
Northrop Frye Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 2
1990

Summer

Ayre Biography Nominated for Two Book Awards

John Ayre's *Northrop Frye: A Biography* (Random House Canada, 1989) was selected as one of the ten finalists in the competition for the Trillium Book Award/Prix Trillium, sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications. The book was also chosen as one of seven finalists in City of Toronto Book Awards for 1989. The book was reviewed by Michael Dolzani in the last number of the *Newsletter*. For a list of the reviews of the book that have thus far appeared, see section K1 of the Frye Bibliography in both this and the last issue.

Anatomizing Frye

A. C. Hamilton's *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism* was published earlier this year by the University of Toronto Press [xxii + 294 pp.; \$45]. Hamilton examines Frye's poetics "as contained in the *Anatomy of Criticism* by considering it in its historical context . . . modern criticism from the 1920s to the 1950s." The book, which will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Newsletter*, can be ordered from UTP, 340 Nagel Drive, Cheektowaga, NY 14225, or UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, Downsview, Ontario M3H 5T8.

Blake's Biblical Illustrations Northrop Frye

This previously unpublished essay was originally presented as a lecture at the Art Gallery of Ontario on 4 February 1983. It is published here with the kind permission of Northrop Frye.

It is rare to have an experience that seems to bring one's past life around in a curve, suggesting the closing up of a period of time rather than the usual open continuity. But when I see the name of Blake in letters of such vast size outside the Art Gallery in my own city (I almost said "of my own city," because I am old enough to think of it occasionally as the Art Gallery of Toronto), it does seem to round off an era with a shape to it. I began working on a book on Blake in the thirties of this century, when I was also around the Art Gallery a good deal because my wife was employed there. At that time there was one workable edition of Blake's poetry and prose and a few presentable collections of reproductions, but very little serious criticism of either. My chief aim in my book was to remove the poet Blake from the mystical and occult quarantine that most commentators assigned him and put him in the middle of English literature, which is where he belongs and where he said he belonged.

Since then, Blake scholarship has put increasing emphasis on the pictorial side of Blake, as it naturally would have done, and its progress has been parallel, establishing a social context for Blake as painter, illustrator, and engraver. You may see a very full and authoritative treatment of this in Professor Bindman's catalogue to the present exhibition, and I am assuming some familiarity on your part both with this catalogue and with the exhibition it describes. The literary critic of Blake has continually to stop and remind himself that Blake was almost totally unrecognized as a poet during his lifetime, and did not begin to influence later poets until nearly half a century after his death. But the painting and engraving Blake had real connections with—Flaxman, Fuseli, Linnell, Samuel Palmer, and many others—has a historical dimension that the poet lacks.

Nevertheless, all Blake's pictorial work was closely associated with books: nothing of real importance that he produced is wholly independent of some kind of verbal context. In thinking about his work, therefore, we have to think first of all of the conception of illustration and its place in the pictorial arts. In reading poetry or fiction we internalize the imagery, vividly or vaguely according to temperament: illustration prescribes our visual response in a definite direction. As a rule our own visualizations, however vague, survive all suggested ones, which may be one reason why the elaborately illustrated literary work, a publisher's conception which did so much to help keep Blake alive, has now less of a vogue than it enjoyed in his lifetime. I should imagine that a film version of a favorite novel, or even a performance of a favorite play, seldom permanently displaces the inner vision of it for most people. The chief exception, a significant one in view of the *Songs of Innocence* and Blake's other connections with the genre, is children's books, where, as in the Tenniel illustrations to *Alice in Wonderland*, text and illustration can hardly be separated in our memory.

As is well known, Coleridge makes a distinction between two aspects of creativity, which he called fancy and imagination. What Coleridge meant by this is not our present concern, but in the relation of Blake's pictorial work to literary texts we can see different levels of vision that are roughly parallel. We may call them, tentatively, the levels of illustration and of illumination. Contrary to what we might think at first, Blake is normally respectful of his text: even his most extraordinary flights can be supported by something in it. In illustrating Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat," for example, Blake demurely illustrates not only Gray's cat and fish, but Gray's poetic epithets as well: the fish are called "genii of the stream" and the cat a "nymph," and we accordingly see very unusual fish and a cat in partly human shape. Such illustrations as these, or those of the fairies in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* illustrations, or the lark and sun and moon of the illustrations of *L'Allegro*, are "fanciful" in a fairly restricted sense, but they are so because the poems they illustrate are also fanciful, or at least are usually read that way.

On this general level of vision there is another and perhaps more serious quality of fancy that operates in the area of the grotesque. In some painters, including Blake, the grotesque verges on the occult. Blake had acquired, partly from his study of Swedenborg, the technique of what some psychologists call a hypnagogic vision, the twilight area of perception which is neither objective, like the walls of a room, nor subjective, like a hallucination. Our senses, Blake says, condense what we see into an objective world, and filter out any perception that disturbs this carefully regulated and predictable vision. But, to use an analogy later than Blake, we could have evolved to see the world in very different ways, and some people can see and converse with other possible modes of being that ordinarily never take definite shape or sound. It is to this world that the "Visionary Heads" belong: these include various historical figures and such creatures as the "Ghost of a Flea."

Blake's friend Varley, we are told, took these visions "seriously": that is, he assumed that they were ghostly but objective, perceived by a kind of X-ray eyesight. For Blake they were among the realities of vision, and no further evidence for their reality was needed beyond the drawing itself. Admittedly we get into something of a block here, because our language instinctively seeks out clear distinctions between objective reality and subjective illusion. For Blake there was a far more important

distinction between the passive attitude that stares at the world, and the active or creative one that builds something out of it. The former is what Blake calls “reason,” and regards as stupid; the latter, its direct opposite, he calls mental, intellectual, or imaginative. Blake could have given many of his drawings the same title that Goya used: “The sleep of reason produces monsters.” But for Blake the word “of” would indicate a different kind of genitive. Goya meant: when reason goes to sleep, monsters are produced in the mind. Blake would have meant: when man falls into the state of sleep he calls reason, monsters inhabit his mind, though only a genuinely creative vision can see that they are monsters.

This kind of fancy, to give it that name again, has run through the whole history of painting: we find it in Hieronymus Bosch and Brueghel, in Blake’s contemporary Fuseli, in Redon and the later surrealist and dadaist movement, in much of the “magical realism” of our own time. It shows us the infinite variety of what can be seen by a visionary skill that tries to see more than the conventionalizing apparatus of the eye has been conditioned to show us. Such variety of vision, as we saw, may be “fanciful” in the idiom of the innocent make-believes of children, or it may be terrifying, like the nightmares of children. Blake would say that we live in a hell that is shown to be a hell by the wars and plagues and famines and slavery that exist in it, but which we dare not look at steadily in its real form. Those who consistently see it in the forms of these other possibilities are often said to be mad, and may sometimes actually go mad; but this need not affect the quality of their vision if they are artists. Sanity is not a critical but a social judgment, and no society is capable of making such a judgment beyond a very limited degree. What the vision of Blake shows us is the much profounder insanity of the society he lived in. The Reverend Doctor Trusler, for example, after commissioning from Blake a picture illustrating “Malevolence,” refused what Blake sent on the ground that he wished to reject all “Fancy” from his work. But as one of his books was called *The Way to Be Rich and Respectable*, it seems clear that neurotic fantasy may disguise itself as its opposite.

Above this pictorial fancy there is the systematic recreation of the visible world into what Blake would call its spiritual or imaginative form. From the paleolithic cave drawings of Lascaux and Altamira to our own day, there has always been something of the unborn world about the art of painting. In contrast to sculpture, which is normally linked to biological form, the two dimensional aspect of painting suggests a recreation of vision by the mind, an objective world transfigured. Even when the underlying cultural impulse is a so-called “realistic” one, we have this in Vermeer in seventeenth-century Holland, in Renoir in French impressionism, in the later Turner in Victorian England. Another publication of the Art Gallery of Ontario is David Wistow’s *Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven*, which deals with a movement in painting utterly remote from Blake in time, place, setting, technique, and objectives. Yet it begins with an epigraph from Emily Carr which would apply with equal accuracy to Blake:

Oh, these men, this Group of Seven, what have they created? —a world stripped of earthiness, shorn of fretting details, purged, purified; a naked soul, pure and unashamed; lovely spaces filled with wonderful serenity.

In Blake’s greatest pictorial work, even when the text it accompanies is by someone else, we no longer have the feeling of subordination to a text that the word “illustration” normally suggests. We have rather the sense of turning to an independent art related to the text but no longer “following” it or merely assisting the reader to visualize it. The distinction between illustration and this kind of illumination is roughly parallel to the difference between reciting a poem and setting it to music. In recitation the poem is turned from print to sound, and guides the ear as illustration guides the eye. But when a poem is set to music its rhythm and much of its structure are taken over by the music. It is the

same poem, but its setting and context are different. In “illumination,” similarly, the context is no longer visual commentary, but an act of creative criticism.

According to Giambattista Vico, writing in Italy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, human culture begins in a mythological and poetic stage, after which it becomes aristocratic and allegorical, then demotic, descriptive and realistic, and finally goes through a *ricorso* or return back to the mythological. It is a corollary of this conception that much the same structural principles of the arts hold throughout each phase, but are easiest to see in the mythological stage, before they have become adapted to class interest or popular demands for likeness or ordinary experience. Literature that is close to the mythological has an affinity with abstract and conventionalized “primitive” painting, because in myths, where the characters are so often gods, things happen of the kind that happen only in stories, just as highly conventionalized painting presents visual relationships and designs, like a saint’s halo, that occur only in pictures. According to Vico, Classical culture had passed through its three stages and then gone in a *ricorso* back to mythology at the beginning of the Christian era, and another such *ricorso* seemed to be taking shape in Vico’s own time.

Blake had not read Vico, but he had developed parallel intuitions from contemporary books: he had read about the ancient Druids and their caste of bards in Stukeley, about the morphology of myth in Jacob Bryant, about Biblical typology in Swedenborg, about the legendary history of Britain as transmitted from Geoffrey of Monmouth down to Milton, about the cycles of Norse mythology in translations of the Old and Prose Eddas. He also regarded his own time as one in which a squalid pseudorealism was about to be swept away on a whirlwind of new mythology coming in the wake of political revolution. It is when Blake is faced with a fairly representative poet of his own century, such as Edward Young or Gray, that we can see most clearly what the direction of his illuminating activity is. Gray wrote in a domesticated eighteenth-century idiom, but took a keen interest in his more “primitive” Norse and Celtic poetic ancestors, and Blake is at his best and boldest, in illuminating Gray, when he gives us his great vision of Hyperion the sun god in “The Progress of Poesy”, or the world serpent Midgard and the wolf Fenri of Norse apocalyptic at the end of “The Descent of Odin.” Young’s *Night Thoughts*, in nine nights ending with a Last Judgment, are less erudite but more speculative, and as what the poet speculates about is frequently cosmological, Blake’s drawings expand accordingly. Finally, after 537 efforts to reconstruct Young’s meditations into myths, Blake abandoned Young for his own much less inhibited dream of nine nights, known as *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*.

