
Northrop Frye Newsletter

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Frye on Frye. The Summer 1993 issue of the *Northrop Frye Newsletter* published a selection of entries from one of Frye's notebooks. The present issue reproduces several additional paragraphs from that notebook, as well as a selection from five additional notebooks, all which date from the late 1980s. Frye's notebooks, which he kept all of his life, are devoted mostly to his writing projects. "I keep notebooks," Frye wrote, "because all my writing is a translation into a narrative sequence of things that come to me aphoristically. The aphorisms in turn are preceded by 'inspirations' or potentially verbal *Gestalten*. So 'inspiration' is essentially a snarled sequence" (Notebook 1993.1, par. 591). The selections printed below come from the notebooks Frye kept when he was working on *Words with Power* and *The Double Vision*. Practically all of the selections, however, have an autobiographical accent or personal focus. In this respect they are atypical entries, but, I think, of no less interest.

Notebook 27 dates from 1985; Notebook 1997.1, which was discovered in the bedside table of Elizabeth Frye after her death in May 1997, dates from 1988-89; Notebook 1993.1, from 1986 to 1990; Notebook 1993.2-6, from 1982 to 1986; and Notebook 1991-28.4b, from 1989. The date of Notebook 1991-28.3k is uncertain. In the texts that follow, everything in square brackets is an editorial addition.

Frye's extensive notebooks, which Michael Dolzani and I are currently editing, will eventually comprise six or seven volumes in *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye* (University of Toronto Press), a project under the aegis of the Frye Centre of Victoria University and the general editorship of Alvin Lee. My thanks to Jane Widdicombe, executrix of the Frye Estate, for permission to publish this selection from the notebooks. (Ed.)

Last Call. As announced in previous issues of the newsletter, Jane Widdicombe is assembling a collection of Norrie Stories—personal anecdotes and tales, mostly humorous, by and about Frye. She is being assisted in her efforts by Roseann Runte, president of Victoria University. Readers who would like to contribute to the collection should send their stories to Jane Widdicombe, Box 545, Nobleton, Ontario LOG 1N0, or to President Runte, Victoria University, 73 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7.

The *Northrop Frye Newsletter* publishes material by and about Frye and his criticism. The editor welcomes contributions related to this aim. The *Newsletter* is published occasionally and is distributed without charge to those who request it. Publication is supported by the English Department at Roanoke College. Address all correspondence to the editor, Robert Denham, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia 24153. Copyright © 1997 by Robert D. Denham
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"Rousseau was one of the first to isolate the generic in his life. But 'I'm going to tell the truth about myself' always means: 'I'm trying to grasp the human situation better by examining elements of my own experience'" (Northrop

Frye, Notebook 27, par. 334).

Frye on Frye

Notebook 27

[6] I once consulted the I Ching, using toothpicks instead of yarrow stalks, saying I didn't want an answer to the specific problem but general advice about what to do and be. I got, without qualification or "moving lines," the second or K'un hexagram,¹ meaning, I suppose, that I was to be a "feminine" or receptive writer.

[7] That tiresome link with McLuhan cropped up again in the paper. McLuhan would be on the Chi'en side,² I suppose: his ideas were, he said, "probes"—a male metaphor—without social context. He supplied the context by naive determinism: technology is alleged to create society.

[35] Problems of belief are still with me: for all practical purposes "I don't believe in God" and "I believe in no God" are interchangeable. They seem to me to be very different statements, and the agnostic-atheist distinction doesn't exhaust their difference.

[100] Where does the lost soul go? If I believed in reincarnation I'd have *that* answer, with the proviso that one's consciousness should not be committed to it. (It never is: if it were there'd be memories of former lives, and there isn't, except for young children in India, where it's culturally accepted.)

[112] The main difficulty in my writing, as I've often said, is in translating discontinuous aphorisms into continuous argument. Continuity, in writing as in physics, is probabilistic, and every sequence is a choice among possibilities. Inevitable sequence is illusory, & especially so in logic, where, just as q is always followed by u, so "rigor" is always followed by "mortis."

[115] In some ways I regret having raised the word "science" in AC [*Anatomy of Criticism*]: people think I was starting a critical-establishment move. But I wasn't thinking of academic bureaucrats: I was thinking of confused undergraduates.

[127] If I'm old hat because I'm "logocentric," I want to know why I'm that, and not just be that because I'm ignorant of the possibility of being anything else. The N.T. certainly defines faith in logocentric terms, as a hypostasis and an elenchos³—the latter, it is true, only in an existential context.

[168] I think I can produce a rough draft of a book fairly soon—I mean of the first half—I'm not attending. The second half may come clear in pieces, though I don't have many ideas for the conclusion different from the introduction. Total consciousness and the disappearance of space into interpenetration is about it. What does seem right is that I should get an intelligible draft as soon as possible and then keep it around for a year or two filling in details from reading.

[197] I have very few religious books, & those I have stress the mystics. I have great difficulty, nonetheless, in reading, say, Boehme, because mystics (less true of Boehme than of others) seem so

masochistic: isn't this stuff just wonderful that we have to say we believe anyway? But now Boehme is making more sense as I move closer to light and signature symbolism. Once more, it's not that I "believe" him but that this is the kind of link between the Bible and the creative imagination that I'm looking for.

[246] GC [*The Great Code*] stopped with the decentered Bible, where every sentence, in theory, is a microcosm of the whole structure. Now if we go back to unity, we find a lot of gaps: that's where people like Frazer & Hook & Gaster jump in with their analogues. I suppose my ideas have always revolved around what I used to call the Druid analogy, i.e., the shadow-Bible constructed out of what the Bible does *not* say, a Derridean *supplement*, perhaps, *my* (not Blake's) Bible of hell. The "secular scripture" was a bone thrown to this voracious mutt.

[276] I know that when I suggested the possibility of a human primary concern that overrides all conceivable ideologies I'm flying in the face of Roland Barthes and the rest of the Holy Family. It's high time that sacred cow was turned out to pasture. By the sacred cow I mean the omnipresence of ideology, & the impossibility of ever getting past it.

[280] I still can't make any sense out of Derrida's assertion that metaphysics excludes writing. But of course his *écriture* includes everything that visualizable. I have studied the metaphorical diagrams underlying some metaphysical systems, and however shallow such study may be, it convinced me that *that* is the *écriture* basis of conceptual thought. In GC [*The Great Code*] I showed that the same visualizable structure, more obviously metaphorical and imagistic, informs the Bible. Hence the crucial importance of its apocalyptic conclusion, the epopteia or vision of the Word illuminated by the Spirit "when every eye shall see him" [Revelations 1:7].

[347] I am old and on the shelf now, and much that is going on I no longer understand. I'm reading Samuel Delany, an sf writer interested in semiotics, and he begins with a sentence from Julia Kristeva I can no more understand than I could eat a lobster with its shell on.⁴ I wouldn't discourage anyone from masticating and ruminating such sentences, but I'd like to think (or perhaps only my ego would) that my greater simplicity came from a deeper level than the labyrinth of the brain.

[348] Except that my ego has also intruded into my writing and caused me to write nonsense. My adversary has not, like Job's, written a book, but he's written *in* all my books, and not always on the margins. I'd like to write one book free of the ego before I go. I also wish that my clearest intervals of thought weren't accompanied by laziness and selfishness.

[353] Why am I blocked by this book? Because I've thought of it as a sequel, *adding* to something I did before. *The Great Code* is not volume one of anything: like the Anatomy & the Blake, it's volume zero, the book of fuck-all, the cast-skin, the excreta of dead decades. I wish my new book could take the form of an autobiography or a "science-fiction" romance, but it probably won't: it'll be more like a "deconstruction" of GC [*The Great Code*].

[374] My view of genuine & phony mythology closely parallels the point I got from Milton, that society can't distinguish the prophet above the law from the "heretic" or whatever below it.⁵ The parallel takes me back to the GC [*The Great Code*] point that for Xy [Christianity] the Bible is a work of prophecy (whereas it's primarily law or "instruction" for Judaism).

