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# Northrop Frye Newsletter

Volume 3, Number 1

Winter 1990–91

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## Northrop Frye Centre

In a previous issue of the *Newsletter* we reported on the founding of the Northrop Frye Centre, the purpose of which is to continue the tradition of Northrop Frye in teaching and research. In keeping with these aims the Centre began its work two years ago with two pilot programs: research grants in the humanities for Victoria University faculty and opportunities for visiting scholars. For the former, two competitions have been held and eight awards granted; and for the latter, a number of visitors from Canada and abroad have come to Victoria for varying periods. Dr. Eva Kushner, president of Victoria, reports that each visitor has given a public lecture. Although the topics have been very different, it has been obvious that humanists working in different fields share many problems and benefit from discussion with one another. A selection committee reviews all applications in both programs to ensure their quality. "The presence of the Visiting Scholars," notes President Kushner, "has been enriching for the life of the Victoria community and of the University of Toronto at large."

Research was the first area to receive the attention of the Centre. Teaching comes next. In the short term, in spite of limited resources, the Centre has begun to institute some visiting lectureships. In the long run the Centre's ambition (financially, a very bold ambition) is to establish an endowed chair in the name of Northrop Frye.

To date, the Centre has operated on the proceeds from an initial gift of \$50,000 from Mr. Blair Laing and from \$25,000 in other donations. President Kushner has recently announced a fundraising drive in order to expand the programs of the Centre. Mrs. Rose Galic has been hired, thanks to a government grant, as a development officer to help organize the drive. Monies received will be used to fund the organization of seminars, bring to Victoria visiting lecturers from North America and abroad, pay for student assistants, support the presence of foreign scholars at a 1992 international conference

that will mark Professor Frye's 80th birthday, and ultimately, it is hoped, fund the Northrop Frye Chair in perpetuity. Readers of the *Frye Newsletter* who would like to contribute to the work of the Centre should send their donations to Dr. Eva Kushner, Northrop Frye Centre, Victoria University, 73 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1K7, Canada. Contributions are tax deductible for both Canadian and U. S. donors.

## New Books

Since the last issue of the *Newsletter*, Frye's long-awaited *Words with Power*, a sequel to *The Great Code*, has been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in the U. S. and by Penguin in Canada. Two collections of Frye's essays have also been published in recent months, *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays, 1974-1988* (University Press of Virginia) and *Reading the World: Selected Writings, 1935-1976* (Peter Lang). Frye's Emmanuel College lectures, *The Double Vision*, will be jointly published by the United Church Publishing House and the University of Toronto Press in 1991. Forthcoming in early 1991 are *A World in a Grain of Sand: Twenty-Two Interviews with Northrop Frye* and *Visionary Poetics: Essays on Northrop Frye's Criticism*, both to be published by Peter Lang. Also of interest is *Ritratto di Northrop Frye*, twenty-seven essays on Frye's work from the proceedings of the 1987 conference in Rome. For details about all seven volumes, see the bibliographical supplement in this issue.

## The Ideas of Northrop Frye

The Ideas of Northrop Frye was a three-part CBC Radio program, written and presented by David Cayley, produced by Sara Wolch, and aired February 19 and 26 and March 5, 1990, on CBC Radio. The recording engineer was Brian Hill. We reproduce here, through the kind permission of David Cayley, the transcript of the first program. The second and third programs will be published in subsequent issues of the *Newsletter*. A transcript of the complete program is available from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, P. O. Box 6440, Station A, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3L4.

**NF** If I look over the 77 years that I have lived in this ghastly century, I don't see anything politically or economically that has not been part of a dissolving phantasmagoria. I see only one thing that has improved in that time, and that's science. I see only one thing that's remained stable during that time, and that's the arts.

**James Reaney** He's a piano teacher. He teaches you how to play things. He's got the quality that Glenn Gould has of taking a work of art and playing it over for you, so that you get something new out of it.

**NF** I think I am a critic who thinks, as poets think, in terms of metaphors. I think that's what, if you like, makes me distinctive as a critic. I don't say that there aren't any critics who think metaphorically, but I do, and I think that whatever success I have as a critic, I have because I can speak the language of metaphor with less of an accent.

**Michael Dolzani** To me, Frye has the capacity to be as influential as Freud or a Darwin or someone like that, somebody who really initiates what Thomas Kuhn called a paradigm shift, a whole shift in the

way we look at things. And I think the only reason he hasn't been as influential as someone like Freud is that people are not used to giving literary studies that type of authority, to tell us what's real.

**Lister Sinclair** For more than forty years, Northrop Frye has been telling Canada and the world what is real, as a teacher at the University of Toronto and as a writer of literary criticism. His first book was published in 1947. It's called *Fearful Symmetry* and it transformed the study of literature itself and became the most influential critical work of its time. And his book on the Bible, *The Great Code*, which has published in 1982, became a Canadian best seller. Success brought celebrity status. Northrop Frye has 36 honorary degrees. To get to his office, he must pass the portals of Northrop Frye Hall. A visit to the library involves an appearance under a portrait twice as big as he is. He also has a formidable international reputation. In Italy a few years ago, the University of Rome devoted an entire conference to this work. Interviews with Frye made the front pages of Italian newspapers, and that was in the middle of an election campaign. Yet despite the fame and adulation, Northrop Frye has remained throughout his career a devoted teacher of undergraduates at the University of Toronto's Victoria College. Tonight on *Ideas*, we begin a three-part intellectual biography of Northrop Frye. Next week, we'll profile the teacher and Canadian. To weeks from now, we'll study Frye's religious views and his writings on the Bible. But tonight, we focus on Northrop Frye as literary critic. The series is written and presented by David Cayley.

**DC** Northrop Frye made his name as a literary critic, and he has insisted, even when writing about the Bible, that that is what he remains. But the job description might be a little misleading if you think of a literary critic as someone who can tell you what a difficult poem means or how John Milton got on with his wives. Frye has turned out an immense body of practical criticism, writing on everyone from Dante to Emily Dickinson. But he has also done much more. He has raised those apparently naive, childlike questions which lesser minds avoid: What is language? What good is the study of literature? And he has tried to answer in a clear, vigorous style which sets him apart from many contemporary literary theorists. What is worth understanding, he has always insisted, can potentially be understood by everyone. His method is just as enlightening as his manner. He teaches his readers and students new habits of thought, new ways of seeing the world. If the doors of perception were cleansed, he says, along with poet William Blake, everything would appear as it is, infinite. Never divisive, never reductive, never mesmerized by either/or dialectics, he has tried to see each question as a whole. He is, finally, a teacher of wisdom, and Canadians have responded to him that way, recognizing him not just as a writer and scholar but as a guide. Northrop Frye was born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, in July of 1912. His mother's father was a Methodist preacher. His father came from a farming family. Three years after Frye's birth, in 1915, his father opened a hardware store. He had previously been a clerk. But the business was ill-fated and eventually failed in 1919. The year before, Frye's older brother had been killed in the war, and the two events together cast a long shadow over his parents' lives.

**NF** When my father's business failed, we moved to Lennoxville, about three miles away, and I stayed there till I was 7 or 8. And then my father began to become a hardware salesman for the Maritimes and settled in Moncton because it was central for his travelling. So I moved Moncton when I was about 8.

**DC** And did you feel that as an exile, when you went?

**NF** Well, my parents did. I suppose I caught it from them. I was too young to feel it as an exile, but they lost all their friends and never felt accepted in the Maritimes.

**DC** Even to the very end?

**NF** Well, of course, other things happened. My father was always of a very retiring disposition socially. He was affable enough with people, but he wasn't a socializer. And my mother got extremely deaf and withdrawn and introverted. I was really brought up by grandparents, in effect.

**DC** Frye grew up in Moncton. He played the piano, which he still does today, quite skillfully, and he read voraciously from a young age. His biographer, John Ayre, paints a picture of him at age 4, clutching a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* to his breast like a teddy bear. By the time he entered school, Frye was already widely enough read that he found it, as he said later, a form of penal servitude. "I saw children lined up and marched into a grimy brick building," he wrote. "A rabble of screaming and strapping spinsters was turned loose on them and the educational process began." Estranged from school and Moncton society, his parents somewhat remote, Frye was forced to rely mainly on himself.

**NF** I was brought up not only as psychologically a grandchild, but also as an only child, because I had only one sister and she was 12 years older. I was very much thrown in on myself, and being temperamentally extremely bookish and rather awkward physically made me even more so. There was also the fact that our family was in a state of shabby genteel poverty the whole time so that I simply could not afford the freedom of social movement that other boys had. And when there's no world to live in except the world of imagination, naturally that's going to take shape. In short, I suppose I spent the first 17 years of my life mooning.

**DC** In high school, Frye pored over the works of Bernard Shaw. His seemingly eccentric intellectual interests and his tendency to sound off won him the nickname of "the professor." He graduated first in his class in English and won, as an award, a scholarship to the Success Business College for stenographic training. According to his biographer, John Ayre, whose account I'm relying on here, Frye quickly proved a prodigy, so good in that the college sent him to a national typing contest in Toronto in April of 1929. His second place finish in the novice class made the papers back home and persuaded the college to send him back to Toronto that fall for an international typing competition. Both Frye and his mother had already decided that he should leave the Maritimes for his university education. The free trip to Toronto gave him the opportunity he needed. He enrolled at Victoria, the University of Toronto's Methodist college. There he encountered the writers who would later shape his thinking and his work. The most important of these was the English poet, painter and prophet, William Blake. "I think it advisable," Frye wrote years later, "for every critic proposing to devote his life to literary scholarship to pick a major writer of literature as a kind of spiritual preceptor for himself." Frye's preceptor was William Blake, and he is telling the figurative, if not quite the literal, truth when he says that he learned everything he knows from Blake.

**NF** I think I've told the story that I was assigned a paper on Blake's *Milton*, one of his most complex and difficult poems. I started working on it the night before I was to read it. Around about 3 o'clock in the morning suddenly the universe just broke open, and I've never been, as they say, the same man since.

**DC** What was it?

**NF** Just a feeling of an enormous number of things making sense that had been scattered and unrelated before, a vision of coherence. That's the only way I can describe it. Things began to form patterns and make sense. In other words, it was a mythological frame taking hold. I've had two or three nights where I have had sudden visions of that kind. They were, I suppose, ultimately visions of what I myself might be able to do.

**DC** The mythological framework which took hold was essentially the Bible. Blake showed Frye the Bible as a cosmos, a comprehensive body of imagery within which a society lives, and he showed him that societies live within such a mythological framework, or body of stories, even when they think they don't. The existence of this mythological universe became the central postulate of Frye's critical theory, and the Bible moved to the center of his studies, where it has remained ever since. —

**NF** The Bible to Blake was really the Magna Carta of the human imagination. It was the book that told man that he was free to create and imagine, and that the power to create and imagine was ultimately the divine in man. For Blake Christianity—and of course it's the Christian Bible Blake is talking about—was preeminently the religion which united the divine and the human and consequently opened a path of freedom to man which was infinite.

**DC** Blake became Frye's touchstone and a source of sanity in a world that was descending into fascism and war. "Read Blake or go to hell," he wrote. "That's my message to the modern world." But Blake as not the only writer Frye was reading. He was also looking into contemporary literature and noticing a reactionary turn amongst writers he had admired, like T.S. Eliot. Eliot was then the dominant voice in English poetry and criticism, and though he did not openly admire fascism, as did Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and William Butler Yeats, he was an anti-Semite and he had already made his famous pronouncement that he was classical in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion. Frye, romantic, socialist, and Methodist, took careful note.

