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# Northrop Frye Newsletter

Volume 4, Number 1

Winter 1991-92

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## Vic Report: Special Issue

The Spring 1991 issue of *Vic Report*, the alumni magazine of Victoria College, is a special number commemorating Frye. It includes the remarks made by the following people at the University of Toronto Memorial Service for Frye, held at the university's Convocation Hall on January 19, 1991: John Hoffman (Principal, Emmanuel College), Robert Prichard (President, University of Toronto), The Honourable Bob Rae (Premier of Ontario), The Honourable Pauline McGibbon (former Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario and Frye's classmate), Margaret Atwood (one of Frye's students in the class of 1961), Joan Foley (Provost of the University of Toronto), Ward McBurney (a former Frye student and a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University), Ann Saddlemeyer (Master of Massey College), Claude Bissell (former President of the University of Toronto), Edward Chamberlin (Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto), Albert C. Hamilton (Professor of English, Queen's University), Alvin Lee (former President of McMaster University), Eva Kushner (President of Victoria University), Pierre Juneau (former chair of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, on which Frye served from 1968-77), Alexandra Johnston (Principal of Victoria College), and Howard Pentland (Secretary of Theological Education, United Church of Canada). These tributes also appear in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61 (Fall 1991): 1-17.

The special issue of *Vic Report* includes as well "A Biographical Sketch" of Frye by Jane Widdicombe, Eleanor Cook's "Northrop Frye as Colleague," Don Harron's "A Memory of Frye," and Richard Outram's poem, "In Memory of Northrop Frye." Copies of this special issue, illustrated with

nineteen photographs and drawings, are available at \$5.00 each. Make checks payable to Victoria University, and send check, name, and address to the Alumni Office, 150 Charles Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1K9. Proceeds will go to The Northrop Frye Centre.

### Frye and Contemporary Literary Theory

At its 23rd annual meeting, the Canadian Comparative Literature Association and the Canadian University Teachers of English sponsored a joint session on "Northrop Frye and Contemporary Literary Theory." The meeting took place at the Learned Societies Conference at Queen's University. The session was chaired by Peter Nesselroth of the University of Toronto. Those in attendance heard the following papers: Alvin Lee (McMaster Univ.) on "Northrop Frye: Identity not Negation"; Jonathan Hart (Univ. of Alberta) on "Northrop Frye: His Place in Current Literary Theory"; Joseph Adamson (McMaster Univ.) on "Northrop Frye: The Semiotic Implications of His Work"; Eleanor Cook (Univ. of Toronto) on "Anatomies and Confessions"; and A. C. Hamilton (Queen's Univ.) on "Northrop Frye in Relation to Contemporary Cultural Criticism." Ian Balfour of York University served as a respondent to the papers.

### Frye Papers

The Victoria University Library has received a grant of \$48,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to prepare a *Guide to the Papers of Northrop Frye*. News about the guide will appear in a later issue of the *Newsletter*.

### "The Legacy of Northrop Frye"

The conference on "The Legacy of Northrop Frye," noted in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, will take place at the University of Toronto, October 29-31, 1992. The organizing committee, chaired by Alvin Lee, has invited a number of speakers to present papers on Frye's legacy as it relates to four areas: Northrop Frye on Culture, Religion, and Society; Northrop Frye and the Development of Canadian Culture; Northrop Frye and Imaginative Literature; and Northrop Frye's *Theoria* of Language and Literature.

As we go to press, those who have accepted the invitation to speak include A.C. Hamilton, Helen Vendler, Thomas Willard, Johan Aitken, Margaret Burgess, Jan Ulrik Dyrkjoeb, Craig Walker, Deanne Bogdan, Michael Dolzani, Imre Salusinszky, Linda Hutcheon, James Reaney, Clara Thomas, Madalene Redekop, David Staines, Sandra Djwa, Claude Bissell, Marianne Müller, Shunichi Takayanagi, Francesca Valente, Alfredo Lombardo, Pierre Boitani, Alvin Lee, Peter Kulpa, Patricia Parker, Ian Sloan, Mary Nyquist, Gerald Bentley, Jr., Angela Esterhammer, Michael Fischer, Monika Lee, Ted Chamberlin, W. Krysinski, Jennifer Levine, Linda Munk, Angus Fletcher, Ian Balfour, Eleanor Cook, Nella Cotrupi, Jonathan Hart, Eva Kushner, Paul Ricoeur, Mario Valdes, Hayden White, Joseph Adamson, Jan Gorak, Peter Nesselroth, Paul Zumthor, and Robert Denham.

Look for the full program in the summer issue of the *Newsletter*. Those interested in attending the conference should write to The Northrop Frye Centre, 73 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7.

## Outram's "In Memory of Northrop Frye"

Readers who would like a copy of Richard Outram's "In Memory of Northrop Frye," which appeared in the last edition of the *Newsletter*, can request one by writing the Editor, *Frye Newsletter*, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24153. The poem, printed by Laserjet on an 8 x 10-inch sheet of Mohawk Superfine Text, was issued in an edition of 100 numbered copies. About 30 copies remain.

## Northrop Frye Festival

The Northrop Frye Festival 1991 was held in Moncton, New Brunswick, November 12-16. As part of the festival, John Ayre presented the Pascal Poirier Lecture on "Northrop Frye and Canadian Culture" at the Université de Moncton on November 14, and on the following day Ayre, along with Margaret Avison and James Reaney, discussed Frye's impact on Canadian writing. Other festival events included the dedication of the Northrop Frye Room at the Moncton Public Library; a display of Frye memorabilia at the Wesley Memorial Church; a dramatic reading by Tony Staples and Maureen O'Reilly of "The Wit and Wisdom of Northrop Frye," coauthored by Douglas Mantz and David Britton; and a special bicycle reenactment of Northrop Frye's fabled rides to Magnetic Hill ("led by the Tantramar Wheelers, complete with Police Escort and parade favourites"). The Festival Committee was chaired by Douglas Mantz of Atlantic Baptist College, home of the "world's first official Northrop Frye Society for University Students." According to the program for the event, special Northrop Frye souvenirs, including lapel pins and sweatshirts featuring Anthony Jenkins' *Globe and Mail* caricature of Frye, were available throughout the week.

## "The Critic and the Writer" by Northrop Frye

"The Critic and the Writer" has been transcribed from a talk Frye gave at the Meeting of the Learned Societies at McGill University in May 1972 and broadcast on CBC's *Ideas* as part of "The Writer in Canada" series. It has not been previously published.

Some time ago when I was in Oxford, I thought that a place as old as that ought to have some particular kind of *genius loci*, that there should be something more or less in the key of Oxford which would indicate the quality of work that had been produced there. I soon realized that Oxford people are extremely proud of their record of eccentric bachelors, and when one examines the great imaginative productions of Oxford, such works as the *Anatomy of Melancholy* and *Alice in Wonderland*, one sees exactly a kind of hyperlogical fantasy which teeters on the brink of normal mental processes. That, of course, throws a flood of light on a number of other Oxford geniuses, such as Pater and Hopkins. And when I read in Newman's *Apologia* that so-and-so taught him the doctrine of the apostolic succession in the course of a walk around the Christ Church meadows, I mean no disrespect to the doctrine of apostolic succession when I say that this seems to be in exactly the key of slightly nutty fantasy which has been the characteristic of Oxford from time immemorial, and which was still going on when I was there as a student in the kind of work associated with C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Tolkien.

So I naturally raised with myself the question of whether there was a similar *genius loci* in the place where I had grown up. When I came to Victoria College I had three people for teachers, and what I would call to your attention is the utter impossibility of finding three teachers of such characteristics in any other community than that of a Canadian university. There was, in the first place, Pelham Edgar, who at first glance was everything that was upper middle-class and Anglophile and vertical mosaic. Only when one got to know him better did one realize that he had got his impressive Christian name from the constituency that had elected his father to Parliament, that he didn't go to England until he was nearly 40, and that he had done a quite conventional PhD at Johns Hopkins, on the imagery of Shelley, of the type that would now be done by a computer. Now with this oddly Canadian melange, it's not surprising that his main interests were, first of all, Henry James, with his treatment of the Atlantic Ocean schizophrenia, and, secondly, contemporary Canadian literature. He had begun as a colleague of Stephen Leacock, he brought Pratt to Victoria, and he founded societies devoted to the supporting of authors.

Then there was Ned Pratt, who had come to Victoria as a church student headed for the ministry, which again exhibits that curious Canadian affinity between the ministry and an interest in literature. At the same time, Pratt absorbed the contemporary outlook of his generation in Canada that made theology a kind of benevolent commentary on Darwin's *Origin of Species*. And his interest in the sciences sent him for a time into a brief and ill-advised career in psychology, or at least into what the University of Toronto at that time assumed to be psychology.

Thirdly, there was Professor John Robins, who was perhaps the most significantly Canadian of the three. He was of working-class origin. He had left school at the age of 12 to go to work, and it was from there that he began to earn the qualifications for university teaching, getting his PhD at the age of 43. He was interested in the ballad and in folk tales and in popular literature. I learned from him the futility of being a social snob in the study of literature, and something of the relevance of primitive and popular literature to literature as a whole. Perhaps without his influence I would not have hit on, for whatever it's worth, the conception of archetypes in literature, which is really an application to literature in general of the work done by students of folk tales on themes and motifs. I was told in the summer of 1937 that Roy Daniells was leaving for Winnipeg and that the second-year honor course in the sixteenth century, the third-year honor course in Milton and the seventeenth century, and the fourth-year honor course in nineteenth-century thought had to be taught by me in September. So I got married and taught them. The chancellor gently cautioned me against rushing into marriage so early—after all I was only 25—but if I was set on it, the college would raise my salary for the year from \$1200 to \$1500. And after another year at Oxford I came back to Victoria in the September of 1939. The colleague who taught the Restoration and the eighteenth century joined up the first day of the war, so I had that too. The Toronto system was a historical system, but it was a historical system which took account of the history of literature itself. It was not a system which ignored the history of literature for a kind of history outside literature, which was perhaps not history either.