In Blake’s illustrations of Milton, who sticks so closely to his Biblical and mythological sources, illustration becomes much the same thing as illumination, and we may say this also of the Dante series. Blake’s dislike of Dante’s literal and legalistic biases in the *Inferno* sometimes leads him to taking more liberties with Dante’s text than he usually does: Paolo and Francesca, for example, appear to have reached an apotheosis in Blake that Dante does not give them. The picture of the Canterbury pilgrims, on the other hand, is relatively realistic by Blake’s standards, and the mythological reconstruction of Chaucer is made only verbally through the Descriptive Catalogue, in which we are told, for example, that “The Plowman of Chaucer is Hercules and his supreme eternal state, divested of his spectrous shadow; which is the Miller. . . .” Blake’s brief comments about the *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* illustrations indicate a similar type of interest in them.

But naturally it is in Blake’s own illuminated poems that text and design reach a perfect balance. Only in the early experiment *Tiriel* do we have a text with accompanying illustrations. Everywhere else the text and design interpenetrate in every variety of proportion, ranging from all text, or text with slight marginal decoration, to all picture, or picture surrounding a title or colophon, or design framing a short lyric. With his own work Blake can provide a constant contrapuntal relation between our verbal and our pictorial experience of the poem, so that there is no shift of attention from verbal to pictorial worlds: the two blend together as aspects of a single creative conception.

In his illustrations to the Bible, again, everything in Blake's design can usually be justified by the text. There are dozens of them that are simply Biblical illustrations, and call for no further comment. Such a departure from a specific Biblical reference as the picture of the Virgin hushing the child John the Baptist is rare, and even this belongs to a very traditional type of departure. There is a collection of Blake's Bible illustrations made by the late Sir Geoffrey Keynes, in which the Job designs are omitted, because, the introduction tells us, apart from being readily available elsewhere, they are less illustrations to the book than an imaginative reconstruction of it. I think this is a false antithesis. Blake is not imposing his own meaning on Job except insofar as he is trying to make imaginative sense of the text as he read it. It may not be the same as the sense we make of it, and it is certainly a Christian and apocalyptic reading of the book, but its relation to the text of Job is quite as consistent as its relation to Blake's mind. I also have to omit the Job series, but for different reasons.

But still the influence of the Bible on Blake is so pervasive that it is difficult to know where it stops. His picture of the temptation of Christ on the mountain top is closely related to his picture of the temptation on the pinnacle of the temple in *Paradise Regained*. In the former Jesus stands on an eminent but quite solid and horizontal rock: in the latter his foot touches the pinnacle in a way that shows that his balance is miraculous. This detail results from a very sharp insight into the implications of Milton's text. But sometimes an illustration of Milton is reinforced by Blake's view of the Bible. Thus Michael's prophecy of the Crucifixion in *Paradise Lost* features the typological serpent of the temptation in Eden and of the brazen serpent on a pole in the Book of Numbers. Blake is illustrating Michael's line "But to the cross he nails thy enemies," but has done so with the image that had been central in his mind for many years, the dying god as a serpent "wreath'd round the accursed tree" who had appeared in *America* (1793) and elsewhere. Again, the illustration of Jesus' offer to redeem man (*Paradise Lost*, Book V) shows Jesus standing in front of God the Father, a grotesque creature with his face concealed by long hair, as in the portrait of the senile Urizen in the frontispiece to *The Book of Ahania*. Blake is illustrating *Paradise Lost*, but he is also illustrating his own view of Milton's Father, besides anticipating the whole of the "God is dead" theology of a few years ago. Similarly, the explicitly sexual embrace of Eve by the serpent that we see in Blake gives a dimension to that episode which is not in Milton, though it is by no means unknown to tradition, and reappears in Dylan Thomas's "tree tailed worm that mounted Eve." At the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake tells us that, after converting an "Angel" (conservative) into a "Devil" (radical):

. . .we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense, which the world will have if they behave well.

I have also the Bible of Hell, which the world shall have whether they will or no.

The "Bible of Hell" is probably the series of prophetic books that includes *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, which read very like the Genesis and Exodus of a revised Old Testament. We shall come back to these in a moment. The Bible in its infernal or diabolical sense needs a more long-range perspective for its explanation.

We spoke of Vico and his conception of a sequence of cultural languages, running from the mythological through the allegorical to the demotic and back again, and remarked that for Vico one such sequence began in the early Christian centuries and was nearing its *ricorso* in his own time. In Vico's day there had been no permanently successful example of a democratic culture, and he had no evidence for any essential change in the nature of his cycle. But Blake, with the American, the French, and the beginning of the industrial revolutions before him, felt, at least for most of the productive period of his life, that a far-reaching change was taking place in human fortunes, of a kind that the apocalyptic visions in the New Testament finally did seem to be really pointing to.

We have now to invoke a broader principle than anything Vico gives us. No human society lives directly in nature as an animal or insect society might do. Human consciousness invariably creates some kind of transparent envelope out of its own social concerns, and looks at nature through this transparent cultural filter, which in its verbal aspect is a mythology. A cosmology, or systematic view of nature, usually forms part of the more developed mythologies. The culture of Western Europe, at the time of early Christianity, produced such a mythology and cosmology, mainly out of the Bible, later annexing a good deal of Classical myth and philosophy to it. The Bible itself, as I see it, does not set forth a mythological universe of this kind, but it provides any number of hints and suggestions for one, and naturally the construct set up in the Middle Ages, however close to the Bible, was mainly a rationalizing of the social authority of church and state.

This construct was on four main levels. On top was Heaven, in the sense of the place of the presence of God. Strictly it was a metaphorical top, as categories of time and space do not apply directly to God, but the metaphors were invariably drawn from “up there,” beyond the sky. Below, on the second level, was the model world that God originally created, saw to be good, and intended to be man’s home, the paradisaical Eden with no sin or death in it. Man fell out of this world into the third level, the “fallen” world he now inhabits, an alien order of nature to which only animals and plants seem relatively well adapted, as they do not sin. The garden of Eden has disappeared, and only the stars in their courses, with their legendary spherical music, are left to remind us of the perfection of the original creation. Still further below, on a fourth level, is the demonic world.

This structure is a rigid hierarchy, with the initiative for everything that is good for man coming from above in the form of grace. Even the revolutionary Milton never thought of liberty as anything that man wanted or had a right to: it is good only because it is something that God wishes him to have. The main object of man’s existence is to recognize that his fallen world presents him with a moral dialectic: he must move upward as close to his proper level (the second) as he can, or else sink down to sin and a death beyond the physical. The second and third levels constitute two aspects of the order of nature: the higher one is specifically the order of human nature, as many things are “natural” to man, such as wearing clothes, being under social discipline, obeying laws and the like, that are not natural to animals.

Because this mythology was a structure of authority, enforced by authority, it lasted far longer than it would ordinarily have done. Blake was the first poet in English literature, and so far as I know the first person in the modern world, to realize that the traditional authoritarian cosmos had had it, that it no longer appealed to the intelligence or the imagination, and would have to be replaced by another model. Blake gave us a complete outline of such a model, but unfortunately nobody knew that he had done so, and one has to read thousands of pages of poetry and philosophy since his time to pick up bits and pieces of his insight. Like its predecessor, Blake’s cosmos is based on Biblical imagery and myth, but it turns the authoritarian structure upside down and makes it a revolutionary one.

By the Bible in its infernal or diabolical sense, Blake meant, first of all, replacing the original revolutionary impetus in the Bible which had got explained away by an establishment. This revolutionary impetus is primarily, in the Old Testament, the account of the exodus of Israel from Egypt: in the New Testament it is the account of the execution of the prophet and martyr Jesus. Traditionally, the unique importance of Jesus’ life has been thought to reside in his “sinlessness” his perfect conformity to established moral standards. For Blake, a conforming Jesus would have accomplished nothing: it was his open defiance of such standards that made him intolerable to society.

As for the Exodus, we have to distinguish two forces at work there, one revolutionary and the other reactionary. The revolutionary impulse, symbolized in Blake as the red and fiery Orc, inspired the Israelites to walk out of the Egyptian oppressive social system into the desert and set up their own society. Orc’s “pillar of fire” guided them on their way. But as they went on, they became more and more hypnotized by the sense of predictable natural order, and so eventually congealed into the same

kind of authoritarian structure that they had left behind. Opposed to Orc is the white Urizen, whose name echoes the word "horizon" and who belongs to the family of tyrannical old men in the sky that mankind has projected there since the beginning of history. Urizen's "pillar of cloud" eventually won out: the twelve (actually thirteen) tribes of Israel fell into the rhythm of the predictable revolution of the twelve signs of the Zodiac with its captive sun: a law of negative commandments was handed to Moses from the sky, and finally the story of the brazen serpent on the pole (Numbers 21) associates the defeated Orc with the serpent and the sinister tree that we find in the story of the fall of Adam and later in the Crucifixion.

Now, in Blake's day, there comes a revolt of the American colonies against the repressive government of "Albion," and we see them bearing flags with serpents, trees and stars on them, as well as an alternation of red and white and a preoccupation with the number thirteen. Both tendencies, to freedom and to repression, are present in slave-owning America, and later both tendencies reappeared in France, producing both a revolution and Napoleonic imperialism. In England itself there is a constant conflict going on between creative and imaginative people and those who insist on rationalizing all the cruelty and injustice in the "dark Satanic mills."

The rebellion of Orc against Urizen produced the French and American revolutions, but as Blake saw it such revolutions do not last, because the youthful Orc grows old, in other words turns into Urizen. History, as Blake saw it, breaks down into a series of cycles beginning with the birth of the terrible "Babe," the annunciation of a new era in time, and ending either with the Babe grown old, as in the poem called "The Mental Traveller," or hung on a tree in youth like Absalom, the victim of youth's impotent protest against tyranny, as in *The Book of Ahania*. A much more permanent human resource is the creative faculty in man that begins by controlling and binding the energy of Orc and then proceeds to transform nature into the home of humanity. The arts themselves, poetry, painting, music, are in the forefront of this transformation, and its presiding genius is Los the blacksmith, the worker in iron, iron being regarded in the Old Testament as a new and suspicious substance, not to be used in constructing altars to the sky god. Los's name is, I should think, taken from the old English word *los* or *loos*, meaning praise or glory, used by Chaucer and not quite extinct, at least as an archaism, in Blake's day.