**NF** I found not fascism in Eliot. Eliot didn't go that far, but he was certainly, in my terms, a reactionary. In *After Strange Gods*, which I read when I was quite young after it first came out, I felt a betrayal. In a way, it was my becoming aware of my own responsibilities as a critic. I mean, one of my guiding principles has been that a poet can be any kind of damn fool and still be a poet, and that because you couldn't trust the poets, you had to do it yourself if you were going to be a critic.

**DC** Frye had other occasions to distinguish between writers and their visions as well. He read Sir James Fraser's *The Golden Bough*, a book which influenced him deeply. He found the scholarship shoddy and the author rather stupid, but the book showed him again what Blake had shown him, that myth is the universal language of the imagination. And he also fell in love with the writing of the German historian, Oswald Spengler, a man easily as hard to like as T.S. Eliot.

**NF** At Hart House library, when I was an undergraduate, I picked up Spengler's *Decline of the West* and was absolutely enraptured with it, and ever since then I've been wondering why, because Spengler had one of these muzzy, right-wing, Teutonic, folkish minds and he was the most stupid bastard I ever picked up. But nevertheless, I found his book an inspired book, and finally I've more or less figured out, I think what I got from Spengler. There's a remark in Malraux's *Voices of Silence* to the effect that

Spengler's book started out as a meditation on the destiny of art forms and then expanded from there. And what it expanded into is the key idea which has always been on my mind, the idea of interpenetration, which I later found in Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, the notion that things don't get reconciled, but everything is everywhere at once. Wherever you are is the center of everything. And Spengler showed how that operated in history, so I threw out the muzzy Teuton and kept those two intuitions which I felt were going to be very central.

**DC** Spengler's *Decline of the West* is a vision of the organic unity of culture. Like Milton, who says that a commonwealth ought to be "but as one, huge Christian personage," like Blake, who says that multitudes of nations seen from afar appear as one man, Spengler conceives of culture as a single form, present in all its manifestations. Frye was on his way to the idea that would eventually coordinate his *Anatomy of Criticism*, that literature must be conceived as a whole. In 1933, Frye graduated from Victoria College with honors in English and philosophy. He decided to continue his studies, first at Emmanuel College, Victoria's theological school. In 1936, he was ordained as United Church minister. Following this, he went to Merton College, Oxford, for further studies in English. He returned to Victoria as a teacher on the eve of war.

**NF** I came back in the fall of 1939. The train got into Toronto on the day the Soviet-Nazi pact was signed, and the next day, one of my colleagues who taught the eighteenth century course signed up for the war. So I had that course to do, as well as the three that I'd been assigned, and preparing for lectures really took all the energy I had.

**DC** The classroom became his laboratory, the encounter with students a constant challenge to him to refine and clarify his ideas. And having to teach them made him plunge more deeply into the authors like Shakespeare, Spenser, Dante, and Milton, who crop up everywhere in his later writings.

**NF** I do read with tremendous intensity, and in my earlier years particularly, every text that I read that I was going to teach, or anything I read on the scale of, say, Dante, was just a mass of marginalia written in pencil. I simply could not read books that didn't have wide margins. That was one way of soaking myself into the book so that I came a part of it and it became part of me.

**DC** Preparing lectures and mastering the texts he was teaching at first left Frye little time for the book he planned to write on William Blake. But by the early forties, he was back at work on his already well-worked manuscript. Frye saw Blake as an artist who had renovated the entire mythical structure of the Western world view. Blake proposed a new way of looking at the universe and of humanity's place in it, as well as that of God. He dethroned the God he called "Old Nobodaddy," the old bugger up in the sky with the whiskers and the reactionary political views, as Frye once said, and substituted the human form divine, a God within, revealed by the imagination, rather than a God "out there." Blake took the world picture that Western civilization had derived from the Bible and, in effect, turned it upside down, making imaginative sense of what had become literal nonsense. This is Frye's account of the traditional view on which Blake worked.

**NF** There is first of all the presence of God, which is always associated with metaphors of "up there," even though they're known to be nothing but metaphors. Then there is the state which God intended man to live in, that is, the Garden of Eden, the golden age, the paradise. Then there is the fallen world that man fell into with the sin of Adam and Eve, and finally the demonic world below the order of

nature. So on that scheme, there are two levels to the order of nature, the one that God designed and the one that we're living in now, and the destiny of man is to climb out of the fallen world, as nearly as he can, to the state that was originally designed for him. He does this under a structure of authority—the sacraments of religion, the practice of morality and education, and so forth.

**DC** And what role does poetry play when such an order is intact?

**NF** Poetry begins with two strikes on it, because God made the world and he made it better than poets can make poems. Sir Thomas Browne says that nature is the art of God, and of course that means that man just sweeps up the shavings, so to speak. The poets didn't take that as seriously as the theologians did, fortunately. But after about 1750, it began to be clearer and clearer that these four levels were the facade of a structure of authority, and with the romantic movement you get this whole cosmology turned upside down.

**DC** Why, at this date, did it begin to become clear?

**NF** Because of the American, the French, and the Industrial Revolutions.

**DC** What about the scientific revolution? What role did that play?

**NF** The scientific revolution, of course, knocked out all the "up there" metaphors. After Newton's time, you couldn't regard the stars as a world of quintessence, as all that was left of the unfallen world. That's why Blake gives Isaac Newton the job of blowing the last trumpet in his poetry.

**DC** In the traditional structure, the movement is from God to man. What is the movement within Blake's cosmology?

**NF** For Blake, it's the fact that you have to think of God as at the bottom of creation, trying to rebuild it, and as working through man to that effect.

**DC** The four levels are still there, I think.

**NF** They're still there, but they're upside down. The world "up there" is the world of science fiction, of outer space. It's a symbol of alienation. There's nothing there except infinite resources for killing you. And then below that comes this very unfair world of ordinary experience, where the predators are the aristocrats. Below that is the world of frustrated sexual and social desire, the world of Marx's proletariat and of Freud's repressed consciousness. And below that again is the creative power of God, which works only through man as a conscious being.

**DC** Salvation, for Blake, comes from below and within. The divine is the creative power within us, and God is our power to perceive the infinite rather than an objective "something" which we perceive in the world. For Frye, Blake was the first to express this characteristic modern idea of salvation from below rather than above. Frye finds this idea, for example, in Blake's best known work, the Songs of Innocence and Experience.

**NF** For Blake, what happens is that the child, who is the central figure of the *Songs of Innocence*, is born believing that the world was made for his benefit, that the world makes human sense. He then grows up and discovers that the world isn't like this at all. So what happens to his childlike vision? Blake says it gets driven underground—what we would now call the subconscious—and there you have the embryonic mythical shape that is worked on later by people like Schopenhauer and Marx and Freud.

**DC** This shape appears in Freud as the relationship between ego and id, in Marx as ruling class and proletariat, in Schopenhauer as idea and will. What is below may be either sinister or the source of salvation. The shape remains constant, and this illustrates Frye's idea that mythical structure is always prior to content. Thought always fleshes out a skeleton of myth. To Frye, it was Blake who gave this modern myth its most humane expression. Blake's approach, he felt, was pregnant with unexplored possibilities in both religion and the arts, and so he worked away at his book on Blake. "I've spun the man around like a teetotum," he wrote, "I've torn him into tiny shreds and teased and anatomized him with pincers. There isn't a sentence in the whole work that hasn't gone through purgatory." After five complete rewritings, *Fearful Symmetry* was finally published by Princeton University Press in 1947. The book had a revolutionary effect on many of its readers. Harold Bloom of Yale University, one of the most widely read critics of the generation after Frye's, told an interviewer a couple of years ago that it had "ravished his heart away. I must have read it a hundred times between 1947 and 1950," he went on, "probably intuitively memorized it, and will never escape the effect of it." Michael Dolzani, today Frye's part-time research assistant and a teacher at Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, had a similar reaction when he read it.

**Michael Dolzani** I was given a copy of *Fearful Symmetry* when I was a freshman in college, and that was what you might call my conversion experience because I was just totally blown away by it. I had an intellectual experience like nothing I'd ever had before. It just opened worlds to me and kept me from dropping out of school and becoming a hippie, like all my friends were doing at the time, and sort of determined my direction ever afterwards, right up to the present time. We don't usually grant literary studies this kind of authority, really, to tell us what reality is. We usually look to science or to the social sciences, but Frye showed me it could be found in literature. Literature could really expand your vision. The title of one of Frye's essays that I like the most is "Expanding Eyes": that's a phrase from Blake. Frye talks in the essay about what the imagination and the arts can really do for people. In the title of his second volume about the Bible, *Words with Power*, is a similar idea. It refers to an untapped potential of consciousness-expanding power that literature has or could have for us that we rarely draw upon.

**DC** In 1957, ten years after *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye published his second book, *Anatomy of Criticism*. In it he laid out the ideas that would occupy him for the rest of his life. At the center of the work is what Frye called "the assumption of total coherence," the idea that literature can and should be considered as a whole and not just as an ever-expanding pile of individual works. Literature is a structure, Frye argued, and because it's a structure, it should be possible to investigate it scientifically and learn its laws. He wanted to derive the laws of literature from literature itself, to make criticism part of literature and not just a parasitic poor cousin of philosophy or history. But first, he had to clear the ground.

**NF** The world of criticism was inhabited by a lot of people who were pretty confused about what they were doing, and didn't particularly mind that they were confused about it. I was impatient with all the



semi-literate productions which I'd been compelled to read in the way of secondary sources. I was tired of a historical approach to literature that didn't know any literary history, that simply dealt with ordinary history plus a few dates of writers. It was a matter of just being fed up with a field that seemed to me to have no discipline in it.

**DC** The *Anatomy* is a claim for the autonomy of literary criticism. In what ways did literary criticism lack autonomy at the time that you began writing?

**NF** Well, by "autonomy," I mean having a discipline. If you study history—and history has a discipline—there are certain rules for writing correct history and ways of writing sloppy history that eventually get recognized as such. The same thing is true of philosophy. Criticism, it seemed to me, had no discipline of that kind. It had no sense of its own integrity. I think "autonomy" was a rather misleading word in some respects because it suggested to a lot of people who wanted to have this suggested that criticism as I conceived it was a retreat from the world. In fact, the original Italian translator of the *Anatomy* used the word *fuori*, "outside," which is a complete misapprehension. The translation has been revised since then. But I didn't think of criticism or literature as in any respects a withdrawing from life. But I thought that criticism was a study in its own right and not simply a parasitic approach to literature.

**DC** What was criticism subservient to at the time you wrote?

**NF** Well, one of the things I was attacking were the reductive or deterministic criticisms, such as Marxist type and the Freudian type, and at that time—it's pretty well blown up now—the Thomist or Roman Catholic type.

**DC** Frye wanted critics to go to literature for their critical principles, just as he had gone to Blake, and not to sociology, psychology or theology. The *Anatomy* he saw as a preliminary attempt to do this. The book is comprised of four essays, each an approach to the question of literature's overall shape. There is a theory of modes, which traces the descent of literature from myth; a theory of symbols, which shows how works of art gather meaning for their readers; a theory of myths, which describes the basic shapes of stories; and a theory of genres, which distinguishes literary forms from each other. Each displays Frye's special diagrammatic and visualizing imagination, as well as his characteristic wit and encyclopedic knowledge. Often the questions Frye invites us to ask are quite simple ones. Are we looking up or down at the characters of the story? Is their power of action greater or less than our own? Does the action rise or fall? Bert Hamilton is a professor of English at Queen's University and the author of a new book called *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*.