I'll give you an example of what I mean. Many years later I heard a lecture by a very famous authority on Shakespeare which was entitled "William Shakespeare." The subject of the lecture was that it could now be regarded as practically certain that John Shakespeare, the poet's father, was the possessor of an unauthorized dung hill at Stratford from such a date to such a date. Now I will not bore you with the obvious comments that I and my contemporaries made about that lecture, but I have always kept in my mind the danger of a kind of historicism that, so to speak, gets stuck in a dung hill. The history of literature itself—the things that happen, the literary conventions and genres, the development of ideas and images down the centuries, with one poet picking up themes from his predecessors like a torch at a relay race—has always seemed to me one of the liveliest and most intellectually engaging of all disciplines.

The students submitted to my ministrations with great patience. It may have been partly the Scottish streak in the Canadian ancestry that gave them a kind of impersonal respect for education as such. It seems to me that if there is a general social respect for education, any educational system will work. If there is not, no educational system will work. The honor-course system assumed that the student was to be taught English literature. Again, I have always tended to distrust conceptions of teaching which regarded it as a personal encounter between teacher and taught. It seems to me that the authority of the subject being taught is supreme over both teacher and student. In the classroom, as in the church, there is only one real presence, and both the teacher and the students are merely shadows of it. At any rate, as John Stuart Mill said of his education, "Anybody who is not required to do more than he can never does all that he can."

At the same time I was working on a book on the prophecies of William Blake, a subject to which I had been introduced by Pelham Edgar as an undergraduate. At that time the Eliot-Pound-T.E. Hulme machine was going full blast and nobody could have held my full attention, as a subject for research, except a writer who was the exact opposite of everything that T. S. Eliot said that he was. That is, the only person I could work on would have to be a nonconformist in religion, a Romantic in literature, and at least a left-wing liberal in politics. Those were, of course, the kinds of preferences which were inevitable to the kind of WASP upbringing in Canada which I have had. I'm always very proud of the fact that I was brought up as a WASP. It means that I belong to the only group in society that it is entirely safe to ridicule. Most of the critics of Blake up to that point told me that Blake's prophecies were related primarily to a mystical or to an occult tradition. This constituted a difficulty for me, because Blake's poems interested me a great deal and most of the occultism I had read did not interest me at all. But I eventually saw that I would have to follow Blake's own instructions and read him within the tradition of English literature. As Blake is an intensely Biblical and mythological poet, I began to understand through him something of the importance of mythology in the study of literature, and it began to dawn on me that there is in fact a general grammar or language of poetry which all poets without exception have to learn somehow or other. Up to that time I had thought of biblical and classical mythology largely in footnote terms—as ways of explaining allusions. I had not thought of them as structural principles of the subject of literature itself. But I began to understand how little it was true that the poet writes in the way, that according to Swift, the spider spins its web out of her own bowels and in a restricted compass.

I think that the presence of Ned Pratt in the Victoria Department, again, was of considerable influence in making me aware that an extremely distinguished poet could be that and could still be a full-time member of a university teaching staff. There was in him nothing of the Romantic mystique about the creative, that is, the assumption that the creative person is a separate kind of person distinct from other kinds. And so one develops in a department like that the understanding that if a work of scholarship is to outlast the issue of the learned journal in which it appears, it is a profoundly creative enterprise as well, and that the work of any distinguished poet or novelist taken as a whole is, among other things, an impressive critical and scholarly achievement. This is the kind of bind that many people get into, such as the Nobel Prize committee in Sweden, which assumes that the creative people in literature are the people who write poems or stories or plays, although I should think it would be a reasonable assumption that such people as I. A. Richards or Lionel Trilling were as important to literature as Kawabata or Lagerkvist. But, of course, making this assumption ascribes creativity to those genres rather than to the people working in them.

It was, I think, the publication of Art Smith's anthology of Canadian poetry in 1943 that first focused my attention on the extent to which my own environment had conditioned my critical and scholarly attitudes. My review of that book was the first article that I wrote that was of more than the most ephemeral importance, and ever since then I have been very deeply aware of the kind of soil that I am rooted in and of the impossibility of my having developed as I did under any formative

conditions other than those which I encountered in southern Ontario. But I have always resisted moving around too much, because it seems to me that it takes a great deal of time to understand the backgrounds of one's students and the kind of assumptions that are involved in their questions. I do teach a certain amount in the United States, and American students often ask me if I notice any difference in moving from Canada to the United States. They always expect the answer to be no, but in fact the answer is yes. And I explain that students who have been conditioned from infancy to be members of a vast imperial complex are very different in their assumptions from students in a relatively small and observant country which has a much more peripheral role in the history of the twentieth century. That bothers them because they don't think that they've been conditioned. What seems to me to make teaching primarily essential in the critic's role is that it helps to define a writer's audience for him. In the years when I first attended such things as the MLA meetings at Christmas-time the papers were extraordinarily dull (they've improved a little since), but I think I began to understand why they were so dull. The readers of them had assumed that there was a scholarly audience in front of them, and this fact had inhibited and constipated them so much that they could hardly commit themselves to a definite statement at all. I remember having to push somebody onto the platform in a state of nervous funk, and he said, "But they're a scholarly audience." And I said, "There's no such thing as a scholarly audience, and the same rhetorical devices that will work with selling soap on television will work with any group of people anywhere at any time."

It is the experience of teaching which enables one to crystallize the sense of an audience of extremely astute, intelligent, critical people of fundamentally good will who are ready to listen to what one has to say. And it takes a great deal of time and effort, I think, to persuade students to ask the kind of questions which they themselves regard as silly questions, that is, to ask the obvious, open, direct, simple questions, which are so obvious that it compels you to reevaluate your entire approach to the subject in order to answer them.

### The Ideas of Northrop Frye

This is the final of a three-part CBC Radio program, "The Ideas of Northrop Frye," which was written and presented by David Cayley, produced by Sarah Wolch, and broadcast on CBC Radio on 19 February, 26 February, and 5 March 1990. The program is based on Cayley's interviews with Frye, his colleagues, and critics. Thanks again to David Cayley for his kind permission to reproduce the transcript of the program. A complete transcription of the eight hours of conversation between Frye and Cayley, from which the material here is drawn, will be published by General Publishing Company in 1992.

**NF** I think my religious background really did shape almost everything; it gave me the mythological framework that I was brought up inside of. As I know from experience, once you're inside a mythological framework, you can't break out of it. You can alter or adapt it to yourself, but it's always there.

**Lister Sinclair** Northrop Frye was raised in a devout Methodist family and ordained as a United Church minister in 1936. His career has taken him into the secular fields of literary theory and university teaching, but his work has always remained centered in a spiritual vision whose ultimate source is the Christian Bible.

**NF** The Bible is, to me, the body of words through which I can see the world as a cosmos, as an order, and where I can see human nature as something redeemable, something with a right to survive. I think if I didn't read the Bible and were confronted with all these dire prophecies about the possibility of the human race disappearing from the planet, I would be inclined to say, well, the sooner the better.

**Lister Sinclair** Tonight, in the last program of our intellectual biography of Northrop Frye, we'll explore Frye's religious vision. We'll look at the connection between this vision and Frye's preoccupation with language.

**NF** A lot of people, some very unlikely people, say that they feel that it's language that uses man rather than man who uses language, and I have a great deal of attraction for that view. It's partly because central to my whole thinking is, "In the beginning is the Word."

**Lister Sinclair** We'll also share in Frye's imaginative reading of the Bible, a reading which recognizes that the Bible, like any literary work, is addressed to the imagination.

**DC** In the early 1980s, Northrop Frye published a book on the Bible and literature called *The Great Code*. The title came from the English poet and painter, William Blake. "The Old and New Testaments," Blake said, "are *The Great Code of Art*." Frye read Blake as a student in the early 1930s, and the encounter was formative. Blake taught Frye to see the Bible as the imaginative framework within which our entire civilization took shape, to see it as the source of the basic repertoire of images and stories out of which literature is made, to see it as "The Great Code". This became the seminal idea in Frye's literary criticism. In book after book, he insisted that literature, like the Bible, reveals the structure of the human imagination—what's within us rather than what's out there in the world. "In a sense," Frye wrote in his introduction to *The Great Code*, "all my critical work has revolved around the Bible."

Frye's immersion in the Bible began in childhood. His family were Methodists, an evangelical Protestant church that had broken away from the Church of England in the eighteenth century, and in Canada eventually merged with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form the United Church. Methodist teaching stressed the authority of scripture and the importance of personal conversion. Frye's grandfather was a circuit-riding preacher, and Methodism permeated the milieu in which he grew up. He thinks today that it still colors his overall approach to things.

**NF** I think Methodism is an approach to Christianity which puts a very heavy emphasis on the quality of experience. That is one reason why I have always tended to think in terms, first, of a myth which repeats itself over and over again through time, and then, second, of the experience which is the response to it. Nothing that happens in history is unique. Everything is part of turning cycles and mythical repetitions. Everything in experience is unique, and it is because of the emphasis on the uniqueness of experience, which I acquired so early, that I realized the other half of this was this mythological pattern.

