondary concerns. Poets are ideologically conditioned by their historical and cultural environment, but their poetry eludes being simply ideological (21). At the centre of this question is language, and Frye reflects on whether language uses humanity or humanity language (22). He proposes that an attempt be made to use the criticism of literature as "a remedy for the abuses of ideology" even though past attempts have not been successful (24). He also suggests that countermovements of myth and metaphor be made into "a world of recovered identity," against the annihilations of time and the alienations of space, where, for a moment, a sense of reality replaces our usual fear of the unknown (26-27). In the full critical operation, Frye argues, there must be a catharsis of belief, which belongs to ideology, the realm of secondary concern and secondary mythology, but they open up to us more intense paradoxes and self-contradictions, allowing for a greater awareness of ourselves and of something not ourselves. Here we find the paradoxical recognition of paradoxes of recognition.

Symbols relate closely to metaphors. Frye elaborates on symbol as a medium of exchange, as a token or counter, on its double nature, as something completed by its context and its relation to something outside of words (28, 32). Since Aristotle, Frye notes, it has been observed that the distinguishing mark of the poet is to think metaphorically (34). Frye also insists that poetry speaks the language of the unconscious and conscious, of emotion and intelligence. He returns to Blake and the Romantics who first used *imagination* to express a linguistic union of the unconscious and conscious, reason, and feeling. Very conscious verbal constructs, like a metaphysical system, Frye asserts, is founded on less conscious metaphorical constructs. He says that criticism must recognize the creativity of metaphor in poetic language and that only another metaphor can describe a metaphor. The metaphorical understructure of thought can change: the Romantics placed metaphor above syntactical language, the *symboliste* movement in France placed them side-by-side, and our post-Freudian era reverses the priority. Our era enacts this reversal because it connects creative power with dream states and repression (36-37). Dynamic relations occur within the symbolic representation: that curious union of thing and meaning that we call a symbol shows once more that it is neither static nor arbitrary, but "part of the continuing presence of our own becoming and being" (43).

Frye's interest in narrative and conceptual and theoretical discourses relates to his interest in "concern," to conscious awareness, in that society attempts to come to terms with life through theory and stories. Traditionally, Frye says, there were two types of stories — the sacred and the secular. The Bible is a mythology of concern for Western Europe and its former colonies in the New World (44). Frye emphasizes the importance in the Renaissance

of two natures, the upper and the lower, the second nature of culture and physical nature, respectively (46). This view of nature derives from the Bible's horror of nature worship, an abhorrence that is also the heart of Frye's thinking. Against this tradition, Frye contrasts the classical tradition of the erotic, "the energy of love rooted in the sexual instinct" (47). The cult of Eros in the poetry of the Middle Ages and later periods extended the imaginative scope of Western poetry, often in the face of religious opposition (52). Frye is interested in the states of mind with metaphorical identities in nature, whether they are called historical or scientific cosmologies, the gods, the Muses, or the concerns of modern life, such as anxiety, absurdity, and alienation (58-59).

The appearance and reality of social and literary conventions also concern Frye. He compares the days of his youth with the present. With his usual wit, Frye observes: "One soon learns that many social issues that we at first consider moral are really nothing more than convention, and can evaporate like the morning dew almost unnoticed" (64). Frye considers education is central to an investigation of convention. He likes to think that teachers of language have helped to break down class barriers, and that speech is being used for less aggressive purposes in the areas of class, race, and gender (66). As a teacher of the humanities, Frye has always argued that his job is to train the imagination and to clarify social vision to help produce citizens who can participate in a complex society (69). Literature has authority and is not ancillary to more "serious" matters (70). The university is a place where one can criticize society. Although student radicalism of any time is in Frye's view, usually simplistic and crude, it shows that the university is home to social criticism, "a counterenvironment in society" (73). Frye traces the change from Samuel Johnson to William Blake, from those who think that society possesses authority and sanity to those who do not (75-76). Frye's view of education stems from his reading of Blake, so that the aim of education is to make one "maladjusted," to question rather than to conform to society (77). To study literature and the arts, then, is to bring us a vision of a New World, "where creation and revelation have different meanings, where the experience of time and of space is different," where "our standards of reality and illusion get reversed" (77-78). It is these apocalyptic glimpses into the imaginative world, which the Romantics retrieved from the realm of madness and made into the creation and recreation of worlds, that fascinated Frye for so much of his life (78).

In Frye's view, convention, genre, and metaphor are related through identity. Convention is an aspect of identity of a literary work; genre is a large convention that establishes the identity of a work by indicating what it is and its context; metaphor is the language of identity (79, 90). Frye alludes to Derrida's idea that writing has been used to denigrate writing as a means of reiterating one of his own longstanding and central points: "If we

start by regarding criticism as parasitic on literature, we invariably end by regarding literature as parasitic on the other verbal structures that convey actual information" (84). Frye argues for distinctions between kinds of discourse which are made in practice no matter how difficult they are in theory. He does not discount history. In Frye's scheme the writer is on the crucifix, the horizontal bar representing the historical and cultural situation, or ideology, and the vertical representing the literary tradition before and after him/her (85). The vertical axis explains transhistorical communication between writers and readers of different cultures and times through metaphor, convention, and genre. There is no unmediated vision, in Frye's view, but the poet's quest. It is a quest for the recovery of myth, primarily through the identity in metaphor and metaphorical structures between the natural and the human (86, 88, 90). Throughout history, Frye argues, secondary or ideological concerns have taken precedence over primary concerns, such as food, shelter, and survival, but can no longer do so if we are to survive (89, 91). He says that literature always reflects ideology in its content but that its shape, as defined by convention and genre, looks back to mythological time (89). According to Frye, pastoral and romantic genres represent a nature that responds to human desire and tragic and ironic genres represent detachment. He thinks that ideology is metonymic because it is used as a substitute structure of authority for an ideal one (90). Criticism is, for Frye, the theory of the language of myth and metaphor, and represents a central, rather than a trivial, pursuit. Ideology is the framework that surrounds us daily in its multiforms, but criticism can study the assumptions on which it is based, the mythological structures that literature recreates directly (91). The difference between Frye and his poststructuralist successors revolves around whether one believes that there is a ground beneath figure. Are these mythological structures rhetorical or fictional constructs, assumptions that are already conclusions? No answer will satisfy both sides. For Frye at least, convention is a meeting place where critics understand poets who recreate mythological identity, the lost traces found beneath the ideological turmoil that is our world (92). This recreation is the beginning of communication.

Frye concerns himself with the metaphorical power of the Bible, which is the mythological basis for Western literature. He decries the wasteland of critical theory, and seeks out the restorative properties of the mythological universe. He grounds his discussion in *belief*, a state of mind, and *faith*, the expression of belief in action, and says that vision must power faith and cannot be separated from hope. Hope shows us that most of objective reality is a human construct that is undesirable, removable, and unreal. Faith is an active realization of a visionary model in the mind that hope suggests (93-100). The Apocalypse is a vision of a body of imagery, the metaphorical

body of Christ surrounded by demonic shadows (101). Literature and criticism, Frye argues, must be committed to mythology (102-03). Rather than call for the demythologizing strategies of poststructuralist and postmodern oppositional critics — which Frye considers the worst thing we can do — he says that the essential task of the literary critic is "to distinguish ideology from myth, to help reconstitute a myth as a language, and to put literature in its proper cultural place as the central link of communication between society and the vision of its primary concerns" (103). Frye opposes the intolerance and tyranny of ideologically-driven governments who persecute writers, and he cannot support ideological criticism as the proper response to that terror (104). How does one move from literature to connect mythology with active faith? Just as literature recaptures some of the existential force that metaphor once suggested, so too can the metaphorical structure of the Bible perform a similar recreation, which leads in this imaginative identity to a subsuming of faith and hope in charity or love, to an incarnation of a greater active power on the first rung of Jacob's ladder, to the mystery of a revelation without end (104-07). This is Frye's Apocalypse.

Through a study of language, Frye maintains, boundaries dissolve, including the division between creators and critics, because criticism is recreation (108). Frye admits that one can emphasize words and admit the theoretical difference that Saussure and Derrida talk about, where all language is part of the same discourse, and the art of words, which makes the commonsense and practical distinction between poetry and philosophy. Frye favours the second option. While recognizing that we use figurative language everywhere, Frye says that poetry in practice calls attention to the status of the word (108-09). The critical reader cannot create a definitive criticism of a poem but can speak for a community of readers. We can read a poem to try to reconstruct its meaning in its original context or to see what makes it still communicative to us. Frye prefers to read with the text in a mood of Leibnizian optimism, reading with, rather than against, the grain (109-10). Practically speaking, poetry is oral and not writtenly:

If there is anything to be said for Marshall McLuhan's axiom that the content of any given medium is the form of a previous medium, then the content of written poetry is the form of oral poetry, which seems invariably to precede it historically. The subordinate and secondary status assigned to writing, of which so many poststructural critics complain, is derived from a literary convention, but within literature the convention is rooted in the facts of literary experience. (110)

Frye returns to a discussion of the metaphor, finding its starting point in what Heidegger calls the ecstatic metaphor, the sense of identity between an individual's consciousness and something in nature (111-12). A literary age,

in Frye's view, tends to consider ecstatic forms of identification as primitive and perhaps even childish, although one of the social functions of literature is to keep metaphorical thinking and language alive (113). There is also a sexual aspect to ecstatic metaphor: Eros awakens the imagination and is the driving force behind poetry (113-14). But literature is also hypothetical and displays ironic detachment from all statements of assertion. It is a kind of model-thinking, for Frye, "an infinite set of possibilities of experience to expand and intensify our actual experience" (114).