**Bert Hamilton** He is interested in structure. I mean Frye is a structuralist critic, a poststructuralist critic. He is interested in standing back from a literary work. You've read it, you stand back from it at the end. Now, what kind of shape does it have? In a work that we call a comedy, whether it's a play or a novel, you see obstructing figures at the beginning of the action and then at the end, the hero and heroine celebrate their union and a new society symbolized by their marriage. Now, in a tragedy, you'll have the opposite kind of action. Things may begin well, but they end unhappily. And Frye then extends this to romance, where he sees two kinds of structural patterns included in one work. You have first of all a descent, but then finally an ascent. In fact, romance goes beyond comedy because more than just a social resolution, more than just a new society, the hero and heroine are transported,

translated to a higher than a social context. Irony or satire is simply the reverse, where there's a descent and no rise at all.

**DC** That, in a nutshell, is the theory of myths. But Frye is more than just a map maker. He's interested in works of art as ethical instruments, capable of carrying us to the highest reaches of what he calls anagogic meaning, the level at which meanings interpenetrate and the world becomes fully human.

**Bert Hamilton** Everyone is aware in reading a work of literature—and this is true of a scholar who will spend a lifetime reading a work or any general reader listening to this broadcast—that a literary work has more than just one meaning. It gathers meanings or accumulates meanings: you see more and more in a work. My mother, God bless her, read very early *Anne of Green Gables*. Now, that's a work she's turned back to again and again for, I guess, sixty years, and it grows in understanding to her. I mean the central story of that work, in which somebody finds identity, is meaningful to her. Frye calls this a level of anagogy, a level where you can have a more comprehensive view on literature and life through one literary work, a work you live with. The term that Frye uses is “possession.” You are first possessed by a literary work, overwhelmed by it, but then later on, you possess it, you absorb it, you take part of its energy in yourself, and it becomes a way of looking upon anything in life.

**DC** The idea that the arts embody a creative power which can be possessed by their audience is central to Northrop Frye's entire work. At the time the *Anatomy* was published, it distinguished him very clearly from his critical predecessors. Documentary or historical critics had investigated the contexts of literary work. The new critics had tried to make literature stand alone. But neither, says Bert Hamilton, had finally believed that literature ultimately matters.

**Bert Hamilton** When he was writing his first books, a literary work was an object of scholarship. A critic would take Milton's *Paradise Lost* and study Puritanism, and whether he responded to the work, whether he appreciated the work hardly mattered. To the critic, it was a work of scholarship in which he was engaged in trying to understand, say, Milton's Puritanism, or whatever. The New Critics came along and looked at the work in terms of a pattern of imagery, but again whether that work really mattered to them in relation to their values was something that the New Critics just did not bother with. Then Frye came along and wanted a response to literature to be more than a response to just an aesthetic object. So you read a literary work and you appreciate it; then you drop it. You pick up something else you like, and you drop it. Where your reading is quite promiscuous, quite occasional, it has no meaning whatever, really, and Frye wanted literature to assume a more important place for readers. He wanted this to be recognized. And he picked up from Blake a notion that when a writer produces a poem or a novel, that writer is not just giving you something to be appreciated as an aesthetic object but is really interested in gauging you as a human being, deeply, and of course the best literature does this. The metaphor Frye uses he gets from Blake: transfer of imaginative energy. If you respond deeply to a literary work and respond to it imaginatively, making it central in your life, then what you do is capture the creative power that's in the work itself.

**DC** Within a few years of its publication, *Anatomy of Criticism* had become the most widely read and most influential work of criticism to appear in its time. Speaking at a symposium on Frye's work in 1965, fellow critic Murray Krieger claimed that Frye had had “an absolute hold on a generation of developing literary critics.” But the praise was never unanimous and misunderstandings have persisted

every since. Occasionally these misunderstandings made the book seem something of an albatross to Frye, and he once wrote to a friend, in jest, that he wished he'd never written it. One of the most controversial points was Frye's denunciation of value judgments in criticism.

**NF** I was getting at the conception of the critic as judge, sitting on a bench with the defendant in front of him, squirming. I felt that that was a preposterous ego trip for the critic to attempt. Value judgments are things that people argue about and discuss endlessly, and they do enter into one's critical experience. But they can never be demonstrated. What a value judgment manifests is the taste of its time as it's filtered through the individual critic. The value judgment of most of the serious critics for a century after Shakespeare's death was that Ben Jonson was really a much more serious writer. The value judgments of the later eighteenth century said that Blake was a lunatic. The great boners of criticism, like Rymer's calling *Othello* a bloody farce, are not the result of a critic's lack of taste; they're a result of his following the conventions of his time.

**DC** Why do you think there was such misunderstanding on this point?

**NF** There was a great misunderstanding because people were brought up to think that being a literary critic was a gentleman's occupation, and the gentleman is a person who attaches immense importance to his taste. "I like this, I don't like that."

**DC** And in rejecting that, where are you trying to go as a critic?

**NF** In rejecting that, you move from the gentleman to the scholar. The scholar reads everything in his historical period, good, bad or indifferent. It's all good because it's all documentation for his work. He works entirely without explicit value judgments. They may enter into his work at some point or other, but good, bad, or indifferent, everything which comes under a critic's purview or under a scholar's purview has to be read by the scholar.

**DC** He's trying to understand, not trying to judge?

**NF** Yes, and very often you can understand the taste of an age from its least interesting writers.

**DC** In rejecting criticism as a gentleman's occupation, you're also implicitly trying to democratize criticism?

**NF** Yes, trying to democratize criticism and also trying to remove criticism from the area of morality, because every value judgment is a moral judgment in disguise, and the moral judgment reflects the ideological conditioning of a certain age. The nearest you come to a value judgment, I think, is in words like "classic" or "masterpiece," which are value terms. Now what they mean are works of literature that refuse to go away. It was all very well to say for a century that Ben Jonson was a closer follower of nature than Shakespeare and therefore a more serious dramatist, but Shakespeare just squatted down on the stage and refused to move and survived even the most grotesque manhandlings of his work, whereas only two or three of Jonson's plays have really held the stage.

**DC** Another source of controversy about the *Anatomy* was Frye's stress on the shaping power of literary conventions or models. Literature is often made out of other literature, Frye insisted, twenty

years before deconstructionists began talking of intertextuality. A poem, he said, is something already latent in language. The difference between the original and the imitative poet is only that the original poet is more profoundly imitative. His detractors preferred to believe that literature is made out of life.

**NF** What I always kept getting were anxieties of the sort “But what about life, Professor Frye?” And I would say, “Well, literature has swallowed life. Life is inside literature. All you have to do to find out about life is read literature.” Oh my. That bothered them. They were bothered by the suggestion that a writer gets what he acquires technically out of other books instead of by empiric observation. They just had to have it the other way. There were all kinds of anxieties about my not attending to the uniqueness of the work of art, and I would keep saying that uniqueness is not an object of knowledge. We never know the unique. The unique exists in experience only. It is part of the response to literature, but it’s not part of literature.

**DC** A lot of the anxiety provoked by Frye’s critical theory is traceable to his idea that literature is valuable in itself and not merely a mirror reflecting values generated elsewhere. The conservative who wants literature to be edifying and the radical who wants it to reflect his own ideological concerns are, for Frye, different sides of the same coin. Both want to attach literature to something else, and their lineage, Frye says, goes all the way back to Plato.

**NF** Plato was the first of all the people who wanted to take over poetry, hitch it on an ideology, namely his, and all the poets who wouldn’t do that would have to leave the Republic. But according to *The Lays*, there are others who stay around writing hymns and panegyrics to the greatness of the Platonic ideal, and that’s still true of all ideologues. Artists have always been told that they have no real authority, that they live in a world of “let’s pretend” and that they just play around with fictions. Their function is to delight and instruct, as Horace says, and they can learn from their own art how to delight, but they can’t learn how to instruct unless they study philosophy or theology or politics. And as a literary critic, I’ve been fighting that notion all my life.

**Michael Dolzani** The thing that the *Anatomy* is attacked for the most often is that, well, Frye divorces art from life. He makes literature turn away from life, from the world out there, and turn inward upon itself. It becomes, his critics say, a sort of self-contained literary universe that’s really an intellectual’s ivory tower where academics can hide out. I think that’s wrong, but amidst all of the confusion, there’s a very central issue that explains a lot about the center of Frye’s work. One of his favorite works of criticism—he rarely names works of criticism as things that attract him—is Oscar Wilde’s essay, “The Decay of Lying.” What Wilde said was he didn’t think art told the truth in the sense of photographic reflection. He said that art is always a form of lying, in the sense of turning away from the given or external world out there. But it’s not just a simple lying either, and this is where Frye’s own ideas are important. What literature and the arts in general do, he says, is create an alternative reality of their own. That’s not just escapist, because, as Wilde said, instead of art imitating life, which is what we usually think, actually life imitates art. Art remodels life, or to use what I think is a central critical term of Frye’s, it recreates it. Art just doesn’t reflect life like a mirror or a photograph, it remodels or recreates it. This is what *Fearful Symmetry* showed me—that art can change the way we perceive and therefore can change the way we experience. It can expand our visions in that way, and it can change the world.

**DC** *Anatomy of Criticism* embodied high hopes. Frye wanted criticism to transcend taste in order to become a body of authoritative knowledge, to transcend ideology in order to become a disinterested voice within literature, and he wanted the arts recognized as the permanent structure of a truly human life, “the ruins of time which build mansions in eternity,” as Blake says. Whether these hopes have been realized is an open question. Frye’s own occasional remarks on the subject, as when he finds criticism, 25 years later, still mired in ideology, tend to suggest that he thinks not. And yet, the *Anatomy* is still there and still read, the most widely read book in the arts and humanities of the twentieth century, according to Frye’s bibliographer, Robert Denham. Precisely because of this influence, most of today’s best known critics have had at Frye at one time or another. Their criticisms are various, but one very common note is the complaint that Frye, as Fredric Jameson says, ignores “the mark of ideology” on myth. Frye says that his critics have still not understood that literature embodies a truth beyond ideology.

**NF** Most of my critics do not know that there is such a thing as a poetic language which is not only different from ideological language but puts up a constant fight against it in order to liberalize and individualize it. There is no such thing as a “pure myth.” There is no immaculate conception in mythology. Myth exists only in incarnations, but it’s the ones that are incarnated in works of literature that I’m primarily interested in, and what they create is a cultural counterenvironment to the ones that are, I won’t say perverted, but at any rate, twisted or skewed into ideological patterns of authority.

**DC** I think probably people like Jameson are saying that all myths are in some sense skewed in that way.

**NF** They say that because they are pan-ideologists. They can’t conceive of any myth that doesn’t come in an ideological form, but Shakespeare doesn’t. Dante and Milton perhaps more obviously reflect the ideologies of their time, but their structure is radically a poetic structure, which is something different.

**DC** Frye has never really bothered much about his critics. There is an occasional note of weary exasperation in his writing when he deals once again with the question of value judgments or some other endlessly controversial point, but generally he sees no point in being drawn into discussion or debate with people whose assumptions are remote from his own.