**DC** Can you contrast the emphasis on experience in Methodism with the other approaches to Christianity that might show its nature?

**NF** Well, the Catholic approach, for example, is very much more doctrinal. You learn a structure of doctrine, you step inside it, and that structure of doctrine performs instead of the myth. In Methodism, you listen to the stories of the Bible. Presbyterians used to say that's the reason why

Methodist ministers moved every two years: the structure of doctrine in Methodism was totally exhausted long before then.

**DC** Frye always retained Methodism's nondoctrinaire approach to religion, but he quickly rejected the fundamentalist side of his family's beliefs. It happened when he was walking to high school in Moncton one day, he told an interviewer years later: "And just suddenly," he said, "that whole shitty and smelly garment of fundamentalist teaching I'd had all my life dropped off into the sewers and stayed there." The punishing father-God, the postmortem hell, the unpardonable sins, all this, he concluded, was "a lot of junk." But characteristically, he also realized that it would be a waste of time to get stuck in a rebellious reaction. Instead, he decided he'd accept from religion only what made sense to him as a human being. The rest he'd simply leave alone. This meant rejecting the sentiments of Cardinal Newman's famous hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," where God, says Newman, leads us, and decides to steer by his own star.

**NF** My attitude to freedom has always been the opposite of Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," where he says, "I love to choose and see my path" and calls that pride. Well, I always wanted to choose and see my path and was convinced that that was what God wanted too. But if I went on with this "Lead Thou me on" routine, I would run into spiritual gravitation and fall over a cliff.

**DC** Frye's path led him first to the University of Toronto. As a boy of 17, he enrolled at Victoria College, the University of Toronto's Methodist college. After his graduation, he went on to study theology at neighboring Emmanuel College, Victoria's theological faculty. This would prepare him for the ministry, and in the summer of 1934, he set off for Saskatchewan's parched Palliser triangle as a student minister. For five months, he ministered to the congregations of Stone, Stonepile, and Carnagh, travelling between them on a horse as old he as was, called Katy.

**NF** I remember something I found later in a Canadian critic, I think it was Elizabeth Waterston, where she spoke of the prairies as the sense of immense space with no privacy. That's what I found on top of Katy, who naturally stimulated one's bladder very considerably. I realized I couldn't get off in that vast stretch of prairie because everybody was out with opera glasses, you see, watching the preacher on top of Katy.

**DC** You really were observed to that extent?

**NF** Well, one was. I mean, that was what people did. They all had spyglasses. They weren't doing it with any malicious intent. It was just that their lives were rather devoid of incident. Naturally, they liked to see who was going along.

**DC** That was just a summer, I think.

**NF** That was a summer, yes. I thought the people were wonderful. Again, I realized that this wasn't the thing I would be good at.

**DC** Was it difficult to decide whether or not to seek ordination?

**NF** Yes, it was difficult for me. And I consulted a friend whose judgment I had a great respect for, Hal Vaughan. He asked me what my difficulty was. And I said, "Well, various people, including



Herbert Davis, a very civilized man, have pointed out that it might be embarrassing later on if I had a professional connection with the church.” And he said, “Well, isn’t that your answer?”

**DC** You mean if it’s embarrassing, then you should go ahead?

**NF** Yes.

**DC** Frye was ordained in 1936. He already knew that his vocation was teaching and writing, not the active ministry, and through the years, he has appeared more often at a lectern than in a pulpit. But he still regards himself very much as a minister of the United Church.

**NF** I used to describe myself as a United Church plain-clothesman, that is, I was in effect somebody who was attached to a church. Most undergraduates are instinctively agnostic and rather rebellious about churches and about religious institutions generally. And I have always used a very secular attitude in order to, in effect, win the confidence of people, not because I want to catch them in a trap later, but precisely because I want them to understand that there isn’t any trap.

**DC** Frye’s secular attitude is evident in his writings. His perspective is the literary critic’s, never the theologian’s. Nevertheless, he has reacted hotly when people have misinterpreted his antidoctrinaire approach. Once he was asked in public to comment on a reviewer’s claim that he’d written *The Great Code* as an ex-Christian. “I can’t express my opinion of those sentences in a language that I think is appropriate to them,” he responded. “The United Church of Canada, of which I am an ordained clergyman, would be surprised to hear that I am an ex-Christian.” Frye’s relationship to the Bible is the foundation of all his work as a literary critic. It was hearing the echoes of the Bible in English poetry that made him aware that literature always belongs to a mythological universe that gives it its fundamental forms and images, and the Bible has given him his personal bearings, as well.

**NF** The Bible is, to me, the body of words through which I can see the world as a cosmos, as an order, and where I can see human nature as something redeemable, something with a right to survive. Otherwise you’re left with human nature and physical nature. Physical nature doesn’t seem to have very much conversation. It’s a totally inarticulate world. Human nature is corrupt at the source because it’s grown out of physical nature. It has various ideals and hopes and wishes and concerns, but its attempt to realize these things is often abominably cruel and psychotic. I feel there must be something that transcends all this, or else.

**DC** Or else?

**NF** Well, or else despair. Why keep this miserable object, humanity, alive on this planet when it’s doing nothing but polluting it?

**DC** Frye learned to see the Bible as a cosmos from William Blake. As a boy, Frye had already rejected a fundamentalist reading of the Bible which made it a prop for authoritarianism and repression. Blake showed him another way, an imaginative reading which saw the Bible as the manifesto of human dignity and creative freedom, not the dictation of a tyrannical God. To Blake God and the human imagination were ultimately identical. In his later writings, he spoke of “Jesus, the imagination.” What this imagination is, neither our senses nor our reason can tell us. They can only observe and compare. “None, by travelling over known lands, can find out the unknown,” Blake says. The imagination must

be revealed by what he called “the poetic genius.” The Bible is this revelation. The alternative is the worship of nature and ourselves as natural beings, which Blake called “natural religion.”

**NF** Natural religion, for him, is what the Bible calls idolatry. It means finding something numinous in nature, in the physical environment. The Bible says that there are no gods in nature, that nature is a fellow creature of man and that, while you should love nature, you actually get your spiritual vision through human society, and then you see nature as it is. But all the gods that people have pretended to find in nature are, in effect, devils; that is, they’re projections of the wrong side of man’s natural origin.

**DC** Blake’s contemporaries sanctified nature. Blake asserted that mental things alone are real. Whether the sun appears to us as “a round disc of fire” or “an innumerable company of the heavenly host,” he says, depends on who’s looking, not on what’s objectively there. Reality is something that we make in perceiving it, and we can’t understand what we haven’t made. Our capacity to do this is what Blake called “vision.”

**NF** He meant the capacity to live with one’s eyes and ears in what he called the spiritual world. It was not a world of ideas, it was not a Platonic world. It was the physical world in its organized form. He says spirits are organized man. He also says spirits are not cloudy vapors or anything fuzzy; they are organized and minutely articulated beyond anything the physical world can produce. In other words, it was his world of poetry and painting. Vision, for him, was, as I say, the ability to hear and see in that world.

**DC** This was not a world that had an independent existence.

**NF** Oh, no.

**DC** Not a Platonic world.

**NF** This is the world as it really is, not the world as our lazy minds and senses perceive it.

**DC** The Bible, to Blake, was the source of this visionary seeing. “Why is the Bible more entertaining and instructive than any other book?” he once asked. And he answered, “Because it is addressed to the imagination.” “The whole Bible,” he says, “is filled with imaginations and visions from end to end.” It is within the figures of the Bible that the imagination awakens and expands. They become the reader’s chariots of fire. We build Jerusalem by recreating the divine forms of the imagination. The Bible is the model, the arts are the means. This was the view that Frye first encountered in Blake and adopted as his own. Soon after he began teaching at Victoria College in 1939, he began to offer a course on the Bible, which continues to this day. He also had the idea of doing a book on the Bible, and friends encouraged him in it, almost from the beginning. But for years, he was primarily taken up with his writings on “the secular scripture,” as he once called literature. He finally got around to the Bible in the late seventies and *The Great Code* was published in the early eighties with the subtitle, “The Bible and Literature.”

**NF** I didn’t want to write a book called “The Bible as Literature.” What I wanted to do was to deal with the entire narrative and imagery of the Bible and the impact that it has made as a totality on literature. That was why the word “and” was extremely important to me.

**DC** So it's not a strategic disclaimer to fend off charges that you're poaching in theological territory or anything.

**NF** Well, it was partly that as well. I wanted to make it clear that I was dealing with the Bible's relation to literature—that it was written mostly in literary language and that my approach to the Bible was neither an aesthetic, literary one nor a doctrinal one.

**DC** Frye does not consider the Bible “as” literature. He puts it in a category of its own, for which he uses the Greek term “keryma,” meaning “proclamation.” But he does recognize that the Bible is made of the same figures as any other literary work. “People are unlikely to get to the center of the Bible,” Frye says, “unless they are willing to pass through the shadowy world of literary imagination, with all its fictions, illusions and suspended judgments.” Michael Dolzani is Frye's part-time research assistant and a teacher at Baldwin Wallace College in Ohio.