[375] The first question any audience would ask is, "How do we tell the difference?" And I don't

know. As long as truth is linked to correspondence, all myth, including “gospel truth,” will lie. I’ve caught myself lying to sustain the Frye myth—nothing serious except perhaps to my own moral fibre, but I have. And I’m damned if I see any methodological difference from what the Gospel does.

[392] I’m trying to circle around what I think should be the subject of my next article: what I meant by saying that the statement “I believe / I don’t believe literally in the Virgin Birth,” or any statement of that type, has nothing to do with orthodoxy or heresy, but is merely illiterate. That involves a study of the definition of faith in Hebrews that shifts its psychological focus away from the subject-object duality of “I believe that.” And towards what?

[393] What I’m hoping to get away with is a paper on “The Dialectic of Belief and Vision.”⁶ That’s the resolution of the “is” and “as though” I’ve circled around since at least the AC [*Anatomy of Criticism*]. I suppose one first attacks the conventionalizing of subject and object involved in “I” (who is I?) believe “that” (what’s that?).

[394] After thirty years, I’m back to page one of the *Anatomy*. My opposition to sociological criticism is based on the principle that mythology is prior to ideology, the set of assumptions being always derived from a prior story. The story *says* nothing, and *you* say nothing: you listen to the story. Criticism often assumes that the ideology goes all the way: that there’s no point at which the literary work stops saying things & keeping open the possibility of answer. If it’s obviously moving from statement to myth, well, that’s because of certain social pressures the writer had to conceal as well as reveal his meaning, had to be oblique instead of direct. Nonsense: obliquity is fundamental: it’s the core (psychologically, anyway) of revelation.

[408] I’m no evangelist or revivalist preacher, but I’d like to help out in a trend to make religion interesting and attractive to many people of good will who will have nothing to do with it now. The literalist view of meaning makes those who take it seriously hysterical. Before long they’re saying that serious writers are wallowing in filth, that children should be spanked as often as possible, that not going to church/mass on Sunday is a mortal sin, that it offends God to call one’s bum an ass, & the rest of the dreary rigmarole. I suppose the root of the hysteria is the threat of hell: I note that these people are always hailing with delight something like herpes or AIDS or, of course, any uncertainty connected with evolution or the pill. Under the law, the more religiosity, the less charity.

[409] The dirty-rags lot I have no use for either: I mean the lofty esoteric meaning hidden under the repulsive literal one. The reality of the story, according to the esoteric people, is a moral platitude. Maurice Nicoll, *The New Man*.⁷ With all my self-doubts, I think I can look into myself more concretely than such people can teach me to do. And I’ve always distrusted allegory.

[410] I’ve always felt that *sum pins Aeneas* was not smug but only very sad. Bunyan’s Christian with his burden of sin was travelling light compared to this awful burden of virtue.

[412] There aren’t many issues in contemporary critical theory that I haven’t raised & discussed in my own context. My distinction between prose & associative speech is an example:⁸ prose is the language of *écriture*, & makes no sense without it. It gets influenced by associative rhythms from oral speech and by rhetorical devices from verse in oratory; but there’s no prose without writing.

[426] Why was I so fascinated by Frazer? Because he linked mythology with anxiety about the food

supply—a primary concern. Why am I fascinated by *The White Goddess*, a wrong-headed book in many ways? Because it links mythology with sexual anxiety, a primary concern. Why did I get so fascinated by that sybil G. R. Levy?⁹ Because she linked mythology to shelter & buildings, a primary concern. Food, sex, shelter, *are* the primary concerns, all grouped around God the Father & Nature the Mother.

[427] I wonder about my passion for detective stories: I read a Freudian article once that I thought was right on target about it, & promptly forgot what it said. Too close for comfort, maybe. Survival and its opposite, murder, are also primary concerns.

[448] I think I'm moving toward a re-absorption of Derrida, though on a much bigger scale than my re-absorption of Lacan. I think ecriture is the valley of dry bones in the desert, & that creative reading articulates the bones and restores to them the faculty of direct speech. The direct speech has to be the "full word," containing all possible deconstructions, but it's Elijah added to Moses. This is my "kerygma" point approached from the opposite direction. Moses-law is belief; Elijah-prophecy is vision. Jesus didn't write, but he was written about, & the process recreates him. Derrida's instinct in going to Rousseau as pre-eminently the man who writes about himself was sound, but it makes his case one of special pleading.

[453] I seem to be shocking the local religious community with my notion that "demythologizing" is a doctrine of Antichrist—well, anyway, of W.H. Auden's Herod.¹⁰ Essentially it means "up with ideology," which is why Barth is so tolerant about Bultmann. But of course it's supposed to mean "up with fact & down with fantasy." I have a lot of thinking to do about the paradox that in religion there's no such thing as a fact. The fact is annihilated by the myth. It's Theseus' two worlds of apprehension & comprehension again:¹¹ fact as fact is incorporated in historical & parallel syntheses: fact that's really experience disappears & is reborn as experience. Fact is the grain of wheat that is buried and "dies"—incidentally, what a violation of fact the word "die" is.

[465] I'm giving up the "science" bit in AC [*Anatomy of Criticism*, 7-8, 15-17, 19]: it's impossible to explain to this generation of critics what I mean. I never did have the analogy of the physical sciences in mind: the model was always social science, man studying himself. What I thought of was a merging of criticism with semiotics and linguistics. When critics keep saying that there can't be a science of criticism, what they're really saying is "I can't and won't write this kind of criticism," and I can't say they're wrong because I can't & won't write it myself. People will write it some day, and I thought it might be a good thing to alert the critics of the 50's to the ultimate end of what they were actually doing. But if it's just a prophecy with no present practical use, the hell with it.

[486] My whole conscious life has been purgatorial, a constant circling around the same thing, like a vine going up an elm. I note that I'm repeating even things from earlier pages of this notebook. And "purgatorial" is only a vague hope: maybe I'm not really going up to a final apocalyptic vision but just going in circles, like a senile old man who thinks the two-hundredth repetition of the same old story is new. Perhaps the end is the choking of the host. Well, when it's vertigo to look down and despair to look up, one can only keep going. But there again I'm assuming an up and a down, and assuming I'm going somewhere. Actually I keep revolving around the same place until I've brought off a verbal formulation that I like.

[487] I'm trying to distinguish a millennial vision, which is social & geared to the future (this is what humanity could do if it really tried) from an apocalyptic one, the individual confronted with a

present reality lie has only to step into. The social vision is approximate freedom, & ends in releasing the individual. The individual who is released, however (a) has to go back to society like a Bodhisattva (b) face his own future of death.

[488] October is my month of performance. For my Sesqui sermon¹² I'll try to find something in Paul that expresses the whole-part interchange. Then apply that to the university. The student qua student is a part of the whole: whatever he studies is the center of all knowledge. The alumnus is a whole, an individual, of which the university education he's had is part. University is connected with universe, that staggering anthropomorphism by which the whole of everything "turns around" us. The illiterate pre-Homeric bards worked in a single dimension: with writing we come to the end of a line and "turn back"; so is "verse" born.

[493] Why am I obsessed with detective stories? As I've said earlier [par. 427], I've completely forgotten the Freudian explanation I came across recently. In my own terms (which wouldn't of course exclude Freud) a really top-flight detective story has two levels of meaning throughout. Every sentence, every fact given, may be potentially a "clue": it has its surface meaning in the narrative, and its ideological meaning as a part of what you "see" in the final *cognitio*. Also, of course, the descent of the police as a Last Judgment symbol, searching for the guilt that's in everyone, and the scapegoat as the primal anxiety symbol.

Notebook 1997.1

[52] Why do I set up such a deafening clatter of inner talking in my mind? Probably for the same reason that villagers gossip and urban people intrigue: to keep myself reassured about the reality of the ordinary world. If I'd shut up and listen I might be able to hear other things. It corresponds to the senses' filtering out and giving us the reality we can take. My whole life is words: nothing is of value in life except finding verbal formulations that make sense. Yet the great secret in reserve is something you can't reach unless you shut up. That's what Zen has to communicate. And how does it communicate? By flooding the world with books about silence. Words are to us what water is to a fish: dwelling-house of being, says Heidegger.¹³ Yuh. The real temple is the tent.