Thus Blake's mythological universe neatly turns the traditional one on its head. On top is Blake's Satan, the death principle, the mechanical energy which whirls the stars around in their courses and sets up a model of predictability, or natural law, which is what the energies of man are expected to adjust to. Paul calls Satan the prince of the power of the air, implying that the traditional abode of the gods is really a place of alienation. Under Satan is Urizen's world of experience, the "fallen" world of the traditional Biblical reading, where morality tries to become as predictable as natural law; and Urizen sits on top of Orc, the revolutionary power latent in human energy.

In childhood man is in the state of innocence: that is, he assumes that the world makes human sense, and that there is a providential order, incarnate in his parents, that takes care of him. As he grows older, he enters Urizen's world of experience, which is a very different world, and his original childhood vision of innocence is driven underground into what we now call the subconscious, a boiling mass of frustrated and largely sexual desire. This conception of the human soul is commonplace enough to us now, but Blake grasped it before anyone else did. Still deeper down in the human spirit than the natural energy of Orc is Los, the creative power. This Los is the true God, the Holy Spirit who works only within human consciousness, and only as its creative potential. Los's home is in Atlantis, the primeval kingdom of human imagination, now submerged under what Blake calls the sea of time and space. It is with ideas like these that Blake attempts to make his pictures of the Bible intelligible to his contemporaries.

Blake's "Bible of Hell" probably began with the two poems called *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Los*. Blake was aware that there were two accounts of the creation in Genesis, and he presents

his own creation myth as a collision of opposing forces. Urizen is the tendency to stability and uniformity that finally reveals itself to be a tendency to death; Los is the tendency to expanding and growing life which fights against Urizen. The poems contain some striking anticipations of later theories about the evolving of forms of life and of the immense stretches of time that would be required for such growth. *The Book of Abania* reshapes the Exodus into a story of revolution betrayed, except that Blake makes an Earth Mother or female principle, who is ignored in the Bible, the chief character. It is possible that the four poems on the continents, *America*, *Europe*, and the two parts of *The Song of Los* called "Africa" and "Asia" correspond to the historical books of the Old Testament: in any case the rather pedantic notion of what amounts to a series of parodies of the Bible was soon given up. The most interesting feature, perhaps, is the pictorial aspect of *The Book of Urizen*, where creation is not the work of an aloof deity commanding the world to exist, but the outcome of a battle of suffering titans.

We have already indicated that it is not always easy to say just what a Biblical illustration is in Blake. If it is not explicitly a picture referring to a specific text in the Bible, it may still illustrate Blake's infernal or diabolical Bible, and if it seems to illustrate something in Blake's contemporary world, it may still be a fulfillment or application of Biblical prophecy. One of Blake's most famous poems tells us that the real form of England, the "green and pleasant land", and the real Israel, the garden of Eden, are the same place, and the object of Blake's art is to reunite them, to build Jerusalem in England. In his poem *Jerusalem* the tribes of Israel and the countries of England are superimposed on one another in the most laborious detail, and many events in his own time are seen as repetitions of the history of Israel.

The famous picture called "Glad Day" by Gilchrist, because he associated it with a sunrise image in *Romeo and Juliet*, is, according to Blake's own annotation, a portrait of Albion, that is, mankind in general and England in particular, in a sacrificial role (Luvah or Orc in Blake's symbolism), identified, as his phrase "at the mill with slaves" shows, with a regenerate or restored Samson. This Samson figure, along with the identification with Albion, comes from a passage in Milton's *Areopagitica*, not the Old Testament, but the picture has its roots in the Bible, as Blake read it, for all that. Again, there is a picture of an infant snatched up by a female in a chariot drawn by blind horses while another female, perhaps the mother, lies exhausted on the ground. The picture is called "Pity" because it is assumed to illustrate the metaphor in *Macbeth* about pity as a naked new-born babe. Doubtless it does, but it also illustrates the infant who heralds a new era of time, and whose threatened and perilous birth comes into the story of Moses in the Old Testament and that of Jesus in the New. Another picture depicting the attempts of good and evil angels to get control of a similar infant is again not directly Biblical, but illustrates the two impulses, towards life and towards death, that have existed in every human being since the fall of Adam. This design appears in reverse in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as a pictorial comment on the point the text is making: that morality, being founded on the forbidden knowledge of good and evil, is a perverted form of religion. At the other end of life such angels appear in the episode that Blake also illustrates, the legendary dispute mentioned in the New Testament of Michael with Satan over the body of Moses.

Although Blake illustrates every part of the Bible, a large number of his most impressive pictures cluster around its beginning and end, the creation and the apocalypse. But, of course, to understand them we must first understand what creation and apocalypse meant to Blake. In the traditional version, God made a perfect world, free of corruption, and a garden in which he put Adam and Eve, who had only to enjoy themselves and not eat the fruit of a tree mysteriously called the "knowledge of good and evil." Naturally they did eat this fruit, and so were flung out of the garden into a lower world, while God retreated to the sky. So we now inhabit a savage and alienating order of nature, and it's all our fault. For Blake it is indeed all our fault, but the origin of the fault lies in believing in a nonhuman creation in the first place. In the picture called "God Judging Adam," the

only figure who is really there is Adam himself, being what Blake calls “idolatrous to his own shadow.” The God in the chariot has been projected from the stupidest and most primitive part of Adam’s brain. This picture was formerly identified with the ascent of Elijah, and it is something of a parody of that scene, where one prophetic power enters the spiritual world and another carries on in time. In another well-known picture, “The Elohim Creating Adam,” not in this exhibition, Adam lies prostrate with the serpent of morality coiled around him, while the alleged creator appears to be stuffing mud (“dust of the ground”) into his head. All of which means that the creation, for Blake, is the world that registers on our closed up and filtering senses: creation and fall are the same thing. The powerful painting of the wise and foolish virgins contains for Blake an allusion to the five organized senses and their opposites.

What lies around us now is not God’s creation but a quite ungodly mess, and it is the primary task of man to recreate it into a proper home for man, with the vision of the creative artists taking the lead. For most of the mess comes from the uncreative side of man, the side that wages war and supports parasitic rulers because it has accepted the knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge, or pseudoknowledge, has two aspects. One is the belief in morality, which tells us that the “Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love” of the *Songs of Innocence* are virtues we may practice only as long as we are careful to keep on rationalizing the war and cruelty and hatred and exploitation that make them virtues. The other is the belief that sanity consists in sharply dividing the perceiving subject from the perceived object, and in regarding the subject as the source of illusion and the object as the source of reality.

In traditional Christianity God is male and a creator: the human society he redeems, men as well as women, is symbolically female, a “Bride” called Jerusalem, or, as Blake says, “a City, yet a Woman.” In Blake all creative human beings are symbolically male: what is symbolically female is not human women but the objective world. Human beings, we saw, either try to help recreate the world or else stare at it passively: Blake calls the former attitude the “Imagination” and the latter one the “Spectre.” Similarly there are two aspects of the object: the retreating elusive object and the responding or transformed object. Blake calls the former the “Female Will” and the latter the “Emanation,” the total body of what one redeems by love. The “Spectre” cannot love; hence his “Emanation” is an object of possessive and panic-stricken jealousy. Such a possessed Emanation is illustrated in the frontispiece to *The Book of Ahania*, already mentioned, and in the poem *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The “Female Will” is Robert Graves’s white goddess, represented in the painting called “Hecate,” the *diva triformis* who is also the elusive moon in the sky and the invisible virgin of the forest. “Hecate” is again a picture drawn from Shakespeare, but its roots are in the Biblical abhorrence of all worship of a female embodiment of nature. The female jealously possessed by an old man, and the female who is a disdainful or tantalizing mistress, are, for Blake, symbolic pictures of human consciousness, and are therefore more important as literary conventions than as facts of life.

The creation for Blake, then, was the imprisoning of human consciousness into the form in which we see the world, and the stories of the fall of man and of the flood of Noah are variations on the same theme. Blake speaks of the flood, in the poem *Europe*, as the time “when the five senses rush’d / In deluge o’er the earth born man.” The famous picture of the “Ancient of Days,” which is the frontispiece to *Europe*, shows the traditional God, Urizen or the old man in the sky, setting his compasses on the face of the deep, in the phrase of the Book of Proverbs. We see the sky as an overarching vault because we are looking at it with eyes underneath an overarching vault of bone, and Urizen’s compasses are tracing the “horizon” both of the sky and of the human head. By contrast, the apocalypse is the recovery by man of his own proper vision, after he has, so to speak, blown his top and sees the world with his open mind and not with his skull. Blake’s pictures of the Last Judgment, with the presence of God where the skull formerly was, indicate the kind of perspective that results. Another form of the skull image is the trilithon of Stonehenge and elsewhere that we see in Blake’s *Jerusalem*, derived, as the exhibition shows us, from Stukeley’s book on what he regarded as “Druid”

temples. According to Blake the upright pillars represent two aspects of human creativity, known in the eighteenth century as the sublime and the beautiful, and the horizontal stone on top is the human “reason,” or skull-bound view of reality.

The great apocalyptic visions in this exhibition are largely of monsters, because the passive view of the objective world sees it increasingly as monstrous, as more is known about the world of the stars. The huge mechanism held together with gravitation that stares silently at man from the night sky seems like a constant accuser of man, emphasizing his littleness, his unimportance in the scheme of things, and the inevitability of sin, misery and the frustration of desire in his life. Ezekiel, according to Blake, saw this image as the “Covering Cherub,” the angel who keeps us out of Paradise, the Argus full of eyes who is the demonic parody of the vision of God with which Ezekiel’s vision opens. Ezekiel identifies his Covering Cherub with the Prince of Tyre, which means with political tyrants of all kinds, and similarly Blake’s demonic figures hold the swords and scepters of temporal rule.

