

# **The Benefits of Teaching Literary Postmodernism within the Monadological Frameworks of Modernist Anagogy: The Case of Anglistics**

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**Résumé:** *Le cadre anagogique de la communication littéraire est placé au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle dans le contexte de l'Anatomie de la critique dans son ensemble. L'auteur fait une plaidoirie pour l'enseignement de la littérature moderniste et pour l'éducation à l'aide de la théorie littéraire «anatomique» d'une conscience critique propre à la réception des œuvres (post)modernistes en tant que monades dans les cadres anagogiques.*

**Keywords:** *anagogy, modern literary communication, monad, 20th-century literary conventions, canon, literary criticism, Northrop Frye*

## **1. Avant propos**

This paper – placed at the crossroads of literary history and theory, outlining a didactics proper to the new literature – focuses on the way of teaching the *high modernist* literary domain, namely the English-speaking European canonical literature in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the perspective of communicating the ethics of literature, as outlined by Northrop Frye in his second essay in the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). We might ask ourselves: Why should literary didactics make use today of a potentially dated theoretical text, like this one, published in 1957? The answer could be that this text is a good starting point to offer preliminary guidelines before the teaching of contemporary literature in a concise format<sup>1</sup>. Since he claims to lay out the anatomy of the entire literary field, as it could be theoretically grasped in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Frye sums up several major trends to be developed throughout the decades to follow, while the *Anatomy of Criticism* functions didactically as a hub wherefrom the students can see, during their classes of literary theory and criticism and also of literary history, how various schools have distilled and specialised their concepts<sup>2</sup>.

First and foremost, the *Anatomy of Criticism* incorporates in its second essay a new historical understanding of literature seen through the lens of cultural communication, in other words, adopting the same methodology as the one the Konstanz Phenomenological School of reception criticism was to embrace later on and implying an understanding related to the great (identity) structures and horizons (of expectation), operational tools for both German hermeneutical-phenomenological criticism and the Geneva or American

(J. Hillis Miller's) phenomenology, and hence moving back to America, there where classical rhetoric was reborn at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Systematically speaking, in the sense of a classical Structuralism, to which he however adds the diachronic and the anthropological dimension<sup>3</sup>, Frye deals in his first essay with the historical succession of the five literary modes (mythic, romantic, high mimetic, low mimetic and ironic), while in his second essay he divides the symbols of literary communication from an ethical viewpoint – that is the name the author gives to literary communication – into four phases (literal and descriptive, formal, mythical and anagogic). Literary communication levels correspond to these phases respectively by means of ever more complex symbols. The literal-descriptive level displays the symbols as literary motifs, the formal exhibits symbols as literary images associated with individual works, the mythical embodies literary symbols as archetypes or bridges linking the entire field of literature, while the anagogic reads symbols as monads.

In a *secundo tempo*, we come upon the *Anatomy of Criticism*, published a year before the *Structural Anthropology*, with the dominants of French Structuralism from Claude Lévi-Strauss' School, that is we join the lineage of cultural anthropology, soon to be turned into a discipline-patron (or pilot) of post-war humanism. The anthropological outlook of this school mediates – as everywhere else, for that matter – between the synchronous specialisation of Structuralism, which draws on the philosophy of language, and a major – proto-historical – semantic extension. By means of its synthetic character, exemplarily structured, in a formalistic and also semantic sense, the *Anatomy* makes it possible for us to draw out intuitive and also systematising constructs (or full-fledged models) the students can use in order to critically grasp and place the idiosyncratic *chefs-d'œuvre* of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the *Anatomy of Criticism* addresses, in its turn, in a methodologically formative way, not only the critical consciousness it strives to develop in an empirical positivistic spirit, but also the imagination, which has so much to learn from cultural anthropology. This holds true even if, since it restricts itself to the field of literature, Frye's cultural anthropology is... old fashioned, not to call it obsolete or, like in Anglistics, dated, since the entire third essay of the *Anatomy of Criticism* refers to myth and archetype more or less in their traditional sense, although Frye occasionally translates the object of his discourse into the language of current cultural anthropology, in an attempt to associate it with the Freudian psychology of desire, compatible with paradoxical awakenings to life, in a nocturnal demiurgic code, similar to the features of post-Romantic literary consciousness.