[54] How to distinguish the clatter & chatter from my central work with words? No real boundary; but I know well enough when it's nothing *but* chatter. I can't turn it all off, but I could, perhaps, get more control of it. And perhaps after a couple of years of trying to shut off babble I might get a second or two when I'd realize what genuine quiet would be. Even before that, a quieter mind might increase the intensity of experience. The aim would be the receptivity of the infant Samuel [1 Samuel 3], but I don't expect that (though I'm not excluding the possibility of learning things in other ways).

[66] I talk very well; it would be nice to know what I was talking about, but if I did I might stop writing, as St. Thomas Aquinas did when he died. If it's necessary for me to know I'll be given the knowledge.

[88] I am about to write the world's profoundest poem, with apologies to William James, the only one who has touched my level of genius:

Hogamus, higamus,
 God is polygynous.
 Higamus, hogamus,

Christ was androgynous.

[212] Once in Pakistan it began to rain: a man from Belfast walking with me had an umbrella & spread it over me, saying he was glad to help preserve “a better brain than my own.”¹⁴ There are many obvious reasons why I should find such a remark irritating: the most important, perhaps, is that I feel that within the very wide area of normal intelligence I think all brains are pretty well alike. I have always loved music better than words, but I think I’d have been a second-rate musician, a commonplace church organist. In other areas, like business, I’m a dunce. We all start from scratch: the immense differences in where we arrive are largely a matter of luck, plus conditioning of various kinds. That’s one reason why one *has* to believe in a God who knows what people are and pays little attention to what they do. (Why do I leave out the crucial word?)¹⁵

[271] I’m not too worried about my compulsive reading of detective stories: until the shape of the whole book is utterly clear in my mind, serious reading would only distract me. Two very central ideas I’ve left out are (1) the progress from mythical to kerygmatic is identical with the progress from type to antitype (2) exploiting imitative harmony & the like is verbal *play*, magic released from the futile work of trying to effect the world out there.

[291] The phrase “God is dead” may have made some sense in the Nietzschean context, but as a slogan it’s sheer idiocy. It’s far more likely that in the twenty-first century the birds in the trees will be singing “Man is dead, thank God.” What really is dead is the antithesis between a subjective man and an objective God. Nietzsche, by the way, was a power and will worshipper, and because everything man *does* goes in a circle, he *had* to wind up with his identical-recurrence horseshit.

[333] I must be coming into my Finland station: a great swarm of things, such as Wallace Stevens’ “Description without Place” are finding their right places. Still, I think I should continue my policy of reading nothing but thrillers until a draft of the 8th chapter is completed.

[407] Two things, one limited & the other big. First, in the *Anatomy* I passed beyond “new” or rhetorical criticism (without knowing much about it) because I was dissatisfied with its lack of any sense of context as a part of literary meaning. Right now I’m passing beyond post-structural criticism (without knowing much about that either) as a mode with no context either, but simply a reinforcing of “anything goes” in literature itself with an “anything goes” in the critical approach to it. I don’t think I want an explicit reference to this (there wasn’t one in the *Anatomy*) much less any hostile comment (if I did that I’d have to read more than I want to of the stuff). But in my view of the Bible as a model of kerygmatic criticism, which I think of as getting past the imaginative creation for its own sake without going back to the old ideological dialectics, I think I’m passing beyond “deconstruction” into a reconstruction no longer structural. (Actually that was all in GC [*The Great Code*] for those who could read it there.)

[443] Considering what I’ve learned from Shakespeare, there isn’t much from him so far. Leontes kills the anima inside him, but she revives at the words “our Perdita is found,” although Perdita, like the second female in MT [*The Mental Traveller*], has to come to the man she loves. Each man kills the woman he loves, but finds her alive again after she’s been hidden. The *Tempest* world is submarine & temporal: the renewal of the previous world, symbolized by Milan, doesn’t amount to much, except for the seed of something genuinely renewed in the F-M [Ferdinand-Miranda] marriage, the vision of the world saved from the flood, and the chess game, whatever that is. Perhaps chess, like the sword-mirror-purple flower complex in Yeats’s dialogue, is “emblematical of love & war,” the

Adonis world caught up & sublimated.

[444] God knows I know how much of this is blither: it makes unrewarding reading for the most part. But I have to do it: it doesn't clarify my mind so much as lead to some point of clarification that (I hope) gets into the book. Hansel & Gretel's trail of crumbs.

[477] I am not (directly) concerned with the familiar complaint that the elaboration of critical theory makes literature less accessible to the student instead of more so, but I am concerned with a direct & inductive response to literary experience.

[479] I'm reading a book that impressed me, Gopi Krishna's *Kundalini*. The introduction writer says we in the West need a new vocabulary for spiritual reality,¹⁶ a thing I strongly felt in writing Chapter Four (and might perhaps add). Even the commentary is rewarding, though it's by a Jungian.¹⁷ (Note: during the war I had racist prejudices against Germans, feeling that there was nothing so dumb as a dumb Kraut. When Jung started talking about Jewish consciousness and the dangers of entering into Oriental attitudes, the farts of a dumb Kraut polluted the air: I think he outgrew that, at least in that autobiography,¹⁸ but (as with Spengler) I distrusted the dumb Kraut for a long time.)

[480] Anyway, Kundalini woke up in him accidentally and almost literally buggered him: I wonder whether prayer, the sacraments and the like aren't really forms of *seduction*. Masturbation too, considering where she is.

[481] One thing the Jungian said was that there's in each of us a collective mind (this sounds like something quite different from the collective unconscious).¹⁹ I suppose it's originally the hallucinating voice of wisdom, urging caution & prudence & obeying social conditioning. It chatters and jibbers incessantly inside me whenever I'm writing, and is a bigger hazard than the steaks frying in my ears. That's why I can't read hostile critiques of me: most of them come from people who have nothing but a collective mind, so all they do is externalize all the monkey chatter I keep hearing anyway. Whether this collective mind is in Jung or not, it's certainly in Samuel Butler as well as in me.

[512] I wish I could express this business of concept as *frozen* or *stuck* metaphor more clearly: in particular I wish I could convey the sense of utter unreality the phrase: "Is there, or is there not, a God[?]" has for me. The disagreement between theist & atheist is a dispute over the verbal formulas that have no meaning. That's been said as far back as logical positivism, except that they thought that only the theistic view was meaningful, which means they got nowhere.

[517] I'm trying to reread Kierkegaard now: I don't find him an attractive personality, because he seems to play the same cat-and-mouse game with his reader that he did with poor Regina—and that God played with Abraham and Job. He's a trickster writer, in short, and interests me because a literary critic sees him as doing the opposite of what he thought he was doing, obliterating the barriers between the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. That is, he's clearly a "metaliterary" writer, like Dostoevsky, Kafka and perhaps Nietzsche (well, Mallarmé too).

[518] I probably don't understand his conception of repetition, & perhaps I'm not intended to. I wish I could be as confident as Karl Barth that I'm "forbidden" to deal with things that don't interest me anyway. But perhaps, if repetition is eternity, as he says, maybe it's that apocalyptic contrast to Nietzsche's identical recurrence, which is the same thing as the orthodox Christian

doctrine of hell. Dante's hell after death is not part of divine revelation: it's exactly what it seems to be, an invention of the devil, as long as the devil is in "his own place," the traitor at the bottom of the human mind. When properly externalized, hell becomes an aspect of human life, and that's where divine revelation comes in. The ferret doesn't know it's ferocious and "cruel," man does, and the quotation marks around cruel fall off when the ferocity is conscious.

[529] To start with my own situation: I think in cores or aphorisms, as these notebooks indicate, and all the *labor* in my writing comes from trying to find verbal formulas to connect them. I have to wait for the cores to emerge: they seem to be born and not made. Because of this, continuity is associated with moral duty, as in Coleridge. This is old stuff. But *is* there a kerygmatic style. What's confusing me just here is the Kantian "the critical path is alone open," which historically means that the conceptual idiom is now permanently aware of a fully matured descriptive idiom contemporary with it. This quality of awareness recurs in the distinction between the genuine rhetoric that respects conceptual and descriptive integrity and the mob rhetoric that howls them down. It doesn't have to be conscious awareness: usually it's better if it isn't.