Elsewhere in the Bible such visions of consolidated evil, political tyranny embodying an alien cosmos, explicitly take the form of monsters. In the Book of Job there are two such creatures, a land monster called Behemoth and a sea monster called Leviathan, from whose power Job is delivered at the end of the book. Man’s limited view of the cosmos is symbolically either subterranean, as in the story of Adam sent back to the red earth he was made from, or submarine, as in the story of Noah. As we saw, the flood for Blake was not the drowning of mankind but the limiting of man’s perception, so that for most of us the flood has never receded, but remains as the “Sea of Time and Space” on top of Atlantis, already referred to. In Revelation 13 these two monsters again rise out of the sea and the earth. In that context they are politically connected with the Rome of Nero and other persecuting Caesars, but symbolically they are also the Pharaoh of Egypt whom Ezekiel identifies with Leviathan and the Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who turns into Behemoth. This latter figure especially fascinated Blake, and he appears at the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, as the final comment on the state of the world at the time of the French Revolution. It is also in the Book of Revelation that the vision of the old man clutching the young woman turns into its apocalyptic form, of a dragon trying to devour the woman crowned with stars who is the mother of the Messiah, or humanity become divine.

There is another type of apocalyptic subject in Blake, where the open vision taught by the seer on Patmos is applied to Blake’s own time. For example, his Exhibition of 1809 contained pictures of the spiritual form of Pitt, the leader of Albion on land, guiding Behemoth, and the spiritual form of Nelson, the leader on the sea, guiding Leviathan. There was also a spiritual form of Napoleon, which has disappeared with no information about what beast he was involved with. A figure guiding such monsters would not always be a tyrant: he could be simply a leader doing what he can in a world where such monsters exist. Pitt and Nelson in Blake’s pictures are examples neither of apotheosis, as Blake’s commentary suggests, nor are they really demonic figures: they are states or functions of human action looked at from an apocalyptic perspective. They also, unfortunately, imply more understanding of Biblical symbolism than the public of 1809 was likely to possess, or attach to Blake’s work if they did possess it.

A similar figure of this type is the picture of Newton, applying Urizen’s compasses to a scroll on the ground, the rolled-up part of which forms a disappearing spiral, an image that Blake often employs in sinister contexts. In the more familiar Tate Gallery version, which is the more carefully finished one, Newton looks almost benignant: the version owned by a Lutheran church in America gives him a harder and more fanatical face. For Blake the apocalypse was, among other things, the separating of a world of life from a world of death, and everything in the latter forms a parody or mimicry of the former. Hence the consolidation of the passive view of existence is a necessary step in visualizing its opposite. So in the poem *Europe*, which describes the intellectual tyranny exerted over Europe between the birth of Christ and the end of the eighteenth century, the trumpet of the Last Judgment is blown by Newton. This Newton, it is hardly necessary to add, is not the Sir Isaac who

was Keeper of the Mint under George I, but the mighty angel Blake's picture presents, his spiritual form. Up to Newton's time, the worship of nature was still possible for some people, who might see, for example, a sun god in a chariot at the rising of the sun, the presence of a being with whom some kind of "I-Thou" dialogue, to use a current phrase, would still be possible. But Newton had turned everything in nature into an "It," a part of a mechanistic force, and by doing so he achieved a negative deliverance of man from nature worship.

The genuinely apocalyptic form of such a Newton figure is the other mighty angel illustrated by Blake and mentioned in Revelation 10:6, who announces that "time should be no longer," a phrase Blake would have taken to mean just what it appears to mean. The apocalypse for Blake is the triumph of revelation and freedom over tyranny and mystery, and one of its central symbols is the ripping of seals from a scroll, the disclosing to the human mind the world that the human mind exists to see.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* there is a conflict of visions between the narrator and a panic-stricken conservative "angel" about what lies in store for man in the world beyond this life. The angel churns up a horrifying vision of black and white spiders (i.e., egos who are either "good" or "bad"), and of a serpentine or shark-like leviathan coiling and thrashing in the sea. The angel then runs away, and the narrator, a "devil" who is mostly Blake himself, is left sitting on a pleasant river bank listening to a harper who tells him that the dogmatist, the man in the sleep of reason, breeds reptiles of the mind. For Blake the world that God is trying to reveal to man in the Bible, and the world Blake himself is trying to illustrate, is not a world of superstitious fantasy but a world in human shape that makes human sense. This is symbolized as a world where man lives in fire and yet is not burned, in water and yet is not drowned, a world above time where all the images of man's creative and charitable acts in the past move into the present, and his lost heritage turns into his regained home.

Nom de Plume

A letter from D. C. Scott to E. K. Brown, written in December 1943, concludes with the following query: "Do you get *The Forum*? If so you will have read the article in the Dec. no. on Canadian Poetry. . . . I suppose Northrop Frye is a nom de plume: if so who is he?"

The reference is to Frye's "Canada and Its Poetry," *Canadian Forum* 23 (Dec. 1943): 207-10. The complete letter can be read in *The Poet and the Critic: A Literary Correspondence between D. C. Scott and E. K. Brown*, ed. Robert L. McDougall. Carleton Univ. Press, 1983, 85-86.

Indexes to Frye's Books

Very few of Frye's books have anything like a sufficient index, and some have none at all, which is a pity for those who remember a phrase or a name or a subject in one of his books but who can locate it only after much page-flipping. To remedy this situation, we will from time to time issue as a supplement to the *Newsletter* an index to one of Frye's books. The first, which accompanies this issue, is an index to *The Critical Path* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1971). It can be inserted into the back of the book.

Frye Bibliography

The list that follows continues the supplements to the Frye bibliography that have appeared in previous issues of the *Newsletter*. Entry numbers, as well as cross-references (A5, M10, etc.), either follow or extend the system of classification in Northrop Frye: *An Annotated Bibliography of Primary*

and Secondary Sources (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987), or else they refer to previous entries in the Newsletter. My thanks to those who have sent me materials, especially John Ayre and Lila Laakso. I invite readers to send me copies of essays and reviews for inclusion in the next supplement. (Ed.)

Primary Sources

A. Books

A2. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Selections from F's theories of modes, symbols, and genres rpt. in *Teoria della letteratura*. Ed. Ezio Raimondi and Luciano Bottoni. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975. 70-73, 296-99, 361-68.

A5h. *Eliot*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989. 126 pp. Italian trans. of A5.

A13. The preface to *The Bush Garden* rpt. in the 2nd ed. of *The Oxford Anthology of Canadian Literature*. Ed. Robert Weaver and William Toye. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1984, 106-14.

A19o. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1990. xxiii + 261 pp. Paperback ed. of A19.

C. Monographs

C12. Review of *Some Reflections on Life and Habit*
Willard, Thomas. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 59 (Fall 1989): 164-69 [167].

D. Essays and Parts of Book

D37. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. New York: Longman, 1989, 541-52.

D75. "English-Canadian Literature, 1929-54" rpt. in *World Literature Today* 63 (Spring 1989): 246-49.

D120. "Mit—fickja—przemieszczenie." *Pamiętnik Literacki* 60, no. 2 (1969): 283-302. Polish translation by Elzbieta Muskat-Tabakowska of "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement." Rpt. in *Studia z teorii literatury: Archiwum przekładów "Pamiętnika Literackiego"*. Ed. Michała Glowinskiego and Henryk Markiewicz. Vol. 1. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1977. 289-307

D138. "Statek pijany: element rewolucyjny w romantyzmie." *Pamiętnik Literacki* 69, no. 3 (1978): 243-60. Polish translation by Maciej Orkan-Lecki of "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism."

D190. "Konteksty wartosciowania literatury." *Pamiętnik Literacki* 76, no. 4 (1989): 234-40. Polish translation by Monica Adamczyk of "Contexts of Literary Evaluation."

D264. "Il linguaggio come ponte tra scienziati e artisti." *Metafore* 1 (October 1989): 31-9. Italian translation by Carla Pezzini Plevano of "The Bridge of Language."

D298. "Cycle and Apocalypse in *Finnegans Wake*." *Vico and Joyce*. Ed. Donald Phillip Verene. Albany: State UP of New York, 1987. 3-19. For annotation, see I173.

F. Miscellaneous

F100. "Woman Heads University." *Globe and Mail* 23 Dec. 1989. Letter to the editor that corrects a news story claiming that the first woman president in an Ontario university had been installed at McMaster. Points out that Dr. Eva Kushner was appointed president of Victoria University two years earlier.

G. Interviews

G68. "'Condominium Mentality' in CanLit." *University of Toronto Bulletin*. 26 Feb. 1990: 11. Interviewer: Peter O'Brien. F replies to questions about John Ayre's biography, Canadian literature, and contemporary criticism.

See also McBurney, L761.

H. Sound Recordings, Films, and Videotapes

H70. "The Ideas of Northrop Frye." CBC Radio, 1990. A three-part series on the evolution of F's ideas from *Fearful Symmetry* to *The Great Code*. Based on interviews with F by David Cayley (the writer/broadcaster) and the comments of colleagues and critics. Broadcast on CBC Radio on 19 Feb., 26 Feb., and 5 Mar. 1990.

Secondary Sources

K. Books

K1. Additions to reviews of John Ayre's *Northrop Frye: A Biography*.

Ferguson, Doug. "Biographer Misses Boat." *The Chronicle-Journal/Times-News* 23 December 1989.

Fraser, Marian Botsford. "An Odd Form of Heroism." *The Province* [Vancouver] 14 January 1990.

Gervais, Marty. "Frye's Hidden Side Unearthed by Biographer Who Knew Him." *Windsor Star* 16 December 1989.

Hayley, Rod. "Introduction to Critic Frye Wins with Popular Approach." *Vancouver Sun* 6 January 1990.

McBurney, Ward. See L760 and L761.

Mills, Allen. "Biography Omits Mr. Frye." *Winnipeg Free Press* 20 January 1990.

Morley, Patricia. "Northrop Frye: Getting to Know Man as Well as Theorist." *Ottawa Citizen* 16 December 1989.

O'Brien, Peter. "The Man Behind the Myth." *University of Toronto Bulletin* 26 February 1990: 10-11.

Reaney, James. "Counterpoint of Meaning." *Books in Canada* 19 (January-February 1990): 37-8.

Stuart, Reginald. "Biography Explores World of Northrop Frye." *Lethbridge Herald* 20 January 1990.

Whiteman, Bruce. "Northrop Frye: The Great Codifier." *The Gazette* [Montreal] 23 December 1989

Yan, Peter. "Frye's Life Imitates Snake-Shape of Literature." *The Strand* 14 March 1990: 8-9.

K9. Hamilton, A. C. *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*. Toronto: U of Toronto, P, 1990. xxii + 294 pp.

K11. Additions to reviews of Robert D. Denham's *Northrop Frye: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*.