**Michael Dolzani** To him, literature is not some sort of substitute for religion. He has always resisted that idea. Some people claim that, well, Frye just wants to make up some sort of new religion out of literature, but he very much resists that notion, I think. Yet he does say that, although the language of the Bible goes beyond literary language to get to what is beyond the literary, we have to go through the literary. The Bible is written largely in the languages of myth and metaphor that characterize literature, and to get to the kerygmatic moment beyond them, we still have to go through them in our reading of the Bible. He doesn't read the Bible as literature, but he says that a literary reading of the Bible is the beginning of a process that comes out the other side—a place that is beyond a merely literary reading of the Bible.

**DC** To understand the Bible, Frye says, we have to understand the kind of language which it's written in. And so he begins *The Great Code* by distinguishing three different phases of language which are, roughly: mythic or poetic language, logical or dialectical language, and finally, descriptive or scientific language. The Bible is expressed almost entirely in the primitive language of myth and metaphor. Logical language appears first with Greek philosophy, and only much later does descriptive language come on the scene.

**NF** In ordinary speech, we use words to represent things outside the structure of words, but as a technique of writing. Such representation is a fairly late development because it depends on technology, really. You can't write history until you have historiography and archives and documents, and you can't do science until you have a machinery for experimentation. You can't write descriptively in any sort of mature or fully developed way until you've established these things. Consequently, I wouldn't put descriptive language as a continuous form of prose much earlier than about the seventeenth century.

**DC** What is happening before that?

**NF** What is happening before that is, first of all, the logical language developed out of Plato, and more particularly Aristotle, where the criterion of truth is the integrity of the verbal structure rather than in its reaction to something outside.

**DC** And how is mythic thinking contrasted with this logical thinking?

**NF** Mythic thinking is the earliest of all: it is the most primitive form of thinking. Consequently, the illusion turns up in every generation that it's something that'll be outgrown, but you always find that if you try to outgrow mythical thinking, you end up rehabilitating it. And mythical thinking proceeds metaphorically in a world where everything is potentially identifiable with everything else. Gods, for example, are linguistically metaphors. That's how they start out. You have a sea god or a gun god or a war god or something, where two things are being identified within a supposed personality.

**DC** And it's your view that that form of thinking is ultimate, is a boundary for us.

**NF** I think it's where the use of words begins, and I think it's where the use of words is likely to end.

**DC** The language of the Bible is metaphoric, not philosophical or descriptive. This means that the Bible neither reasons about reality nor points at something outside of itself, like a work of history. It comes to us, like any literary fiction, as a self-contained world of words.

**NF** There is nothing that we get from Christianity except a body of words, and they become transmuted into experiences. You start out with the notion that if you have a body of words they must point to an event. So that in the beginning God did something, and the words are the servomechanisms which tell us what he did. But the Gospel of John doesn't begin that way. It just says the Word came first. You've got a body of words and nothing else. You create the events yourself. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. The word comes first, the event follows. Verbalizing consciousness precedes the physical existence.

**DC** There are words before there are things?

**NF** There are in Genesis, certainly.

**DC** Words, for Frye, are powers, and as we recreate the world in their light, they use us as much as we use them. When we use words to describe a world "out there," they divide our reality. If we use them metaphorically, they can be healing powers.

**Michael Dolzani** Ordinarily, when we perceive what we think is ourselves, what depth psychology would call the ego, the I, what we see is a little point of consciousness. We look out on a big, wide world out there, external to us. We are the subject and we are looking out on an external world of objects from which we are separate. That's how we define what we are. I am not that, out there. I am little me, in here. And we are also by that very act alienated from anything but our own minds, anything but our own sense of consciousness. It is this lurking sense of dualism between the subject and the object, the I and the not-I, that's been haunting Western thought for a long, long time now. What metaphor does, or could do, if we'd let it, is to heal the separation between myself and another person, between myself and nature, between myself and God. As reader-response criticism suggests, there is even a gap between myself and the text which could be closed by the identification that occurs through metaphor and myth in literature. Those are forms of identifying ourselves with things which we are not normally in communion with. If you take that far enough, you have a sense of everything being united in a whole webwork of community or, ultimately, of identity. God, for Blake, was the single form or identity that encompassed all this webwork of identification: the human world, the natural world, God, especially Christ. In the center of *The Great Code*, almost in the exact physical center of it, is a chart of all the pastoral and urban and spiritual imagery. What Frye is saying is that all

those images in the Bible are ultimately identified. That's a wild way to think, but it's not beyond the ways in which religion really does sometimes think.

**NF** My growing interest in the Bible has led me to a growing interest in the way that nouns, the world of things, rather block movement. It's partly the screw up of language. The scientist, for example, is trying to describe processes in space-time, and ordinary language has to twist that into events in time and things in space. And things are not really going on in space and time. One of the most seminal books that I've read is Buber's *I and Thou*. Buber says we are all born into a world of "Its," and if we meet other human beings we turn them into "Its." Everything is a solid block, a thing, this and that, and so forth. Consequently, when we think of "God," we think of a grammatical noun, but we have to get used to the notion that there is no such thing as "God," because God is not a thing. He's a process fulfilling itself. That's how he defines himself: I will be what I will be. Similarly, I am more and more drawn to thinking in terms of a great swirling of processes and powers rather than a world of blocks and things. A text, for example, is a conflict of powers. A picture is not a "thing"; it's a focus of forces.

**DC** When Frye began teaching his Bible course at the University of Toronto, his so-called "mythological" approach scandalized the campus fundamentalists. "Myth" was a word they preferred to apply to other people's religions. Like many Christians, they wanted to believe that there is a substratum of historical truth in their Bible. The quest for the historical Jesus has been perennially popular. Modern Protestant theologians have even spoken of "demythologizing" the Bible, as if myth were an archaic husk that could be stripped away to reveal a kernel of theological truth. In Frye's view, the Bible itself condemns such undertakings. The Bible contains history, but only as the raw material of myth, and its view of evidence would make any historian blush. This can be seen quite clearly in a traditional way of studying the Bible called typology.

**NF** The Christian Bible consists of an Old Testament and a New Testament and the relation between them from the Christian point of view is that everything that happens in the Old Testament is a type of something that happens in the New Testament. And so you get this tennis-game view of evidence. How do you know that the Old Testament is true? Because it's fulfilled in the New Testament. How do you know the New Testament is true? Because it fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. After the resurrection, we're told that the disciples confronted the risen Jesus and he simply said, search the scriptures and you'll find that the Messiah has to rise from the dead. And that's the only evidence that the writers of the gospels are interested in. They are not biographers. The one criterion they subject themselves to is that what happens to Jesus in the account must fit what the Old Testament said would happen to the Messiah. Typology is really a view of history which says that history is going somewhere and meaning something.

**DC** And the meaning appears in the future.

**NF** Yes.

**DC** The Bible's typological structure yields a philosophy of history which the modern secular world interprets in terms of continual progress and improvement. Progress, in our modern sense, is an idea foreign to the Bible itself, but it is a reflection of the value the Bible places on the future. Even where the original ideas have been transformed, the Bible colors the Western tradition and produces what is distinctive in it.

**NF** There's a difference between the biblical religions and, say, the oriental religions. In Buddhism you have a compassionate Buddha, and in Jesus you have a compassionate Jesus, but he's also a Jesus that confronts and condemns the world. It is a more militant conception, more thrown on the will and less thrown on enlightenment. That is, the crucifixion of Jesus is something that goes on every day. It goes on in El Salvador, it goes on in Viet Nam, it goes on here. And that condemnation of the world by the fact that it tries to kill God, and is always trying to kill God, is what seems to be distinctive in the biblical religions.

**DC** Why is the biblical, Hebraic tradition revolutionary? Why do you call it a revolutionary tradition?

**NF** Well, I call it revolutionary because the Old Testament comes out of a people who were never any good at the game of empire. They were always on the underside, the side oppressed, and placed in bondage by more powerful kingdoms like Egypt and Assyria and Babylonia. So that the central thing in the Old Testament is the liberation of an enslaved people, in other words the exodus, and that goes on repeating through the return from Babylon. In the New Testament, it is again a struggle between Christ and the world in which the world wins, to the extent that Christ is crucified and dies and is buried. But, of course, the central thing is the resurrection. God can't die.

**DC** What does the eye-ear dialectic in the Bible have to do with its revolutionary cast?

**NF** The metaphor of the "ear," of the voice of God, God speaking, suggests an invisible God who nevertheless enters into you and becomes a part of you, and the "eye" always retains a sense of the objective, the thing "over there." In a polytheistic religion like the Greek one, you have to have visual symbols like statues in order to distinguish one god from another. But if you don't have the problem of distinguishing among gods, if there's only one, then it's a reduction of that God to see him as an object.

**DC** Does the word also become a command in a different sense?

**NF** It has often taken the form of command, yes. The word of command in an ordinary society is the word of authority, which is in the whole area of ideology and rhetoric, and that kind of word of command has to be absolutely at a minimum. It can't have any comment attached to it. Soldiers won't hang themselves on barbed wire in response to a subordinate clause, and if there's any commentary necessary, it's the sergeant-major's job to explain what it is, not the officer's. Now, that is a metaphor, it's an analogy of the kind of command that comes from the other side of the imagination, what has been called the kerygmatic, the proclamation from God. It is not so much a command as a statement of what your own potentiality is and of the direction in which you have to go to attain it. But it's a command that leaves your will free, whether you follow it or not.