**NF** I detest arguments. You’re going to lose any argument with an ideologue because you can only argue on the basis of a counterideology, and I’m not doing that. I think that the ideologue wants to have a kinetic effect on his audience. He wants people to get out there and do something. The poet turns his back on his audience. I begin the *Anatomy*, I think, with John Stuart Mills’ remark that the poet is overheard, not heard, and he doesn’t look for a kinetic effect on his audience at all. The actual technique of argumentative writing is something I avoid as far as possible, because when you argue, you are selecting points to emphasize and there can never be anything definitively right or wrong about an emphasis. It’s simply a choice among possibilities, and consequently an argument is always a half-truth. We’ve known that ever since Hegel. It is a militant way of writing, and I’m not interested in militancy. Literature, you see, doesn’t argue within itself. That’s the principle of Shelley’s *Defence of Poetry*, that literature cannot argue. As Yeats says, you can refute Hegel but not the “Song of Sixpence.” As I’ve often said, the irrefutable philosopher is not the person who cannot be refuted, but the philosopher who is still there after he’s been refuted.

**DC** Frye, I think, has this quality himself, of still being there after he's been refuted. Newer schools have replaced the romantic myth-centered criticism with which Frye was identified, and philosophy, through Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction, has reasserted its hold on criticism. But Frye, in a real sense, stands outside the sequence of fads which constitute the history of literary criticism: historical criticism, new criticism, myth criticism, structuralism, deconstructionism, and now the new historicism. Frye, always encyclopedic, always swallowing contradictions whole, embodies parts of them all, usually the best parts. He belongs to what Bert Hamilton calls "the extended humanist tradition," which stretches all the way back to Aristotle, the tradition of thinkers who have asked fundamental questions and have given us compelling answers.

**NF** I am often described as somebody who is now in the past and whose reputation has collapsed, but I don't think I'm any further down skid row than the deconstructionists are.

[To be continued in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.]

## 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, as always, to Jane Widdicombe, and to others who have sent me materials: John Ayre, Frank Munley, Thomas M. F. Gerry, Baldo Meo, William Johnsen, John Lang, David Cayley, Patrick Hogan, Michael Lawlor, John Roder, Lauriat Lane, Linda Munk, Robert Fulford, Susan Payette, Erlin Sills, Robert Brandeis, and David Staines. I invite readers to send me copies of essays and reviews for inclusion in the next supplement.

One reader of the Frye bibliography (K11) was especially displeased that it failed adequately to distinguish between those writings that are primarily about Frye's work and those that apply his various and insights theories to the reading of literary texts; the reviewer complained also that the bibliography should have had a separate section devoted to applied criticism. While I have never attempted to track down all the applied criticism, examples of this massive body of work have come to my attention over the years. In the supplement that follows I list, in section L, some of these studies from the 1960s and 1970s. I have decided, for the present at least, not to make a separate category for applied criticism, which seldom appears without some attention to theory. (Ed.)

### Primary Sources

#### A. Books

**A2.** *Anatomy of Criticism*. Portions of "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader*. Ed. K.M. Newton. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. 99-102.

**A2m.** *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Toronto: Penguin, 1990. Reprint of A2 in paperback ed.

**A26.** *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays, 1974-1988.* Ed. Robert D. Denham. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1990. xviii + 386 pp. Hardcover.

Contents:

The Koine of Myth: Myth as a Universally Intelligible Language (I170)

Literary and Linguistic Scholarship in a Postliterate World (D277)

The Symbol as a Medium of Exchange (I171)

The Survival of Eros in Poetry (D287)

The View from Here (I159)

Framework and Assumption (I183)

The Dialectic of Belief and Vision (I184)

The Expanding World of Metaphor (D284)

The Responsibilities of the Critic (D232)

Some Reflections on Life and Habit (C12)

The Rhythms of Time (I93)

Literature as a Critique of Pure Reason (D274)

Literature and the Visual Arts (I174)

The Stage Is All the World (I180)

The Journey as Metaphor (I182)

The Double Mirror (D268)

The Mythical Approach to Creation (I177)

Crime and Sin in the Bible (I187)

Blake's Bible (I193)

Natural and Revealed Communities (I191)

Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (C9, D285)

The Meeting of Past and Future in William Morris (D272)

The World as Music and Idea in Wagner's *Parsifal* (D280)

Cycle and Apocalypse in *Finnegans Wake* (I173)

**A27.** *Words with Power: A Second Study of the Bible and Literature.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990. 320 pp. Hardcover. Selections printed in advance of publication in *American Poetry Review* 19 (Nov.-Dec. 1990) and in *Raritan*.

**A27a.** *Words with Power: A Second Study of the Bible and Literature.* Toronto: Penguin, 1990. 320 pp. Hardcover.

**A28.** *Reading the World: Selected Writings, 1935-1976.* Ed. Robert D. Denham. New York: Peter Lang, 1990. xvi + 416 pp. Hardcover.

Contents:

I. On the Performing Arts

Current Opera (D1) / Ballet Russe (D2) / The Jooss Ballet (D3) / Frederick Delius (D5) / Music and the Savage Breast (D6) / The Great Charlie (D11) / Music in the Movies (D16) / The Eternal Tramp (D31)

## II. On Painting

Men as Trees Walking (D7) / Canadian Art in London (D8) / Watercolor Annual (D21) / The Pursuit of Form (D35) / Academy without Walls (D121) / The Myth of Light (D176) / The Canadian Scene: Explorers and Observers / (D215)

## III. On Education

A Liberal Education (D22, D23) / Education and the Humanities (D28) / The Larger University (I8) / The Developing Imagination (D137) / The University of the World (I21) / Education as Immersion and Struggle (I35) / The Community of Freedom (C4) / Universities and the Deluge of Cant (D212)

## IV. On Criticism

Systematic Criticism (E1) / The Chicago Critics (D67) / Content with the Form (D71) / The Transferability of Literary Concepts (D76) / An Indispensable Book (D79)

## V. On Literature

A Mixed Bag (D15) / A Lovely Evening (D17) / Experimental Writing (D20) / Blake on Trial Again (D26) / Turning New Leaves: Nursery Rhymes (D53) / Shakespeare and the Modern World (I24) / Literature and Society (I32) / William Blake (I71)

## VI. On Religion

The Church: Its Relation to Society (D40) / The Analogy of Democracy (D52) / Religion and Modern Poetry (D108)

## VII. Sermons

The Baccalaureate Sermon (F78) / Symbols (F82) / All Things Made Anew (I63) / A Leap in the Dark (I72) / Wisdom and Knowledge (I88) / Substance and Evidence (I95)

## VIII. On Culture and Society

Wyndham Lewis: Anti-Spenglerian (D5) / War on the Cultural Front (D9) / Reflections at a Movie (D14) / Turning New Leaves: Ernst Jünger (D32) / Dr. Kinsey and the Dream Censor (D34) / Trends in Modern Culture (D59) / Oswald Spengler (D77) / Preserving Human Values (I12) / America: True or False? (D188) / Rear View Crystal Ball (D199) / Literature and the Law (D202) / The Quality of Life in the Seventies (D209) / Violence and Television (D237)

## IX. Editorials

Undemocratic Censorship (F30) / Canadian Authors Meet (F31) / Revenge or Justice? (F32) / Merry Christmas (F33) / So Many Lost Weekends (F34) / Merry Christmas? (F35) / Duncan Campbell Scott (F36) / Gandhi (F37) / Canadian Dreiser (F38) / Dean of Critics (F40) / Merry Christmas (F41) / Cardinal Mindszenty (F42) / Culture and the Cabinet (F43) / The Two Camps (F44) / Law and Disorder (F46) / To Define True Madness (F47) / Nothing to Fear but Fear (F48) / Merry Christmas (F49) / George Orwell (F51) / New Liberties for Old (F54) / John D. Robins (F55) / Regina vs. the World (F56)

## D. Essays and Parts of Book

**D299.** "Lacan and the Full Word." *Criticism and Lacan: Essays and Dialogue on Language, Structure, and the Unconscious*. Ed. Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1990. 187-89. English translation of "Lacan et la parole dans sa plénitude" (D283).

**D300.** "Foreword." *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*. Ed. George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. ix-xii. In this foreword to a *Festschrift* for A.C. Hamilton, F notes



that what underlies the several essays is the domination of romance during the Elizabethan-Jacobean period. F glances at two of the contexts of romance during this period: education and love.

**D301.** "Some Reflections on Life and Habit." *Northrop Frye Newsletter* 1 (Spring 1990): 1-9. Rpt in *Myth and Metaphor* (A26).

D302. "Epilogue." *Ritratto di Northrop Frye*. Ed. Agostino Lombardo. Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1989. 419-20. F's concluding remarks to the participants at the conference devoted to his work (see K13). Expresses thanks for the good will of those who have found that his work assisted them in moving freely in their own directions.

**D303.** "Maps and Territories." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (see K13). For annotation, see I192.

**D304.** "Afterword." *Hetty Dorval* by Ethel Wilson. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. 105-8. Comments on the heroine of the novella, her relation to the narrator, and Ethel Wilson's sense of place and time. "A typical first novel of a writer of great ability and a sure sense of direction."

**D305.** "The Bride from a Strange Land." *Craft and Tradition: Essays in Honor of William Blissett*. Ed. H. B. de Groot and A. Leggatt. Calgary: U of Calgary Press, 1990, 1-11. For annotation, see I175. This essay published previously only in Italian. See A25, *Mito metafora simbolo*.

**D306.** "Levels of Cultural Identity." *Northrop Frye Newsletter* 2 (Winter 1989-90): 2-18.

**D307.** "Blake's Biblical Illustrations." *Northrop Frye Newsletter* 2 (Summer 1990): 1-12. For annotation, see I157.

**D308.** "Shakespeare's The Tempest." **Northrop Frye Newsletter** 2 (Summer 1990): 19-27. For annotation, see I123.

## **F. Miscellaneous**

**F92.** "From the Chancellor" (1979) rpt. as "The Chancellor's Message" in *The Victoria University Handbook 90-91*. [Victoria University, n.d.], p. 4.

## **G. Interviews**

**G69.** Fraser, Matthew. "Northrop Frye: Signifying Everything." *Varsity* 1 October. 1979: 6-7. Frye replies to a series of questions by Fraser on life in the thirties, creative writing, the language of fiction, teaching religion, the value of the university, and the destruction of the honour course at Toronto.

**G70.** Burrill, Gary. "Northrop Frye: A Conversation." *The World: Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Association* 4 (July-August 1990): 5-6. Reports on a conversation with Frye in connection with the CBC documentary, *Northrop Frye: The Great Teacher*.

## **H. Tapes**

**H68.** *The Great Teacher: Northrop Frye.* A transcript of this film has been prepared by CBC, Toronto. 44 pp.

**H71.** "Literature as Therapy." Audiotape of a lecture F delivered on 23 Nov. 1989 at Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto. Begins by noting the references to physicians and medicine in English literature, from the Middle Ages on, and then develops the idea that literature, in contrast to science, has the kind of recuperative power that music has had in unifying body and mind.

## **I. Manuscripts.**

**I223.** "Henry James and the Comedy of the Occult." (1989). Lecture delivered at Carleton University, 19 Oct. 1989. Typescript, 32 pp. Sees James' fiction as ironically reversing conventional comic patterns, and argues that in James' ghost stories and international novels the movement is away from realism toward a fuller and wider vision of reality.

**I124.** "Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility." (1990). A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Minneapolis, 26 April 1990. Typescript, 24 pp. Forthcoming in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Winter 1990-91. F's paper was in connection with a special session devoted to his work, and his response (5-page typescript), along with the other papers, will also be published in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*.