Baine, Rodney M. *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* Fall 1989: 88.

Forst, Graham. "Frye." *Canadian Literature* 122-23 (Autumn/Winter 1989): 189-90.

Laakso, Lila. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 27 (1988): 110-12.

Willard, Thomas. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 59 (Fall 1989): 164-69 [167-68].

Woodruff, James F. *Modern Philology* 87 (Feb. 1990): 324-26.

K12. Reviews of Ian Balfour, *Northrop Frye*

Denham, Robert D. *American Review of Canadian Studies* 19 (Summer 1989): 228-30.

Hamilton, A. C. *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Summer 1989): 500-2.

Willard, Thomas. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 59 (Fall 1989): 164-9 [168-9].

L. Essays and Parts of Books

L741. Albrecht, Jane White. "The Satiric Irony of *Marta la piadosa*." *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 39 (Summer 1987): 37-45. Argues that Tiro de Molina's play is an example of what F calls "ironic comedy."

L742. Altieri, Joanne. *Against Moralizing Jacobean Drama: Middleton's Chaste Maid*." *Criticism* 30 (Spring 1988): 171-87. Seeks to rescue Middleton from the "Frye-based reading" of George E. Rowe, Jr., who sees Middleton as not belonging to the comic tradition at all, at least not to the tradition of New Comedy.

L743. Applebee, Arthur N. *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History*. Urbana: NCTE, 1974. 202-3. On the ways that Project English tried to answer the problem of sequence in the school curriculum by combining F's literary theory with Jerome Brunner's model of learning.

L744. Belline, Ana Helena Cizotto. "Espaço Real e Espaço Poético no 'Cancioneiro' de Fernando Pessoa." *Estudos sobre Fernando Pessoa*. Ed. A. Gomes da Costa and Cleonice Berardinelli. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Cultural Brasil-Port., 1986. 31-57.

L745. Berryman, Charles. "Atwood's Narrative Quest." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 17 (Winter 1987): 51-56. Argues that the narrative pattern of Atwood's *Surfacing* is heavily dependent on F's descriptions of the archetypal patterns of comedy and romance.

L746. Besses, P. "Métaphore vive et référence chez N. Frye: Poétique et théologie; Eléments d'une critique du discours opaque." *Bulletin de la Societe de Stylistique Anglaise* 7 (1985): 53-67.

L747. Blodgett, Harriet. "Through the Labyrinth with Daniel: The Mythic Structure of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 9 (Mar. 1988): 164-79. A study of Eliot's novel from the point of view of "the theories of symbolic imagery proposed by Jung and . . . the narrative patterns for literature identified by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*."

L748. Capecchi, Luisa. "Literatura: Semántica y temática." *Métodos de estudio de la Obra Literaria*. Ed. Jos, Maria Djez Borque. Madrid: Taurus, 1985. 384-88. On F's understanding of literary "theme" (*dianoia*).

L749. Day, Douglas. "Catch-22: A Manifesto for Anarchists." *Carolina Quarterly* 15 (Summer 1963): 86-92. Maintains that *Catch-22* is not "a novel at all. It is, rather, what scholars like Northrop Frye would define as an *anatomy*, or *satire*. . . . The reader who tries to judge it by a novel-centered conception of fiction will indeed find little to please."

L750. Denham, Robert D. "Northrop Frye and Wayne Booth: (New) Ideologies and (Old) Traditions." *Perspectives* 20 (Spring 1990): 32-41. On F's ideas about liberal education.

L751. Di Giuseppe, Rita. "'Tutto fa brodo': Bellow's *Herzog* and Meaning In-the-Making." *Quaderni di Lingue e Letterature* 13 (1988): 49-70 [56-59]. On the elements of the anatomy form of prose fiction in Bellow's *Herzog*. Di Giuseppe maintains, however, that all forms of prose fiction, as defined by Frye, are present in *Herzog*: it includes the novel, confession, and romance as well.

L752. Döring, Wolfgang. "G. E. Lessings Lustspiel *Der junge Gelehrte*: Eine typologische Betrachtung auf dem Hintergrund der Komödientheorie Northrop Fryes." *New German Review* 4 (1988): 27-40. A study of Lessing's play from the point of view the theory of comedy F develops in the third essay of the *Anatomy*.

L753. Fisch, Harold. *A Remembered Future: A Study in Literary Mythology*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. 1-3 and passim. Sets his own view of historical archetypes in opposition to F's. Claims that for F "literary structure is spatial rather than temporal."

L754. Fischer, Michael. *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989. 12-17. In examining the relations between Cavell's skepticism and recent poststructuralist theory, glances at Frye's new critical assumptions about the unity of the literary object.

L755. Hassan, Ihab. *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990. 23-24. On F's perception of the quest-romance as central to both the formal and historical structure of literature.

L756. Jerez-Farrán, Carlos. "'Ansiedad de influencia' versus intertextualidad autoconsciencia en *Tiempo de silencio* de Martín-Santos." *Symposium* 42, nos. 1-2 (Summer 1988): 42-46. Begins by noting that Martín-Santos's *Tiempo* is a novel whose significance depends in great measure on what F calls centripetal or literary meaning.

L757. Kermode, Frank. "Northrop Frye and the Bible." *Omnium Gatherum: Essays for Richard Ellmann*. Ed. Susan Dick et al. Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989. 71-79. To F's "powerful and original book," *The Great Code*, Kermode has two principle objections: (1) "a system, if it is to be truly inclusive, will distort detail" and (2) "the contrary movement of Frye's speculation—on the one hand the desire to recover numinous metaphorical compaction, to roll the universe up into one ball, and on the other the unrestricted proliferation of auxiliary systematic patterns—is often quite beautiful and entertaining, but never compels belief." Thinks that F's system may become primary rather than secondary writing, not unlike the systems of Joachim, Blake, and Yeats.

L758. Lazarescu, Gheorghe. "Structuri comice în teatrul lui I.L. Caragaile." *Limba și literatura* 3 (1987): 307-10.

L759. Lyn, Gloria. "Once upon a Time: Some Principles of Storytelling: In the Castle of My Skin." *Critical Issues in West Indian Literature*. Ed. Erika Sollish Smilowitz and Roberta Quarles Knowles. Parkersburg, Iowa: Caribbean Books, 1984. 112-24. Uses F's theories of genre, convention, archetype, and romance to argue that the "reality" in George Lamming's novel "cannot be presented except within the conventions of literary structure."

L760. McBurney, Ward. "John Ayre: A Profile." *Acta Victoriana* 114, no. 2 [1990]: 15-17. Background story on and review of John Ayre's *Northrop Frye: A Biography* (K1). "On its own terms, it is a very entertaining, at time uplifting, read. Ayre's efforts to 'manage' Frye's opus is too plainly like wrestling with an exceptionally athletic angel to avoid the metaphoric comparison. Like Jacob, Ayre comes out of that struggle with clarity. . . . Ayre has performed a mixture of recreation and rescue work that we should be grateful for."

L761. _____. "Northrop Frye: A Profile." *Acta Victoriana*. 114, no. 2 [1990]: 20-22. An account of an interview with F, who comments on *Words with Power*, Victoria College, Canadian literature, current critical trends, and possession as the end of literary study.

L762. MacCulloch, Claire. *The Neglected Genre: The Short Story in Canada*. Guelph, Ont.: Alive Press, 1973. 75-81, 93-94. On the application of three of F's concepts to the interpretation of the Canadian short story: symbol and other repeated conventions, mythology, and "garrison mentality." Also glances at some of the negative response generated by F's 1965 comment that Canada had not yet produced internationally significant art.

L763. Meihuizen, Nicholas. "Yeats, Frye, and the Meaning of Saint and Poet." *Theoria* 67 (Oct. 1986): 53-60. Sees F's commentary in *Spiritus Mundi* on Yeats's *A Vision* as useful in understanding the meeting of Saint and Poet in Yeats's work.

L764. Morris, C. "Woody Allen's Comic Irony." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 15 (1987): 175-80. Maintains that "the structure of Woody Allen's films inverts that traditional, circular pattern of romantic comedy first outlined by Northrop Frye and C.L. Barber."

L765. Perkins, David. "Taking Stock after Thirty Years." *Teaching Literature: What Is Needed Now*. Ed. James Engell and David Perkins. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. 111-17. Looking back over his career as a teacher, Perkins asks himself to what extent he still holds to the beliefs that the teaching of literature is opposed to two of F's convictions: that what one teaches is not literature but criticism and that literary conventions come from previous literature.

L766. Preussner, Arnold W. "Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* and the Genres of Comedy." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 16 (1988): 39-43. Shows how Allen's film is indebted to three of the four types of comedy F identifies in "The Argument of Comedy": Aristophanic Old Comedy, Roman New Comedy, and Shakespearean "green world" comedy.

L767. Rosner, Katarzyna. "Świat przedstawiony a funkcja poznawcza dzieła literackiego." *Problemy teorii literatury*. Series 2. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1987. 73-96. [92-94]. On F's theory of symbols.

L768. Rowe, John Carlos. "Structure." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1990, 23-38 [34]. Argues, following Lentricchia, that

Anatomy of Criticism, which “may be the only ‘native’ version of structuralism” in American criticism, unwittingly makes a connection between literary structure and linguistic structure and so moves criticism in the direction of the “human sciences.”

L769. Runcie, Catherine. “On Figurative Language: A Reading of Shelley’s, Hardy’s, and Hughes’s Skylark Poems.” *AUMLA* 66 (Nov. 1986): 205-17. Draws on F’s understanding of the literary figure to illustrate the different meanings of the skylark in poems by Shelley, Hardy, and Hughes.

L770. Seamon, Roger. “Poetics against Itself: On the Self-Destruction of Modern Scientific Criticism.” *PMLA* 104 (May 1989): 294-305. Argues that the mode of scientific criticism proposed by Frye, among others, changes into an interpretative method and so subverts the idea of criticism as a science.

L771. Segre, Cesare. *Introduction to the Analysis of the Literary Text*. Trans. John Meddemmen. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. 248-49, 277-78, 293-94. Discusses the way F’s poetics is based on a model of the world. Also glances at F’s understanding of *mythos* and *dianoia* and his theory of archetypes.

L772. Silva, Vítor Manuel de Aguiar e. *Teoria da literatura*. Vol. 1. Coimbra, Portugal: Lirrarria Almedina, 1982. 367-73 and *passim*. An overview of F’s theories of modes and genres.