**DC** For Frye, God is not an objective being who compels our obedience. God is a human identity towards which we grow, and the word of God is a statement of our potential. God only acts and is in existing beings, Blake says. Reality is not something fixed forever; it is something we make. Literature, Frye has always said, deals with the conceivable, not the real, with what can be made true rather than what is true now. The important question about the Bible is not whether we believe it, but what actually happens when we enter into its imaginative forms. Like literature, it is a vision to be tested rather than believed, and this testing is what Frye calls faith.

**NF** Faith, is according to the New Testament, the hypostasis of hope and the elenchos, the proof or evidence of the unseen. I would translate that approximately as meaning that faith is the reality of hope and the reality of illusion.

**DC** The reality of illusion?

**NF** Yes.

**DC** You put it rather paradoxically.

**NF** Well—

**DC** Illusion is something that is not real for us by definition.

**NF** That's right. For most people, it's the schoolboy's definition. Faith is believing what you know ain't so. I have no use for that kind of faith, and I don't think the New Testament does either. Faith can only be achieved through experience. Say the Wright brothers start to wonder if a heavier-than-air machine can actually get off the ground. Everybody says that's impossible, that's an illusion. They get the damn thing off the ground. That's faith. It's not an objective body of propositions, because the author of Hebrews, after he's given his definition of faith, goes on and gives examples from the Old Testament, and he says, by faith these people did certain things. They weren't talking about a trinity with three persons in one substance and anybody who doesn't believe in the identity of the substance or the difference of the persons is etc. etc. If the gospel says that faith can remove mountains, it's no good just saying I have faith that that mountain shall not be there the next minute; of course it stays there. So obviously, you have to keep on working at your conception of faith until it becomes more precise and heads in the direction of realization. The important thing is that it does work. It's a process of turning into reality what has been either a matter of hope or a matter of illusion.

**DC** *The Great Code* is a study of the Bible's overall narrative pattern. Frye finds this pattern to be the characteristic U-shape of comedy. The book begins, well, with the Creation, quickly runs into complications with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and ends in re-creation with the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of a new heaven, a new earth, and a new tree of life in the book of Revelation. The same pattern is repeated over and over again in miniature in the individual stories of the Bible. Israel captive, Israel delivered. Jonah swallowed by the whale, then disgorged. The same images recur and build towards the unification of the entire book in the comprehensive personality of Jesus. Frye finds an epitome of the Bible's overall shape in the Book of Job. The familiar story concerns a wager between God and Satan over the loyalty of Job. God delivers Job into Satan's hands. His property is taken, he's afflicted with boils, and his friends claim that he must have done something wrong, or this would never have happened. Finally, God reveals a vision of the Creation to Job. Above is the uncorrupted world, where the morning stars sing together. Below are the great beasts, Behemoth and Leviathan, in whose bellies we live. Job is reconciled to God. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," he says, "but now mine eye seeth thee," and his property is restored and increased. It's a story which Frye says can be read in two diametrically opposed ways. Bernard Shaw, for example, saw it as a story in which God first betrays Job, then bullies him into submission with what Shaw called "an ignoble and impertinent tirade." Blake, who illustrated the book in a wonderful set of engravings, saw the story as Job's deliverance from an ego-centered consciousness into an enlarged vision. Frye reads the book as Blake does.

**NF** Blake looks at Job as a kind of spiritualized version of the story of the fall in Genesis. That is, you start with Job doing his moral duty and therefore not being quite on the upper limit of what human beings can achieve, so he falls into Satan's world. Satan is young and vigorous, God is old and an imbecile, and Satan takes over and dominates the world, until Job goes through the vision of the morning stars singing together, in plate 14, and the vision of Leviathan and Behemoth, in plate 15. And the new creation and consequently a renewed God, who is, among other things, the divinity in Job himself, take over.

**DC** You've called the Book of Job an epitome of the Bible.

**NF** Yes.

**DC** What does that mean? How does it epitomize the whole Bible?

**NF** Well, it seems to me that Job begins with, as I say, a spiritualized form of Genesis. It ends with a spiritual form of apocalypse or revelation. And in the middle comes this vertical contact between God and man which the New Testament has a different version of. It sees that contact as existing in Jesus. But imaginatively and mythically, it's in the book of Job.

**DC** What's the difference between the two readings of the book you've given, by way of a conception of God?

**NF** Well, the reading which I disagree with, which makes God a bully who forces Job into agreeing with the justice of his ways, is the objective God who is sitting up there in the sky and is linguistically a noun; that is, he's an object that never changes. And all he does is to say, "Look what I did in the remote past. I created this wonderful world." As I see it, the opening of the story with Satan in God's court depicts God as shifting the center of action to Satan, who brings about all these disasters. Job then is driven to assert the dignity of human beings. If I've done so and so, Job says, then it's all right. But I haven't. Therefore, there's a problem. At that point, God moves in, and the new creation which he displays to Job is the old creation again, but it's something in which Job now participates. It's something that engages Job as an actor, as an experiencer. That means that God himself has become a principle of action and experience. He has transformed himself from a noun in Job's mind into a verb in Job's spiritual body.

**DC** The Book of Job ends with an apocalypse, a word meaning literally "an uncovering," a revelation of how things really stand. Frye sees the same dynamic in literature, which he calls a human apocalypse—man's revelation to man, the arena in which we divide what we want from what we don't want. Usually, Frye rejects either/or choices. What we exclude, he says, will only ambush us somewhere further down the road. But he does accept the Bible's apocalyptic either/or.

**NF** The only either/or dialectic that I'm interested in is the apocalyptic one, which moves towards a separation of a world of life from a world of death, not a separation of the good from evil. I don't believe in that. In ordinary life, the good/evil distinctions are hopelessly tangled. Jesus has a parable on the wheat and the tares in which he says there's no use trying to root out the weeds from the grain in this world. When you make choices, when you make decisions, you're always moving towards an apocalyptic vision of something that doesn't die and throwing off the body of the death that you want to be delivered from. So that the final separation of life and death has to be in the form of an imaginative vision, which is what literature expresses and what the critic tries to explain.



**DC** Literature is apocalyptic because it distinguishes what human beings actually care about from what they merely belong to by birth or by circumstances. Comedy shows us the world we want, tragedy the world we don't. Whichever it is, literature, for Frye, must be rooted in what he calls primary concern.

**NF** Man is a concerned being. I think that's one way of defining the conscious animal. And as I went on, I tended to see a distinction between the primary concerns of man as an animal—food and sex and property and freedom of movement—and his secondary concerns. Primary concerns are distinguished from ideology and rhetoric of all kinds. You can learn a great deal about the ideological or religious structure of a society from novels like Flaubert's or Zola's or Tolstoy's, but in the work of fiction, they have to be subordinated to making love and making a living and getting on with your life—the questions of survival. If there's one thing clear about the late twentieth century, it is that it's an age where primary concerns have got to become primary, or else. I mean, food and sex and freedom of movement and property (in the sense of what is proper to individuality) are the primary concerns. We must come to terms with those.

**DC** The Bible reflects primary concern. Jesus was a teller of tales, not an ideologue. He preached the power of the present moment, the kingdom of heaven in a mustard seed, later echoed in Blake's eternity in a grain of sand. This is what Frye thinks the Bible gives us—a real present.

**NF** The present doesn't exist in ordinary experience. It's always a never-quite, and it keeps vanishing between the past and the future. The Bible, while it doesn't raise so abstract an argument, nevertheless makes it clear that reality is a matter of a real present, a "now" which exists, and a real presence, a real "here" in space, because in space, things are just as alienated as they are in time. "Now" is the center of time, but there's no such time as "now" ordinarily. "Here" is the center of space, but there's no such place as "here." It's always a "there," even if you're pointing to your own backbone. To me, the words "eternal" and "infinite" do not mean time and space going on and on without ever stopping. They mean the reality of now and the reality of here.

**DC** What makes the reality of now and the reality of here is vision, the power to see in the light of eternity, which is the world as it always and never is. The Bible is the source of this vision for our culture. We forget it, Frye says, at our peril.

**NF** I think that forgetting the Bible is on par with forgetting the rest of our cultural heritage, and I have always of course maintained that when you lose your memory you become senile. That's just as true of a society as it is of an individual.

**DC** Do you see this as a senile society in that sense?

**NF** Well, there's a lot of senility about, yes.

**DC** Frye's answer is characteristic. He notes the reality of growing senility, but humorously, in passing. He doesn't dwell on it, brood about it, berate others about it. His eyes remain fixed on a better possibility and on his obligation to try and realize it. He makes a statement of his faith in the conclusion to his book, *Creation and Recreation*, published in 1980, and I'd like to end this series by reading it. "If we could transcend professed belief," Frye says, meaning essentially ideology, "and reach the level of a world-wide community of action and charity, we should discover a new creative power in man altogether, except that it would not be new, but the power of the genuine word and

spirit, the power that has created all our works of culture and imagination and is still ready to re-create both our society and ourselves.”

## 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: A.C. Hamilton, Brenda Neal, Graham Forst, John Ayre, Lauriat Lane, Jr., W. D. Souter, Branko Gorjup, Nicky Drumbolis, Sonia Bicanic, Sid Feshbach, Barbara Pell, Julián Rodríguez Álvarez, Warren Stevenson, E. M. Oppenheimer, Rebecca Wigood, David Staines, Pierre L. Ullman, Derrick M. Norman, and Gill Holland.

Special thanks to Hugh Anson-Cartwright of Toronto for unearthing a previously unrecorded review by Frye in *The Canadian Bookman* 20 (April-May 1938). For his discovery, which nullifies my claim that the 1987 Frye bibliography formed a complete record of primary sources up to the time it was published, see E70, below.