Nonetheless, through the various exemplary literary analyses interspersed into the narrative of the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye includes the ever-fading new Anglo-Saxon stylistics of the "American New Criticism" or "Practical criticism" schools – under whose sign Structuralism itself gained momentum in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, it may be important to show, at the end of our plea for teaching modernist literature from the perspective of *anatomical* literary theory (i.e. the theory of the *Anatomy of Criticism*), that the denominator of all the schools mentioned above as the fabric Northrop Frye's synthesis works with is their focus on humanistic sciences, with no drop

of hermeneutical suspicion, as Paul Ricœur would call it, in his essay on Sigmund Freud's interpretation. Therefore, for the purposes of academic literary didactics, the critical modelling of literature without suspicion, in a descriptive rather than problematic way, seems to be beneficial – to appease the rigours of a clear-cut exposition which should welcome the students to a new field of study and in a... disciplinary format, albeit hastily. Frye's Structuralism still keeps much of the all-comprising objectivity of disciplinary omniscience rightfully covering things, before judging them and possibly dismantling them, tasting them somehow only in the subsidiary of their own discourse.

At this point I should draw attention to the fact that while the aestheticism of the first Modernism (at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) is unsuspicious about its own capacity to give a resounding answer to tradition, to engage in a dialogue with it, the second aestheticism, the Postmodernist one, is wary of its own place in the world, not only in relation to tradition, but also to itself, being sceptical, whereas the first Modernism was just rational. Under these circumstances, philology students cannot grasp the Postmodernist gestures derived from the first Modernism unless they set out on this journey having in mind clear-cut landmarks. Unravelling today's parody, or pastiche, or hybridity, carried into effect by arcane games of intertextuality, needs a staunch point of departure and a keen eyesight, with a clear direction.

The *anatomical* theoretical model enables the reception of the first great experimental literary works as monads within anagogical communication, which stands out by its capacity to transfigure literary history, with its inventory of canonical conventions, genres and gestures into a figural format.

## **2. Understanding modern anagogy through the relation between the topicality of monads and traditional literary-hermeneutical canons**

The second essay from the *Anatomy of Criticism* transposes into a circular figure the history of effects or canons, of literary conventions or horizons. Frye refers first and foremost to the archetypal circle of literature seen as a whole (the mythical phase of communication of literary works) and to the circular circumference to which the literary communication of the works<sup>4</sup> moves in the anagogical phase. At this point, what becomes obvious is the all-encompassing manoeuvre of the ordaining will that underpins the Structuralism of the *Anatomy*, inspired both by the synchronous model of Formalism and by the circle of hermeneutical interpretation featuring historical communication and the cultural circulation of ideas.

These are the terms of anatomical... literary theory, which can be used to teach Modernism in an efficient and convincing way to students whose artistic and literary taste is no longer educated through reading as much as it should be, but rather through the interaction with the daily press or the electronic media, providing the fastest and most spontaneous communication.

Let's start with the meaning of the term "anagogical". As a step and the last and sublime level of the meaning, seen through the lens of traditional hermeneutics, namely mediaeval

biblical interpretations, the anagogical level of interpretation was the launching pad for human meanings outside... "the narrow circle" of mundane concerns. If we are to define the first of the terms of this paper on a more playful note, hopefully without trespassing the rigours of theoretical literary research, we can say that the anagogical level represented the last layer of the information pack provided by human existence before being sent... as a tribute to the beyond, on a broader scale, with no typically human boundaries and constraints. The anagogical locus (and being within anagogy) meant the entrance into the spiritual antechamber of eternity, through the narrow door of Christianity. To the modern lay world, the fact that Northrop Frye invokes anagogy, generating transcendental meanings, is, of course a poetic... licence. Detaching them from their immediate context, I use the terms *anagogical* and *anagogy* to expand the encompassing area of this word enriched by Northrop Frye with a cultural index value. I have applied in teaching, but also in this paper, what Frye, in his general system, meant by literary communication through anagogical significance. As previously mentioned<sup>5</sup>, this (anagogical) form or this aspect of communication within the (anagogical) framework of literature represented the front stage of significance. Reaching anagogy means going beyond, in the first place, the literal-descriptive level of understanding literature, then formal mimetic level and finally the mythical level of expert communication, likely to feel and think literature as an aggregate and moreover fathom it in all its profoundness. Consequently, this literary construct which Frye calls monad brings along three other types of symbols: to the literal-descriptive phase – simple literary motifs, to the formal-mimetic phase – figural images and to the mythical phase – the archetypes.