L773. Watson, Garry. “Frank Lentricchia and the Currently Paralysed Debates”. *English* 37 (Spring 1988): 1-38 [5-12, 31-32]. On Lentricchia’s critique of F.

M. Reviews

M10. THE GREAT CODE

M10.158 Chopineau, J. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 66, no. 3 (1988): 651-53.

M10.159 Markowski, Michal Pawel. *Pamiętnik Literacki* 79, no. 3 (1988): 340-53. In Polish.

M23. ON EDUCATION

M23.4 *Cross-Canada Writers Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1989): 25-26.

M23.5 Willard, Thomas. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 59 (Fall 1989): 164-69 [165-66].

N. Dissertations and Theses

N44. Comas, James N. *Toward a Rhetorical Historiography of the Discipline*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1987. As a test case for the thesis that the history of literary studies in America is a history of the reception on major theoretical works, “this study examines the conditions governing the reception of Frye’s *Anatomy* and finds that its influence was largely a function of the discipline’s need to legitimate itself at a time of perceived crisis.”

N45. Goss, Noble Thomas. *The Theme of Chastity in Ariosto and Spenser*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1987. 377 pp. The first chapter seeks “to understand, applying Frye’s theories of romance

structures. . . , what role chastity plays in the epic and romance strains contributing to Renaissance Epic.”

N46. Harding-Russell, Ruth Frances Gillian. *Open Forms of Mythopoeia in Three Postmodern Canadian Poets*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1986. A study of postmodern mythopoeia in the poetry of MacEwen, Ondaatje, and Bowering. “Building on the theories of Northrop Frye, I identify the mythopoeic process with the individual poet’s vision of the world which inevitably makes use of myth structures but not always in their obvious forms.”

P. Miscellaneous

P219. Anonymous. “Opere principali di Northrop Frye tradotte in Italia.” *Metaphore* 1 (October 1989): 40. A bibliography of Frye’s books that are available in Italian.

P220. Barilli, Renato. “Eliot, nostro compagno.” *Corriere della sera* 17 December 1989. News story, based on an interview with Frye in Toronto, on the occasion of the Italian translation of *T.S. Eliot*. Frye notes that Eliot is a poet of our age but that his medieval dream is a reactionary one.

P221. Cuff, John Haslett. “Missing the Measure of the Man.” *Globe and Mail* 23 Dec. 1989. A review of Harry Rasky’s film *Northrop Frye: The Great Teacher*.

P222. Kushner, Eva. “From the President’s Desk.” *Vic Report* 18 (Winter 1989-90): 3. Comments on the opening of the Northrop Frye Centre, 22 September 1989.

P223. Plevano, Carla Pezzini. “Notizie su Northrop Frye e sul suo metodo critico.” *Metaphore* 1 (October 1989): 35. Brief overview of Frye’s critical method.

P224. Quill, Greg. “Northrop Frye Admirable Even in This Wretched Work.” *Toronto Star* 24 December 1989: C6. Review of Harry Rasky’s film, *Northrop Frye: The Great Teacher*.

P225. Ritts, Morton. “No Light on the Great Teacher.” *Broadcast Week* 23-29 December 1989: 10. Review of Harry Rasky’s film, *Northrop Frye: The Great Teacher*.

P226. Spence, Bob. “Frye Featured Christmas Night.” *Northern Daily News*. 13 December 1989. A notice of the showing on CBC-TV of Harry Rasky’s film, *Northrop Frye: The Great Teacher*.

P227. Vincent, Isabel. “Frye’s Biographer on Two Short Lists.” *Globe and Mail* 28 Feb. 1990: C9. News story about John Ayre’s *Northrop Frye: A Biography* having become a finalist for the Trillium Book Award and the City of Toronto Book Award.

Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

Northrop Frye

This previously unpublished essay was originally presented as a lecture in Vicenza, Italy, 18 May 1979. It is published here with the kind permission of Northrop Frye. Although Frye has written on *The*

Tempest on other occasions (e.g., his introduction to the play in *The Pelican Shakespeare* and the final chapter of *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*), this is his most extended commentary on the play.

In Shakespeare's day, if a cultivated person had been asked what a comedy was, he would probably have said that it was a play which depicted people in the middle and lower ranks of society, observed their foibles and follies, and was careful not to diverge too far from what would be recognized as credible, if not necessarily plausible, action. This was Ben Jonson's conception of comedy, supported by many prefaces and manifestoes, and is illustrated by the general practice of English comic writers down to our own day. But the earlier Elizabethan dramatists—Peele, Greene, Lyly—wrote in a very different idiom of comedy, one which introduced themes of romance and fantasy, as well as characters from higher social ranks. The first fact about Shakespeare, considered as a writer of comedy, is that he followed the older practice and ignored the Jonsonian type of comedy, even in plays which are later than Jonson's early ones.

One reason for this is not hard to see. Observing men and manners on a certain level of credibility demands a degree of sophistication, whereas the fairy tale plots of Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* and Lyly's *Endymion* appeal to a more childlike desire to see a show and be told a story, without having to think about whether the story is "true to life" or not. The child wants primarily to know what comes next; he may not care so much about the logic of its relation to what it follows. If the adult completely loses this childlike response, he loses something very central to the dramatic experience, and Shakespeare was careful never to lose it as a playwright. Jonson tends to scold his audiences for not being mature enough to appreciate him: Shakespeare says (in the epilogue to *Twelfth Night*): "We'll strive to please you every day," and never fails to include some feature or incident that is incredible, that belongs to magic, fairyland, folktale, or farce rather than to the observation of men and manners. In Jonsonian comedy the play is intended to be a transparent medium for such observation: we learn about life through the comedy. In Shakespearean comedy the play is opaque: it surrounds us and wraps us up, with nothing to do but to see and hear what is passing. This does not mean that an unusual or unfamiliar type of story is wanted: again, the simple and childlike response is to the familiar and conventional, new variants of well-loved stories that have been told many times before. Shakespeare's comedies are all very different from one another, but he understands this response well enough to keep repeating his comic devices.

Further, not only does Shakespeare adhere to the pre-Jonsonian type of comedy, but he moves closer to it as he goes on. The plays are classified by the First Folio as comedies, histories and tragedies, but criticism has isolated a fourth genre, that of romance, to which Shakespeare devoted his main attention in his last years. We have also come to realize that the romances are not a relaxation or letdown after the strenuous efforts of *King Lear* or *Macbeth*, as often used to be said, but are the genuine culmination of Shakespeare's dramatic achievement. These are the plays in which Shakespeare reaches the bedrock of drama, the musical, poetic and spectacular panorama of magic and fantasy in which there is no longer tragedy or comedy, but an action passing through tragic and comic moods to a conclusion of serenity and peace.

We notice that the plays that seem most to have influenced Shakespeare in writing the romances were much cruder than those of Peele or Lyly. One of them was *Mucedorus*, a play of the 1590s revived around 1609, which clearly held the affections of the reading public as well as playgoers, as it went through seventeen editions in about eighty years. It is a very simple-minded play about a prince who goes in disguise to another country to woo a princess, and who gains her after baffling a cowardly villain and rescuing her and himself from a wild man in a forest. There is a prologue in which two figures named "Comedy" and "Envy" engage in a sharp dispute about the shape of the forthcoming action, the former promising a happy ending and the latter many pitfalls along the way. In another early play, *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, which features a magician and his daughter,

like *The Tempest*, we begin with an assembly of gods and a debate between Fortuna and Venus, again over the character of the story that is to follow.

From such unlikely (as it seems to us) sources, Shakespeare drew hints for an expanding stage action that can include not only all social levels from royalty to clowns, but gods and magicians with superhuman powers as well. The romances end happily, or at any rate quietly, but they do not avoid the tragic: *The Winter's Tale* in particular passes through and contains a complete tragic action on its way to a more festive conclusion, and *Cymbeline*, which has at least a token historical theme (Cymbeline was a real king of Britain, and his coins are in the British Museum), is actually classed as a tragedy in the Folio. Such plays are "tragicomedies," a genre that not only Shakespeare but Beaumont and Fletcher were popularizing from about 1607 onward. In the preface to Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (ca. 1609), it is said that in a tragicomedy a god is "lawful," i.e., superhuman agents can be introduced with decorum.

But to expand into a divine world means reducing the scale of the human one. The jealousy of Leontes and Posthumus is quite as unreasonable as that of Othello, but it is not on the gigantic human scale of Othello's: we see it from a perspective in which it seems petty and ridiculous as well. The form of the romance thus moves closer to the puppet show, which again, as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* reminds us, is a form of popular drama with a strong appeal to children, precisely because they can see that the action is being manipulated. The debates of Comedy and Envy in *Mucedorus*, and of Venus and Fortuna in *The Rare Triumph* introduce us to another approach to the manipulating of action. Here we are told that the play to follow is connected with certain genres, and that characters who personify these genres are taking a hand in the action. The notion of Comedy as a character in the action of a comedy may seem strange at first, but is deeply involved in the structure of Shakespearean comedy. Let us look at a comedy of Shakespeare that many people have found very puzzling, *Measure for Measure*, from this point of view.

In *Measure for Measure*, Vincentio, the Duke of Vienna (which Shakespeare seems to have thought of as an Italian town) announces his departure, leaving his deputy Angelo in charge to tighten up laws against sexual irregularity. Everything goes wrong, and Angelo, who sincerely wants to be an honest and conscientious official, is not only impossibly rigorous, condemning to death young Claudio for a very trifling breach of the law, but is thrown headlong by his first temptation, which is to seduce Claudio's sister Isabella when she comes to plead for his life. The action leads up to the dialogue of the condemned Claudio and his sister in prison. Claudio's nerve breaks down under the horror of approaching death, and he urges Isabella to yield to Angelo. Isabella, totally demoralized by her first glimpse of human evil, and, perhaps, by finding herself more attracted to Angelo and his proposal than she would ever have thought possible, explodes in a termagant fury. She says: "I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death"—hardly a possible procedure for any Christian, though Isabella wants to be a cloistered nun. Everything is drifting towards a miserable and total impasse, when the disguised Duke steps forward. The rhythm abruptly changes from blank verse to prose, and the Duke proceeds to outline a complicated and very unplausible comic plot, complete with the naive device known as the "bed trick," substituting one woman for another in the dark. It is clear that this point is the "peripety" or reversal of the action, and that the play falls into the form of a diptych, the first half tragic in direction and the second half comic. Vincentio has the longest speaking part of any character in Shakespearean comedy: a sure sign that he has the role of a sub-dramatist, a deputy producer of the stage action. *Measure for Measure*, then, is not a play about the philosophy of government or sexual morality or the folly of trying to legislate people into virtue. It is a play about the relation of the structure of comedy to these things. The Duke's actions make no kind of realistic sense, but they make structural dramatic sense, and only the structure of comedy, intervening in human life, can bring genuine repentance out of Angelo and genuine forgiveness out of Isabella.