I invite readers to send me copies of essays, reviews, and other materials for inclusion in the next supplement. (Ed.)

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#### A. Books

A19p *Veliki kod(eks): Biblija i knjizevnost*. Trans. Novica Milic and Dragan Kujundzic. Belgrade. Prosveta, 1985. 283 pp. Serbian translation of *The Great Code*. The first chapter of *The Great Code*, trans. by Ljiljanka Lovrinčević as “Veliki zakonik: Biblija i knjizevnost,” appeared in *Republica* 4 (April 1984): 73-90.

A23f *Shakespeare: Nove lezjioni*. Trans. Andrea Carosso. Turin: Einaudi, 1990. x + 201 pp. Wrappers. Italian translation of *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*.

A27 *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature*. Sixteen paragraphs from Chapter 3, Part II rpt. as “The Overstanding Reader” in *Partisan Review* 57, no. 4 (1990): 569-73.

A29a *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991. 124 pp. Paperback version of A29.

A29b *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion*. [Toronto]: United Church Publishing House, 1991. 124 pp. Paperback edition issued simultaneously with A29.

A30 *A World in a Grain of Sand: Twenty-Two Interviews with Northrop Frye*. Ed. with an intro. by Robert D. Denham. New York: Peter Lang, 1991. 351 pp. Hardcover. A collection of interviews from the early 1960s to the 1980s, in which F responds to a wide variety of questions about the media, education, religion, literary theory, language, music, and literature—from Plato and the Bible to Milton, Blake,

Shelley, and Melville. Half of the interviews, transcribed from tape recordings, are published here for the first time. The interviewers are Eli Mandel, Gregory Baum, Roby Kidd, D. M. Smyth, Bruce Mickleburgh, Janet Somerville, John Ayre, Melvin Hill, John J. Teunissen, Don Harron, Art Cuthbert, Robert Fulford, Elizabeth Cowan, Gregory Cowan, Richard Costa, David Stewart, Deborah Shackleton, Stan Correy, Don Anderson, Andrew Kaufman, Imre Salusinszky, Alan Roughley, Vijay Mishra, Donald Winkler, Ian Alexander, Anne Craik, Vince Carlin, and Deanne Bogdan.

#### **D. Essays and Parts of Book**

D65 “Long Sequacious Notes” rpt. as “Des notes, longues et suivies” in *Littérature* 80 (Dec. 1991): 89-94. Trans. Jacques Neefs and Heloise Raccach-Neefs, with an introduction to the essay by Claude Mouchard, pp. 86-88.

D233 “Zaključak za knji evnu povijest Kanade.” *Forum* 1-2 (Feb. 1989): 80-87. Croatian trans. by Ljiljanka Lovrinecic of F’s “Conclusion” to *Literary History of Canada*.

#### **E. Reviews**

E70 “Poetic Aspirations.” *The Canadian Bookman* 20 (April-May 1938): 49. Review of *Characters in Cadence* by Louise Morey Bowman, which F damns with faint praise and not so faint censure.

#### **F. Miscellaneous**

F94 Letter to the editor. *Pietisten* 5 (Fall 1990): 19. Brief letter of thanks for the commentary on *The Great Code* that appeared in a previous number of the journal (see P230).

#### **G. Interviews**

G74 “Northrop Frye u razgovoru.” *Republica* 11-12 (1990): 48-54. A “Conversation with Northrop Frye,” conducted at the Hotel Esplanada, Zagreb, on the occasion of F’s visit to Yugoslavia (see *Frye Newsletter* 3 [Winter 1990-91]: 32-33). Interviewers: Professors Ivo Vidan, Janja Ciglar Zanic, and Giga Gracan.

G75 “Inside Mythology: Northrop Frye Talks with David Cayley.” *The Idler* 32 (Mar.-Apr. 1991): 23-34. Excerpts from a long interview with David Cayley, to be published in book form by General Publishing Co. in 1992.

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#### **K. Books**

K1 Additions to reviews of John Ayre, *Northrop Frye: A Biography*  
 Bemrose, John. “An Exceptional Mind.” *Maclean’s* 102 (11 December 1989): 65–6.  
 Forst, Graham. “Modern World’s Aristotle?” *Canadian Literature* 129 (Summer 1991): 173–5.  
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K3 Addition to reviews of David Cook, *Northrop Frye: A Vision of the New World*  
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- K9 Additions to reviews of A. C. Hamilton, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*  
 Forst, Graham. "Modern World's Aristotle?" *Canadian Literature* 129 (Summer 1991): 173–5.  
 Denham, Robert D. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61 (Fall 1991): 114–15.
- K9a Hamilton, A. C. *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991. 316 pp.  
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- K11 Addition to reviews of Robert D. Denham, *Northrop Frye: An Annotated Bibliography of  
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 Pell, Barbara. *Christian Scholar's Review* 19, no. 3 (1990): 290
- K12 Addition to reviews of Ian Balfour, *Northrop Frye*  
 Surrette, Leon. *Essays in Canadian Literature* 41 (1990): 159–65.
- K13 Denham, Robert D., and Thomas Willard, ed. *Visionary Poetics: Essays on Northrop Frye's Criticism*.  
 New York: Peter Lang, 1991. 161 pp. Hardcover. An address by F plus a collection of eight essays on  
 F's work: four examine the contexts of his criticism and four reflect on *Anatomy of Criticism* thirty years  
 after its publication. Written in the year of F's seventy-fifth birthday, the papers seek to recognize his  
 achievement and to consider its place in contemporary critical thought.
- Contents:  
 Northrop Frye, "Auguries of Experience"  
 Thomas Willard, "The Visionary Education"  
 Hazard Adams, "Essay on Frye"  
 David Staines, "Northrop Frye in a Canadian Context"  
 Imre Salusinszky, "Frye and Romanticism"  
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 Hayden White, "Ideology and Counterideology in the *Anatomy*"  
 Patricia Parker, "What's a Meta Phor?"  
 Paul Hernadi, "Northrop Frye on the Rhetoric of Nonliterary Prose"
- K14 Russell, Ford. *Northrop Frye on Myth: An Introduction*. New York: Garland, forthcoming, June  
 1992. Examines F's theories of myth, culture, romance, and the Bible, and compares his ideas with  
 those of Frazer, Jung, Cassirer, Ricoeur, Spengler, and Toynbee.

## L. Essays and Parts of Books

- L425 Paul Ricoeur's "Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, or the Order of Paradigms" rpt. in *A  
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- L860 Cave, Terence. "Northrop Frye: Recognition at the Center." *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*.  
 Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 190-99. A study of F's use of the idea of *anagnorisis*, especially in the  
*Anatomy*. F's "method is one which displays the enormous range of possibilities opened up by a  
 conjunction of poetics and modern mythography, of plot with figure. If those possibilities multiply by  
 semantic slippage rather than by controlled conceptual analysis, the freedom is none the less refreshing.  
 The shifting of elements in Frye's kaleidoscope gives the lover of recognition scenes better value for  
 money than almost anything else in the history of poetics." For F on "displacement," see pp. 236-37.

L861 Drumbolis, Nicky. *An Inventory of Modern English Poetry in Canada*. Toronto: Letters, 1987. Item following No. 242. This annotated catalogue of Canadiana includes a three-page account of *Anatomy of Criticism*, “perhaps the most enigmatic and provocative book of Canadian literature.”

L862 Fabiny, Tibor. “Northrop Frye and the Rediscovery of Typology.” *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature*. London: Macmillan, 1991. 4-9. On F’s concept of typology, which is seen as theoretically significant because of F’s understanding of typology as a figure of speech and because of the type-antitype distinction he makes between the phases of revelation in the Bible.

L863 Gonçalves, Aguinaldo Jos. “Dom Casmurro: Mimesis das categorias narrativas.” *Revista de letras* 29 (1989): 1-10. Establishes the relationship between F’s theory of myths and the four narrative categories in Machado de Assis’ novel, *Dom Casmurro*.

L864 Kavanagh, P. J. “Words in the Mouth.” *Spectator* 260 (9 Apr. 1988): 33. A positive assessment of F’s opinions. Uses F to support his claim that the schools are drawing too great a distinction between good speech and good writing.

L865 Kirkham, Michael. Review of John Fraser’s *The Name of Action: Critical Essays*. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 56 (Fall 1986): 122-23. Agrees with Fraser’s judgment (L174) that Frye’s criticism is a mistaken failure and complacently irresponsible.

L866 Lovrinevic, Ljiljanka. “Northrop Frye.” *Republica* 4 (April 1984): 71-72. Preface to Lovrinevic’s Croatian translation of the first chapter of *The Great Code*. See A19p.

L867 Meo, Baldo. “L’ultimo imperatore.” *L’astrolabio nuovo* 4, no. 11 (8 March 1991). A review of F’s critical career.

L868 Neely, Carol Thomas. *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985. 26, 39. Takes issue with F’s view of the “impediments to comic fulfillment” in Shakespeare’s comedies and with his characterization of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

L869 Parrinder, Patrick. “Northrop Frye.” *Authors and Authority: English and American Criticism, 1950-1990*. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 281-87. Labels F, along with Empson and Jakobson, as one of the “scientific schoolman” in the “age of interpretation.” Sees his work as “a blatantly archaic, almost medieval construct.” For all Parrinder’s admiration for F’s erudition and his correction of New Critical tenets, he thinks F is an anxious, stubborn, and narcissistic reader. Unless one accepts F’s distinction between knowledge and vision, or between science and myth, “the whole system collapses, and Frye’s magisterial poetics becomes revealed as the grandest of literary impostures.”