In a preliminary empiric approach, this is how the anagogical outlook can be applied to the particular case of a literary work Frye called monad. We always realise, in keeping with Frye's terminology, that at the descriptive level the monad is first and foremost eternally encyclopaedic (it cannot be understood outside the very broad canonical horizons of tradition and implies the archetypal belief, according to Frye's terminology, that any individual chef d'œuvre has a dialogue with tradition as a whole, as T. S. Eliot stated in his essay on *Tradition and the Individual Talent*). Therefore, we see that the personal emphasis (or the signature a writer puts on the archetypes of tradition, according to Leslie Fiedler) (qtd. in Surdulescu 85-87) is backed up by the communication between monads inside the completely new and idiosyncratic milieu represented by the internal monologue; this monologue freely attracts, in an unfettered way, all literary materials, draws them out of their formal context, where they contributed to the configuration of specific images it breaks up into fragments, to recombine afterwards, creating monads within the individuality and the concreteness of a consciousness let free to evolve among the loosest associations.

Once more, we come upon the critical consensus on text literalization as developed by the first Modernism, with a view to reaching that maximum perceptive density of hedonistic language, underlying the lyrical register of communication in the great prose writings by Conrad, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner or Joyce. At the same time, 20<sup>th</sup>-

century English poetry equates the dramatic monologue, the inheritor of Victorian prosopopea, with the internal monologue.

Thirdly, still on an empirical level, the monad works as an abstraction, beyond its indexical-deictic signals on the surface of the text to be read when it draws up the power lines of a given idiosyncratic consciousness. At this point, we recognise the ultimate assumptions embraced by the philosophy of the rational being in crisis and who, in response, clutches itself to the immediate materiality of the language as a household... space of the being (to echo Heidegger's terminology), or reshapes time, searching for its own specific *patterns* of interaction via the word divorced from time or time divorced from space – as a space where the current drama of individual and social existence is unfolding. Here the link can be made with the breakthroughs of literary theory and criticism, summed up by Paul Ricœur in his towering study on narration and time, which brings to light the narrative figures of identity taken by the former individual subject of philosophy or the figures of interacting identities, as they are represented in experimental novels. Likewise in the major Modernist poems, such as *The Waste Land*, or in the lesser Modernist works, all monads, where the traditional and canonical *continuum* of heroic ages is reshaped as entirely exhausted, but reappears in fact with a fresh problematic under the species of current modern thinking. In the poem-monads, like in the monads in prose, the reader is required to notice the dictatorial overlapping of individual existence with identity horizons accepted by those whose education lifted them to the level of encyclopaedic, mythic or archetypal knowledge<sup>6</sup>.

The monads, the most advanced symbols in the ethical and anagogical order of communicating consciences, give shape to the very dramatic encounter between the cultural common sense, which can be acquired only by those who are conversant with canonical ideas, through education, and the even greater common sense of the modern individual able to become aware of his own crisis or the general crisis of values in present-day world. Since in a British format, the monads function as spiritual exercises by means of which... the canons canonize those who are conscious of the distance between themselves and their ideal (*sic!*), the connection Frye makes in his lay anagogy becomes significant on the spiritual or anagogical level as well, in the classical sense of the word.

On the other hand, on the lay anagogical level, the monads can deliver aesthetic delight like the traditional hermeneutic anagogy, centred on the significance at the borderline of the humane with the sense zone occupied by transcendence. The encyclopaedic Modernist monad calls for and teaches a reader able to take part in a kind of major cultural *anamnesis*, since, exactly like the literature of the great classics of all times, Modernist anagogy operates geometrically. It places the reader on the circumference or a very wide circle of literary knowledge – to be acquired only through the obstinate and obsessive interaction with the broadest literary practice or tradition. And on this level, communication takes place according to abstract *patterns* outlining the specific power lines of the knowledge in progress. The revelation of aesthetic anagogy comes from the way the reader discovers the specific directions taken by the secret tracks of knowledge. Only that – like in flagellation or Jesuit spiritual exercises –, when faced with anagogy, the student who

is pressed for time should understand why and how to position oneself to accurately grasp the particular way in which the artistic monad cuts into the canonical cultural heritage to which it tries to clutch by means of the word, like the sculptor who carves in the stone block or the whip which cuts into the pulsating flesh and like a painting knife which stripes out the white of the virgin canvas giving the onlooker only cubes of colour.