The Bible is metaphorical, but, unlike literature, is not content with ironic removal from assertion or experience, so that Frye is led, after the *Anatomy of Criticism*, to examine the cultural context of metaphor, that had and may still have roots in ecstatic experience (114). Frye says that poets thought they were doing something more complex than play, and he warns against concentrating on how myth departs from history, which he describes, perhaps with Stephen Daedalus in mind, as a continuing psychosis. He values accuracy in history but says that our experience in time has to struggle with three unrealities — "a past which is no longer, a future which is not yet, a present which is never quite" (118). As is common in Frye's later works, he discusses ideology. He sees metaphorical and mythological recreation as a way of seeing what is beneath ideology, what conditions us, and what social function we actually fill. Although Frye was often critical of the protests of the 1960s, in the latter part of the decade he likes the discontent with subject-object consciousness and the desire for a heightened form of consciousness individually and socially (120). The poet regains his/her social authority to the extent that the relation between subject and object grows illusory and the fictions connecting them real, and that, as Vico suggests, reality is not the world we look at but in the world we make (122).

Frye has always concerned himself with the responsibilities and importance of the critic. He says wryly: "The critic has no relevance except what he creates himself, though I suspect that that is equally true of the rest of the human race" (124). "Vision" is also a recurrent theme in Frye's corpus. This term involves *theoria*, human vision and thought, and *praxis*, human actions. Literature, in Frye's scheme, should never take the traditional form of poetry giving emotional resonance to the truths of philosophy and history (127). Frye was one of the stronger voices to "decolonize" literature and criticism in the modern university of the English-speaking world. A work of art tries to be an imaginative communication and, if successful, becomes the focus of a community: "The critic is there, not so much to explain the poet, as to translate literature into a continuous dialogue with society" (138). The critic responds to a crisis, his or her critical act is one of recognition more than one of judgement, a means to recreate the earlier traumas at the beginnings of culture (138-39). Frye never denies

ideology: "As a structure of meaning, every body of words is an ideological document, the product of a specific social and historical condition in the cycle of human life" (139). Frye sees the role of the critic as leading us from what the prophets and poets said, or thought they said, to their created world, to the inner structure of what they said. The structure of language is at the core of Frye's project. Literature and what becomes literature are conservative, traditional, and conventional while being immensely renewable (140).

Education is never too far from Frye's mind. In discussing Samuel Butler, he warns that in education we must not have a perverse sense of history and sacrifice the present, which exists, to a future, which does not, and will not exist in any form recognizable to the present (147). Nor should educators think that a pastoral myth will do, where our standards have dropped and we have lost a more perfect way of teaching and learning. Like Frye's theory of education, Butler's relies on habit and practice. We work to play (149-50). Frye sees in Butler the humanist's necessary attempt to relate what he observed in his reading to the potential or actual quality of life. The humanist, for Frye, struggles to help humanity continue to control its own life and habits (153).

In the next cluster of essays Frye provides a comment on time, a critique of pure reason, looks at the relation between literature and the visual arts, and examines specific instances of important recurring metaphors in literature: the stage and the journey. In speaking about time Frye points out its paradoxical nature: "The great difficulty about time, of course, has always been that it is the primary category of experience, the most important and fundamental aspect of life, and yet apparently it does not exist" (157). In the context of a discussion of time Frye contrasts romanticism, which deals with the recurring constants of myth and romance, with historicism, which treats the specific features of an age (167). For Frye, literature is a critique of pure reason. Frye quotes Russell and Whitehead, who assert that there is an imaginative background behind philosophical systems, and says that while philosophy may hide or disguise this background, literature faces and recreates it in every age. Frye has called this retreating and secret imaginative background a metaphorical or mythological structure. The primary mode of thought is not rational but imaginative or metaphorical, "an identifying of subjective and objective worlds in huge mental pictures" (168-69). As soon as we enter the world of play, beauty, design, and the assimilating of nature and art, Frye argues, we start to wonder whether creation, as opposed to the exercising of control over it, is not the primary human activity in life. In Blake the word "reason" is usually unfavourable because all creation tries to overcome it, the Cartesian split between subject and object (179-80). At the centre of Frye's notion of creation is an imaginative vision of society and culture:

if we place the works of the human imagination in the center of the community and make sure they stay there, we shall be able eventually to see that community itself as the total form of what human beings can bring forth, their own larger life that continues to live and move and possess its inward being. (182)

Part of that imaginative community is painting. Frye says that literature is closer to the visual arts than to music, because it depends on imagery as well as rhythm. Poetry, Frye says, depends on concrete sense experience and has little tolerance for thesis, proposition, and argument (183-85). He thinks that the great creative activity in all the arts in the present — he wrote the essay in 1983 — has incorporated the spirit of Dada. Frye welcomes this movement on one condition, "as long as we see it not as a kind of morbid preoccupation with chaos for its own sake, but as an opportunity for renewed imaginative energy and a new freedom in seeing the world" (195). A vision of freedom seems to be the end that Frye asks of literature and criticism.

Theatre is another place of liberation. Translating Oliver Wendell Holmes' translation of Shakespeare's phrase, itself from a Latin motto for the Globe theatre (and so on back for this conventional trope), Frye sees the stage as all the world (196, see Hart 1992). In discussing Shakespeare's plays Frye says that, for the professional dramatist, the axiom that the world is a stage suggests the way s/he works and adds that there is no solid essence or identity behind the various dramatic roles we play in life (201). In this discussion of theatre Frye raises the question of the difference between ideology and mythology — a cultural framework — in the middle of an examination of genre, or how a playwright shapes plays. Frye prefers mythology to ideology because the former suggests story and narrative while the latter implies ideas and because at the base of human thought since the beginning of the conscious is the making-up of stories. Frye thinks that ideologies derive from these stories and that many ideologies take on a comic shape imposed on history (204-05). From his reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*, which he says will be held in the highest appreciation among Shakespeare's plays, Frye concludes that the motivation is a dramatic one, to put on a show: "The stage is all the world, and human life has become what the stage is: a place where illusion is reality, with a procession of actors waiting to be applauded, not for what they have been or done, but for what they have remembered in time to say" (211).

Frye continues his discussions of time and space (he speaks about music, painting, and literature in these terms) when he examines the journey as metaphor. This metaphor implies decisions taken, the ways we do things (212). The word "way" is a method or manner, a sequence (214). In most of these metaphors in literature, of which Frye gives us a taxonomy, the journey is most often taken because it has to be since the journey is a

metaphor for life, and the end is the point or goal of that journey (221). Literary metaphor is, in Frye's view, hypothetical and grows out of existential metaphor, "where a subject does identify himself with something not himself, in an experience that has no further need for language, although it has also fulfilled the entire function of language" (226). In metaphor we cannot distinguish between what we believe and what we believe we believe, but when we pass from the language of metaphor to the identities that metaphor asserts, we attain the *hypostasis* of the hoped-for and the *elenchos* of the unseen, the kind of faith the New Testament represents (226). Beyond the literary experience of literature is religious experience, a movement from the content of the form to the form of the content.

The next group of articles discusses the Bible, a subject that interested Frye throughout his life and that provided a subject for his last major project, consisting of three books published between 1981 and 1991: *The Great Code, Words with Power*, and *The Double Vision*. The relation between Bible and literature especially preoccupied Frye in the last fifteen years of his life. As I am commenting on *The Double Vision*, I shall discuss issues in these essays that relate to but are not discussed in the book, especially those which involve a conjunction between critical theory and the Bible. Frye says that many contemporary critics and theorists are talking about the Bible even when avoiding it:

Many critical issues originated in the hermeneutic study of the Bible; many critical theories are obscurely motivated by a God-is-dead syndrome that also arose from biblical criticism; many of the principles advanced by such theorists often seem to me more defensible when applied to the Bible than they are when applied elsewhere. (229)

The literal meaning of the Bible, Frye says, must be mythical and metaphorical, and only when we read it as we read poetry can we take the word "literally" seriously, can we accept without question everything it gives us (232). Questions of biblical criticism serve as models for numerous critical questions about secular literature. We find that otherness is the text itself (233). The Bible ends with a vision at the end of time and history and its reality begins in the reader's mind after reading. This biblical principle is an analogy to methods in secular criticism. For instance, the idea of the canon, a collection of books unified by consistency of vision and imagery, translates into secular criticism from a study of the unity of the Bible. Frye thinks that culture appears "to be ending today in a vast chaos of *écriture* where there are no boundary lines between literature and anything else in words" (235-36). This statement about a lack of boundaries is self-evident in his view, but he urges us to begin making discriminations again, looking at contexts and not delimited areas. We should, he says, re-establish the referential for verbal structures that require it (235-36). The Bible is not

historical but mythical because myth is the only vehicle for revelation (240). Through the criticism of mythology, Frye suggests, which unravels a myth from within and studies its context with other myths external to it, "we arrive most closely to what we can learn through words, or the contact with words that has traditionally been called revelation" (253). Frye's interest in metaphor and its relation to mythology is central to an understanding of his criticism and theory. In his view the subject can never meet the object, the Other, as itself, but can only encounter it in language, an intermediate realm, that assimilates both subject and object. The language of myth and metaphor is self-contained and does not rely on reference to anything else. Secular and biblical criticism rely on the recreation of identity in metaphor as a recognition or revelation:

When we are at the point of taking in a vision of time and space of the kind that myth and metaphor offer us, we are ready to meet the conception of a mythical and metaphorical creation that was there from the beginning, but is there again, reborn as soon as we look at it with fresh eyes. (254)

Frye reiterates the literary qualities of the Bible, but also distinguishes it from literature because it assumes an objective nature for its God and revelation (268). The central myth in the Bible, Frye says, is a vision rising "above the progression from past to future into a higher form of present, a vision of human creative power continually making the new by reshaping the old" (269). And Frye returns to Blake, whom he calls an intensely biblical poet. Blake, Frye insists, believes in God and man together, in "Divine Humanity." He summarizes Blake's religious beliefs thus: "A human being comes equipped with a potentially divine power centered in his ability to create, to love, to destroy his own grasping and clutching ego, and only such things make him human" (270). Frye discusses Blake's double vision and uses his lines as an epigraph for *The Double Vision*. Blake's unique revolutionary understanding, Frye says, is that he saw that a metaphorical framework had enclosed the assumptions of the eighteen centuries since Christ, that this framework was obsolete, and that another was displacing it (277). Blake reads the Bible forward to the end rather than looking back to the beginning as he reads through it. Blake's Bible says that humans can use their creative capacities, their imaginations that are the centre of their existence, to climb out of chaos (285). To build a Jerusalem in England is an invitation to remake the world in its genuine human form, and Frye returns us to Vico's *verum factum*, that whatever is real is what we have made, so that we can remake it all. For Blake, and I think for Frye, the imagination is always struggling to make visible the spiritual reality that has always been there. Blake's vision is the attaining of a human and divine identity whose creative powers are unlimited because the powers of making

are infinite even if the forms of what is made have limits (273, 286). Temporal limits can be remade beyond those limits to an unlimited extent.

The final grouping of essays involves Frye's reading of particular literary texts. This answers the criticism that Frye does not read closely (see Denham 1990, xviii). He examines works by two early modern figures, Thomas More and Baldassare Castiglione. In his discussions of More's *Utopia*, Frye found that with his students in the 1930s the book made more sense than England did and that "no normal human being wants to live in anyone else's Utopia" (289). Frye relates the two primary meanings of "body" — the physical structure of the individual and the unity of the community — by suggesting that in both kinds of bodies good health depends on unity and not uniformity. In a very sensible conclusion, perhaps with the atrocities of Hitler and Stalin in mind, Frye assesses what *Utopia* can teach us:

Plato remarked that the most frightful tyrannies were very like his ideal pattern entrusted to the wrong people. In a world where no people can be exactly the right people, Utopia can exist only where More put it, in the "nowhereness" of the consciousness within the individual mind. There it can do much to inform and reform the society around it, as long as we neither abandon its vision or [sic] try to deduce an actual society from it. (305-06)

Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* is, in Frye's view, a wistful and nostalgic tribute to a vanishing ideal (309). It interests Frye because the book is about the theory of education (311). Castiglione's courtier must do things with grace, which is made up of *sprezzatura*, or ease, and *disinvoltura*, or graceful movement (314). Like Machiavelli's prince, Castiglione's courtier is constantly on view, but the prince takes decisions and is hypocritical and manipulating (315). Bembo's panegyric on love points to the Neoplatonic goal of the courtier, who, like the prince, becomes a metaphor for aspects in us all: Eros governs us all. Leisure and play is the true goal of work, but neither should be, in the wake of the ideals of the French revolution — liberty, equality, fraternity — left to an elite. Fraternity, or personal respect, Frye suggests, is the hardest ideal to enact and the educational ideal associated with it must become one of our chief preoccupations. Castiglione is one of the few educators to have grasped the importance of this ideal, "and that is why his book is not only a beautiful handbook of grace but a profound vision of human destiny" (321).

Frye also discusses the works of more recent figures like William Morris, Richard Wagner, and James Joyce. He is interested in Morris, a versatile figure who raises questions about the relation between art and society, especially in regard to his utopian impulse, which is most readily seen in *News From Nowhere* (322, 327). As usual, Frye is drawn to the visionary and prophetic aspect of the writer whose work he is considering. Morris tries to

re-tell as many of the world's great stories as he can, so that he can transform traditional heroism into "a new world where man had made his peace with himself and with nature" (339). Frye explains his reaction against Wagner's music during World War II for political reasons, but now he attempts to understand what makes Wagner's mind and art extraordinary — the way in which all his mythological themes seem available to him at once and how he develops aspects of that mythology in individual ways in each of his works (340-41). For instance, Frye argues that the verbal framework of *Parsifal* derives from Schopenhauer's construct of the world as will and as idea (354). The music in that opera expands "into a much larger vision of humanity led by its own inner nature to rise toward some infinite power which is both itself and the opposite of itself," so that Frye is brought to ask "whether music, which defines nothing and expresses everything, may not be the primary language of the spirit, and not merely, as Schopenhauer said, of the suffering and enduring will" (355).

It is appropriate that Denham decides to end this collection of essays, which concentrates so much on vision, recreation, revelation, and apocalypse, with the essay, "Cycle and Apocalypse in *Finnegans Wake*." In discussing Joyce's last great mythological work, Frye begins with a statement that should serve as a wake-up call to those who study English literature in isolation: "Since the fourteenth century there has never been a time when English literature has not been influenced, often to the point of domination, by either French or Italian literary traditions, usually both at once" (356). Joyce's literary masters outside of English, Frye says, are Italian, which Samuel Beckett noticed in an essay in response to the work when it was published in fragments under the title, *Work in Progress*. The influence of Vico is especially prevalent (357). Frye thinks of *Finnegans Wake* as an epic form that expanded into an imaginative encyclopedia, whose limit was the sacred book (360). Not until Derrida and deconstruction did Joyce's theory become apparent because the deconstructor, Frye says, works in the same way Joyce did when he produced his drafts in creating his book of "traces." Practically every word in Joyce's novel:

provides, in addition to a surface meaning that may, or may not be there, a great variety of "supplements" providing a number of further aspects to the meaning. Deconstruction implies a concept not far removed from Freud's concept of the censor, the process of achieving meaning by excluding unacceptable meanings; and Joyce's dream language, while the activity of censorship is certainly recorded in it, escapes, to a very unusual degree, from the kind of psychological gaps that mental censorship leaves in narrative-directed writing. (361)

Frye differs from those who use Derrida to comment on *Finnegans Wake* where he thinks Joyce preferred a set of narrative canons, however

distinctively he used them, to discontinuity. Like other scriptures, this novel begins, Frye says, with mythical themes of beginning: creation, fall (or some other myth of the passage into mortality), and a universal flood (367). Frye also glances at psychoanalysis, having perhaps the work of Jacques Lacan in mind, when he says that today we are accustomed to hearing that the unconscious, like the conscious, is linguistically structured (368). Joyce's two mentors, according to Frye, are Vico, the theorist of time and history, and Giordano Bruno, who concentrated on space and developed a doctrine of an infinite universe (372-73). Frye ends his essay, and Denham chooses to end the collection, with a characteristic visionary moment. For Frye, both Bruno and Joyce died martyrs to their visions. Of Vico and Bruno, Frye says: "Both writers are full of the contradictions of creative power itself, and both find their tradition continued in the epic of a drunken Irishman's mock funeral wake that expands into the sleep of Eve and Adam under the circling stars" (374).

FRYE'S DOUBLE VISION

Northrop Frye was very private, at least publicly, about his religion. Perhaps his non-conformist upbringing in the Methodist Church (the episcopal branch) and his affiliation with its successor, the United Church of Canada (which also incorporated part of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Church) fostered in him a belief in individual conscience and a sense that it was nobody's business what he believed. The Bible was the word that the individual member of the church interpreted. The hierarchy of the church and of the secular authority, from which the church was separated, had no business regulating beliefs. In fact, the first three chapters of Frye's *The Double Vision* were originally given as public lectures at Emmanuel College, the theological faculty of Victoria College, University of Toronto, and the fourth chapter was added to clarify the first three chapters (1991, xvii). In one of Frye's jokes he claimed that he was an undercover agent for the United Church of Canada and, near the end of his life, he blows his cover purposely. Here he addresses the religious expertise and story element in the Bible that the Methodist church emphasized (5). The book appeared after Frye's death in January of 1991 (Aitken xv). This was the only one of his books that Frye never held in his hands.