L870 Perloff, Marjorie. *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981. 39-42. A summary of F’s account of prosody in *The Well-Tempered Critic*, which Perloff refers to throughout her book.

L871 Rodriguez Alvarez, Julián. *Antología de Literatura Universal Comparada: materiales para la enseñanza de la literatura a través de la experiencia literaria, visual y musical*. Murcia: Publicaciones de la Universidad de

Murcia, 1991. 590 pp. An anthology of literature organized on the principles of the third essay of *Anatomy of Criticism*, exemplifying the main archetypes in each phase of F's four mythoi.

L872 \_\_\_\_\_. *Curso B sico de Literatura*. Barcelona: Editorial Teide, S. A., 1991. An adaptation of L871, for high school students.

L873 Seidel, Michael. *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979. Chapter 2—on the narrative mode of satire—is indebted to F's understanding of the mode.

L874 Stevens, Bonnie K., and Larry L. Stewart. *A Guide to Literary Criticism and Research*. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 99-100. In a chapter devoted to archetypal studies, the authors glance at F's conception of the archetype and his theory of narrative patterns.

L875 Ullman, Pierre L. "La simbologia quinaria y 'El castellano viejo': réplica a Gonzalo Navajas." *Revista Hispanica Moderna* 44 (June 1991): 3-17. Notes that in the sixteenth century Juan Pérez de Moya had added a fifth level to the medieval exegetical system, and argues that F's suggestion about contrapuntal analysis is a convenient way to look at the five-fold symbology inherent in Spanish literature.

## M. Reviews

M10. *THE GREAT CODE*

M10.162 Medhurst, M. J. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 27, no. 2 (1991): 214-26.

M10.163 Westra, Haijo. *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*. Vol. 21. Stuttgart: Anton Hierseman, 1986. 308-12.

M1. *NORTHROP FRYE ON SHAKESPEARE*

M14.49 Jansohn, Christa. *Anglia* 108, nos. 3-4 (1990): 521-4.

M26. *WORDS WITH POWER*

M26.17 Anon. *Wilson Quarterly* 15 (Spring 1991): 96-7.

M26.18 Guardiani, Francesco. "Northrop Frye e il potere della parola." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 12, no. 1 (1991): 133-42.

M26.19 Jordan-Smith, P. *Parabola* 16 (February 1991): 135-8.

M26.20 Kenner, Hugh. "The Words We Live By." *The World and I* 6 (March 1991): 356-62.

M26.21 Stuttaford, Genevieve. *Publishers Weekly* 237 (5 Oct. 1990): 83.

M26.22 Toolan, David. *Commonweal* 118 (22 Mar. 1991): 199-200.

## M27 MYTH AND METAPHOR

M27.5 Anon. *Christian Century* 108 (29 May-5 June 1991): 601-2.

M27.6 Forst, Graham. *Canadian Literature* 130 (Fall 1991):

M27.7 Guardiani, Francesco. "Northrop Frye e il potere della parola." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 12, no. 1 (1991): 133-42.

M27.8 Hamilton, A. C. "Northrop Frye on Myth and Metaphor." *Queen's Quarterly* 98 (Summer 1991): 402-8.

M27.9 Russell, Ford. *Christianity & Literature* 40 (Summer 1991): 396-98.

M27.10 Spector, Robert D. *World Literature Today* (Spring 1991):

## M29. THE DOUBLE VISION

M29.2 Edinborough, Arnold. "Frye: A Colossus among Academics." *Anglican Journal Review of Books* Nov. 1991: 3A.

M29.3 Robertson, P. J. M. "Frye's Challenging Vision." *Globe and Mail* 24 Aug. 1991: C12.

**P. Miscellaneous**

P238 Anon. "Encaenia, May, 1960: Herman Northrop Frye, to be Doctor of Letters." *Honoris Causa: The Effervescences of a University Orator*. Associated Alumnae: Univ. of New Brunswick, 1968, 79-80. Citation on the occasion of F's receiving an honorary degree.

P239 Anon. "The *Maclean's* Honor Roll." *Maclean's* 103 (31 Dec. 1990): 10-35. A profile of F, who is included among the 1990 winners of the *Maclean's* Honor Roll.

P240 Anon. "Frye Documentary." *Globe and Mail* 14 February 1991. Brief notice about Harry Rasky's film, *The Great Teacher: Northrop Frye*, having been entered in two film competitions.

P241 Burgess, Joanne Harris. "Frye's Inspiration." *Globe and Mail* 28 January 1991. Letter to the editor, which reminds readers of Frye's remarks, in a CBC *Ideas* program, about Blake's notion of "Mental Fight."

P242 Davies, Alan T. "No Pressure Applied To Keep Frye Course." *Toronto Star* 4 June 1991. A letter to the editor, replying to Loral Dean's claim that the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Toronto was indifferent to Frye's legacy because it did not list his course for 1991-92.

- P243 Dean, Loral. "Is This What We Do to a Towering Legacy?" *Toronto Star* 20 May 1991. News story on the uncertain future of F's course, "The Mythological Framework of Western Culture."
- P244 Fitzhenry, Robert I. "A Myth about Myth." *Globe and Mail* 29 December 1990. Letter to the editor on F's use of the word "myth."
- P245 Mathews, Robin. "Frye: An Imperfect Scholar." *Vancouver Sun* 23 February 1991: D6. Attacks Frye as an elitist who didn't value Canadian literature and whose critical theory "exclude[d] literature of social engagement, political commitment and communal affirmation." See replies by Morrison, Stevenson, and Wallace, below.
- P246 Miller, Mary Ruth. "A Book of Insights." *Road to Wonderful: Journey through Fantasy Literature* 2 (April 1991): 3. Review of the 2nd ed. of Glenna Davis Sloan's *The Child as Critic*. (see L475).
- P247 Morrison, George. Letter to the editor. *Vancouver Sun* 23 March 1991: D20. An answer to Robin Mathews' charge that Frye was arrogant and unable to understand Canadian culture.
- P248 Rogers, Bob. "Frye Videos." *Globe and Mail*. Expresses the hope that Canadians will come to recognize the value of the videotape series, *The Bible and Literature: A Personal View by Northrop Frye* (H51), produced by the Media Centre at the University of Toronto.
- P249 Stevenson, Warren. Letter to the editor. *Vancouver Sun* 23 March 1991: D20. Defends Frye against the charges leveled against him by Robin Mathews (see above).
- P250 Wallace, David. Letter to the editor. *Vancouver Sun* 23 March 1991: D20. Sees Robin Mathew's attack on Frye (see above) as "arrogant, condescending, and even occasionally insulting."

### Obituaries, Tributes, Memorials

In the last issue of the *Newsletter* we listed various memorial articles and tributes that appeared shortly after Frye's death. The following can now be added to the list, along with those that appeared in *Vic Report* and the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (see article on page 1 in this issue).

Abley, Mark. "Literary Scholar Northrop Frye Dies." *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* [Ontario] 24 Jan. 1991: C19.

Anido, David. "Northrop Frye: 1912-1991." *Canadian Culture* [Tokyo] April, May, June 1991: [2].

Anon. "Noted Literary Critic Northrop Frye." *Los Angeles Times* 24 Jan. 1991: A24.

Anon. "Northrop Frye, 78." *Boston Globe* 29 Jan. 1991: 41.

Anon. *Queen's Alumni Review* [Kingston, Ont.] 65 (May-June 1991): 38-39.

Atwood, Margaret. "Northrop Frye Remembered by His Students." *Journal of Canadian Poetry* 6 (1991): 1-3. Rpt. of "The Great Communicator." *Globe and Mail* 24 Jan. 1991: C1. Also rpt. in *Canadian Literature* 129 (Summer 1991): 242-43; in *Michigan Quarterly Review* (Fall 1991); and partially rpt. in *Chronicle of Higher Education* 13 Nov. 1991: B5.



- Bissell, Claude. "Northrop Frye." *The Independent* 26 Jan. 1991: 12.
- Buckley, Jerome. "Northrop Frye Remembered by His Students." *Journal of Canadian Poetry* 6 (1991): 4.
- Cooley, Dennis. "The Educated Imaginer: Northrop Frye (1912-1990) [sic]." *Border Crossings* 2 (April 1991): 7-8.
- Denham, Robert D. "Northrop Frye: 1912-1991." *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 24 (Spring 1991): 158-59.
- Fraser, John. "The Reverend Doctor Frye." *Saturday Night* 105 (April 1991): 5-6.
- Guardiani, Francesco. "In Memoriam: Northrop Frye, 14 luglio 1912—23 febbraio 1991." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 12, no. 1 (1991): 5.
- Hamilton, A. C. "Northrop Frye Remembered by His Students." *Journal of Canadian Poetry* 6 (1991): 5-7. Rev. version of "Northrop Frye: 1912-91." *Quill & Quire* 57 (Mar. 1991).
- Johnston, A. F. "In Memoriam: Chancellor Northrop Frye." Minutes of the Victoria College Council, 11 Feb. 1991, pp. 1-3.
- Knelman, Martin. "Remembering Northrop Frye." *Toronto Life* May 1991: 20
- McIntyre, John P. "Northrop Frye (1912-91)." *America* 165 (13 July 1991): 14-15.
- Oppenheimer, E. M. "Northrop Frye (1912-1991)." *Carleton Germanic Papers* 19 (1991): 51-53.
- Regier, Kerry. "Northrop Frye, 1913 [sic]-1991." *Vancouver Review*, Spring 1991: 27
- Smyth, Michael. "Northrop Frye: He Wrote the Book on Nation's Writers." *Daily Mercury* [Guelph, Ontario] 24 Jan. 1991: 12B.
- Stuewe, Paul. "Northrop Frye: 1912-1991." *Books in Canada* 20 (Mar. 1991): 7.
- Valds, Mario J. "The Legacy of Northrop Frye." *MLA Newsletter* 23 (Summer 1991): 2-3.
- Ward, Marney McLaughlin. "Thank You, Northrop Frye." *Vancouver Sun* 5 Feb. 1991.