### **3. The articulation of basic conventions through which the monads act/communicate in an algorithm: the monologued free discourse (in the British version: irony, satire<sup>7</sup>)**

With regard to the new communication milieu offered in Modernist monads by what was called, with a generic term, in time, the inner monologue after it was initially seen only as the rhetorical variant of the free indirect style – it is important here to see that in this macro-style, with nuances so typical to each and every monad, a necessary transfer takes places between the interiority of any style in fact and the introspective symphony of the rich perception specific to the dramatic monologue. Both the internal monologue (in 20<sup>th</sup>-century prose writing) and the dramatic monologue (in Victorian poetry and also with Pound, Yeats and Eliot) call forth a detailed scene or situation, which may, in class, be the starting point for establishing a connection between the historical dominant of general stylistic assumptions specific to the introspective style and the requirements for decoding a given literary subgenre or species.

The emphasis on the discourse located as a dramatized voice within the text helps to describe systematically the dynamics of receiving the monadic discourse of fictional works, under the sign of an interiority that emanates from inside when it is transcribed or leads to the inside when it is read. In this way, we can decode the apparently random literality and the tension always resolved into a poetical articulation, using a certainly truncate syntax whose blank spots cover significant silences, like on a stage on which people in flesh and blood speak, and whose repetitions are, like in music, themes with variations. Grasping all the literal aspects of the monadologic language, which most often rejects to be shaped into formal, figural, allegorical or connotatively mimetic images, but which may send directly to archetypal ideas, is the reading task and also the reward to be sought after by they who wish to reach the always promised projections of consciousness of abysmal necessary ones in the literature of the communicational order from Modernist anagogy. Enriching comparatively the plea for Frye's monadology or allegory, we can link it to the opinion voiced by Rémy de Gourmont in the *Promenades littéraires*: the experimental writing of the monad addresses itself to a sixth sense to which the modern word resorts in anagogical ... hypostasis.

In Northrop Frye's order of historical modes, the third aspect of the communication with the monads belongs to the ironic mode of writing or receiving literature, which for modernity begins from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if not even from social Romanticism, not from the lyrical one. The transcendental phase of anagogical communication, by means of demiurgic dialogues of the humane with its supra-



ordained level is reached through an operational mode with the literary tradition derived from satire for The Modern(ist) writer, be it from the English-speaking space, where the peaks are Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens or Faulkner (to cross over completely to America) or, in broader, namely comparative, analogical... terms, i.e. the author of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century modern chefs d'oeuvre, in the literature in the trail of Baudelaire, the Surrealism and Proust, up to Thomas Mann or Musil. If we do not have it in mind, that is the modern literature, together with all the critics inspired by Formalism, and in Anglistics by the New Criticism, like a literature of the paradox and dissonant tensions, or seeing it through the lens of (decadent) pan-aestheticism it is likely to assert, staying within the structural frameworks Northrop Frye's theory, that lay anagogy of Modernism works through negation, like in apophatic mysticism, its great texts taking shape through the ironical transcendence of mimetism and the arguments against the conventions of tradition in its key points.

#### **4. Between the canonical and the abstract: the encyclopaedic meaning of intertextuality in anagogical communication inside modern literary monads**

In this subchapter, we shall itemise what was said above regarding the relation in the anagogical phase of communication between actuality and the canons of tradition (See the end of part 2 of this paper).

The anagogical communication in the monads ranges itself on the encyclopaedic circumference, encompassing to the maximum each and every literary convention, in order to build its own local conventions. Since, exactly like in classical hermeneutics, anagogy is the remotest point, or the highest perspective on the field of literature and the tradition of literary communication, it makes use of the entire literary canon in an abstract way, transforming it, namely, from the desire to join its own speculatively philosophical *pattern*, into a canvass of messages reset on totally new power lines; these are tantamount to Cubist abstraction in figurative painting.

In order to explain to the students this aspect common to the texts that are monads, we can introduce the students, within this framework of the anagogical literary communication, into the laboratory of the Modernist writer, who, by exhibiting his own techniques, invites us to act that way (as it happens within the Spanish Romanic Modernism, in Unamuno's novel *Mist*, or in Italy, in Pirandello's works, where the characters themselves go in and out of the text-laboratory). And we can tell the students that the author works with the most variegated conventions of literary communication he can master as if they were in suspension, or in standby, like the psychical material in the Freudian subconscious system. The inherited conventions, not only familiar but also already acknowledged as canons, are taken into possession to be turned into new local and intertextual selections in each and every noteworthy literary work.