**I225.** "The Double Vision." (1990) A four-chapter manuscript, the first three of which were delivered as lectures at Emmanuel College, Victoria University, Toronto, 14-16 May 1990. Typescript, 115 pp. Forthcoming as a book to be published jointly by the University of Toronto Press and the United Church Publishing House. The chapters are entitled, "The Double Vision of Language," "The Double Vision of Nature," "The Double Vision of History," and "The Double Vision of God."

**I226.** [Untitled tribute to Don and Pauline McGibbon]. (1990). Typescript, 5 pp. Presented at a dinner honoring the McGibbons, 12 June 1990. Reviews their life-long volunteer work on behalf of education and the arts.

## **Secondary Sources**

### **K. Books**

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

Dooley, D. J. *Anglican Journal* May 1990: 16.

Fetherling, Douglas. "True to His Own Tastes." *Toronto Star* 24 November 1990: G13.

French, Goldwin. "Two Complex Victorians." *Vic Report* 18 (Spring 1990): 8.

Jackson, Marni. "Anatomy of Frye." *Canadian Forum* 70 (June 1990): 27-8.

Walker, Craig Stewart. "Visions of Coherence: Northrop Frye Reviewed." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études canadiennes* 25 (Summer 1990): 170-7 [172-3].

**K9.** Review of A. C. Hamilton, Northrop Frye: *Anatomy of His Criticism*

Walker, Craig Stewart. "Visions of Coherence: Northrop Frye Reviewed." *Journal of Canadian*

*Studies/Revue d'Études canadiennes* 25 (Summer 1990): 170–7 [173–5, 176].

**K11.** Addition to reviews of Robert D. Denham, *Northrop Frye: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*

Mellard, James M. "Monument or Scholarly Tool? Denham's Northrop Frye: A Review Essay." *Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography* 2, no. 3 (1988): 113-21.

**K13.** *Ritratto di Northrop Frye*. Ed. Agostino Lombardo. Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1989. 435 pp. Wrappers. The proceedings of the conference, "Portrait of Northrop Frye," sponsored by the English Department of the University of Rome and held at the Villa Mirafiori, 25-27 May 1987. See *Northrop Frye Newsletter* 1 (Fall 1988): 1-2. The foreword to the proceedings by Professor Lombardo is in both Italian and English, and the Italian essays in the collection are summarized in English by Richard Ambrosini (pp. 421-31).

Contents:

I. Theory and Criticism

Northrop Frye, "Maps and Territories" (1192) / Remo Ceserani, "Primo approccio alla teoria critica di Frye: Riflessioni attorno concetto di modo" / Sergio Perosa, "Incontri con Frye" / Roberto Cresti, "Critical Theory and Literary Experience in Northrop Frye" / Francesco Guardiani, "Le categorie di Frye dall'Anatomia della Critica al Grande Codice" / Domenico Pietropaolo, "Frye, Vico, and the Grounding of Literature and Criticism"

II. The Bible

Frank Kermode, "Northrop Frye and the Bible" / Piero Boitani, "Codex Fryeanus 0-15-136902-X: A Medieval Reading of *The Great Code*" / Giorgio Mariani, "Northrop Frye and the Politics of the Bible" / Jan Ulrik Krielbaum Dyrkjoeb, "Northrop Frye's Visionary Protestantism" / Paola Russo, "The Word as Event"

III. From Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot

Paola Colaiacomo, "La letteratura come potere" / Keir Elam, "A Natural Perspectivism: Northrop Frye on Shakespearean Comedy" / Agostino Lombardo, "Northrop Frye e *The Tempest*" / Francesco Marroni, "Frye, Shakespeare e 'la parola magica'" / Stefania d'Ottavi, "Frye e Blake" / Cristina Berteza, "Frye e la fiaba" / Carlo Pagetti, "Frye cittadino di utopia" / Caterina Ricciardi, "Frye, l'America e le finzioni supreme"

IV. Canada

Eleanor Cook, "Against Monism: The Canadian Anatomy of Northrop Frye" / Robert Kroetsch, "Learning the Hero from Northrop Frye" / Alessandro Gebbia, "L'idea di letteratura canadese in Frye" / Alfredo Rizzardi, "Northrop Frye e la poesia canadese" / Richard Ambrosini, "From Archetypes to National Specificity" / Maria Micarelli, "La visione sociale di Northrop Frye" / Francesca Valente, "Northrop Frye the Teacher: Education and Literary Criticism"

V. The Presence of Frye

Robert D. Denham, "An *Anatomy* of Frye's Influence" / Baldo Meo, "La fortuna di Frye in Italia" / Alessandro Gebbia and Baldo Meo, "Bibliografia di Northrop Frye, con una appendice delle traduzioni e dei contributi critici italiani"

VI. Northrop Frye, "Epilogue"

**L. Essays and Parts of Books**

**L774.** Agnew, Gates K. "Berowne and the Progress of Love's Labour's Lost." *Shakespeare Studies* 4 (1968): 40-72. Says the play fits the formula of comedy as defined by F.

**L775.** Ambrosini, Richard. "From Archetypes to National Specificity." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 331-39. On "the cross-pollenization between [Frye's] literary theory and his writing about Canadian literature."

**L776.** Berteà, Cristina. "Frye e la fiaba." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 225-34. On F's view of fairy tales as an archetypal form towards which more complex literary forms tend to return. Berteà looks at the connections between fairy tales and both ritual and romance.

**L777.** Bessai, Diane. "Counterfeiting Hindsight." *World Literature Written in English* 23, no. 2 (1984): 353-66. Argues that F's comprehensive overview of Canadian literature neglects "the positive elements of literary colonialism."

**L778.** Boitani, Piero. "Codex Fryeanus 0-15-136902-X: A Medieval Reading of *The Great Code*." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 121-34. Examines the ways in which F blends medieval and modern ways in reading in *The Great Code*.

**L779.** Brown, Ashley. "Eudora Welty and the Mythos of Summer." *Shenandoah* 20 (Spring 1969): 29-35. Sees Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom* as an excellent example of F's mode of romance—the mythos of summer.

**L780.** Cadbury, William. "The Two Structures of *Rob Roy*." *Modern Language Quarterly* 29 (1968): 42-60. Finds F's concepts of novel and romance helpful in explaining the structure of Scott's novel.

**L781.** Calvino, Italo. "Literature as Projection of Desire: On Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*." *The Uses of Literature*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. San Diego: Harcourt, 1986. English trans. of L75, "La letteratura come proiezione del desiderio."

**L782.** Ceserani, Remo. "Primo approccio alla teoria critica di Frye: Riflessioni attorno concetto di modo." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 17-38. On the problematic nature of F's concept of mode.

**L783.** Cluett, Robert. *Canadian Literary Prose: A Preliminary Stylistic Analysis*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1990. F's *Fables of Identity* is included as part of the data base in two chapters this study. Although F's style is not discussed, charts following chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how features of his prose compare with features in the prose of Morley Callaghan and Robertson Davies.

**L784.** Colaiacomo, Paola. "La letteratura come potere." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 169-79. Applies De Quincey's distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power to F's work and finds that the function of criticism for F is to reproduce the power of literature.

**L785.** Coleman, Dorothy. "Rabelais and *The War Babies*." *Modern Language Review* 66 (July 1971): 511-21. Maintains that Rabelais and Kingsley wrote what F calls the Menippean satire or anatomy.

**L786.** Collins, Harold R. "The Ironic Imagery of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born Yet*: The Putrescent Vision." *World Literature Written in English* 20 (Nov. 1971): 37-50. Argues that an analysis of Armah's work in F's terms reveals it to be a fiction in the ironic mode.

**L787.** Cook, Albert. "'Fiction' and History in Samuel and Kings." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (Oct. 1986): 27-48 [37-39]. Maintains that in his reading of the Bible F gives "too great an attention to the fictional and typological aspects of the narrative, at the cost of neglecting its main historical thrust."

**L788.** Cook, Eleanor. "Against Monism: The Canadian *Anatomy* of Northrop Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 283-97. On the dialectical, rather than the monistic, nature of F's work, and on his relation to recent Canadian criticism, especially that of Eli Mandel. Concludes with the suggestion that in F's *Anatomy* there is the strong undercurrent of the confession, out of which emerges the dual image of F as both the master interpreter and the gracious servant.

**L789.** Cooper, Barbara T. "Master Plots: An Alternate Typology for French Historical Dramas of the Early Nineteenth Century." *Theatre Journal* 35 (March 1983): 23-31. In order to develop a synchronic view of early nineteenth-century French drama, draws on F's theory of modes and Hayden White's adaptation of F's model.

**L790.** Cramer, Carter M. "The World of Nathaniel West: A Critical Interpretation." *Emporia State Research Studies* 19 (June 1971): 5-71. Argues that critics might have interpreted West's works more correctly if they had been guided by F's classification of fiction.

**L791.** Cresti, Roberto. "Critical Theory and Literary Experience in Northrop Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 47-63. On the idea of criticism as science in F and the relation of this idea to both experience and understanding.

**L792.** Delespinasse, Doris Stringham. "The Significance of Dual Point of View in *Bleak House*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1968). Sees Esther's narration as a mixture of what F calls novel and romance, and notes that the omniscient narrator's view is almost entirely an anatomy.

**L793.** de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1971, 26; 2nd ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983. In discussing F's idea of intention, argues that F reifies literature into a natural object. F gives "license to order and classify the whole of literature into one single thing which, even though circular, would nevertheless be a gigantic cadaver."

**L794.** Denham, Robert D. "An Anatomy of Frye's Influence." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 359-68. For annotation, see L620.

**L795.** Denniston, Constance. "The American Romance Parody: A Study of Purdy's *Malcolm* and Heller's *Catch-22*." *Emporia State Research Studies* 14 (Dec. 1965): 42-59, 63-64. Sees both works as romance parody in F's sense.

**L796.** D'Ottavi, Stefania. "Frye e Blake." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 217-24. On the centrality of Blake for F's theories of archetypes, symbols, and images and for his interest in "systems."

**L797.** Doherty, Paul C. "Hopkins' 'Spring and Fall: To a Young Child'." *Victorian Poetry* 5 (Summer 1967): 140-43. Sees the poem as exemplifying F's analogies of innocence and experience.

**L798.** Donoghue, Denis. "Kenneth Burke's Dangling Novel." *Encounter* 29 (Oct. 1967): 78-84. Sees Burke's *Towards a Better Life* not as a novel but as an anatomy in F's sense.

**L799.** Dyrkjoeb, Jan Ulrik Krielbaum. "Northrop Frye's Visionary Protestantism." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 145-57. For annotation, see L627.

**L800.** Elam, Keir. "A Natural Perspectivism: Northrop Frye on Shakespearean Comedy." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 181-94. Notes the extent to which recent criticism of Shakespeare's comedies can be traced back to F's *Anatomy*, *A Natural Perspective*, and "The Argument of Comedy," and then looks at the most vocal recent critics of F's approach, the textualists and the historicists.

**L801.** England, Eugene. "Why Nephi Killed Laban: Reflections on the Truth of the Book of Mormon." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Fall 1989): 32-51 [32-38]. Maintains that F's study of the Bible's literary typology can be applied to the Book of Mormon as well.

**L802.** Fort, Keith. "Satire and Gnosticism." *Religion & Literature* 20 (Summer 1988): 1-18. Argues that the view of reality in gnosticism is quite similar to the darkest visions of irony as outlined by F in *Anatomy of Criticism*.

**L803.** Fujimura, Thomas H. "Mode and Structure in *The Merchant of Venice*." *PMLA* 81 (1966): 499-511. Finds three of F's fictional modes relevant to understanding the play.