In *The Winter's Tale* the action also forms a diptych, and again we have first a tragic movement proceeding toward chaos and general muddle. This action comprises Leontes' jealousy, the disappearance of his wife Hermione, the death of his son Mamillius, the exposing of the infant Perdita, and the devouring of Antigonus, who exposes her, by a bear. Then a shepherd and his son enter the action: as in *Measure for Measure*, the rhythm immediately changes from blank verse to prose. The shepherd finds the infant and the son sees the death of Antigonus, and the shepherd's remark, "Thou mettest with things dying, I with things new born," emphasizes the separating into two parts of the total action. This separating of the action is referred to later on in a recognition scene, not presented but reported in the conversation of some gentlemen: "all the instruments that aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found." Such phrases indicate that the real dividing point in the action is the finding of Perdita at the end of the third act, not the sixteen years that are said to elapse before the fourth act begins. In the final scene of the play Paulina, the widow of Antigonus, says to Hermione, who is pretending to be a statue: "our Perdita is found." This is the formula that first draws speech from Hermione. Paulina, though an agent of the comic structure of the second half of the play, is not its generator: that appears to be some power connected with the Delphic oracle, which had previously announced that Leontes would live without an heir "if that which is lost be not found."

In *The Tempest* there is no clearly marked peripety or reversal of action. The reason is that the entire play is a reversal of an action which has taken place before the play begins. This concentration on the second half of a total dramatic action accounts for many features of *The Tempest*. It is quite a short play, which is why Prospero's role has fewer lines than Vincentio's, though he dominates the action even more completely. Again, we are constantly aware of the passing of a brief interval of time, an interval of a few hours, very close to the period of time we spend in watching the play. The dramatic action is generated by Prospero and carried out by Ariel, whose role is parallel to that of Pauline in *The Winter's Tale*. But because only the second or rearranging half of the action is presented, the characters have no chance to mess up their lives in the way that Angelo and Leontes do. The theme of frustrated aggressive action recurs several times: when Ferdinand tries to draw his sword on Prospero, when Antonio and Sebastian attempt to murder Alonso and Gonzalo, and later to attack Ariel, and when Stephano's conspiracy is baffled. Prospero's magic controls everything, and the effect is of an audience being taken inside a play, so that they not only watch the play but, so to speak, see it being put on.

Ordinarily, in our dramatic experience, this sense of a play being created before our eyes is one that we can only get when we are watching an action that seems to be partly improvised on the spot, where we know the general outline of the story but not its particulars. Various devices such as Brecht's "alienating" techniques and the Stanislavski method of acting attempt to create such a feeling in modern audiences. In Shakespeare's day this type of improvising action appeared in the *commedia dell'arte*, which was well known in England, and influenced Shakespeare in all periods of his production. Some of the sketchy plot outlines (*scenari*) of this type of play have been preserved, and we note that they feature magicians, enchanted islands, reunions of families, clown scenes (*lazzeri*), and the like. Such *scenari* are probably as close as we shall ever get to finding a general source for *The Tempest*.

Not only does Prospero arrange the action, but we are seldom allowed to forget that it is specifically a dramatic action that is going on. Prospero orders Ariel to disguise himself as a nymph of the sea, while remaining invisible to everyone but himself. In reading the play, we might wonder what point there is in dressing up so elaborately if he is to remain invisible, but in the theater we realize at once that he will not be invisible to us. Again, an illusory banquet is presented to and snatched away from the Court Party, and Ariel, as a harpy, makes a somber speech condemning the "three men of sin." It is an impressive and oracular speech, but we hardly notice this because Prospero immediately undercuts it, coming forward to commend Ariel on doing a good actor's job. The opposite emphasis comes in the epilogue, when Prospero says:

As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

The epilogue represents only the convention of asking the audience to applaud the play, so we hardly notice how grave the tone is. Yet it is clear that the restructuring of the lives of the characters in the play is being said to be a deeply serious operation, with an application in it for ourselves. We have not merely been watching a fairy tale, we feel, but participating in some kind of mystery. What kind of mystery?

The Tempest is almost a comic parody of a revenge tragedy, in which there is repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation instead of revenge. The characters are divided into three groups and each is put through ordeals, illusions, and a final awakening to some kind of self-knowledge. There is hardly a character in the play who is not believed by other characters to be dead, and in the final recognition scene there is something very like a sense that everyone is being raised from the dead, as there is with Hermione in the last scene of *The Winter's Tale*. Prospero actually claims the power of raising the dead in his renunciation speech, and he also pretends that Miranda was drowned in the storm he raised.

The Court Party goes through a labyrinth of “forthrights and meanders” with strange shapes appearing and disappearing around them, but nevertheless they finally arrive at a state of self-recognition where Gonzalo is able to say that each has found himself “when [formerly] no man was his own.” Gonzalo himself is on the highest moral level of the Court Party: in contrast to Antonio and Sebastian, he finds the island a pleasant place and his garments fresh, and he is excluded from Ariel’s condemnation of the “three men of sin.” Alonso comes next: his repentance and his gaining of self-awareness seem equally genuine, and he is clearly the focus of Prospero’s regenerative efforts. Next is Sebastian, a weak and ineffectual person who does what the stronger characters around him suggest that he do. In the final scene he seems quite cheerful, and we feel that, while nothing very profound has happened to him, he will be as easily persuaded to virtue as to vice. Antonio, who speaks only once in the last scene, in reply to a direct question, is a more doubtful quantity. Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban go through a kind of parody of the Court Party ordeals and illusions, yet they too reach some level of self-awareness. Stephano is reconciled to losing his imaginary kingdom, and Caliban, who has emerged as much the most intelligent of the three, is apparently ready to be weaned from idolatry, and so to take the first step in self-knowledge himself.

To the extent that people are acquiring self-knowledge, then, they seem to be taking their places in a moral hierarchy. Yet as we look further into it, it seems to be less a moral hierarchy than an imaginative one. They move from illusion to reality as the play presents these categories. What is illusion? Primarily, it is what such people as Antonio consider reality. As soon as Alonso falls asleep, Antonio starts a plot to murder him: this is *Realpolitik*, the way things are done in the real world. Similarly, he takes a very “realistic” view of the island, in contrast to Gonzalo’s. But the play itself moves towards a reversal of this view of reality. Antonio’s one remark in the last scene, already alluded to, is that Caliban is a “plain fish”—one of several indications that living on his level is symbolically living under water. The illusions in the mazy wanderings of the Court Party are more real than Antonio’s life without conscience.

What then is reality, as the play presents it? That is more difficult, and Prospero seems to agree with T. S. Eliot that whatever reality is, human kind cannot bear very much of it. But just as “reality” for Antonio turns out to be illusion, so perhaps what is illusion on the much higher level of Ferdinand and Miranda might turn out to be closer to reality. The masque put on for their benefit by Prospero is a vision of the highest form of “reality” in our cultural tradition: the vision of what in Christianity is called “unfallen” nature, the original world before the fall, the model divine creation that God

observed and saw to be good. The dance of nymphs and August reapers seems to suggest the “perpetual spring” which is a traditional attribute of Paradise, and the three goddesses of earth, sky, and rainbow suggest the newly washed world after Noah’s flood, when the curse was lifted from the ground and a regularity of seasons was promised. The vision, however, is one of a renewed power and energy of nature rather than simply a return to a lost Paradise: a sense of a “brave new world” appropriate as a wedding offering to a young and attractive couple. And it seems highly significant that this vision of the reality of nature from which we have fallen away can be attained only through some kind of theatrical illusion.

The action of the play, then, moves from illusion to reality in a paradoxical way. What we think of as reality is illusion: not all of us are realistic in the criminal way that Antonio is, but, as Prospero’s great speech at the end of the masque says, in our world everything that we call real is merely an illusion that lasts a little longer than some other illusions. At the other end, what we think of as real can come to us only as a temporary illusion, specifically a dramatic illusion. This is what the wedding masque symbolizes in the play: the masque is presented to Ferdinand and Miranda, but the whole play is being presented to us, and we must be sure that we omit no aspect of it.

The play keeps entirely within the order of nature: there are no gods or oracles, though Alonso expects them, and Prospero’s magic operates entirely within the four elements below the moon. Sycorax, like other witches, could draw down the moon, i.e., bring “lunatic” influences to bear on human life, but this is not Prospero’s interest, though it may be within his power. In the action that took place before the play began, when Prospero was Duke of Milan, his brother Antonio had become the *persona* or dramatic mask of the absent-minded Prospero, and gradually expanded until he became “absolute Milan,” the entire Duke, until Prospero and the infant Miranda vanished into another world in an open boat (for Milan, like Bohemia in *The Winter’s Tale*, appears to have a seacoast). On the enchanted island this dramatic action goes into reverse, Prospero expanding into the real Duke of Milan and Antonio shrinking to a kind of discarded shell. Prospero’s life in Milan is what passes for real life in our ordinary experience: the action of *The Tempest* presents us with the aspect of nature which is real but, like the dark side of the moon, constantly hidden from us. We note in passing the folktale theme of the struggle of brothers, the rightful heir exiled only to return later in triumph.

The feeling that the play is some kind of mystery or initiation, then, is a quite normal and central response to it. The connection between drama and rites of initiation probably goes back to the Old Stone Age. In Classical times there were several mystery religions with dramatic forms of initiation, the most celebrated being those of Eleusis, near Athens, which were held in honor of the earth goddess Demeter, the Roman Ceres who is the central figure in Prospero’s masque. In the eighteenth century Bishop Warburton suggested that the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, depicting Aeneas’ journey to the lower world, was a disguised form of Eleusinian initiation, and in 1921 Colin Still, in *Shakespeare’s Mystery Play*, applied a similar theory to *The Tempest*. He noted that the route of the Court Party, from Tunis in Africa to the coast of Italy, paralleled the route of Aeneas from Carthage, and the otherwise pointless identification of Tunis with Carthage made by Gonzalo in Act II, along with the equally pointless amusement of Antonio and Sebastian, seems to be emphasizing the parallel. I suspect that Colin Still’s book was an influence on T. S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*, published the next year, though Eliot does not mention Still before his preface to Wilson Knight’s *Wheel of Fire* in 1930.