Frye's discussion of religion has everything to do with language, meaning, literature, and history. Imagination brings these subjects together. For Frye, history is an open cycle: "A new movement begins, works itself out to exhaustion, and something of the original state then reappears, though in a quite new context presenting new conditions" (1991, 3). With some irony, Frye gives as an example the relation of capitalism to communism, of the myths each created to justify its triumph over its adversary, when in fact

capitalism was said to be the great victor and saviour in the 1920s, then socialism in the 1930s and then capitalism again in 1990 (4-5). The death of Hegel's history, as a movement towards freedom, except as a useful system that Marx inverted for the greater purposes of materialism, no longer seems, in light of the crumbling of Communism in Eastern Europe, a certainty (5). Frye's view of religion involves individual conscience and imaginative freedom but is social, communal, and democratic. With Heine, he realizes that freedom is a prison song: nevertheless, he values political democracy and thinks that in Eastern Europe there has been a disillusionment with all forms of ideology. Still, since Adam, humans have thrown freedom away (5-6). With characteristic irony, Frye says: "Involved in the Christian conception of original sin is the perception that no human society is likely to do anything sensible for longer than the time it takes to break a New Year's resolution" (6). Frye thinks that it is necessary to place the "impulse to freedom" in a wider and more practical context. He returns here to an idea he developed in the late 1960s and that he made central in *The Critical Path* (1971). As early as *The Modern Century* (1967), Frye was working out his myths of concern as particular to every historical context:

In every age there is a structure of ideas, images, beliefs, assumptions, anxieties, and hopes which express the view of man's situation and destiny generally held at that time. I call this structure a mythology, and its units myths. A myth, in this sense, is an expression of man's concern about himself, about his place in the scheme of things, about his relation to society and God, about the ultimate origin and ultimate fate, either of himself or of the human species generally. A mythology is thus the product of human concern, of our involvement with ourselves, and it always looks at the world from a man-centred point of view. (105-06)

In *The Double Vision* Frye returns to his myths of concern. Human beings have primary and secondary concerns. The primary are food, sex, property, and freedom of movement — the concerns we share with animals on a physical level. The secondary concerns include our religious, political and other ideological loyalties. Frye does not discount "ideology," which for many traditionalists and liberals is a menacing word to be repressed or dismissed because it threatens traditional values or freedom, respectively. "All through history," Frye says, "ideological concerns have taken precedence over primary ones" (6). Frye states the problem succinctly and perceptively: "We want to live and love, but we go to war; we want freedom, but depend on the exploiting of other peoples, of the natural environment, even of ourselves" (6). This assessment of our putting ideology first accurately describes one of the main reasons why we choose not to feed, clothe, shelter, and educate all human beings; why, for instance, many indigenous people are impoverished on many reserves in North America; why people starve in Africa while

factional armies fight; why blacks go hungry in the slums while whites grow fat in the suburbs; why Catholics and Protestants kill one another in Northern Ireland; why students are jailed in China for democracy; why as consumers we consume unnecessary products that consume our environment; why women are beaten, raped and murdered, and so forth.

Like Marx, Frye is concerned with human self-alienation, but, unlike Marx, he does not consider religion and economics as the only illusions or ideological delusions. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx writes that "Religious alienation as such occurs only in man's interior consciousness, but economic alienation is that of real life, and its abolition therefore covers both aspects" (Marx 1977, 89 [1964, 136], see 64 which sums up Marx's earlier emphasis on religion as the primary cause of alienation in the Introduction of *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* [1844]). Frye thinks that, owing to pollution, we can no longer afford to put ideology before primary needs or concerns. He says that during the Cold War the Soviet Union put secondary concerns before primary ones and the United States satisfied only the primary ones. The Cold War impoverished both sides (6-7). Freedom, Frye says, must be seen as an additional primary concern: it is physical and begins with freedom of movement and from discrimination. Movement includes thought and criticism, and property includes intellectual and artistic endeavours, all of which are shared in the community (7-8). One of the key questions for Frye is the distinction between the spiritual and the ideological elements of primary concerns. As a liberal, Frye thinks that primitive societies make the individual a function of the social group and mature societies develop individuality in its members. Mature societies give "space" to its members — it is as if Frye is harkening to his train trips between Toronto and Moncton, to *The Bush Garden*, and perhaps to Bachelard's poetics of space — but most mature societies, rare as they are, collapse back into the suffocation of primitive societies. Fifty years ago, Marxism, Thomism, fascism, and the American way of life were nostrums, so-called returns to primitive social values (8). As much as I agree with Frye, I am sure it did not escape him that liberalism is another ideology (9). According to Frye, communism failed in Eastern Europe because it did not provide the physical foundation of primary concern — food, possessions, and free movement. He says that the primitive form of society allows for social authority over the individual and that most religious organizations are more bound to this form (9-10). Erasmus and Rabelais are models of moderate liberals who are not interested in the sectarian aspects of Reformation and Counter-Reformation: by implication, Frye places himself in this tradition as well as the liberal movements of Vatican Two and the Protestant ecumenical movements. Thus he opposes "fundamentalist" and "orthodox" religious attitudes as "the worst possible

basis for a secular society" (11-12). He also criticizes the dogmatic atheism and anti-religious campaigns Lenin thought important to the Marxist revolution. Frye is concerned about tyranny, which comes from within, and asserts that humans are products of nature and of social and ideological conditioning. Marx and Freud, Frye says, are the two most influential thinkers for the twentieth century because they have alerted people to the exploitation in society and the latent hysteria in the individual and to the alienation that both produce (13). Spirituality may be a way of completing the person and of undoing alienation. Frye appeals to the New Testament, which represents the human being emerging from the natural and social into the full worlds of the individual — a kind of resurrection or rebirth. "Body," a metaphor meaning repressed elements in the psyche, becomes crucial in Frye's scheme. The human who wants to be reborn can only be separated from natural or social context to the extent that one can gain some knowledge of one's conditioning (13-14). From St. Paul, Frye takes up the *soma pneumatikon* or spiritual body (the spiritual person is a body) and contrasts it to the *soma psychikon*, or natural person.

In discussing the crisis in language Frye argues against the dangers of literal truth, what Paul calls the letter that kills. Frye attacks fundamentalism or the false literalism of belief: "cruelty, terror, intolerance, and hatred within any religion always mean that God has been replaced by the devil, and such things are always accompanied by a false kind of literalism" (15). In Islam as well as "Christendom" people can pervert the scriptures demonically by insisting on false literalism. As examples Frye cites the reception of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and the reactionary religious movement that Atwood represents in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Literature's organizing principles — myth (story or narrative) and metaphor (figured language) — are "completely liberal" because of the freedom of spiritual movement, so that even though literature incorporates our ideological concerns, it devotes itself mainly to primary ones. Literature "does everything for people except transform them. It creates a world that the spirit can live in, but it does not make us spiritual beings" (16).

One of Frye's principal observations about the Bible is that it is written in the language of myth and metaphor, that is of literature. The Bible represents counter-historical myths that show the limits of historicism, of, for instance, the historical Jesus. The Bible is all myth: Frye does not think it wise to turn sacred history into history, *Heilsgeschichte* into *Weltgeschichte*. The New Testament moves from the myth of the Messiah to the metaphor of the Messiah, "the vision of all things in their infinite variety united in the body of Christ" (17). The Bible moves from counter-historical myth to counter-logical metaphor. Frye alludes to the appalling historical record of Christianity and appeals to charity, an imaginative conception of language,

the genuine Christianity. Without "imaginative literalism," as opposed to historical facts and logical propositions, creeds and dogmas become harmful. Frye distinguishes between literary myths and biblical myths, which are in part literary, because the vision of the spiritual life that the New Testament represents are myths and metaphors to live in. This power of transformation is kerygma or proclamation (17-18). Frye maintains a certain amount of scepticism in human matters even when speaking about spirit and God, something that he avoids in his literary theory: "What 'the' truth is, is not available to human beings in spiritual matters: the goal of our spiritual life is God, who is a spiritual Other, not a spiritual object, much less a conceptual object" (20).

The double vision of nature — which Frye takes from a phrase in a poem in a letter William Blake wrote to Thomas Butts on November 22, 1802 — suggests that sense perception is not enough (22). Frye interprets this double vision as the subject recognizing itself as part of what it perceives, or the humanizing of the world (23). One must become aware of the distinction between the natural and the human: "There seems to be no human society that does not live within an envelope of law, ritual, custom, and myth that seals it off from nature, however closely its feeding and mating and hunting habits may approximate those of animals" (25).

Taking up where Matthew Arnold left off, that is, in speaking of poetry as a criticism of life, Frye relates criticism to civilization. He says that two elements of the construction of the human world exist: work and play. Play opens up a realm of freedom and leisure: from here, forms human consciousness and the creative arts arise (28). The play of genres represents primary concerns — fiction and drama, people making love, gaining property, going off on adventures; the comic and the romantic wish-fulfillment; and the tragic and the ironic, frustration and maladjustment. Frye also proposes that the nonsense of ranking a leisure class above a working class and fine arts above useful arts is past, celebrates the work of leisure in all classes and implies that class distinctions may be ceasing to exist (29). The human consciousness of being in and apart from nature is a sabbatical vision, a leisurely freedom, as in liberal education (30-31). If Frye speaks about Kant as the philosopher "who took criticism as his base of operations" and relates the Kantian notion of beauty in nature, the "purposiveness without purpose," and of the connection between aesthetic and suspended teleological judgements, he sets out the limitations of teleological arguments, for instance, the view that the end of nature is for human exploitation (32-33). Frye quotes W.H. Auden in expressing the crisis we now face — "We must love one another or die" (34) — and he sees the extension of love from the human to the natural in the ecology movement as one of the few welcome developments in the past generation.