[532] Perhaps I can't get this book really clear until I've faced the complexities in the question: what is the *critical* idiom; what am I writing?

[535] For some time now I've been scolding myself for not reading a lot of the "good books" on my shelves, or opening them and not having the guts to finish them. Then I take book after book from my shelves and find that I've read it carefully all through, with marginal comments that prove I have. What gives? Is senility just the flipside of human existence?

[538] My own kerygmatic anthology would include 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, some fables of Dostoevsky and Kafka, the opening of Buber's I and Thou, some Rimbaud & Holderlin. *Zarathustra* I should disqualify for trying too hard. This is a purely subjective list of no value: I made it because it shows that *no* kerygmatic canon will ever be drawn up: it would be impossible to find a committee to agree on the selections.

[542] It's curious the vogue for deconstruction in America today: there's something hysterical about it, something out of focus. My own view that it makes it possible for anybody to become a critic, or at any rate to produce critical articles, may be part of the point. It's curiously antithetical to the Zen Buddhist vogue at the other end of the intellectual society. Koans, parables, & the like, are designed to stop you talking all around the subject & looking for additional meanings. They don't, of course: they just add one more convention to literature and keep yacking about it. Still, it's interesting that a Zen master confronted with the logic of supplement would reach for his stick. Perhaps at the back of the deconstructive critical mind is some hazy analogy with atom-smashing: eventually we'll break down my gross accumulations of rhetoric into protons, hadrons, quarks. I think that's a false analogy.

[546] Without infinity of hope, we have only the accuser's record: human history is the record of the only animal in nature more repulsive than nature. We can hope for nothing in either man or nature: there has to be an apocalypse within man. I personally don't see why humanity still exists without some power that cares more about it than it does about itself, as history records nothing persistent or continuous except the impulse to self-destruction. But that's not an argument: the principle is that everything charitable makes for the elimination of the sacred-secular antithesis in Word & Spirit. Spirit (*esprit*, *Geist*) can be freely used with no suggestion of the "supernatural," but it doesn't

eliminate such suggestions either.

[553] My present hunch is that I have to write about a hundred pages on each chapter of Part Two and then start cutting. I've got a hundred pages on three of the chapters, and the feeling keeps nagging that there *are* only three chapters, following the Trinity rhythm rather than my two creations, two falls, & four heathen gods.²⁰ Naturally, I'm still kicking like a steer. There MUST be four bloody chapters: I just don't know enough, that's all.

[566] In my detective-story frenzies I've read Ngaio Marsh's *Light Thickens*, her last book. Very so-so story, one of the large number set in a theatre, but the performance is *of Macbeth*, and she's quite eloquent about the unique compulsiveness of that play.²¹ The reason I've given elsewhere: its convention is the Tudor mystique about the king as Messiah-figure, which lifts it out of the category of murder stories. We say we can't "believe *in*" this convention any more, which is irrelevant. We can't believe *in* Dante's hell either. Literature is a mass of fallacies from that point of view. The myth is the ideology presented as imaginative possibility. That should go at the end of Three, with the gospel myth of the Passion holding the personal *plus* of the myth. I know what I mean: I haven't found the words yet.

[567] Ngaio Marsh is a kiwi, & this story has a Maori who uses the word *tapu* a good deal. When I was in New Zealand I noticed this word (Usually "taboo") which identifies the holy and the forbidden ("Tapu Papiia [Paipera] means the Bible). That's the metaphor represented by the angel with the flaming sword over Paradise, whom Blake says can be driven off by a prick.

[568] I was talking to a friend about the blocks I have with this book, and he asked me if I had any major projects following it. I said no, and he suggested that that could be the trouble: the self-preserved instinct balks at the swan-song ritual. Maybe, though I have reasons for not thinking so. But, apart from a collection of already written essays, what do I have? I've always wanted to write "my own" book of *pensees*, not like Pascal's but more like Anatole France's *Jardin d'Epicure* or (I've just discovered) Connolly's Palinurus book. Neither A.F. nor Connolly is a first-rate mind, so these are examples, not models. Do I have a first-rate mind? Perhaps in some respects I do, but I lack education (i.e. my range of interests is exceedingly narrow). And a book of that type depends on a pretty superior mind that wouldn't instantly start to date. (The model is Nietzsche's *Gaya Scienza*, probably). The disadvantage of this project is that it can't be planned.

[569] I notice that passages in Connolly's book that are for him fantasy, things he can't possibly "believe in," are far more profoundly true than his expressions of what he thinks he thinks. Similarly with Pascal, who says great things when the shitty bastard he lets take charge most of the time isn't listening, or at least isn't censoring.

[574] The main sticking point of my book is that I don't know what the Derrida people are talking about, and am too lazy & cowardly to find out. I *don't* know why "God is dead" should become (so ironically) a dogma; I don't know what's wrong with being "logocentric." My first tentative guess is that deconstruction is a Lenten criticism, where the Word wanders in the desert, most vulnerable to temptation, as Eliot says, never making contact with the Spirit. The contact with Spirit is like two gases that will burn combining to form the liquid water that won't.

[575] I suggested in San Francisco that there were so many critical schools because of an assumption that everyone employed on a university teaching staff ought to be a "productive" scholar, and the

variety of schools provided a prefabricated series of models.²² Many of these schools, such as feminism, are only temporary ideological trends: I note that even such broken-winded old nags as Yvor Winters and F.R. Leavis are taken out of pasture. The whole notion of “productive” is an assembly-line notion that is now being outgrown. A scholar should take a *creative* interest in his subject, and what will make the “productive” compulsion less universal will be the rise in adult education.

[593] I think, with a modicum of that horrible obscene four-letter word (ugh) WORK, these four chapters will come off all right. Eight will simply extend the ascending ladder into evolutionary & other views that start with nature & end with man. The intensifying of consciousness bit & the four levels of time & space will fit into the end.

[594] *Now* what do I do?

[595] Well, first you finish the fucking book. The difference between [chapters] Seven & Eight is a difference between Ore & Los. Seven is revolutionary upheaval & culbute, the rising of the repressed; Eight is about education in the largest sense, running from wisdom through a sequence of social models (myths) to participating apocalypse. Seven is where Nietzsche goes with his Oedipus & Dionysus complex. What I haven't got clear yet is the role of eating in Seven.

[621] The “publish or perish” syndrome created a variety of prefabricated formulas for enabling sterile scholars to become productive: they were aided by a recrudescence of the old myth-as-lie syndrome. I don't want to attack or dismiss any genuine development, but there is certainly going to be a text in my class,²³ however enormously flexible and approximate the “establishing” of that text is to be. Texts, starting with the Bible, expand in meaning because they mean first of all what they say, & because they mean that they can mean infinitely more. We've never believed that poets really do mean (start with meaning) what they say.

[627] I don't want to leave the impression of moral wimpishness, and I wonder if I can get away without a conclusion putting all this on a basis of humane values? Values, like God, come first as creative assumptions, not last as judges.

[654] A writer can write only what takes shape in his mind: but *why* certain themes & subjects do take shape at certain times is something my kind of mythical geography can sometimes explain.

[683] In conformity with your usual policy of leaving out all the obvious things that any fool would have the sense to put in first, you seem to have omitted the whole *locus amoenus* theme from [chapters] 5 and 6.

[728] What fascinated me about Spengler when I read him was the vision of every historical phenomenon being a symbol of all the other phenomena contemporary with it. Every age presents a symbolically interlocking group of phenomena: I suppose that's what the word “culture” means. I reacted against that, because of the over-dominance of that dimension of history, but it really means that the narrative of history can be halted at any moment and looked at as a thematic stasis.