### Frye's Fables

In 1936 Frye published the first of six pieces of short fiction in the Victoria College literary magazine, *Acta Victoriana*. Two others followed in *Acta Victoriana*—in 1938 and 1940. Three were published in

*Canadian Forum*—in 1936, 1940, and 1941. We reproduce the two stories of 1936 below, written when Frye was 23. Others will follow in subsequent issues of the Newsletter.

## The Ghost

### I

“At the moment of death,” said the ghost, “I was aware of two things only. I hated you, and I loved Margaret. I expect it was that concentration on two very simple emotions that brought me back. There was a priest bending over me with the eyes of a mystic, eyes that unnerved me at first, but then seemed to give me courage. They seemed to say, I have been there too, and come back—so can you.’ After that I knew nothing until I appeared here.”

“Then I take it,” said the enemy, “that you learned that portentous style of speech on this side of the grave. That at least is a big relief. I thought it might be a compulsory cultural acquirement, like harp playing. Well, what do you propose to do now?”

“Drive you insane,” said the ghost calmly. “It shouldn’t take long.”

“You should never have died,” returned the other. “You have no idea what a reinforcement your flesh was to my dislike of you. And how do you intend to go on to make yourself completely intolerable?”

“Repeated visits, from your account, seem to be the most direct approach. I could hover round your bedside, as I am doing now, I could appear in company like Banquo, I could laugh in your ear when you are trying to persuade Margaret that you are not an infernal bounder—I think I shall find plenty to amuse myself with.”

“How do you know you can do all this?” inquired the enemy. “This is only a preliminary flap and crow, you say: how can you tell whether you can fly where you like?”

The ghost sighed wearily. “I don’t know, of course. But I shall do my humble best, trust me.”

“You have overlooked one thing,” said the enemy. “I don’t believe in ghosts. I was brought up in a ghostless world; I am still living in it. Consequently you have taken me by surprise, but you are here only on sufferance. I am not interested in your brand of goods, and your next attempt at appearance will be useless.”

“You are not an intelligent man,” said the ghost contemptuously, “but I should think that for that very reason you would depend on the evidence of your senses. Your own common sense, on which you pride yourself, revolts and informs you that seeing is believing.”

“That is an axiom for fools,” said the enemy. “I am not at all impressed by the fact that I see you. Enlightened people see what they want to see. Superstitious people see what they have to see. And what do they get by it? They get a chance to see things like you. I have spent years building up my private universe, without ghosts. Do you think I am going to disrupt it for the sake of a single appearance of someone I particularly detest? The world is full of occultism of all kinds, evocation of spirits good and bad, reincarnation, table rapping, stigmata, miracles for ever sort of religion. Sensible people don’t believe in any of this. There is irrefutable evidence for all of it. Sensible people disregard the evidence. You’re Exhibit A of a strong case, but I’m the judge, and the other side has already bribed me. Good night.”

“Perhaps” said the ghost, “but I am here, although you heartily wish I were not. You will not be saved by invincible incredulity.”

“Why not?” inquired the other. “You belong to a world of illusion.”

“Your bravado is wearing thin,” said the ghost.

“Belief,” remarked the enemy reflectively, “is a selection of experiences. I am not selecting you. Get out.”

He turned over and closed his eyes. The ghost stood, infuriated but motionless, apparently trying to move forward, without success. Then a violent shuddering—or flickering—seized him; he became thinner and thinner, and disappeared.

## II

“Yes,” said the girl, “but I still don’t understand what you’re here for. I mean, I think it’s wonderful for you to be thinking of me the very last thing, and to come straight back to me like this, but—well—I mean—we can’t go on the same way, can we? You don’t want me to kill myself or anything, do you?”

“No, no, darling,” whispered the ghost. “I didn’t come back for anything in particular—only to show you how much I loved you, and still love you; only to protect you in any way I can—”  
 “But I’ll be all right. Really I will. And as for your appearing and disappearing all the time, and my never knowing when you might be watching me—well, you can see how horrible that would be.”

“I shall never frighten you, sweetheart. We can make appointments.”

“But I’d sooner just think of you. I mean, it seems awful for you to come to me like this, looking so cold and everything. It doesn’t seem right, somehow, for me to be in bed, and you there, without a body or anything. When you were alive, we could be together and love each other, but now you’re dead, we can still be in love, but it just doesn’t make sense for us to be together any more. You understand, don’t you?”

“Not quite,” said the ghost, “but I’m beginning to. I didn’t realize that everything I told you about the way I loved you went out through the same mouth that kissed you. I wish you could have understood just what I said, Margaret, without taking it in through my wretched carcass. Dearest, I’ll get myself another body. Really, I promise it. There must be lots going around, with so many people asleep.”

“My God,” said the girl. “I don’t know who you are, or what you are, but you’re not what you pretend to be, I know that. The man I used to love told me he would kill himself rather than stand in my way, when I fell in love with somebody else, and he did. He was generous, and I loved him. I don’t care how much you look like him; you’re not his ghost, and you can’t fool me. Now go away.”

## III

“But why to me?” asked the priest.

“I succeeded in coming back,” said the ghost, “partly because I hated and loved so strongly, and partly because you encouraged me, by your eyes. It now appears that I can neither hate nor love.”

“Your first mistake,” said the priest, “is literally a ghastly one, for all ghosts make it. The second is only a regrettable misunderstanding; whatever encouragement I may have given you was, as far as I was concerned, not to come back, but to go on. The real reason you returned, of course, was only your feeling of self-importance. You simply refused to enter a world where your hates and loves would not matter. All ghosts are just like you—egomaniacs, possessed by feelings which have meaning only in a world of three dimensions—or is it two?”

“Preaching is part of your routine, of course,” said the ghost. “I gather that according to you there are no good spirits in the world, only evil ones. Well, I’m quite reconciled to being one. I have a little account to settle, and so I will not detain you.”

“It would be fun being Mephistopheles, wouldn’t it?” said the priest. “But I didn’t say you were an evil spirit. I merely said you were a fool. And I am afraid your enemy was quite right. For

him, and for people on his level, you do not exist. Your impotence will force you to degenerate very rapidly, to find an outlet for your spite. If you are very lucky, you may get a chance to beat up a medium or two. But you will gradually come to find it thrilling to frighten children in the dark, and eventually you will join the ranks of the demons clustering around primitive tribes, who can be outwitted by the most transparent devices. And—”

“Excuse me,” said the ghost. “Could you get me a drink? I am very thirsty.”

—from *Acta Victoriana* 60 (April 1936): 14-16.

### Fable . . . in the Nineteenth-Century Idiom

There was a young man who wished to become a great writer, and he sought counsel of his daimon.

“I will bring you,” said the daimon, “the seven spirits who hold the seven great secrets of writing.” So the room was suddenly darkened, and there appeared before the young man’s eyes a gigantic figure in purple.

“I give you,” said this figure, “confidence in you own genius. All artists must have in them the spirit of Prometheus, ready to defy anything to associate form with fire. I give you independence and revolt, refusal to compromise with the world, the dignity of the creator.”

He vanished, and there stood in his place a figure of similar size, but dressed in red.

“I add to your first gift,” said he, “the contempt for the mediocre and the shallow, a fierce, ascetic hatred for the facile. I give you the *saeva indignatio*, the artist’s horror of a world in hell.”

Then appeared a colorless figure, very hard to see clearly.

“My gift confers on you,” said he, “the artist’s power to reflect. The artist’s work is privileged work, and you must have leisure. I give you inert, passive recipience, the response of the sensitive artistic mind.”

Then a small, crouching figure, dressed in gold, bearing a small book in his hand.

“I give you this book,” he said, “and in it you are to set down every fleeting impression, every sketch of an idea. Nothing is too trivial to pass unnoticed; I give you the persistence to record.”

Then another crouching figure, in green.

“From me,” said this one, “you will gain an additional power of recording, the power to imitate others in order to surpass them. I give you the capacity for catching every great master’s accents.”

Then a rotund figure richly dressed.

“You have from me,” he said, “the sense of varied experience. I give you the artist’s ecstasy in eating, drinking and loving. I will make you good company, and men will be glad to see you at their tables.”

The last figure was female and nude.

“Not only must you experience life,” said she, “but you must be fearless in recording it. I give you the artist’s grip of the reality of sexual life, his sense of the directness of living which the vulgar shun, and which makes his work obscene in their eyes.”

“Do you want anything more?” asked the daimon.

“Hardly,” said the young man. “But what are the names of your spirits?”

“I do not know what they call one another,” said the daimon, “but in the world at large they are usually referred to as Pride, Wrath, Sloth, Avarice, Envy, Gluttony, and Lechery.”

—from *Canadian Forum* 16 (June 1936): 14-16; written under a pseudonym: Richard Poor.