In discussing the redemption of nature, Frye shows how Pauline and Hegelian his schema is. The vision of an ideal must be present and realizable: this ideal is the spiritual kingdom that Jesus reveals in the Gospel. Only the genuine human being or spiritual body, Paul's *soma pneumatikon*, can understand this realizable ideal. Frye appeals to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, which argues that we are aware of the split between the conscious subject and the unconscious object and that we make progress in knowledge and consciousness by bridging the gap and abolishing the difference (36). This redemption of alienation through spiritual "atonement" is a very different project from the divisions, contradictions, and aporias that deconstruction and scepticism emphasize and the material "redemption" that Marx promises in the face of economic alienation. It does not mean that Frye thinks there is a fixed truth in the human world: "there are no permanent or final truths in science or any other human discipline" (37). Truth is a kind of spiritual body. Critics work with the writer in judging the human condition: criticism becomes larger than the individual critics and becomes almost synonymous with education (38). Similarly, in religion people have to "keep a critical attitude that never unconditionally accepts any socially established form of revelation" or they end up with self-idolatry (39). Only a creating God can allow for a spiritual vision.

The double vision of time involves the intricate relation between space and time. In Christianity a spiritual vision means that everything is always everywhere (41). Anxiety arises from a conflict between desire (a will to live) and consciousness (42). The past, Frye argues, is the only source of knowledge because every experience is a recognition (like an *anagnorisis* in classical tragedy) of having had that experience a moment earlier (44). Time in Christianity is a cross, the descent and ascent of Christ through the horizontal line of history (46). In examining time and history Frye admits that with the influence of Marx and Nietzsche, only the horizontal or historical dimension remained, but, given the psychotic record of humanity, what Stephen Dedalus calls the nightmare of history, Frye does not see how it is possible to believe in history. Marxism is one such belief that needs re-examination (47-48). The biblical narrative from creation to apocalypse moves from one creation to another that is new and restored only to humankind, one that enlarges human experience (49). Frye says that history is not a cycle but contains cyclical patterns in events themselves that are not simply fictions in the minds of historians. Thus Frye differs from Virgil and Nietzsche, and he criticizes the totalitarian rewriting of history into the infallibility of the ruler or ruling party as well as the quixotic appeal to the ideals of ages that never existed. Here Frye is like Raymond Williams whose analysis of a book on country life suggests that our perspectives shift and that the view of the pastoral rural scenes from our individual and national

youths recede on a nostalgic escalator (Williams). The versions of history, like Don Quixote's attempt to have his society follow him into some lost age of chivalry, represent secular parodies of the Fall, for, as Proust says, the only paradises we have are those we have lost (50). Similarly, progress is just another idol (52).

Education has a distinct temporal dimension. Education involves wisdom, the spirit, and criticism. Frye reminds us that the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, sees wisdom as a double movement, for it begins with present experience disappearing into past knowledge but becomes past knowledge permeating and illuminating present experience (53). For Frye, human authority is subject to cancellation and spiritual authority is alone real and expands the dignity of those that accept it. Spiritual authority inheres in the classic in literature, the example of the spiritual life and the repeatable experiment in science. Criticism moves beyond self-criticism to a conscious awareness of the historical context of one's activity. It relates the past to the concerns of contemporary life (54). Frye criticizes "the pan-historical fantasies of the nineteenth century," of thinkers like Hegel, Marx, Newman, and Comte, who insist that history alone will save us or who put specious constructs on history (56). We are, in Frye's view, on the verge of an awakening, perhaps akin to the Great Awakening, in which we shall participate in an individualized movement of social concerns, for primary concerns like food, shelter, the greening of the earth, as well as for their spiritual aspects of equal rights and freedom (57). But Frye understands the chaos and contradictions that history involves and appeals to one of the foundational beliefs of liberalism that by harnessing greed and self-interest to better uses we might make our way in the right direction (if not to a kind of progress of which Frye has been sceptical throughout his book) (57-58).

Elsewhere I shall be discussing Frye's religious views, so that I shall only glance at his discussion of the double vision of God. Given Frye's interest here and throughout his career in myth and metaphor, it is not surprising to find his religious vision grounded in these terms. In a section discussing God and gods, for instance, Frye observes: "The metaphorical vision may see the reflection of God from his works in nature, but it is only through the distinctively human elements in the world that we can come to the spiritual God" (59). As usual, Frye is interested in the transformation of mythology into literature. Gods change into human heroes of romance and saga, which begins secular literature, or, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the original myths are retold as literary stories. The cosmos, according to Frye, has three levels: the genuinely divine, the demonic parody, and the human world turned by grace from the demonic to the divine (62). Along with Ovid's encyclopedic poem about change, Virgil's *Aeneid* completes the representation of the whole of classical mythology (63).

When examining the Hebraic and Hellenic traditions, Frye notes that Christianity is based on the New Testament, which is founded on the Old Testament and which views itself as an interpretation and spiritual fulfillment of its laws and prophecies (65). Frye also returns to his idea of metaphorical literalism, the position that the true literal sense of the Bible is metaphorical. He remarks that Dante's son, Pietro, who is one of the first commentators on the *Commedia*, realizes that there are different kinds of literal meaning, of which the metaphorical literal is one, and so moves beyond his father's problematic notion that the literal-descriptive is the basis of all meaning, no matter how polysemous meaning is in Scripture and in Dante's poem (69). Frye maintains that one can only get so far with textual disintegration, when he cites as a cause for the importation of the Mediterranean myth of the Virgin Birth the Septuagint rendering of *halma*, young woman, as virgin, *parthenos*, in Isaiah 7:14. One must, in Frye's view, move beyond this single vision to the double vision that realizes that the Virgin Birth is necessary as a means of giving Jesus spiritual significance and that divine intervention interrupts the hereditary succession of natural fathers (70). The Gospels are great works of literature but their polysemous nature only allows readers to approach it as literature on the literal level. Using as examples the Duke's exclamation in seeing the twins, Viola and Sebastian, for the first time together and the detail, in Mark 1:6, that John the Baptist is described as wearing a leather girdle and camel hair clothes, Frye connects the necessity of a natural perspective of Shakespearean comedy with that of a double vision in the Gospels (71). Blake's Newton could not witness comedy and the Gospels because they are not the domain of single vision, although the historical Newton, who devoted much of his time to theology and alchemy, might well have understood more of doubling perspectives than Blake gave him credit for. Frye maintains that the literal-descriptive will not do for the Gospels, which are aesthetic and spiritual productions (72).

Culture humanizes the world in Frye's schema: a humanized God is part of that culture. Frye examines Jehovah as an anthropomorphic God and moves from the metaphorical-literal level — in the Medieval system — to the polysemous level in which biblical stories form a myth to live by: the literal-descriptive level (interpretations of Genesis 3:16 that opposed doctors who began to use anaesthetics in childbirth), to the allegorical level (the story of Abraham's two wives in Genesis), to the moral or tropological level (Jesus' parables) (76-78). Frye condemns the idea of hell after death as a reflection of the depravity of the human mind and thinks of hell as something we have created on earth. He observes, like Blake, that there is a marriage of heaven and hell, two realities here and now, in human life (78-79). The episode in Genesis 32, "wrestling with the angel," is an example of a story that

represents all three levels of meaning (79-80). Whereas secular literature, from Homer to the Medieval romance, put the aggressive hero in the foreground as a central theme, the Bible counters that view, except in the period of the Old Testament from Joshua to David, by advocating endurance under adversity as the real form of courage and faith and hope, however uncertain, as survival values (80). Frye asks why we as humans allow evil to persist (81). Frye is a humanist who considers that our spiritual journey as individuals makes us more authentically human and as a group makes us a social movement (81-82). Education and especially religious education is, Frye says, supposed to show us the limitations of our social conditioning. He is hopeful that social change in the past half century reflects such an awareness. In stating that hope Frye credits Marxism for illuminating what was an unconscious "bourgeois" conditioning and Freudian psychoanalysis for unmasking the way we rationalize unconscious conflicts. He thinks, however, that for our times these positions polarize too much in a dialectic (82). Frye says that in the double vision God's reality comes nearer to human life when purified of the vain and cruel reflection of human evil (83).

Frye's last words are an exhortation to vision, an apocalyptic hermeneutic. Here is a double vision based on uniqueness and unity, moving away from literal domination where zealots call on words to back up a totalitarian and ruthless God or the literal disintegration where exegetes break up texts to demonstrate an infinite surface of contradiction and tyrannical logocentrism. Here is a double vision where the Logos unites mind and nature, where the spiritual and physical worlds are simultaneously present, where each moment we live through and die out of into another order, where we live in the resurrection here and now (83-85). This is the eternal now that Frye's work led up to, from Blake to the Bible. This book, *The Double Vision*, may or may not have been intended as Frye's last, but he always said in person that his work on the Bible was the culmination of his life's work. If Frye began with Blake, let me end with him. In *Additions to Blake's Catalogue of Pictures* (1810) or *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, the poet declares: "The Last Judgment is not Fable or Allegory but Vision. ... Vision, or Imagination, is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably" (168, 78). In Blake's poem, "With Happiness Stretch'd across the Hills," which is in his letter to Thomas Butts the speaker ends by praying, as Frye did in this book as he heard the poem in his mind, "May God us keep / From Single vision & Newton's sleep" (85). And, finally, behind Frye's work is Blake's human form divine, the Christ in us all, here and now, witnessed through the visionary company we are all a part of.