[731] The nub sentence of the whole book: what difference does God make in human life? has still to be articulated. Original sin means that there is no way of separating means from ends, good from bad, vision from history, without God. I'm writing in Russia at the moment,²⁴ and in churches or

cathedrals still functioning as such, listening to the liturgy and the murmured responses from the dense crowds, I can only feel that in 70 years the essential principles of Christianity have been compromised far less than the principles of Leninism. Lenin hated religion because the church of his clay was inseparable from the Czarist regime, but the same perversion overtook his revolution, as yesterday's radical became today's bureaucrat (if after Stalin, any radicals survived to do so).

[741] Some writers in Canada describe me as a “thematic” critic, with the implication that that is the wrong kind of critic to be. But it is only “thematic” criticism, of whatever kind, that actually discovers anything about literature.

[745] My next book has the central theme of education and Utopia. The axiom that a Utopia is really a projection of a theory of education has been borne out so often that I don't need to query it: just find examples of it. I have four papers, on More, on Castiglione, on Butler's Life and Habit, on William Morris,²⁵ to draw on, along with a lot of intuitions about Plato and the symposium form of dialogue. My present question is whether it belongs to the *Great Code* series.

[746] I also feel that my circle of arts, the conception of painting as essentially a “cave” or unborn art, my hazy intuition about music as one of the verbal languages, also belongs. I used to get excited about this ever since I was setting and marking essays on More's Utopia and thinking about the encyclopaedic visions of Elyot, Spenser, etc. Also the greatest form for prose being the Utopia (Greville on Sidney).²⁶ Some of this of course I've gone over. I'd like to make the central metaphor the centre-circumference interchange and the whole-part interaction.

[753] I have just had an itchy and uncomfortable eczema skin eruption all over me. I suspect a partly “psychosomatic” factor: I'm the most irritable and irascible of men; I'm aware of the folly of expressing this in front of innocent people, so the irritability comes out in this form. To compare small things with great: were Job's boils his body's protest against his patience? If so, something in him agreed with his wife.

[772] My big books are like lakes or oceans, and my “parerga,” as Sparshott calls them,²⁷ rivers flowing into them. My Shakespeare criticism didn't flow into WP [*Words with Power*]²⁷—that was mainly a Blake & Romantic book—but I think this book will be full of Shakespeare. Historical process vs. drama are the theme of the history plays; Montaigne's Utopian paradoxes comes into T [*The Tempest*]. Even the two-world structure of MND [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*] seems to belong. In studying Shakespeare I constantly have the illusion of a definitive comprehension of the play and a definitive rendering of it in critical language. Half my brain knows that this is nonsense; the other half knows that there's some reality there, if we think in terms of wordless possession rather than verbal translation.

[774] Regarding things like silly reviews of me: what is important about free speech in a democracy is not only that everyone has a right to express an opinion, however ill-considered, but that fools should have full liberty to speak so that they can be recognized to be fools.

[799] I'm haunted constantly by the feeling that I don't know anything; then I read scholarly books & wonder if my hunches & guesses are really so inferior to their knowledge. Now I'm wondering if I could explore the Great Doodle. Erikson says little boys make tower structures & little girls enclosure ones.²⁸ Islamic countries have the minaret & the mosque; Christian ones the bell-tower and the basilica; Toronto the C.N. tower & the retractable Skydome. I've written about the axis

mundi & only hinted at the G.D. [Great Doodle]. I am not a historian: I'm an architect of the spiritual world. I should start with the female or group aspect of God, the Schekinah. The "mankind" synecdoche affects all the spiritual world. The feminists keep yapping about Sophia, but I don't know what they know about her. Maybe God's intelligence is a group of emanations of wisdom.

[805] I've so often been asked, but can't you do anything creative like writing poetry or fiction? My creative powers, I've said, have to do with professional rhetoric, on both sides of myth-metaphor. To carry this farther I'd need a distinction between specific (Biblical) and general kerygma. Though that wouldn't help if the latter were just inspirational. It would have to be something part of specific kerygma though not its precise context. A lot of kerygma in the Bible is faked anyway: the "still small voice" [1 Kings 19:12], for example.

[806] Opus Perhaps Posthumous: Working Title: Quintessence of Dust. Four Essays.

[822] I wonder if I could be permitted to write my *Twilight* book,²⁹ not as evidence of my own alleged wisdom but as a "next time" (Henry James) book, putting my spiritual case more forcefully yet, and addressed to still more readers. I wonder about a "Century of Meditations": if there isn't time for that, perhaps a "theme with variations," where after 32-3 meditations a central theme is repeated. Some of the meditations might be fictional, like my early efforts.

[823] Thus: God exists in us and we in him, the metaphor of Paul where part and whole keep interchanging, might be the second announcement of the theme, while "we exist in nature and nature exists in us" could be the opening statement.

[824] Perhaps what I'm after is a series of gigantic "commissionings." It is, after all, a statement as trivial as the Diabelli waltz—I mean the nature one.

[825] Yes, I will pray for inspiration to complete another book, closer to "Power" than ever before. As long as I don't confuse power with dogmatic emphasis. The Spirit will translate what I ask for. Buber says the real devil doesn't deny or defy God: he just never makes up his mind.

Notebook 1993.1

[199] The primary thing to remember about this book is that I am free. That is, free to write the kind of book I like without being tied to sequels (though, being as I think about the Bible, there will be strong connections with GC [*The Great Code*], as my preface suggests).

[200] I don't believe affirmations, either my own or other people's. The motto I've chosen for the book (quique amavit cres amet)³⁰ represents a hope but not a faith: I can't pin down my faith so precisely. What I believe are the verbal formulas I work out that seem to make sense on their own & seem to me something more objective than merely getting something said the way I want it said. I hope (but again it's not faith) that this is the way the Holy Spirit works in me as a writer.

[267] I don't think the doleful mood recorded [earlier] is the final answer. It's common knowledge that religious movements are ideological, and closely parallel political & economic ones. The seminal but immensely overstated parallel of Weber between Protestantism & the work ethic is an example.³¹

The other side of this is that theological structures provide diagrammatic models for political & economic programs (cf. the ideologies of the 17th c. English revolutions). I am not interested in the relation of religion and literature, where there may be any number of “either-or” contrasts and dilemmas—aporias, we knowledgeable people call them—but in the relation of the Bible & Western literature.

[396] Perhaps all this last note means is that I haven’t yet really understood Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. But I don’t know: I have no interest or belief in absolute knowledge: I may be climbing the same spiral mountain, but by a different path. The hypostasis of the hoped-for, the elenchos of the unseen [Hebrews 11:1]. If I could articulate that in my own words, I could burn the straw and pass on (I’m thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas on his deathbed.)³² Hegel is a Gnostic, of course, and while I have a great respect for Gnostics, I don’t altogether trust them. At *their* point of death there’s a separation of physical body and spirit, but their spirit is patterned on the soul or mind, & isn’t a real spiritual body.

[398] Now I feel I must do something on Samuel Butler,³³ even if I don’t get it done in time for Jerry’s Festschrift.³⁴ I can always dedicate it to him anyway. A book with More & Castiglione weighing down one end and Morris & Butler weighing down the other would be a well unified book. More accurately, they would be four essays on the relation of education to a social model. *Utopia*, *Cortegiano*, *News from Nowhere* and *The Way of All Flesh* (I think, rather than the *Erewhon* books) would be the main foci.

[399] I’ve also been considering an article on the ghost stories of the 19th c. occult (no other century produced ghost stories worth a damn). The main focus of interest, for reasons I’ve given elsewhere, would be Henry James. Curious that the only one who wrote better ghost stories was also named James.³⁵

[400] But as I started thinking about that I got increasingly attracted to an article on “Fairies & Elementals.”³⁶ In studying the “Faerie” theme in Spenser I became aware of the conception of a world occupying the same time & space as England but differing in moral perspective. That’s different, though. What I’m interested in is mainly:

1. The Paracelsian tradition of the spirits of the elements in Shakespearian comedy & romance (MND [*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*] and T [*The Tempest*] particularly) and in early Milton, especially *Comus*. I have always had the feeling that there was something to be pinned down here that I never did pin down. The parody in the *Rape of the Lock* should be noted too.

2. Romantic developments of this in the Germans (Novalis especially) and in George MacDonald. Morris’ romances of course, early & late. Here we shade off into the occult & ghostly.