However, what matters in the monadologic work is the significance of local choices (the intertextualities) the text or the author makes use of. Students are shown the importance of the acts of decoding the meaning indicative of compositional strategy or

the platform of experimental works. First, they can see how the monad is built taking as a model the repetition which sets a motif like in music and develops through variations on the once agreed theme. Like in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, the students are shown the literal *clusters* of expressions that pile up through the repetitive literary motif of darkness, then the ever less descriptive and ever richer images (from a symbolic and cultural point of view), pointing to the area of darkness, even becoming archetypal, central symbols, that is the symbolical heart of darkness, as captured by the title. The interwoven repetitions, images and symbolic hearts knit together the new anagogical theme of this text which manages to gear up and subordinate all the elements, altogether, to local assertions. The monadologic global construct speaks about the universal situation of crisis, madness or possession under a new archetypal species. The stasis of the current colonial civilisation is just a type or a motif of the monad or text which is titled *Heart of Darkness*. The text has a wider scope than the mimetic, historical or critical descriptions (or horizon apertures) of colonial society. What matters is that the text is centred on the intensity and interiority obtained by correlating the social crisis and the individual crisis of the main character Kurtz, only bleakly imitated by the insight granted to Marlow, the narrator. What is significant here is the projection established here in the text between the individual and the universal levels, along the line of madness or demonic possession. Both the individual and the herd are possessed by demons, not mere archetypal demons, but demons with new names of blasphemy (of course, the new demons are bourgeois, they are the demons of greed, self-sufficiency, selfishness, selflessness or cupidity). Therefore, Conrad's text becomes an archetypal demonological encyclopaedia, seen both in a traditional hermeneutic key and in the broader sense of cultural anthropology or abysmal, analytical psychologies or straightforward psychoanalyses.

The inner space of monadologic narration stunningly gathers all that has ever been inside a human mind. The monadologic space is bordered by characters made not only to live on the circumference of their own experience of living on the edge, on the most dangerous and deceiving edge – the line separating madness and normality. Furthermore, the characters are made to be projected one against the other dramatically, that is implicitly, like shadows from the bolgias of darkness, with no commentary to mediate in-between or among human experiences irreducibly close to madness; or without mediating between them and the reader.

Although the monads are each dedicated to an area selected by their own choices and therefore they are virtually unique (as their name also shows it), it is likely to find, for didactic purposes, figures or directions to critically approximate their meaning. In Conrad's work, projection works as a kind of local abstract, concrete and universal principle, functional on all levels. The reminiscence of commentator Marlow projects, in a telescoping way, in time and in space, the modern colonial world on the universal screen of Roman colonial world. Civilised barbarism derives from the projection between civilisation and wilderness which works freely and is made possible by the projective rapprochement, like in a normal flow on the Thames, of Roman triremes and the Nellie with its modern equipment and Marlow on board. Marlow's reminiscence and narration



are local means of anagogical communication at long distance, in a projective manner, between the remote Congo River and the Thames which flows through the newest centre of civilisation at the watershed between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The projection gathers together the waters of civilisation with the most recently discovered barbarism, which takes hold of the modern soul living under the rigours of bourgeois society. A barbarism sustained by what Freud and all the masters of modern suspicion called... projection and illusion and the overflow of archetypal consciousness with its incommensurable energies into the diurnal consciousness it contaminates.

The fact that Northrop Frye gives to the works belonging to the anagogical economy or to the anagogical frameworks the common name of monads helps the student better circumscribe a series of reading expectations or get a better grasp of what he read. Obviously, the analysis above started from the enumeration of the symbols within certain communication levels, but it developed toward the identification of abstract projective lines which operated with the traditional elements of the novel genre, such as the characters, the narrative discourse accompanying them or even the plot.

In modern-anagogical literature, the power lines, construed like in music, on the principle of repetition and themes with variations, carve out things in the traditional cultural field they restructure or overturn, sometimes into satirical mirrors, other times just into a multitude of mirrors.