THE ANATOMY OF FRYE'S CRITICISM

Northrop Frye's criticism itself displays the range and intricacy of a major *oeuvre*. In approaching this body of work it is important to find a focus. A.C. Hamilton's method focuses on Frye in his historical context, which is particularly appropriate today when the prevailing critical and theoretical winds in literary studies are those of history. Quite properly, Hamilton raises the issue that George Steiner has, one that is imperative for our times — how can literature be the chief force of civilization when the arts faculties in various universities have not resisted the atrocities of our civilization? Hamilton implies that Northrop Frye has been a major defender of English literature and criticism in this historical context (ix). Frye responds, Hamilton argues, to the mythopoetic literature of the modern age and the need to make sense of the chaotic critical scene in the central decades of this century (x). Hamilton says that each of Frye's works after the *Anatomy* represents a brief version of it, and each article an even briefer version (xi). Hamilton suggests that Frye, like Harold Innes and Marshall McLuhan, are Canadian in their desire to communicate and establish perspectives in the face of obstacles and distance (xii-xiii). Frye's view of literature is that it is a human apocalypse, a kind of interhuman revelation, and criticism a human last judgement, the awareness of that revelation. The work of imagination is central here, as Blake taught Frye, because it is a vision of the recreation of humanity, a decisive act of spiritual freedom. In Frye's pronouncement here, Hamilton aptly hears similar musings on vision in Shelley, Milton, Sidney, Longinus and Aristotle (xiii-xiv). Hamilton also is right to resist Frye's insistence that he is a loner, a romantic figure (there are other romantics), but that he:

belongs centrally to an extended humanist tradition, specifically to the social context of literary criticism that was established by Matthew Arnold, the Romantic theory of the imagination formulated by Blake and Shelley, and the concept of literature as a secular scripture formulated in the Renaissance, chiefly by Sidney. (xiv)

Perhaps, as Hamilton suggests, drawing on T.S. Eliot and Geoffrey Hartman, we are at the end of the Protestant tradition in English literature and at the end of humanism (xv). In this scheme Frye might play the owl of Minerva at dusk. It is a hypothesis worth considering.

Hamilton structures *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of his Criticism* like Frye's *Anatomy*. In Hamilton's first chapter, "Introduction to Frye's Poetics," he reviews the criticism, making room, as is the convention, for his own book and, following Denham's (1988) classification of four types of criticism of Frye: genial praise, general abuse, misunderstanding, and serious criticism (3-5). Under the rubric of serious criticism, Hamilton includes some

examples of negative comment from eminent critics like Kenneth Burke, Frederick Crews, W. K. Wimsatt, Frank Kermode, Frank Lentricchia, Terry Eagleton, Geoffrey Hartman, Murray Krieger, and others (5-8). Hamilton's defence of Frye is admirable and necessary: he situates Frye historically and understands Frye's work thoroughly. He centres his debate on the *Anatomy*, which is a logical and important approach. He also realizes the importance of vision to Frye, which Frye himself stressed (his last book is not called *The Double Vision* without reason) and I have written an essay on Frye's mystical and visionary religion (see Hart forthcoming). The defence, then, is well-wrought but is also vulnerable. Hamilton responds to a theoretical climate in English studies, and to some extent within Comparative Literature, that involves the relative forgetting of Frye. Although this partial eclipse has occurred and is occurring, especially among the new wave of theorists, Frye need not be relegated to literary history, as someone who cannot speak to the present except on his own terms. Hamilton recognizes Frye's significance and argues eloquently for it, but the defence of Frye's defence of poetry sometimes seems over-defensive because by translating Frye into the present, Hamilton sometimes does not allow for sufficient historical estrangement to make Frye's texts seem other enough to unsettle the present theorists in and with their present. At other times, Hamilton makes the 1950s, the immediate context of the *Anatomy*, appear to be a step in the progressive march to the present. We are in an age of new historicism and post-modernism that has displaced old historicism and modernism, so how does one make the critics of the new age and the new-age critics read someone who displaced Eliot, Tillyard, and Leavis as a primary model for criticism? But the word "supplemented" is probably better than displaced, although some displacement always occurs. Frye is more cited now by critics than by theorists. Nonetheless, at one level, Frye needs no apology for his canon, which displays wit, learning, clarity, scope, and rigour. Writing well may not be enough, although Auden thought it to be sufficient, but Frye's style alone suggests that future readers and critics will read him. Hamilton is not the first to attempt a comprehensive analysis of Frye's work, nor will he be the last: Denham's (1978) and Balfour's books (1988) especially contribute to our understanding (see also Bates, D. Cook, Dyrkjob; for collections of essays on Frye, see Krieger and E. Cook. Kogan attacks Frye). Admittedly, conviction and fashion have led some critics and theorists to change their minds about Frye from 1957 to the late 1980s, when Hamilton appears to have completed his book. But Frye needs to be taken on terms that are as synchronic as they are diachronic because he may deviate from his own period as much as Blake did his. Visionaries do not follow their times: they lead them. They also diverge from their times. Hamilton's anatomy of Frye's anatomy is historical. It is an approach that needed to be done, and

Hamilton does it well. But, as Hamilton himself realizes, history is not enough when talking about literature, and it is not enough in talking about Frye. The theory of literature, at least historically, has established connections with philosophy and poetics as well as history. Hamilton's great strength is that he is not reductive in his historical reading of Frye, but rather, opens up vistas into Frye's vision. One would not expect less from one of the world's great Spenserians, whose work on Edmund Spenser is also interesting given that Frye gave up working on his book on Spenser to study modern literature and work that resulted in the *Anatomy* (Frye 1957, vii, Ayre 213, 220-22, 340). I am only saying that as strong as Hamilton's reading is, it is one in a spectrum in a community of readers and that sometimes it places too much faith in historical criticism, even though it is aware of some of its limitations.

As Frye's critical theory involves a theory of education, Hamilton provides a brief history of English studies as a context for Frye's work (see Palmer and Graff). Hamilton regards English studies as being in continuous crisis since its inception. By the 1950s, he argues, there was a bitter antagonism between the literary critic and historical scholar, which was exemplified in Leavis' many controversies, and both were played out. English studies needed a larger critical framework as critical schools multiplied: this is the accomplishment of the *Anatomy* in the context of the 1950s (13). Hamilton derives four polemical suggestions in the *Anatomy*: literary criticism is a science; the emphasis on value-judgements in literary studies is mistaken; reading must be distinguished from criticism; criticism is a structure of knowledge that will reveal that literature is an "order of words" (13-35). Hamilton gives Frye's appeal to criticism as science a useful context: Hugh Blair (1762), Leslie Stephen (1895), Rene Wellek (1949) all want to see a more scientific critical theory. According to Hamilton, the *Anatomy* is "the skeleton of literature" that structures a miscellaneous body of literary works and gives them a human form and that permits the reader to respond imaginatively to a literary text by placing it in its literary and social contexts (19-20). Matthew Arnold, as Hamilton suggests, is a big influence on Frye: Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" recognizes the importance of literary criticism in human culture, associates creative and critical activities, and considers criticism to be a way to gain knowledge rather than to make judgements about literature (20). These are ideas that Frye takes up over the course of his career. Hamilton says that Frye's critical theory places recognition above value-judgements, while not denying the latter but only their primacy (23). Frye thinks that criticism begins where reading ends, when the critic distances himself from the work to make sense of it, but, in a reversal, a full imaginative response begins only when criticism ends (27). But Hamilton aptly questions this Blakean movement

from innocence through experience to higher innocence, because he says that Frye does not address the possibility that it is impossible to find an innocent reading (27-28).

One of the strongest sections of Hamilton's book is his discussion of Frye's construction, the order of words, or the visionary unity of literature (29-35). Through Blake, Frye unites his religious or biblical penchant for apocalypse and revelation in the body of Christ and his Romantic vision whereby humans recreate a metaphorical, mythical, and imaginative paradisaical form of humanity. Frye called this vision his theory of archetypes. Hamilton aptly points out the link between Frye's interest in the Bible and literature stems in part from hermeneutics as well as from Blake. He also recognizes the centrality of vision to Frye's critical theory. This vision of literature as an order of words, the structure of a secular scripture, echoes Blake's view of the Bible as the great code of art. Hamilton also places the *Anatomy* in the context of Frye's earlier writings (36-42). Early on, Frye learns to step back from the text and look for its archetypal dimensions rather than to perform close readings like those of the New Critics (42).

Like Frye in the *Anatomy*, Hamilton leaves his Introduction for essays on historical criticism, ethical criticism, archetypal criticism, and rhetorical criticism before moving to his Conclusion. From Hamilton's historical point of view:

Perhaps Frye's most deliberately polemical act in the *Anatomy* is to introduce his poetics with an essay on historical criticism that relates all literary works chronologically within a history of culture to provide a "total literary history" ([*Anatomy*] 16-17), one radically different from the usual history, which isolates selected works within separate historical periods in order to relate them to specific social and intellectual contexts. (45)

I noted that Hamilton realizes that the vulnerability of a historical reading of Frye is that it must answer to Frye's criticism of historical approaches to literature, their failure to consider that the quality of a poet "is often in negative relation to the chosen context," a passage Hamilton quotes before showing how Frye uses Milton as an illustration of this poetic negation of history (49). For Frye, criticism is historical — it studies the literary text in its original cultural context — and ethical, which involves present concerns, and exists in a dialectic between historicism and ethics (50). Hamilton continues his emphasis on literary history or the historical Frye, noting that Frye's use of Spengler, as seen through Blake, helps Frye to formulate a central thesis, namely that the poet is taken over by literature as an organism, which has its historical roots in the Bible (59). The immediate historical context is Frye's own generation as a reaction to Thomism and Eliot, Frye defended as central to the English tradition those elements that were Protestant, radical, and Romantic (60-61).