3. Lewis Carroll’s Sylvie & Bruno, one of the most off-putting books in the language. But its conception of a “fairy” world close to children, dreams, and everything related to what the theosophists call the “astral” will bear a good deal of thinking about. I suppose Bruno’s relentless & nauseating cuteness is his way of coming to terms with little boys: Alice is never cute: that’s one of the things that’s so wonderful about her, and neither really is Sylvie.

4. John Crowley’s *Little, Big*, a book the author handed to me at Smith, seems to know something about this: two of his characters are called Sylvie and Bruno, and the name “Bruno” suggests memory theatres.³⁷ Also A.E. Waite’s *Quest of the Golden Stairs*, another superficially off-putting book.

[580] I can't say what I really think here: I'd kill the book if I did. I think social feminism, genuine social & intellectual equality between men & women, a centrally important issue. Feminist *literary* criticism is mostly heifer-shit. Women frustrated by the lack of outlet for their abilities turn to pedantic nagging, and the nagging pedantry of most feminist writing is a reflection of frustration unaccompanied by any vision of transcending it. As Newman resignedly said of English literature, it will always have been Protestant. Perhaps female (not feminist) writing has a great future, but that doesn't make its effort to rewrite the past any less futile.

[581] In the previous note I had to stop & think before writing the commonplace "bullshit." I must look up the passage in D.H. Lawrence where a white peacock is associated with women: I remember the phrase "all vanity and screech and defilement." I think it's in *Lady Chatterley*: it's not in *The White Peacock* itself. But if I remember correctly it's still a peacock, not a peahen.³⁸

[645] Why am I writing all this out? Because the ideas have excited me for fifty years (e.g. Dumézil's red-white-blue men and Plato's classes, though I don't believe that set-up is just Aryan). Montaigne on the Cannibals and the beginning of the natural-society debate, with its Tempest overtones. But while all the elements are rooted deeply in my mind, where am I going with it all? Is it really the third book in the Bible series, incorporating both my Utopia article and the educational-contract one the *New Statesman* reprinted?³⁹ Is the educational contract in the Bible? (Yes, it's part of wisdom).

[673] Some of my readers say that my approach lacks rigor; I hope it also lacks rigor mortis. (If this goes in⁴⁰ the reaction to Kermode goes out: I'm sunk if I start slapping all the mosquitoes. One has to sacrifice one's blood to insects who need it to fertilize their own wretched little lives; but in this area I should have some control over the itch.)

Notebook 1993.2-6

[10] I've got stuck in my noddle the two names Prometheus and Hermes, and am beginning to feel that, apparently just for reasons of symmetry, there must be a second cycle incorporating the bulk of the imagery of modern poetry that doesn't get into the Eros-Adonis cycle.⁴¹ I'm putting it in the strongest terms a hostile critic would apply: because I've got a pretty pattern to apply, the facts have simply got to conform to it, and naturally with that attitude I'll succeed sooner or later. I'm familiar with that kind of shit. You can't be original unless you work with hunches and treat them exactly as a paranoiac would do. Of course I find what I want to find in the texts themselves: what else does the double meaning of "invention" mean?

[173] Then again, there's the dialectic of self and persona. I don't ordinarily think much of myself as a public figure, but when I do see myself on television and realize what other people see, which is no more what I feel myself to be than a cigar-store Indian, I realize the kind of contrast involved in my own separation of the Jesus within each potential resurrection and the Jesus of the gospels.

[184] I've been reading Loomis and A.E. Waite on the Grail.⁴² Loomis often seems to me an erudite ass: he keeps applying standards of coherence and consistency to twelfth-century poets that might apply to Anthony Trollope. Waite seems equally erudite and not an ass. But I imagine Grail scholars would find Loomis useful and Waite expendable, because Waite isn't looking for anything that would interest them. It's quite possible that what Waite is looking for particularly doesn't exist—secret traditions, words of power, an esoteric authority higher than that of the Catholic Church—and yet the *kind* of thing he's looking for is so infinitely more important than Loomis' trivial games

of descent from Irish sources where things get buggered up because the poets couldn't distinguish cors meaning body from cors meaning horn. Things like this show me that I have a real function as a critic, pointing out that what Loomis does has been done and is dead, whereas what Waite does, even when mistaken, has hardly begun and is very much alive. Not that this is new.

[209] The Feuerbach principle, that man creates God in his own image, is the one that all religions apply to all other religions except themselves. But it can of course be applied to them by others. I haven't the least objection to having it said that my religion is essentially my own creation. I feel that it must be that way because my understanding of anything is finite; but I think the position I do hold is one that enables me to crawl a little farther and discover a bit more. Faced with a Jew, a Moslem, a Catholic, an atheistic humanist, I should not deny for a second that they also have positions from which to advance. All this is very elementary: one assumption I've so far left aside. I am what I am because of certain historical events: the Protestant Reformation, the Anglican settlement, the Methodist movement, the transfer of religious energies to the New World. Hence if I express a tolerance that grants to any position the capacity of moving nearer whatever truth is, I am also annihilating history, assuming that all religious theory and practice today begins in a kind of apocalypse in which past history has exhausted its significance as such. The nineteenth-century obsession with conversion, mainly from Protestant to Catholic positions, was a desperate effort to keep history continuous: I think it no longer works, if it ever did.

[257] I was lecturing on Biblical wisdom and Ecclesiastes today, saying that "there is nothing new under the sun" is a statement about knowledge, while "there is a time for all things" is a statement about experience, are means that in that realm everything is new. A very bright girl asked me about this, realizing that the vision of the natural cycle with which the book opens coincided with my creation myth of the revolving mother. In answering her I had to say something I had not thought of before: that as soon as you say "there's a time for all things" you've invoked the creating father and his appearance in time.

[258] A second student asked me about the difference between analogy and metaphor. I said that such a statement as "God is love" could mean that love, a mere finite word, was being used as an analogy to something infinite, or that the two were being metaphorically identified. It then occurred to me that the metaphorical meaning was only possible in an incarnational context. Useful people, students.

[509] The first two chapters [of *Words with Power*], outlining the introduction and general position, are in red folders.⁴⁵ The next two, outlining the authoritarian and revolutionary universes, are in orange ones. The positive analogy point goes in the first two. Then, I suppose, Prometheus-Eros would be yellow (we'll pretend it's gold) and Adonis-Hermes green. Nine and ten, the space and time of the reintegrated universe, are blue and the last two, dealing with the Bible as apocryphon, the presence of the written word in all this, and the inter-penetration that is the experiential result, are purple. I always abandon these schemes sooner or later, and they bugger up my notes, but I seem to have to go through them.

[519] Well: in teaching my graduate course I always felt a bit self-conscious in spending so much time on the Eliot Quartets: they sounded so *damn* Christian, and I wasn't trying to convert anybody. But if they're on the direct line from Narcissus to the escape from Narcissus, alias the Bible, they make more sense.

[691] I have naturally found Sparshott's violent critique of *The Great Code*⁴⁴ very disheartening reading, and have wondered ever since if I should simply abandon the idea of a second volume as something that perhaps always was a mirage. But that would be weak. The cliché about such things is not to take it personally, but it depends on what one has to take. The remarks about an old man's book, where the word "senile" is being suppressed with so much difficulty, remind me of how little time I have to accomplish anything at all now, and surely one hardly needs such reminders. The main line of what he says is already in my own introduction, of course, as Peter Richardson, who liked the book quite a little, remarked.⁴⁵ One reason for writing the book I did that isn't in the introduction is that the legend of the book was becoming intolerable: publishing *The Great Code* might disappoint people who were looking for something definitive, but that was better than being crippled for life in the way that Woodhouse was.

[768] The third part of the book deals, very approximately, with the worlds beyond space and time respectively, if by that time "respectively" is still a possible kind of approach. The third part is to be called "The Cycle of the Spirit," and deals with what corresponds to Incarnation and Resurrection in the Word—"inspiration" at the beginning and some kind of upward transformation or metamorphosis at the end. Marvels and mysteries would go here, if I knew any. If the Person they're offered to wants these chapters, they'll no doubt get written.⁴⁶ The mystery of inspiration is not what is popularly thought to be that, but the whole mandala question, as Jung would call it: the question of how far our frame of seeing produces what is believed to be there. The mystery of metamorphosis of course brings me around to the matter of what speaks to us across our own death, which I dodged in GC [*The Great Code*].