**L804.** Galvin, Brendan. "A Note on T. S. Eliot's 'New Hampshire' as a Lyric Poem." *Massachusetts Studies in English* 1 (Fall 1967): 44-45. Observes that the poem conforms to F's definition of lyric.

**L805.** Gebbia, Alessandro. "L'idea di letteratura canadese in Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 313-19. On the aesthetic and social concerns in F's criticism of Canadian literature.

**L806.** Guardiani, Francesco. "Le categorie di Frye dall'*Anatomia della Critica* al *Grande Codice*." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 65-86. On the theory of polysemous meaning in the *Anatomy* and *The Great Code*.

**L807.** Hansen, Niels Bugge. "Wise Saws and Modern Instances." *Proceedings from the Second Nordic Conference for English Studies*. Ed. Hakan Ringbom and Matti Rissanen. Helsinki: Abo Akademi, 1984, 389-401 [396-401]. Applies several theories of comedy to twentieth-century drama and finds F's to be the most theoretically promising.

**L808.** Hinz, Evelyn J. "'Tekeli-li': *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* as Satire." *Genre* 3 (Dec. 1970): 379-99. Thinks Poe's story is an excellent example of what F calls the Menippean satire.

**L809.** Holsberry, Carmen W. "Secondary School Literature: A Multifunctional Approach." *Clearing House* 52 (Mar. 1979): 313-17. Says that F's literary theories are an application of Jerome Bruner's notion of the spiral curriculum; and that this application can be used to good advantage in the school curriculum because it provides a contextual rather, than a simply chronological, foundation for literary study.

**L810.** Jensen, Jørgen I. "Cultural Theology: Northrop Frye between Totality and Decentralisation." Trans. Arnt Lykke Jakobsen. *A Literary Miscellany Presented to Eric Jacobsen*. Ed. Graham D. Caie and Holger Nørgaard. Univ. of Copenhagen: Publications of the Department of English, vol. 16, 1988. 406-18. Examines the connections in F's theology of culture between a series of dialectical oppositions that produce "a reconstruction of anthropology in theological form." The oppositions are resolved by metaphors of integration, resulting in a visionary theology that "comes close to being what, in the early Church, Clement of Alexandria called true gnosticism in contrast to the heretical variety."

**L811.** Johnsen, William A. "Myth, Ritual, and Literature after Girard." *Literary Theory's Future(s)*. Ed. Joseph Natoli. Urbana: U Illinois P, 1989. 116-48 [127-31]. On the relationship of myth and ritual in F's work and the way in which desire, in his view, is mediated by displacement.

**L812.** Kaul, A. N. *The Action of English Comedy*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1970. 18-23. Quarrels with F's theory of New Comedy: "the interests of this comedy are not nearly as psychological and social as he suggests"; and argues that F's notion of the creation of a new society at the end of New Comedy will not stand up under scrutiny.

**L813.** Kennedy, Richard S. "Thomas Wolfe's Fiction: The Question of Genre." *Thomas Wolfe and the Glass of Time*. Ed. Paschal Reeves. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1971. Urges that F's critical terminology be applied to lyric works of fiction in order to better describe their genre.

**L814.** Kermode, Frank. "Northrop Frye and the Bible." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 105-120. Same as L757.

**L815.** Kerr, Elizabeth M. "As I Lay Dying as an Ironic Quest." *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 3 (1962): 5-19. Sees Faulkner's novel as consistently embodying ironic parallels to F's conception of romance.

**L816.** Knight, Alan R. "The Dilemma of the Public Critic; or, Does George Bowering have *A Way with Words*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 9, no. 1 (1984): 5-19. Uses F's account of the public critic in the *Anatomy* as a background against which to examine the criticism of Bowering.

**L817.** Kroetsch, Robert. "Learning the Hero from Northrop Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 299-311. Same as L728.

**L818.** Lobb, Edward. "The Subversion of Drama in Huxley's Brave New World." *International Fiction Review* 11 (Summer 1984): 94-101. Employs F's outline of the four generic plots or mythoi to illustrate how Huxley's treatment of the theme of freedom depends on a parody of literary forms.

**L819.** Lombardo, Agostino. "Northrop Frye e *The Tempest*." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 195-204. On F's approach to *The Tempest*. Comments on his insights into the power of the play and his emphasis on its metatheatrical character.

**L820.** Lougy, Robert E. "Swinburne's Poetry and Twentieth-Century Criticism." *Dalhousie Review* 48 (Autumn 1968): 358-65. F's critical method, along with Harold Bloom's, has made possible a more sympathetic appreciation of Swinburne's imagery and dramatic power.

**L821.** Macpherson, Jay. "Educated Doodle: Some Notes on *One-Man Masque*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 24-25 (Win.-Spr. 1982-83): 65-99. Illustrates how James Reaney's *One-Man Masque* imaginatively exploits F's "two grammars of poetic myth," *Anatomy of Criticism* and *Fearful Symmetry*.

**L822.** Madson, Arthur L. "Melville's Comic Progression." *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 1 (1964): 69-79. Maintains that F's definition of comedy as the record of the hero's incorporation into society and F's division of comedy into six phases provide insights into Melville's novels.

**L823.** Mariani, Giorgio. "Northrop Frye and the Politics of the Bible." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 135-43. Argues that F's potentially radical reading of the Bible is finally not open-ended enough. It remains at the level of the "individual concerns of the transcendental subject" and so turns away from "the preoccupations of cultural, historical man in search of a human community."

**L824.** Marroni, Francesco. "Frye, Shakespeare e 'la parola magica'." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 205-16. On F's approach to the structure of Shakespearean comedy.

**L825.** Mason, Rachel. "An Exercise in Artistic Understanding." *Studies in Art Education* 3, no. 2 (1982): 27-35. Adopts the approach of Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and Ricoeur's interpretation theory to the problem of understanding the religious paintings of Norman Adams. Mason's article is a long abstract of her doctoral dissertation (see N47).

**L826.** Mellard, James M. "*The Sound and the Fury*: Quentin Compson and Faulkner's 'Tragedy of Passion'." *Studies in the Novel* 2 (1970): 61-75. Argues that Quentin Compson meets the requirements of F's "tragedy of passion" archetype as described in *Fools of Time*.

**L827.** Meo, Baldo. "Un 'modello' per il Novecento: L'archetipo in Jung, Kerényi, e Frye." *Il piccolo Hans* 65 (Spring 1990): 190-219.

**L828.** \_\_\_\_\_. "La fortuna di Frye in Italia." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 369-80. On the reasons for the delay among Italian readers in recognizing F's contributions to literary study.

**L829.** Micarelli, Maria. "La visione sociale di Northrop Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 341-47. On the myths of freedom and concern in F's social vision.

**L830.** Munk, Linda. "Understanding Understatement: Biblical Typology and 'The Displaced Person.'" *Journal of Literature & Theology* 2 (Sept. 1988): 237-53. Using F's ideas on typology developed in *The Great Code*, argues that "the typological method of Biblical exegesis is the implicit structural principle of Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person'."



**L831.** Murphy, John. "Narrative and Social Action: The Making of a President 1960." Paper presented at the 1989 annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, 18-21 Nov. 32 pp. Argues that the narrative structure of Theodore White's book, *The Making of a President*, derives its power from the form described by F as a quest story in the high mimetic mode.

**L832.** Pagetti, Carlo. "Frye cittadino di utopia." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 235-44. Notes that F's main contribution to the study of utopia and science fiction is his awareness that the ludic and visionary dimensions of romance are central to an understanding of the connection between the myths of the past and today's apocalyptic vision.

**L833.** Penn, W. S. "The Tale as Genre in Short Fiction." *Southern Humanities Review* 15 (Summer 1981): 231-41. Draws upon F's theories of modes and genres to develop a description of the form of the short story.

**L834.** Perosa, Sergio. "Incontri con Frye." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 39-46. An account of Perosa's three encounters with Frye: at Princeton (while Perosa was a student), in Toronto, and in Italy.

**L835.** Pietropaolo, Domenico. "Frye, Vico, and the Grounding of Literature and Criticism." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 87-101. Points to the similarities between Vico and Frye on the importance of poetic thinking for the *humanitas* of civilization; and to the differences between them on the nature of myth: for F, myth is important for the light it sheds on the phenomenological status of the literary work; for Vico myth is important for its civilizing influence.

**L836.** Rewa, Michael. "Biography as an Imitative Art." *English Symposium Papers* 1 (1970): 3-28. Notes that F's categories of the central characters in fiction are helpful in adducing parallel embodiments in the history of biography.

**L837.** Ricciardi, Caterina. "Frye, l'America e le finzioni supreme." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 245-80. On the importance of American literary myths in F's encyclopedic anatomy.

**L838.** Rizzardi, Alfredo. "Northrop Frye e la poesia canadese." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 321-30. On F's role in helping to form the collective consciousness of a whole generation of Canadian writers.

**L839.** Rowe, George E., Jr. *Thomas Middleton and the New Comedy Tradition*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1979. 2-4. Beginning with F's definition of New Comedy—"an accurate and illuminating summary of the kinds of activities we are likely to encounter in plays of this type"—examines the ways Middleton's plays both follow and depart from the structure of New Comedy.

**L840.** Russo, Paola. "The Word as Event." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 159-66. For annotation, see L676.

**L841.** Schafer, Roy. "Language, Narrative, and Psychoanalysis: An Interview with Roy Schafer." *Criticism and Lacan: Essays and Dialogue on Language, Structure, and the Unconscious*. Ed. Patrick Colm Hogan

and Lalita Pandit. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1990. 123-44 [136-37]. In response to questions by Patrick Colm Hogan on Schafer's use of F's *mythoi*: "For myself I found them applicable in that they pulled a lot of things together that were closer to experience than the very formal categories of metapsychology, and they corresponded to my experience as a therapist. I thought it would be worth trying to develop it at length." Schafer is referring to the project he developed in *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*. See L459.

**L842.** Straube, Arvid. "The Bible in Unitarian Universalist Theology." *Unitarian Universalist Christian* 44, no. 1 (1989): 22-29. Argues that F's view of the phases of revelation, as presented in *The Great Code*, offers a legitimate schema for interpreting the Bible.

**L843.** Thomson, George H. "*The Lord of the Rings*: The Novel as Traditional Romance." *Contemporary Literature* 8 (Winter 1967): 43-59. See the trilogy as structured on the six phases of romance as defined by F.

**L844.** Valente, Francesca. "Northrop Frye the Teacher: Education and Literary Criticism." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 349-55. On F's view of the social function of the humanities and the other liberal arts.

**L845.** Wilson, Raymond. "*Slake's Limbo*: A Myth-Critical Approach." *Children's Literature in Education* 18 (Winter 1987): 219-26. Argues that Felice Holman's *Slake's Limbo* can be better understood and enjoyed if seen in the light of F's phases of romance.

## M. Reviews

### M10. *THE GREAT CODE*

**M10.160** Erb, Peter C. *Conrad Grebel Review* 1 (Winter 1983): 57-61. Largely a summary of F's central arguments. "It is for [F's] power of suggestion, . . . for the rhetorical (persuasive) power of his style to inspire insights on the part of his readers that this book and his others are recommended," though F's Hegelian conclusion "depends too heavily on his ability to convince with the stylistically polished authoritative statement."

**M10.161** de Hart, Steven. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Fall 1986): 147-9. Largely a summary of F's approach. "For those who persevere [with the book], there is a great body of insight that reconfirms the central importance that the Bible holds for our cultural world."