Frye adapts Aristotle's literary classification, which compares the hero's moral state to that of the audience and extends the scheme to include the hero's environment. As the five fictional modes in this order — myth, romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic modes — tend to succeed one another in a sequence, they provide a taxonomy for a new literary history (61-62). Hamilton contends that while Frye admits the possibility of many other fictional modes, he uses these five to make his literary history intelligible (63). These modes, Hamilton says quite sensibly, are not essential but emphasize the relations between texts (65). In Frye's schema literature descends from myth (66). Frye uses Freud's concept of displacement allows him to represent literary history as a patterned movement that connects literary texts through their common identity in myth: Freud's concept refers to the restrictions that reality places on human desire, and Frye's to the limits that the reader's recognition of reality places on the writer's imagination. The writer cannot present myth but must increasingly, as the sequence of modes demonstrates, accommodate it to the reader, or allow for displacement (68). Hamilton characterizes Frye's use of displacement clearly:

displacement refers to the techniques used by a writer to preserve a work's mythic form *through* its realistic content. Myth belongs to the metaphorical world of the imagination in opposition to the metonymical world of the senses, and it is displaced in literature in the sense that a refugee is a displaced person: the person remains the same but the environment has become alien. While the term is certainly borrowed from Freud, it involves Aristotle's fundamental critical concept, that the poet displaces history, or what actually happened, in order to tell things as they might have happened according to probability or necessity. (69)

Hamilton's reading of Frye's historical criticism is sophisticated and measured. In discussing cosmology in the *Anatomy* Hamilton observes the importance of framework. In Frye's scheme literature forms an order of words because all literary texts have been created within a Christian cosmology, which, centred on the Word, is, as Hamilton says, words within the Word (71). He says that Frye's historical sense is not the usual kind because he thinks that the critic should not explain the poem in relation to external factors, like history and philosophy, but as a poem in its mythological context, though Frye recognizes that the identity of a poem is rooted in historical culture (73).

In this historical framework Frye's thematic modes relate to the fictional modes, the poet's power vis-à-vis his readers and society in relation to the hero's power of action vis-à-vis other people and his environment. The five thematic modes are the mythical, the romantic, the high mimetic, the low mimetic, and the ironic (75). Hamilton says there are two principles to Frye's literary history, analogies of revelation and existential projection. In

speaking about the first, Hamilton sums up the relation between Frye's fictional and thematic modes: "As myth is displaced in the fictional modes, biblical revelation is displaced in the thematic modes, again by demands that literary works reflect ordinary human experience" (76). Catharsis allows us to see the whole shape of a literary text, to witness its theme, and historical criticism in Frye's framework, as Hamilton says, is a necessary first critical act because otherwise one would not discover a higher reality in the strangeness of literature but only the tyranny of the present (77). Frye recognizes the fallacy of existential projection, of which historical critics before and during the 1950s were guilty, the notion "that they could abstract ideas, beliefs, or values from a poem, project them against various intellectual traditions of the age, and then discuss the poet's political and religious views as reflected in the poetry" (78).

Frye asks a telling question: why are we prepared to admit Shakespeare's skillful dramatic use of a theme and then equate it to a commonplace belief in his own day? Frye admits that literature is historically conditioned but not historically determined, which distinguishes him from earlier Marxist critics. He eschews any criticism that views the literary text as merely a product of the writer's life or age or in terms of social realism: he thinks it reductive. Hamilton maintains that Frye, who, like Blake and Shelley, sees literature as an imaginative form that defeats history, will seem anti-historical, but it is literature, in Frye's view, that is thus. Frye does not see the function of literature, as Hamilton says, run away from the actual but asserts that it seeks to see the possible in the actual (78-80). This kind of hypothesis is in keeping with possible or fictional world theory (see Hart 1988).

I have concentrated on Hamilton's theoretical introduction and, especially, on his view of Frye's historical criticism for two reasons: Hamilton wishes to place Frye's work, and especially the *Anatomy*, in its historical context, and historicism is the dominant paradigm in English studies (The "rediscovery" of history is also important for Comparative Literature; see Hart 1991, 1992b). Although the other chapters of Hamilton's study warrant detailed attention, all writers, poets and critics, are faced, as Chaucer says in the "General Prologue," with the problems of time and space. Briefly, then, I shall now consider Hamilton's discussion of Frye's ethical, archetypal and rhetorical criticisms and, in a little more detail, I shall examine his conclusions.

In his discussion of Frye's notion of ethical criticism, Hamilton says that Frye insists that historical and contemporary must be combined in criticism because the historical gives us the total form of the present and the ethical offers the relevance of past art for the present (83). He sees in Frye's criticism an initial response of Aristotelian detachment from the text but a final response of Longinian absorption in it, being taken out of the work

only to find one's identity in it (84). Frye places the literary text within literature, and literature within culture: the reader may internalize that culture through the text (86). Hamilton's summary of the relations within Frye's construct of ethical criticism is lucid and helpful:

The context of any literary work now includes the whole cultural environment of literature, or rather the structure of that environment as revealed by the archetypal patterns which literature shares with significant — and therefore ritualized — social actions. The anagogic phase points to a final synthesis of structure and content in its symbol, the monad: the order of words revealed in the mythical phase is ultimately identified with the order of nature itself. Hence this phase may be considered to turn inward: any literary work may become the focus of all literature and culture, the centre of the order of words. (87)

Frye does not acknowledge a distinct literary language and thinks that the reader must decide whether the text possesses an inward or literal meaning, which makes it literary, as opposed to an outward and descriptive meaning (88). Descriptive writing derives from an active will and the conscious mind (intention): literature does not (90). Through the formal phase, Frye wants to provide a synthesis of the literal and descriptive phases. The formal phase, Hamilton argues, demonstrates how the two preferred modes of critical reading during the 1950s — rhetorical analysis and historical background — complement each other (92-93). Hamilton rightly points out Frye's debt to Aristotle's idea that poetry is more universal than history and is therefore more philosophical, and Philip Sidney's view that poetry combines the general notion of philosophy and the particular example of history. Poetry faces *theoria* and *praxis* (94-96). Although it is obvious how Frye differs from New Critics, the difference cannot be stated too often because of the tendency to identify Frye too narrowly with this method (if not with structuralism). Hamilton makes this necessary distinction: "As an archetypal critic, Frye extends the New Critical emphasis on the particular structure of a literary work to the larger structure through which it may be related to the rest of literature" (103). The first stage of archetypal criticism, Hamilton says, studies the conventions, genres, and archetypes that link poems because it considers that a poem is an imitation of other poems (104). What convention says through the poem is more important for Frye than what and how a poem says (106). Frye, as I have said in this essay, has a penchant for comic and romantic endings, for vision, apocalypse, and revelation. The movement towards a single body, like an atonement with or redemption in Christ, becomes the end of the critical journey. The anagogic phase is the end of the critical path, a journey "sustained by the faith that the structural patterns found in literary works express not only the identity of the works

themselves but one that becomes existential in providing 'the objective counterpart to [the reader's] own identity'" (118-19).

Hamilton's discussion of Frye's notion of archetypal criticism continues the theme of identity. He claims that Frye's archetypal criticism supplants other critical languages during the 1950s. After having revealed that the structure of poetry was myth and having examined its implications as a structure of meanings, Frye relates "the various structures of imagery that organize the meaning or pattern of literature" (123). He uses the metaphor of music to describe the structural principles of literature (124). His archetypal criticism attempts to show how four related categories of myth organize literary works synchronically in a literary universe. Frye argues for a structure of imagery, or *dianoia*, and for two undisplaced worlds, the apocalyptic and the demonic, which draw mainly on the Bible, the major source for undisplaced myth in Western tradition (126). Hamilton argues quite sensibly that the theory of *mythoi* occupies the theoretical centre of the *Anatomy* (130). The *mythoi*, which include all literature and are defined by their relations to one another, are structures of imagery, or *dianoia*, in movement (126, 133-34). Hamilton chronicles Frye's contributions in the theory of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony and satire (136-52). These contributions are well-known and have benefitted many critics and theorists over the past fifty years since the appearance of Frye's early essays on Manipulative satire and satire as a genre in 1942 and 1944, respectively (149). It is no exaggeration that Frye has done for the theory of comedy and romance what Aristotle did for the theory of tragedy, although, through no fault of his own, he did so late in the day, so it was hard for him to influence Terence, Castelvetro, Molière, Ibsen, Shaw, and Brecht (136, 140). Frye sees the *mythoi* of comedy and romance in the Bible, which stands behind all Western literature (137, 143). Hamilton argues that by using contemporary anthropology and psychology to sharpen analogies to myth, ritual, and dream, Frye relates a literary text to more than philosophy, history, and literature itself and that he overcomes the problem of dating himself with terminology from the 1950s and takes criticism beyond the Romantic heritage of New Criticism to the pre-Romantic heritage, which stressed the function of literature in society. According to Hamilton, Frye belongs to a Central European tradition: his archetype retains Plato's sense of a pattern; his use of myth extends Aristotle's discussion of plot; and his use of dream picks up on Francis Bacon's claim that poetry gives "some shadow of satisfaction to the mind" where nature denies it as the world is inferior to the soul. For Hamilton, Frye's assumptions contain the following critical truisms in our tradition:

that literature expresses central human desires and fears; that it relates, accordingly, to the amalgam of doctrines, beliefs, and values that compose a society's ideology; and

that writers express our major human concerns within this ideology by imitating the central events in human life — such ritualized events as birth, marriage, and death, and the various relationships of the individual: to the other sex and to the same sex, within the family and society, and beyond to "reality," in the sense of the Other which is not oneself. (153)

In his examination of Frye's concept of rhetorical criticism, Hamilton is surprised to find that instead of providing a theory of genres in the fourth essay, Frye analyses anew contested concepts in the study of literature. Hamilton praises Frye for providing a new perspective from which to see literary texts as an order of words and to move beyond them in order to view all writing as a verbal universe. After studying the Bible to gain a comprehensive view of literary criticism, in Frye's view, the critic descends from archetypes to genres and observes how drama comes from the ritual aspect of myth and lyric from the epiphanic side and, while epic perpetuates the the central encyclopedic structure (157).