Within the forms specific to the monad which can contain everything in its local *patterning*, at work are the abstraction and fragmentation of the big *continuums* (from opinions, customs of the common sense or living to canonical cultural texts) shared by all. On course, this is another description of the processes of defamiliarisation Russian Formalism gloriously spoke about prior to Structuralism. What matters, however, is that, in the anagogical model, the Formalist analytics is complete with the systemic and hermeneutic dimension and incorporates the diachrony of historical sequences to boot.

Furthermore, it enables us to introduce the notion of intertextuality without resorting to theory but via Modernist textual practices. The student can understand empirically and inductively but mainly contextually how all these local ideas and forms are obtained through what recent literary theory calls intertextuality. To us, the merit of Frye's anatomical literary theory is that it tackles intertextual mechanisms globally and systematically, focusing on the outcome on global instalments of intertextual rapprochements in modern literature or references to the extratextual universe, which, in its turn, is also made up of texts.

The monad of (modernist) anagogy is clearly built by transforming the relation with tradition from a reference basis into a launching pad for a kind of missile (of course, anagogical) which leads to the supra-ordained space of new literary conventions that transcend tradition. The student needs to be explained in a pertinent way, with reference to ever more canonical precedents, the specificity of new experimental conventions, and the monads serve this very purpose.

Until the detailed demonstration of how the monads operate with tradition, all we can do is introduce this topic, illustrating it with movements of Yeats' poem, *The Second Coming*.

### **5. Annex: Determining the anagogical and monadologic algorithm with reference to Yeats' *The Second Coming* (At the Second Coming on Doomsday)**

Reading the text of the poem, we can see how the meaning shifts from the centre to the circumference, by interpreting the image that moves from the literal to the paradoxical level. On the literal level, we witness the discourse about the demolition of the centre which no longer supports the totality, but, paradoxically, the readers are called to record the transcendental shift of meaning, witnessing the process that rebuilds the meaning high above, beyond. The main statement, claiming that the centre is powerless, followed by a lamentation, outpours into a vision which shifts the discourse into a new assertive figurality, built up not around the weight of a centre, but the performing power of a visionary image restoring the universe, as it puts pressure from the extreme edge of the entire circumference as a spectrum of possibilities. The figurality of poetry continues to breathe or live paradoxically, remotely, on the widest opening of the generating force.

Analogically transposing in theory the poem's constructs, we can begin by asserting, in keeping with Gadamer's hermeneutics, that, ultimately, Yeats's poetry restores the history of the effects after the most drastic negation of the archetypal (doctrinaire) centre and thus maintains – despite the categorical negation – the *continuum* of effects or keeps tradition alive. And, having the postmodernists in mind, we can say that, although the poem's literal meaning is situated, like many other constative discourses, in that area where meta-narration detaches itself from legitimacy – which for Yeats and for the time ... of poetry is equated to “the ceremony of innocence” – from a figural and a performative point of view, the mere assertion of separation is transposed back into... making and hence in poetical creation. Like in any literary discourse generating new meanings on a paradoxical, ironic, tense and ambiguous level – or as in this case, visionary – the *continuum* is re-made from another direction, through an outflow of meaning from an altogether different knot, which needs not be, like in the area of the archetypal and the Numinosum, a hub. The periphery and the borderline are invested with meaning while giving access to a new supra-ordained level (of literary communication). The revelation of the poem is not about the Christic centre of the return, but the radical marginality of those who still live – so to say – inside the Christian horizon.

An analogical judgment can state, therefore, that, through interpretation, this Modernist poem becomes a type, a figure for what is going on in Postmodernist theory. Shifting theory beyond the centre foreshadows the status of the literary criticism accompanying the Postmodernist literary text and that of Post-structuralism. The analogy between the meanings of a general theory of culture and the Modernist literary monad gives us a figural answer to the crisis of authority. The new figure Yeats<sup>8</sup> dreams of is the figure of the energetic spiral or the geometrised whirl of historical cycles. The

whirling cycles of history replace each other when reaching the maximum extension of the basis or generated circumference (the phase of maximum extension is recognizable when at its climax the centre goes into an eclipse, touching upon the dead end of what Ion Barbu would call “latent nadir”). In Yeats’ generating gyres, the sub-lunar phases are interchangeable and dizzying in their dynamics. But they can be seen as correlating moments in a *continuum* of unhampered metamorphoses in the order of culture, history, values. In this *continuum* the mechanisms of intertextuality bring forth an entire series of hallucinating grotesque *traces* of the Christian Empire. Allegorically, they give shape to a profoundly troubling oneiric history. In a deconstructive reading, they are but traces and evidence of the sub-presence, which may be called absence.