Colin Still, recognizing that Shakespeare could have had no direct knowledge of Classical mystery rites, ascribed the symbolic coincidences he found with *The Tempest* to an inner “necessity,” to the fact that the imagination must always talk in some such terms when it gets to a sufficient pitch of intensity. I should add only that the “necessity” is specifically a necessity of dramatic structure. We can see this more clearly if we turn to a dramatic form which not only did not influence Shakespeare but was nowhere in his cultural tradition, the No play of Japan. In a No play what usually happens is that two travelers encounter a ghost who was a famous hero in his former life, and who recreates the

story of his exploits in this ghostly world, which is also presented as a world of reconciliation and mutual understanding. This type of drama is linked to Buddhist beliefs in a world intervening between death and rebirth, but we do not need such beliefs to make imaginative sense of No plays. We do recognize in them, however, a very powerful and integral dramatic structure. When we enter the world of *The Tempest*, with its curious feeling of being a world withdrawn from both death and birth, we recognize again that that world is being specifically identified with the world of the drama.

As often in Shakespeare, the characters in *The Tempest* are invited to a meeting to be held after the play in which the puzzling features of their experiences will be explained to them. This seems a curious and unnecessary convention, but it is true to the situation of drama, where the audience always knows more about what is going on than the characters do, besides being in a greater state of freedom, because they are able to walk out of the theater. Each character in *The Tempest*, at the beginning of the play, is lost in a private drama of his own. This is true even of Prospero, in the long dialogues he holds with Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban in Act I, mainly for the benefit of the audience. Through the action of the play, a communal dramatic sense gradually consolidates, in which all the characters identify themselves within the same drama, a drama which the audience is finally invited to enter.

The Tempest, like its predecessor *The Winter's Tale*, is both comedy and romance. In the tradition of comedy that Shakespeare inherited from Plautus and Terence, what typically happens is that a young man and a young woman wish to get married, that there is parental opposition, and that this opposition is eventually evaded and the marriage takes place. Comedy thus moves towards the triumph of youth over age, and toward the vision of the renewal and rebirth of nature which such a triumph symbolizes, however little of nature there may be in a Roman comedy. In *The Tempest*, the conventionally comic aspect of the play is represented by the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. Prospero puts up a token opposition to this marriage, apparently because it is customary for fathers to do so, and he forces Ferdinand into the role of servant, as part of the token tests and ordeals which traditionally make the suitor worthy of his mistress.

The corresponding comic element in *The Winter's Tale* is centered on the successful marriage of Florizel and Perdita in the teeth of strenuous parental opposition. Florizel temporarily renounces his princely heritage and exchanges garments with the thief Autolycus, just as Ferdinand takes over Caliban's role as a bearer of logs. Here again the renewal of nature is a part of the theme, more explicitly because of the romance element in the play. The great-sheep shearing festival in the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale* is a vision of the power of nature extending through four seasons, that being probably what the dance of the twelve satyrs symbolizes. Nature has it all her own way throughout this scene, and Perdita, the child of nature, announces that she will have nothing to do with "bastard" flowers adulterated by art. Nor will she listen to Polixenes' sophisticated idealism about art as being really nature's way of improving nature. The traditional symbol of the domination of art over nature, Orpheus, whose music could command animals and plants, appears only in parody, in connection with the ballads of Autolycus.

But this triumph of nature and its powers of renewal and rebirth, with its center of gravity in the future, is only the lesser recognition in the play. The main emphasis comes not on the successful wooing of the younger pair, but, as usually in Shakespearean romance, on the reintegrating of the world of their elders. The greater recognition scene takes place in a world of art, Paulina's chapel where we are told that we are being presented with a work of sculpture and painting, where music is heard, where references to the art of magic are made. In the vision of the triumph of art, the emphasis is not on renewal and rebirth but on resurrection, the transformation from death of life. And just as the vision of nature's renewal and rebirth relates primarily to the future, so the triumph of art and resurrection relates primarily to the past, where the words of the oracle, spoken sixteen years earlier, are brought to life in the present, and where old sins and blunders are healed up. In his essay *The Decay of Lying* Oscar Wilde says of music that it "creates for one a past of which one has been ignorant, and

fills one with a sense of sorrows that have been hidden from one's tears." Perhaps it is the function of all art to "create a past" in this sense of revealing to us the range of experience that our timid senses and reasonings largely screen out. The power of nature gives us a hope that helps us to face the future: the power of art gives us a faith that helps us to face the past.

The Tempest is concerned even more than *The Winter's Tale* with the triumph of art, and much less with the triumph of nature. This is mainly because Prospero is a magus figure: in Elizabethan English "art" meant mostly magic, as it does here. Prospero renounces his magic at the end of the play: this was conventional, for while magic was a great attraction as dramatic entertainment, it was a highly suspicious operation in real life, hence all dramatic magicians were well advised to renounce their powers when the play drew to a close. But there is more to Prospero's renunciation of magic than this. We recall the deep melancholy of his "our revels now are ended" speech at the end of the masque, and his somber comment on Miranda's enthusiasm for her brave new world: "'tis new to thee." In the world of reality that we can reach only through dramatic illusion, the past is the source of faith and the future the source of hope. In the world of illusion that we take for reality, the past is only the no longer and the future only the not yet: one vanishes into nothingness and the other, after proving itself to be much the same, vanishes after it.

As a magus, Prospero is fulfilling the past, reliving and restructuring his former life as Duke of Milan. To do so, he must take an obsessive interest in time: "the very minute bids thee ope thine ear," he says to Miranda, referring to astrology, and he later tells her that the fortunes of all the rest of his life depend on his seizing the present moment. Antonio's urging the same plea on Sebastian later is a direct parody of this. Prospero's anxiety about time interpenetrates very curiously with his anxieties as a theatrical producer, making sure that Ariel comes in on cue and that his audience is properly attentive and impressed. Such strain and such anxiety cannot go on for long, and all through the play Prospero, no less than Ariel, is longing for the end of it.

Prospero's magic summons up the romantic enthusiasm for magic with which the sixteenth century had begun, in Agrippa and Paracelsus and Pico della Mirandola and the legendary Faust. It continued for most of the next century, and among contemporary scholars Frances Yates in particular has speculated about its curious relation to Shakespeare's romances. But this vision of a power and wisdom beyond human scope seems to be passing away when Ariel is released and melts into the thin air from whence he came. Whether magic was a reality or a dream, in either case it could only end as dreams do. In Shakespeare's day magic and science were very imperfectly separated, and today, in a postscientific age when they seem to be coming together again, the magus figure has revived in contemporary fiction, with much the same dreams attached to it. Such a return may make *The Tempest* more "relevant" to us today, but if so, the weariness and disillusionment of Prospero are equally "relevant."

Just as the mere past, the vanishing age, seems to be summed up in the figure of Ariel, so the mere future, the yet-to-vanish new age, seems to be summed up in the figure of Caliban. Caliban's name seems to echo the "cannibals" of Montaigne's famous essay, a passage from which forms the basis for Gonzalo's reverie about an ideal commonwealth in Act II. Around the figure of Caliban, again, there are many phrases indicating Shakespeare's reading in contemporary pamphlets dealing with the first English efforts to settle on the American coast. Every editor of *The Tempest* has to record this a fact, while pointing out that Prospero's island is in the Mediterranean, not the Atlantic, and has nothing to do with the New World. Still, the historical situation of *The Tempest*, coming at the end of an age of speculative magic and at the beginning of an age of colonization in the New World, seems to give Caliban a peculiar and poignant resonance. Caliban is the shape of things to come in the future "real" world, not a brave new world of hope, but, for the most part, a mean and cruel world, full of slavery and greed, of which many Calibans will be the victims.

Of course we had rather have the past of faith and the future of hope than the past of dream and the future of nightmare, but what choice have we? This is perhaps another way of asking what *The Tempest*, as a dramatic illusion, has to give us in the way of reality. When Shakespeare touches on such subjects he is apt to bury what he says in unlikely places, passages of dialogue that the eye and ear could easily pass over as mere “filler.” We find such a passage in the inane babble of Antonio and Sebastian at the beginning of the second act. Sebastian’s response to a narrow escape from drowning is a kind of giggling hysteria, and Antonio falls in with this mood and encourages it, because he knows what he wants to do with Sebastian later on. In the course of the dialogue Gonzalo, who is speaking with a wisdom and insight not his own, assures the others that “Tunis was Carthage.” We pick up the implication that *The Tempest*, as explained, is repeating the experience of Aeneas voyaging from Carthage to Italy to build a new Troy, and presenting an imaginative moment, at once retrospective and prospective, in the history of the third Troy, as England was conventionally supposed to be. The dialogue goes on:

Ant. What impossible matter will he make easy next?

Seb. I think he will carry this island home in his pocket, and give it to his son for an apple.

Ant. And, sowing the kernels of it in the sea, bring forth more islands.

Gonzalo never claims to make impossible matters easy, but Prospero can do so, and by implication Shakespeare himself can. And it is Shakespeare who gives us, as members of his audience, his island, as one would give a child an apple, but with the further hope that we will not stop with eating the apple, but will use its seeds to create for ourselves new seas and even more enchanted islands.

The Northrop Frye Newsletter publishes articles and news stories about Frye and his criticism, as well as reviews of his books; and supplements to the Frye bibliography. Its primary purpose is to promote the study and understanding of Frye's work. The editor welcomes any material related to this aim: articles, letters, reviews, abstracts, bibliographic items. The Newsletter is ordinarily published twice a year and is distributed without charge to all who request it. Publication is supported by the English Department at Roanoke College. Address all correspondence, including changes of address, to the editor, Robert D. Denham, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24253. Copyright © by Robert D. Denham.



New From Virginia

MYTH AND METAPHOR *Selected Essays, 1974-1988*

Northrop Frye

Edited by Robert D. Denham

"For those familiar with Frye's criticism, it will be immediately obvious that the questions on which he has focused from the beginning of his career have not disappeared. This means that each of the essays is ultimately about the conventions of language, literature, and discursive thought: the myths, metaphors, cosmologies, images, symbols and genres that form the fabric of Western writing, or, perhaps better, the loom upon which that writing has been woven." *-From the Introduction by Robert D. Denham*

Taken together, this collection illustrates the continuity of Frye's vision of culture. These essays come from a particularly fruitful period of Frye's career, and they are important for what they have to say about both the subjects they address and the shape of Frye's own thoughts.

September \$35.00



Available from the

University Press of Virginia

Box 3608 University Station
Charlottesville, VA 22903-0608
804-924-3469