### M23. *ON EDUCATION*

**M23.4** Layman, Eric. *Cross-Canada Writers' Magazine* 11, No. 3 (1989): 25-6.

**M23.5** Dagg, Anne Innis. *Atlantis* 14 (Spring 1989): 94-5. Attacks the sexist bias in the language and content of F's essays.

**M23.6.** Walker, Craig Stewart. "Visions of Coherence: Northrop Frye Reviewed." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 25 (Summer 1990): 170-77 [171-72].

**M25.** *MITO METAFORA SIMBOLO*

**M25.1** Guardiani, Francesco. *Quaderni d'italianistica* 11 (Spring 1990): 168–9.

**M26.** *WORDS WITH POWER*

**M26.1** Anon. *The Griffin* 40 (Nov. 1990): 3–4. “A work of tremendous range and vigor . . . [and] an important elaboration of and summing up of Frye’s literary and critical theories.”

**M26.2** Anon. *Kirkus Reviews* 58 (15 September 1990): 1298. Brief notice.

**M26.3** Garebian, Keith. “Frye’s ‘Sequel’ Supplies Abundant Insight and Wit.” *Quill & Quire* 56 (Sept. 1990): 60. F “never obscures what he dissects, and never obscures what he clothes with his colourful wit. . . . Perhaps because he appears to have the whole of Western literature at his fingertips, he avoids finely detailed textual analysis in favor of broad, interlocking patterns of imagery and structure. While sometimes thin in exploration, his allusive text is invigoratingly abundant in insight, harmony, and wit. Although his tone and style are best appreciated by a widely read clerisy, his prose, glistening with epigrammatic genius, will give pleasure to all.”

**M26.4** Keith, W. J. “The Bible of the Imagination.” *Globe and Mail* 1 December 1990. Notes that F’s approach is that of a secular literary critic; that whereas *The Great Code* moved inward toward the imaginative unity of the Bible, this book moves outward to the influence of the Bible on Western secular literature. Says that *Words with Power* “is a wide-ranging, elegantly written book that will inevitably provoke both admiration and controversy. . . . Frye’s supreme achievement is that he shows, in terms not confined to the theological, how myth and the imagination can be redeemed.”

**M26.5** Knowles, Richard Paul. “The Canons of the Authentic.” *Books in Canada* 19 (Nov. 1990): 15–17. Sees the book, which “could have been written by no one else,” as “monumental, articulate, and provocative,” but finds that F’s “monologic” drive for unity and coherence slights the disruptive, open, and irregular forms in the Bible. Thinks also that F too readily dismisses other forms of criticism.

**M26.6** Marchand, Philip. “Vintage Frye.” *Toronto Star* 25 Nov. 1990: G12. Worries about F’s claim that the questions of history and fact are not important in the study of the Bible. “The argument, pursued with Frye’s customary erudition and brilliance. . . , is a very serious one but it will not be convincing to those who believe that reality is even richer than the human imagination.”

**M26.7** McGinn-Moorer, Sheila. *Booklist* 15 October 1990. Brief notice.

**M26.8** Stuttafrod, Genevieve. *Publishers Weekly* 5 October 1990. Brief notice.

**N. Dissertations**

**N47.** Mason, Rachel. *Interpretation and Artistic Understanding*. Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1980. Adopts the approach of Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* and Ricoeur’s interpretation theory to the problem of understanding the religious paintings of Norman Adams.

## O. Bibliographies

**O10.** Gebbia, Alessandro, and Baldo Meo. "Bibliografia di Northrop Frye, con una appendice delle traduzioni e dei contributi critici italiani." In *Ritratto di Northrop Frye* (K13), pp. 381-410. A selected bibliography of F's writings, the translations of his works into Italian, and the Italian criticism of his work.

## P. Miscellaneous

**P228.** Clark, Chris. "Book Release This Week." *Guelph Tribune* 11 November. 1989. News story about the publication of John Ayre's *Northrop Frye: A Biography*.

**P229.** Fulford, Robert. "Newsletter for a Man of Letters." *Globe and Mail* 14 June 1990: A18. Reports on the intent and scope of the *Northrop Frye Newsletter*—"a little publication put out by a gentleman in Salem, Va." Notes that the newsletter is "cosy but also authoritative, funny but also scholarly, an unlikely blend of gossip and high seriousness; in all, an odd but appropriate tribute to one of the great cultural figures of the century." So there. The first four issues of the Newsletter get noticed appreciatively in an omnibus review by Craig Stewart Walker, "Visions of Coherence: Northrop Frye Reviewed." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'Études canadiennes* 25 (Summer 1990): 175.

**P230** [Johnson, Phil]. "The Authorized Version—Northrop Frye." *Pietisten* 5 (Summer 1990): 15–16. Ruminations on *The Great Code* and its sequel.

**P231.** Passell, Peter. "Adam Smith, Meet Northrop Frye." *New York Times* 10 October 1990: D2. About Donald McCloskey's *If You're So Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertise*, which "is surely the first [book] by economist to marshal the ideas of Harold Bloom, Daniel Defoe, Euripides, Northrop Frye . . . Wallace Stevens and Virginia Woolf," among others.

**P232.** Walker, Craig Stewart. See P229.

**P233.** Woodcock, George. *Beyond the Blue Mountains*. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1987, 71. In connection with a visit Frye made to the University of British Columbia, comments on Frye's not responding "with delight" at the natural scenery in the area. "I had a clue to what disturbed me in Frye's criticism; he created a huge critical schema because he wanted literature to appear as a construct apart from the nature he feared."

### Hamilton's *Northrop Frye*: A Review by Thomas Willard

When I last heard from Bert Hamilton, in December 1987, he wrote that he was sorry he could not attend the MLA programs on Northrop Frye at 75 and the *Anatomy of Criticism* at 30, and that he hoped the programs augured well for his book-length manuscript on Frye. I was surprised to hear about this manuscript, because I had corresponded with him, in his capacity as General Editor of *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (1989), and knew that it had cost him a great deal of effort. Although I knew that he had

developed certain of Frye's suggestions in *The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene"* and had written a well-received essay on "Northrop Frye: The Visionary Critic" (1979), the English profession is such now that the "Renaissance specialist" is not an oxymoron but a fact of life. He therefore seemed like an unlikely author for the longest study of Frye. But because I had studied Renaissance literature under Frye, I was eager to see the book and learn Hamilton's purpose.

Hamilton leaves the reader in no doubt. By the end of the first paragraph, he has established that Frye's work constitutes, for him, a defense of literature and literary study; and by the end of the preface, he has plainly suggested that he is writing a defense of Frye's theory in order to defend literary praxis as he knows it against the onslaught of post-structuralism. As befits an archetypal critic like Hamilton, the terms are almost apocalyptic. According to Hamilton, Frye's defense of literature culminates a series of defenses running from Sidney's through Shelley's, and his vision of literary study is the final development of Humanism or, to continue the apocalyptic terminology, its fulfillment. The fulfillment occurred in the 1950s, when Frye was writing the *Anatomy of Criticism* and, incidentally, when Hamilton was setting up shop as a teacher and critic.

In the preface, Hamilton describes his own literary training between the points of mighty opposites: Frye and A.S.P. Woodhouse at Toronto and F. R. Leavis and E.M.W. Tillyard at Cambridge. From Woodhouse and Tillyard he learned the ideals of a literary history based in ideas about nature, grace, and man's place in the cosmos. From Frye and Leavis he learned the social function of literature and criticism in the life of one's own time. Woodhouse and Tillyard had more in common than Frye and Leavis—Frye rejected value judgments, while Leavis reveled in them, and some of the most blistering judgments about Frye have been made by Leavisites like Martin Green, who shunned him as a modern day Faust in *Children of Light* and *Sons of the Morning*. Nevertheless, Hamilton found common concerns at the time, and repeatedly returns to Leavis for the "immediate context" of arguments in the *Anatomy*. Fortunately, Hamilton has developed the tolerance of his Canadian teachers. It may not be too much to say that his ability as a student to reconcile the very different approaches of Frye and Woodhouse was due in some measure to their collegial respect for each other. Woodhouse discouraged Fryedolatry and wanted no clones. "There is only one Frye," he told students; "we'll have no small Frye." But he recognized Frye's appeal as a teacher and described it in a "vignette" for *PMLA* (1961).

The differences between the literary historians and theorists seemed inevitable. For just as literary works emerge from historical contexts, so they speak to readers differently in different historical periods. Frye helped Hamilton to understand the differences because the first two chapters of the *Anatomy* established a dialectic between historical criticism and ethical criticism, the latter concerned with values as well as the symbols that embody them. This understanding enabled Hamilton to respond to the frequent charges that Frye's criticism is ahistorical and apolitical—"anaesthetic" in Frederick Crews' word. It also enabled him to keep up with the critical debates and to see some hope in the New Historicism. In many ways, this was the enabling recognition behind his book, which combines historical criticism of Frye's *Anatomy* as it was created in the fifties and ethical criticism of Frye's contributions to the ongoing critical debate.

Hamilton sees more importance in the third and fourth essays, where Frye develops his archetypal criticism as an absolutely new form of criticism and takes rhetorical criticism beyond ornament to a concern with poetic thought. He sees a connection between the last two essays, though not so much between the general and specific treatments of literary forms as between the literary form and the whole universe of discourse. Yet his comments on the second pair of essays are less compelling because he is less comfortable with Frye's method; Frye seems to proceed deductively despite his claim to work inductively. However, Hamilton grasps the musical analogy underlying the

Third Essay, noting that Frye's four seasonal myths, each with its six phases, is analogous to the circle of fifths in musicology. He tries to clarify Frye's use of key words like "myth" and "archetype" and, in doing so, reexamines Frye's relations, not only with Aristotle and Plato (who introduced those terms into Western thought) but to Jung as well. He also reexamines what Frye means by "rhetorical criticism," though here he is strangely silent about two of the authors whom Frye names most frequently in the early chapters: I. A. Richards and R. S. Crane. In conversation, Frye has mentioned his review of Crane's Alexander Lectures at Toronto, *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, as the starting point of his thinking about rhetorical criticism.

By emphasizing the historical context of the *Anatomy*, Hamilton gives credence to two myths that Frye has put forward about the book: that it belongs so completely to the fifties as to be unrevisable and that it sets out the principles he has been repeating ever since. That is to say, he points to the synchronic quality of Frye's criticism, as Frye does with Blake's poetry, and deemphasizes the development of Frye's theories. Although he refers extensively to Frye's other works, the references are nearly always for corroboration and only seldom for correction—for example, when he shows Frye revising the treatment of nonfictional prose style in *The Well-Tempered Critic*. Granted that this is a matter of emphasis and that archetypal critics see similarity where post-structuralists see difference: the emphasis on the sameness of Frye's theories, early and late, nevertheless undercuts the assertion that Frye's theories still point the way for criticism. Such emphasis underestimates an important aspect of Frye's theories or any theories: their resilience in response to newer developments in literature and criticism.