Frye's fourth essay, according to Hamilton, attempts to answer the great question — What is literature? — by using rhythm to set up genres that, in their relations to one another, describe all literary texts. As usual, Hamilton provides useful comments on the critical context of the 1950s. He suggests that by concluding the *Anatomy* with an essay on genre entitled "Rhetorical Criticism," Frye was being polemical because genre study had been badly neglected in favour of rhetorical study (158). This fourth essay, Hamilton contends, establishes "a theory of genres that extends archetypal criticism by isolating the conventions that characterize groupings of literary works in terms that relate to the immediate experience of reading" — to the reader's experience of the sounds of words and their ordering rhythms (160). Frye returns to Aristotle, who classified literary texts as drama, narrative, and epic, but whereas Aristotle's theory of genre relates literary imitation to design in painting, Frye connects it to music where the internal organization of sound comes first (160-61). Hamilton argues that Frye sets up a system of relations that allows genres to interpenetrate and thus define one another. There are three distinct rhythms: metrical, semantic, and associative (162). Thus Frye examines drama, lyric, prose fiction. Hamilton wishes that Frye would say more about the anatomy because it is close to being at the centre of his view of prose fiction (179, see 170-81). Frye himself works in the anatomy of form, and his encyclopedic text echoes the encyclopedic structure of the Bible (180, 184). Here, as in most of his work, Frye works consciously with metaphor and identities rather than trying to avoid it, a course that younger theorists, like Foucault and Derrida, have followed (184).

A.C. Hamilton's fine book will long be a definitive guide to Frye's *Anatomy*, but it also looks at Frye's work before and since as prologic and epilogic (for a brief analysis of the *Anatomy* in this context see Fletcher and

Ricoeur). Although Hamilton integrates the work before and after the *Anatomy*, he concentrates most of these comments in his Conclusion (187-223). For Hamilton, Frye is proleptic and useful for our time. The Tentative Conclusion to the *Anatomy* is a Polemical Introduction to the rest of Frye's work. Hamilton admits that whether one values or devalues Frye's repetition over his career depends on one's perspective. In the Conclusion Hamilton also provides a brief synoptic look at Frye's books, which Denham did more extensively in his bibliography in 1988 (187-93).

Hamilton says that after the *Anatomy* Frye makes four polemical suggestions: romance, not myth, organizes literature as a secular scripture; reading and criticism can be as creative as creating literature; the mythological universe is made up of all verbal discourses, so that a major function of criticism is to relate mythology in literature to the social mythology in other discourses; reading literature provides a vision of what society should be and should be doing and what direction it should take and thereby suggests how people can become better individuals and citizens (193-94). Hamilton then examines these four polemical suggestions (194-204). He calls attention to the importance of ideology in Frye's work since the 1950s. Frye opposes the conformities of social mythology to the imaginative ideals of literary mythology. It seems, however, that in the *Anatomy* Frye also defended the autonomy of literature and criticism against the ideological motives of the culture, which often tries to hijack literature for its own purposes by stressing content over form (200-01). Mythology in literature, in Frye's scheme, is supposed to hold up before us a higher vision with which we can educate our imaginations and work for greater freedom in society (202-04). Hamilton sees Frye's critical method as a Socratic dialectic that moves from the uniqueness of a literary work to its literary context in the mythological universe that informs our culture. He thinks that Frye's impersonal and oracular style helps to establish the autonomy and authority of his encyclopedic criticism (204-05). As I have noted, Hamilton understands the centrality of vision in Frye's work, "an imaginative vision of a fully human world which can only be pointed to, not described" (206). Frye's analogical method relates to Stephen Greenblatt's use of analogy in his cultural poetics or new historicism, something that Hamilton implicitly acknowledges (207-10, 222-23; for an extended discussion of analogy in Greenblatt, see Hart 1991b). Frye's discussion of myth and metaphor involve his own story-telling and abundant use of metaphors (211). As Hamilton suggests in his Preface and here in the Conclusion, Frye is indebted to many sources — Aristotle, Spengler, Frazer, Sidney, Shelley, Arnold, Wilde, and, above all, Blake (212-13). Hamilton also traces the influences of Canada, liberalism, humanism, and religion on Frye. He concludes that while Frye is not a religious critic is a prophetic and visionary one (214-15).

In the coda to the Conclusion and the book, Hamilton suggests ways in which Frye might speak to the 1990s and beyond. He maps the differences and similarities between Frye and the deconstructionists: for instance, they like difference, he identity; they both agree that poetry is metaphorical and that criticism must begin with historical criticism and end with rhetorical criticism (216-19). Hamilton, who began with a historical view of Frye's *Anatomy*, turns to new historicism in his hope that Frye will be heeded now and later. Perhaps, Hamilton suggests, new historicism, unlike old historicism, recognizes that literature is a part of history, which is one of Frye's notions. Hamilton hopes that, like Frye and deconstructionists, new historicists will proceed from historical to rhetorical criticism. He implies that they need a more general and generic view of how literary texts function in historical contexts. Perhaps they will agree with Frye that literature provides a rival "ideology" (Hamilton's term for Frye's "mythology" to social ideology, and one "more congenial to human desire" (223). Hamilton completes his book by maintaining that Frye's system is open and can be, as it has been, penetrated by other methods, but will be dominated by none. Frye's criticism views literary works in the contexts of literature and culture as a whole. With some ambivalence towards Frye's need of the 1980s and 1990s, the same kind of ambivalent attitude Frye showed towards the end of his life, Hamilton chooses the comic structure, the vision of hope, the reassertion of Frye's identity.

In reading two of Frye's last three books (*The Double Vision* is his last), it is possible to conclude that Frye's system is anything but sterile and resonant, a product of Urizen. Frye's writing in the last two decades of his life shows how he never allowed himself to be swayed from his vision that the human imagination could recreate the mythology at the foundation of our lives and ideologies and could suggest a higher reality, however fleeting before our eyes, with which to read the past and present as we move into the future. That conviction of hope may have arisen from his Christian faith, but he wanted literature and literary criticism to be autonomous from religion as much as from other fields. Literature and criticism were not, for Frye, servants to society but, as he saw in Blake, revolutionary and prophetic means to lead us to the utopian impulse in our imaginations and in our lives.

University of Alberta

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BRIAN EDWARDS

Figures of Difference: History, Historicism, and Critical Practice

In a recent essay on aesthetics and history, Rodolphe Gasché suggests that there is no need for post-structuralism to rediscover history "because history was never lost" (159). But as anyone who reads the journals or notes the titles of new publications in the fields of literary theory and critical practice would realize, the last decade or so is remarkable for lamentations about a denial of "history" and calls for its return to the centre of critical discourse in the name of "history" or "politics" or "ideology" — words that seem to denote hardcore social realities in ways that the category "literature" perhaps does not. Learned journals such as *Critical Inquiry*, *New Literary History*, and *Diacritics* present continuing evidence of the liveliness of the debate and of the confusions in the terminology in which it is conducted. Works such as Frank Lentricchia's *After the New Criticism* (1980), Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), and the Attridge and Bennington collection of essays *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (1987) address the alleged displacement of history by a formalism that refuses to die. Although authors may be pronounced dead and we use, with varying degrees of confidence, such terms as postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-analytic psychology, post-colonialism and even post-feminism as markers of our up-to-dateness, or demonstrating our awareness of the avant-garde of critical discourse, the formalist legacy remains like a virus that proves resistant to each new medical procedure apparently brought against it. So, for example, in the Winter 1990 issue of *New Literary History*, Professor Carolyn Porter alleges, "In short, formalism has remained institutionally inscribed, despite the fact that we ritualistically denounce it at every opportunity" (255). What does she mean by "formalism"? Who are the "we" so strong in its denunciation?

Professor Porter teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, which she describes as decidedly not the promised land of New Historicism. Although she writes about the context of literary studies in the United States, a hardly homogeneous environment, the debate is transferrable because, in Australia and Canada, there are sufficient similarities in the broad patterns of our histories of critical practice and we participate in an