Notebook 1991-28.4b

[28] When I talked to the doctors at Mt. Sinai I found myself improvising a thesis I didn't understand at the time.⁴⁷ I said the sympathies and antipathies in nature that underlay Galenic medicine don't exist as that, but similar forces may exist in the mind. I thought of mother after a post-parturitional disease following Vera's birth:⁴⁸ she had what sounded (ironic for a woman who never touched a drop of alcohol in her life) just like delirium tremens. She said that reading Scott's novels, dropped on her by my grandfather, brought her round. Scott in those days was the acme of serious secular reading. What I felt was that the plots of formulaic fiction conventions could act as a sort of counter-delirium. Similarly the O.T. God may be a counter delirium to a nation trampled on by foreigners. I know how vague this sounds, but there's something that may emerge.

[49] I keep having a vision of a guide or preacher or some professional haranguer standing in front of a war cemetery in Flanders with a million crosses behind him and explaining how human aggressiveness has such essential survival value.

Notebook 1991-39.8a

[1] I've been asked by Emmanuel College to do a series of three lectures for their alumni reunion in May of 1990. Passing over the question of whether or not it's an imposition to dump an assignment of that size on me with five months' notice, I'd like to make it one of my three-lecture books providing a pocket-sized summary of my GC and WP theses, more particularly the latter, in the way that the Masseys [*The Educated Imagination*] were a pocket-sized *Anatomy*.

[2] The first lecture would deal with the central issue of both books, the fact that in the Bible the

prevailing language is myth and metaphor, and that consequently the literal meaning of the Bible is the poetic meaning. What I've started in the double-space pages will do, I think, with the usual ten-times rewriting. I think I can get around being pointlessly controversial in the Catholic-Protestant area if I stick to the fact that the literal meaning is the metaphorical meaning, which actually everyone with any sanity believes anyway. The educated Catholic laity doesn't believe in the autonomous infallible, non-contradictory church any more, and even the upper hierarchy only asserts that it does out of habit. Well, out of desire to maintain power.

[16] The theme I want for the third lecture takes me into fields I'm ill prepared to enter, and unless I can connect it with something already central in me I don't know how I can complete it in time. The general idea is that harmony, reconciliation (whether of God and man or of two arguments) and agreement are all terms relating to prepositional language. The poetic counterpart is what I've been calling interpenetration, the concrete order in which everything is everywhere at once. Whitehead's SMW [*Science and the Modern World*] says this in so many words:⁴⁹ I must have got it from there originally, though I thought I got it from Suzuki's remarks about the Avatamsaka Sutra.⁵⁰ (I can't make any sense out of these infernal Sutras: they seem designed for people who really can't read). The general line is, I think, anti-Hegelian: Hegel showed how the thesis involved its own antithesis, although I think the "synthesis" has been foisted on him by his followers. Anyway, the expansion to absolute knowledge is too close to what Blake calls the smile of a fool.⁵¹ My goal would be something like absolute experience rather than absolute knowledge: in experience the units are unique, and things don't agree with each other; they mirror each other.

[19] My marginal note on Whitehead's "everything is everywhere at once" refers to Plotinus V, 8, the essay on intellectual beauty, but I don't know why I said that.⁵² But then I make very little of Plotinus anyway.

[20] I have a feeling that this lecture involves history, my view of history, the attacks that have made on me about my alleged lack of historical sense. True, I regard the Marxist historical process as a superstition: it's betrayed millions of people who tried to believe in it, and it's a dead cock that can't fight any more. It's also been revealed to be another aspect of the grotesque and horrible substitution of progress: starve everybody now and our great-grandchildren will be better fed, except that the present establishment is making sure they won't be.

[21] I've realized that my attraction to Spengler, which puzzled me so at first, was the result of divining in him the principle of historical inter-penetration: everything that happens is a symbol of everything else that's contemporary with it. Such a perspective helps one to escape from the abstracting of culture, including the arts and sciences, from what I've called the dissolving phantasmagoria of political events.

[35] Schedule: finish the first lecture, which deals with a thesis quite familiar to you, is already clear in your mind, and is extant only in a book not yet published. That will do for Carleton.⁵³ Meanwhile, in what time you have, finish the second lecture, and that may be all you'll be in a shape to give to Emmanuel: if the shape of three becomes clear, give it from notes only.

[38] Anyone who's lived as long as I have can't possibly believe that any society is going to do anything sensible for more than the time it takes to break a New Year's resolution. The current news from Eastern Europe is wonderful.⁵⁴ I'm waiting however for the hangover. Something sensible may be forced out of people when the alternative is starvation; but all programs of positive action are

perverse, like Lenin's.

[39] They talk about liberation theology. We've spent centuries realizing that order and authority are not as necessary as panic and selfishness thought they were: spiritual authority, which is order without authority, is all we need. I wonder how the same principle applies to what's called liberation theology: only spiritual liberation will be any good, even though it has to be built on physical concern.

[42] In the summer of 1951, in Seattle, I had an illumination about the passing from the oracular into the witty: a few years later, on St. Clair Ave. I had another about the passing from poetry through drama into prose. They were essentially the same illumination, perhaps: the movement from the esoteric to kerygma. Any biography, including Ayre's, would say that I dropped preaching for academic life: that's the opposite of what my spiritual biography would say, that I fled into academia for refuge and have ever since tried to peek out into the congregation and make a preacher of myself. That's why I'm taking this preposterous assignment [the Emmanuel College lectures] so seriously.

[96] The rush of ideas I get from Hegel's Phenomenology is so tremendous I can hardly keep up with it. I note that there's a summary in my edition that quotes Plotinus as saying that what is beyond is also here.⁵⁵ So Plotinus has interpenetration, though the buggers don't give a reference, and Hegel doesn't allude to Plotinus.

[152] I've been called a mystic as well as a myth critic, because some people think that's an even more contemptuous term. If myth is really mythos, story or plot, then mysticism is being initiated in the mysteries. The mysteries historically were rebirth experiences, and as such they belong to what Jesus tells Nicodemus is central to spiritual life. The connection with shutting the eyes and above all the yacking mouth (turn off the fucking chatter) takes one from the world of convention and tradition that's always sure it's going somewhere into the inner world of before birth and after death and thrownness and vision in between. Jesus entered synagogues, even preached in them, but he also talked of going into a closet and shutting the door [Matthew 6:6]. This is the world of the individual experience that isn't just subjective and egocentric. It's also the nothing-world out of which nothingness grows into creation.

[168] I wish I could find a book on the Tienanmin Square business and get the phrases shouted by the students and the Party statement afterward. It would be a perfect illustration of the contrast between the authentic voice of human concern and the ideology-bumbling of liars. (The last phrase echoes an early phrase of mine, "between the truth that makes free and the bumbling of the father of lies").

[175] Derrida on the book between two covers as a solid object enclosing an authority is, as Derrida must know, complete bullshit: nobody believes that a book is an object: it's a focus of verbal energy. What he should be attacking is the dogmatic formulation that eliminates its own opposite: that's the symbol or metaphor that can kill a man, and has killed thousands. It's always self-enclosed and opaque; no kerygma ever gets through it.

[182] Spengler: I never did buy his "decline" thesis, which I realized from the beginning was Teutonic horseshit, closely related to the Nazi hatred for all forms of human culture. (Well, not just Nazi: Stalin had just as much of it.) No, as I've said, what struck me was, first, the sense of the

interpenetration of historical phenomena, a conception of history in which every phenomenon symbolizes every other phenomenon.

[261] I have a limited faith in a historical process myself: I cannot believe that the Canadian nation will blunder and bungle its way out of history into oblivion, raising with its name only ridicule or at best a sympathetic smile from the rest of the free world. I do not remember any other time in history when a nation disintegrated merely through a lack of will to survive, nor do I think ours will.