It is possible to find familiar themes in Frye's most recent work, but equally possible to overlook significant new variations. Frye has always recognized the reader, for example. In the *Anatomy* he described the reader's grasp of a work in its totality and simultaneity as the anagogic moment toward which criticism moved; indeed, he recognized the reader as the central figure in *Finnegans Wake* a full decade before Stanley Fish wrote about "The Reader in *Paradise Lost*." He relied more than most critics upon his personal insights into literary works. However, he avoided discussions of the epistemology of reading and the varieties of reading experience because they seemed outside the proper scope of criticism, which was to develop a body of fact that helped one to read. From this perspective, *Creation and Recreation* represents a fresh attempt to deal with the business of reading; the first half of *The Great Code*, for which the *Creation* lectures serve as a dress rehearsal, treat language in its linguistic and not just its rhetorical and poetic dimension; and the undergraduate lectures in *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* show a practical interest in the student's mental staging of plays for which there are no parallels in Frye's earlier books on Shakespeare. The later developments do not negate the earlier theory, but do not simply repeat and confirm it; they return with a difference in the development of what Jerome Bruner called the "spiral curriculum." The first chapter of *The Great Code*, with its Viconian history of European writing, might well be compared to the First Essay of the *Anatomy*, with its cyclic history of literature since the Middle Ages. However, a proper account of such developments would require a longer discussion than *The Great Code* or any other "post-*Anatomy*" book receives.

Ironically, Hamilton dismisses Ian Balfour's *Northrop Frye* as being too short to provide ample coverage, noting that only four of its 110 pages are devoted to the *Anatomy*'s Polemical Introduction. Yet only two of Hamilton's pages are devoted to *Fearful Symmetry*; all other references are by way of commentary on specifics in the *Anatomy*, and the rest of "the Frye canon" is treated in the style of the annotated bibliography (189-93). Ironically too, Hamilton makes light of the book that comes closest to his own sustained commentary on the theory in the *Anatomy*, Robert D. Denham's *Northrop Frye and Critical Method*. He recycles Frye's joke about the ingenious people who send him mandalas, but Hamilton himself offers geometric images for each of Frye's four essays and concludes his treatment

of the *Anatomy*, many pages later, by saying: "Through his conceptual use of such diagrams, his poetics constitutes an encyclopedic diagram."

Like many of Frye's books, Hamilton's *Anatomy* is an outgrowth of his teaching. Toward the end of his preface, he thanks the undergraduates who asked him to explain two sententiæ of Frye's and who taught him, in the process of explaining, that Frye's entire vision of literature can be compressed into a sentence, much as the Bible can be discovered in one verse if the verse is creatively explicated. Hamilton thinks of this explanation as "anatomy" (xxii), and although he proceeds to a more New Critical dissection than Frye has ever performed, the closest resemblance is probably to *Fearful Symmetry*, where Frye devotes most of his effort to "recreating" his author's thoughts in his own words and with his own examples, as he points out in the preface to the Beacon Press reprint of 1962.

We may well ask whether Hamilton has produced an "anatomy" as Frye defines it: "A form of prose fiction . . . characterized by a great variety of subject-matter and a strong interest in ideas" (365). Here we return to the question of whether Frye has produced an "anatomy" either. We now know that Frye did not make up his own title—he preferred *Structural Poetics*—but chose it from a list of possibilities drawn up by an editor at Princeton University Press. (The list is printed on p. 253 of John Ayre's *Northrop Frye: A Biography*.) Frye's book has the quality of prose fiction in the ironic mode in that it does aspire to artistry in design and utterance, which is itself ironic in a work of criticism. Hamilton has a much more scholarly aim, and seems horrified at the possibility of a "fictional and nonfictional" criticism such as David Cook attempts in *Northrop Frye: A Vision of the New World* (230 n. 1).

To be sure, the structuring of this book is an act of wit. The six chapters correspond to Frye's four essays plus the Polemical Introduction and Tentative Conclusion. (The chief difference in form lies in the 55 pages of notes, compared with Frye's eight pages in the *Anatomy*; many of Hamilton's notes are thoughtful paragraphs, thoroughly annotated with the precision one would expect from the editor of a major research tool in Renaissance literature.) Moreover, the first and final chapters provide "four polemical suggestions," leading up to the *Anatomy* and following up on it—a notable instance of the number magic of "Forming Fours" that Frye mentioned in his review essay on Jung (reprinted in *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature*.) In many ways, the first and final chapters are the most interesting. The first retraces the development of English studies in order to show how Frye emerged from a long tradition, though curiously it emphasizes the developments at Cambridge, where Hamilton studied, rather than at Oxford, where Frye studied, and is silent about the somewhat different developments at Toronto. The last points the directions that Frye has taken in becoming, not just a literary critic, but a cultural critic in the manner of Matthew Arnold, interested in education and the arts, nationally and internationally, for what they can provide to humanity in our time.

Hamilton has good points to make, in conclusion, about Frye's critical method. He finds it contestatory rather than harmonizing, *pace* Frye's own remarks about ecumenical needs, more rhetorical than scientific in establishing a turf for criticism, more metaphorical than metonymic (he does not use the last word) in conveying insights into the "order of words" within literature; he finds the style "gnomic" and the bent "intensely religious," even "prophetic." Many of his comments here are close to the criticism that younger theorists have been leveling at Frye for the past two decades; and although Hamilton thinks Frye is the major theorist of our century, and resists Frank Kermode's contention that Frye is easier to reject than to accept *tout court*, this book offers little to counter Kermode's remark to Imre Salusinsky that "Frye's apogee was in the early 1960s." The title is witty, but it would have been more honest to call this book *Northrop Frye: An Anatomy of His Anatomy of Criticism*.

Hamilton mentions Frye's new book, *Words with Power*, which he read in manuscript; and since neither he nor Frye quotes the verse being alluded to in the title, it may be worthwhile to note the

irony. The line occurs at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, just after he has been baptized, has returned to Nazareth, and has been forced to conclude that "no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24 AV). When he goes on to Capernun, we are told that the people respond more favorably: "they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power," and later, when he cast out demons, "they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, 'What word is this?'" (4:32, 4:36). We are later told that his teachings concern the kingdom of God (4:43), and because this subject so often drives Jesus to parable, we may be able to understand their astonishment if we consider a remark in Frye's new book: "we tend to think of Jesus as primarily a teacher of doctrine who, as recorded in the synoptic Gospels, used parables as illustrations and examples. It would be at least as true . . . to say that the parables *are* the teachings, and the doctrinal material is concerned with their applications" (87). The irony in Frye's latest title is that Frye too has astonished people because his words too are full of power. Hamilton's fine book grew out of a realization very close to this, as he expounded Frye's aphorisms for his undergraduates. He has followed out the "doctrines" of the *Anatomy* more thoroughly than any other critic to date and without losing sight of the insights behind them or of the possibility that, even in the most schematic of teachers, "the parables are the teachings."

### A True Story by Warren Stevenson

Warren Stevenson of the Department of English, University of British Columbia, reports that "A True Story" is, in fact, a true story, the augury in the poem having been witnessed also by his colleague, Peter Taylor. It occurred some eight or nine years ago when Frye gave the Sedgewick Lecture at UBC.

#### *A True Story*

A group of us are gathered  
one deathless spring day  
in a glass-walled penthouse  
to hear the famous critic  
chat about his theory.  
(That evening he is to give  
a formal lecture.)

He begins talking—  
witty, incisive  
more succinct than usual.  
After ten minutes or so  
He stops abruptly,  
And we begin asking questions.

Suddenly someone  
looks out the window:  
A flock of crows  
Is attacking an eagle!



## Frye and the Comix: Part II

In Vol. I, No. 2 of the *Newsletter* we reproduced a bit of dialogue from the Marvel Comics *New Defender* series in which Hank McCoy, A.K.A. The Beast, engages “Professor Frye” in a bit of chatter about the visionary epic form and the apocalyptic imagination. One of Imre Salusinszky’s students at the University of Newcastle (New South Wales) has noted that Frye also makes an appearance in still another episode of the *New Defenders*, “Hearts and Minds” (No. 137, November 1984: 17). Here, one of the gallant defenders, Iceman (A.K.A. Bobby), asks the inimitable McCoy, “Hank, what was that gibberish you said to the Wizard back there?” Whereupon, McCoy replies: “The Wizard’s a *Gnostic*, Bobby—I recognized his spiel from a book *Professor Frye loaned me—seemed to have hit him where he lived!*”\* [The asterisk refers the reader to *The Gnostic Religion* by Hans Jonas, Beacon Press, 1963.

The author of these two episodes of *The New Defenders* is Peter B. Gillis. The first episode occasioned this letter to Marvel Comics from Linda Koenig of Garwood, NJ:

Dear Peter,

Peter, Peter, burning bright  
In the Bullpen late at night  
Introduces Northrop Frye  
Into Defenders’ historye!

Seriously. . . you delighted the heart of an eternal English major and an incorrigible Blake freak.

To which the editors replied: “It’s nice to know that [Peter’s] little tribute to one of the great critical minds of the 20th century didn’t go unnoticed. It has made his day. We always knew Marvel had the most erudite readership around, and this proves it. And just wait till the Beast meets Susan Sontag.”

### The Mondello Prize

During September 1990, Northrop Frye travelled to Mondello, Italy (near Palermo), where he was awarded the Premio Mondello, one of the most prestigious Italian literary prizes. The ceremony consisted on two major events, the citation, held at the University of Palermo, and the presentation, which took place in Mondello before a large audience, which included the mayor of Palermo, regional authorities, the rector of the University of Palermo, and the representative of the Canadian Embassy in Rome. The ceremony was broadcast live on RAI, the Italian national television network.

Following this occasion, Frye traveled to Zagreb, Yugoslavia, where he received an honorary degree from the University of Zagreb, one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe. Frye was not only the first Canadian to receive an honorary doctorate from a Yugoslav University but also the first to be so honored by the University of Zagreb after democracy had replaced forty years of Communism. While in Zagreb, Frye visited with number of important members of the Union of Croatian Writers, including Ranko Marinkovic, Milivoj Slavicek, and Marijan Tadijanovic. At this reception, Frye answered questions about his own work, Canada, and Canadian literature, and he was

given the occasion to discover that his criticism had been used by Yugoslav and Croatian faculty members in both their scholarship and their teaching.

During his stay in Zagreb, Frye gave a one hour interview for Croatian National TV, portions of which were shown on the same evening as part of the national news. The entire interview was broadcast two days later in a special program called Panorama. The Croatian National Radio recorded a discussion between Frye and two prominent members of the Department of English at the University of Zagreb, Professors Ivo Vidan and Janja Ciglar-Zanic, as well as Giga Garcan, the translator of *Anatomy of Criticism* into Croatian. This discussion was broadcast in November in Zagreb, and later in other cities in Yugoslavia. Croatian National Television also made a documentary film, *Northrop Frye in Zagreb*.

Frye also traveled to Ljubljana, where he lectured at the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Letters and where he was interviewed for the Slovenian National Television and Radio. [*My thanks to Branko Gorjup, who accompanied Frye to Italy and Yugoslavia, for providing the information in this report. —Ed.*]

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*Edited by Robert D. Denham*

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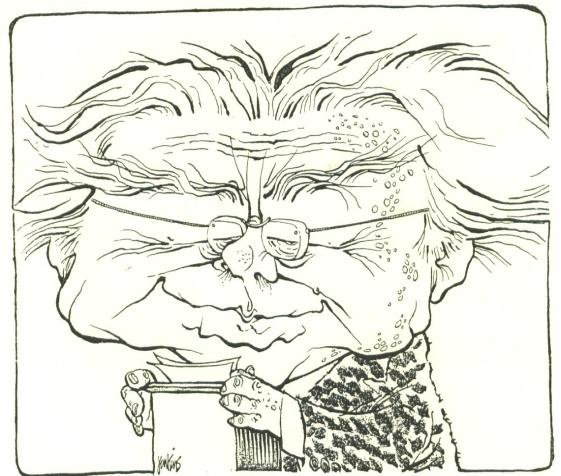
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