As far as intertextuality<sup>9</sup> is concerned, Yeats’ poem is the rewriting in a Christian-apocalyptic key of the Romanic pagan poem “Ozymandias”, by Shelley, which interpreted world history by seeing the decay of our days as the sacrificial ritual of initiation rituals from the bleak past of Egypt. The entire modern history is the decomposition of the pathos of a pharaonic life and a ritual gesture of discarding illusions. The major question here is whether theory can, like poetry itself, since it is intertextual, to do more than interchange the sectors of the circumference, glossing over the centre of authority, which has been devalued. Literature is a reservoir of figures from modern Palingenesis (as Toynbee and Somervell call it, when referring to the great empires) which criticism and theory sanction through their practical exercise. Here the analogy takes us into the arms of American Post-structuralism, where figurality becomes a dominant model in theory, as in *poiesis*. To renew theory means to go backward in spirals on your own road, circumventing the centre or noticing, *en passant*, the decay, while treating the archetypal myth obliquely, like in pagan-Christian Romantic pantheism.

The opening lines of Yeats’ *The Second Coming*:

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,...”

(From the version of the poem as it was published in the edition of Michael Robartes and the Dancer dated 1920.)

He seems to deplore the fact that the cultural meta-narrations, although born *sub specie aeternitatis*, are falling apart. However, the fact still holds that, beyond and above everything that happens, significance shifts from consecrated order, under the incidence of the centre, in the order of the circumference of the circle, figuratively surging from unexpected places. To use one last time the terminology of Frye’s updated hermeneutics, we can conclude thus: what Yeats’s poem announces is the entrance into the anagogical dispensation following the archetypal dispensation guaranteed by the centre.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> From the time I started working on this paper till it was presented for publication, Romania adopted certain Bologna strategies which shortened, in fact endangering, the process of academic adjustment of the built-in canons of the disciplines, the humanities included. Consequently, the idea of compressing and archiving information is put to work in traditional education fields in the same way as in computer science.
- <sup>2</sup> Starting from the *Anatomy of Criticism*, the students can be told how deconstruction functions and also asked to redefine the entire field of written cultural and literary communication, methodically arguing or denying, i.e. ultimately modernizing Structuralist and cultural anthropological summations.
- <sup>3</sup> As I will show, how Frye's text sways back and forth between the historical outlook and rhetorical synchrony, whenever he divides his discourse into separate essays.
- <sup>4</sup> It is quite clear that the genitive form in the phrase "communication of literary works" is ambiguous, since it can be read either as the subjective genitive of the literary works the author created or the objective genitive of the literary works the reader becomes aware of. We should bear in mind the fact that Frye wrote at a time when literary criticism was not yet formalised or specialised through the clear-cut principles and practices of theoretical schools, as it would be the case in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And to us, the ambiguity of the genitive could but help us present literature by means of accurate unitary concepts. What matters to us is not to analyse and assess the model of literary theory we call *anatomical*, but to use it practically, to academically teach the literature of the first Modernism from the Anglophone series of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modern literature (the series containing also the mid-century Neomodernism and the Postmodernism of the last decades).
- <sup>5</sup> See *supra*, p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> These words are the ultimate terms in a historical series of opinion and lyrical literature (in his first essay, in which Frye speaks about thematic literature) (Frye 55-62), or (in our essay, the second) in the series of ethics and literary communication, as a general framework of communication, as a symbol used thereon respectively.
- <sup>7</sup> In a less Saturnian reading, quite open to hermeneutics and therefore less serious anagogical than the current one, like in *The Modern Paradigms: Authors, Texts, Arlequins*, freely written by Timisoara-based Professor Ilie Gyurcsik, modernist freedom is interpreted in a paradoxical and comic key, much more serene and pleasant than this one.
- <sup>8</sup> Frye subordinates dreaming to anagogical thinking, since it embodies the overall dream of modern humankind which, by means of cultural techniques, comes to contain rather than to imitate nature in this mature-modern age.
- <sup>9</sup> Direction in which, as we were rightfully told after finishing the paper, the monad cannot make reference, being closed in itself or too autonomous; even if, we can reply, in itself the idea of the anagogical framework should however open the text – since the anagogical framework is in fact transcendently opening up any closed system.

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