Notebook 1991-28.3k

STATEMENT FOR THE DAY OF MY DEATH: The twentieth century saw an amazing development of scholarship and criticism in the humanities, carried out by people who were more intelligent, better trained, had more languages, had a better sense of proportion, and were infinitely more accurate scholars and competent professional men than I. I had genius. No one else in the field known to me had quite that.

Notes

- 1 One of the original eight trigrams in *I Ching, or The Book of Changes*. Its attributes are the receptive, female, and passive; its symbol is the earth; its family relation is the mother.
- 2 One of the original eight trigrams in *The Book of Changes*. Its attributes are the creative, male, and active; its symbol is heaven; its family relation is the father.
- 3 Hebrews 11:1. For Frye's discussion of *hypostasis* (substance) and *elenchos* (evidence) see *Words with Power*, 128-9 and *Myth and Metaphor*, 99.
- 4 The Delany novel Frye refers to is *Neveryona, or: The Tale of Signs and Cities* (New York: Bantam, 1983). The sentence from Kristeva, which comes from her *Desire in Language*, is this: "the modality of novelistic enunciation is *inferential*; it is a process in which the subject of the novelistic utterance affirms a sequence, as *conclusion to the inference*, based on other sequences (referential—hence narrative, or textual—hence citational), which are *the premises of the inference* and, as such, considered to be true."
- 5 "Moral law can only define the lawbreaker: it cannot distinguish what is above the law from what is below it, the prophet from the criminal, Jesus from Barabbas" (*The Return of Eden*, 86).
- 6 Frye presented a paper with that title at the School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto, on 3 December 1985. It was published in *Shenandoah*, 39, no. 3 (1989): 47-64, and rpt. in *Myth and Metaphor*, 93-107.
- 7 Maurice Nicoll, *The New Man: An Interpretation of Some Parables and Miracles of Christ* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967). Nicoll believes that the parables have an outer literal meaning and an inner psychological one; the latter is what Frye refers to as a moral platitude. Nicoll was a pupil of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.
- 8 A distinction examined most fully in *The Well-Tempered Critic*.
- 9 See Gertrude Rachel Levy's two books, *The Gate of Horn* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), and *The Sword from the Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953).
- 10 Herod as depicted in Auden's *For the Time Being*, in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1976), 301-4.
- 11 The reference is to Theseus' speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.18-20: "Such tricks hath strong imagination, / That if it would but apprehend some joy, / It comprehends some bringer of that joy."

- 12 “To Come to Light,” delivered on 5 October 1986 at the Metropolitan United Church, Toronto, and published in *No Uncertain Sounds* (Toronto: Chartres Books, 1988).
- 13 Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 333.
- 14 In September 1969 Frye had attended the congress of the Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes in Islamabad.
- 15 Following “people” in the preceding sentence, Frye had omitted “are,” which he inserted above the line.
- 16 Frederic Spiegelberg, “Introduction,” *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy of Man* by Gopi Krishna (Berkeley: Shambala, 1971), 8.
- 17 For the commentary on Krishna’s autobiography, written by James Hillman, see pp. 38-45, 68-73, 94-102, 131-3, 153-8, 176-80, 202-5, 235-9, and 250-2.
- 18 *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and ed. Aniela Jafte, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1963).
- 19 Hillman does refer to the collective unconscious (*Kundalini*, 251) but not to “a collective mind.” Perhaps what Frye remembered was Hillman’s account of the “collective voice” (71-2).
- 20 That is, the two views of creation and fall in the J and P narratives in Genesis, respectively, and the four gods that serve as informing presences of the last four chapters of *Words with Power*: Hermes, Eros, Adonis, and Prometheus.
- 21 In addition to writing sophisticated detective stories, Dame Edith Ngaio Marsh was also a producer of Shakespearean repertory theatre.
- 22 The reference is to a talk Frye gave at the 1987 convention of the Modern Language Association, on the occasion of two sessions devoted to his work. The talk was published as “Auguries of Experience,” in *Visionary Poetics: Essays on Northrop Frye’s Criticism*, ed. Robert D. Denham and Thomas Willard (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 1-7. The suggestion about productive scholars is on p. 3. See also *WP*, xviii.
- 23 A reference to the position taken by some critics, such as Stanley Fish in *Is There a Text in This Class?*, that texts do not contain meaning; meaning, rather, are constructed by readers.
- 24 Frye travelled to Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev in October of 1988.
- 25 All four papers were later published in *Myth and Metaphor*.
- 26 The intent of the parenthetical phrase is not clear. Fulke Greville’s *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* says nothing about prose forms or the Utopia. Perhaps Frye means that Greville’s own prose account is an idealized version of Sidney’s accomplishments.
- 27 That is, Frye’s “moonlighting” works. Francis Sparshott uses the word in his review of Frye’s *The Great Code* in *Philosophy and Literature*, 6 (October 1982): 180.
- 28 Erik Erikson, “Configurations in Play—Clinical Studies,” *Studies in Play* (New York: Norton, 1975), 139-214.
- 29 Throughout his notebooks Frye uses a series of names and “hieratic forms” to refer to eight books he planned to write: Liberal, Tragicomedy, Anticlimax, Rencontre, Mirage, Paradox, Ignoramus, and Twilight. His first dream—at about age nine—was to write eight concerti. After reading Scott he had another wish—also at age nine—to write a sequence of historical novels, and when he had made his way through Dickens and Thackeray, the wish became “a sequence of eight definitive novels.” When he was fourteen, each of these novels acquired the one-word descriptive name given above, and these names, along with their hieratic forms (inverted V, upside-down T, etc.), remained with Frye over the years: they appear hundreds of times in the notebooks as a shorthand way of referring to his writing projects. The emphases of the books changed over the years—often radically, but he saw them as “eight masterpieces in the same genre.” He conceived of *Twilight*

as his *Tempest*, his “valedictory,” “the work of my old age.”

30 “And those who have loved now love the more”—the last half of a couplet from the *Vigil of Venus*, “Cras amet qui numquam amavit, quique amavit eras amet.”

31 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1930).

32 After Aquinas’s vision (or mental breakdown) on 6 December 1273, he determined to abandon the scholarly life, and when his secretary urged him to complete his *Summa*, he responded, “I cannot, because all I have written now seems like straw” (Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 26).

33 Frye eventually wrote the Samuel Butler paper, “Some Reflections on Life and Habit,” which was presented as the F.E.L. Priestly Memorial Lecture at the University of Lethbridge, 17 February 1988; it was published as a pamphlet by the University of Lethbridge in 1988 and rpt. in both the *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, 1, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 1-9, and *Myth and Metaphor*, 141-54.

34 That is, a *Festschrift* for Jerome Buckley. As it turned out, Frye did not contribute to the *Festschrift* (*Nineteenth-Century Lives: Essays Presented to Jerome Hamilton Buckley* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989]).

35 M.R. James. See, e.g., his *Collected Ghost Stories* (1931).

36 This article was never written.

37 Frye’s lectured at Smith College on 24 October 1985; his talk, “Framework and Assumption,” was published in the *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, 1, no. 1 (1988): 2-10; rpt. in *Myth and Metaphor*, 79-92. One of the sections in chap. 2, bk. 5 of Crowley’s *Little, Big* (New York: Bantam, 1981) is entitled “Sylvie & Bruno Concluded,” and bk. 5 itself is entitled “The Art of Memory.” Frye is associating Crowley’s Bruno and Carroll’s Bruno with the work of Frances Yates, the author of *The Art of Memory* (1966) and *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964).

38 The passage Frye remembers actually does come from *The White Peacock*: “‘Just look!’ he [the gamekeeper] said ‘the dirty devil’s run her muck over than angel. A woman to the end, I tell you, all vanity and screech and defilement’” (*The White Peacock*, ed. Andrew Robertson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 149).

39 This article, which appeared in *New Society*, rather than *New Statesman*, was a reprinting, with slight editorial changes of the last half of “The Universities and Personal Life: Student Anarchism and the Educational Contract,” *Higher Education and Response*, ed. W.R. Niblett (London: Tavistock, 1969), 35-59. It appeared as “The Educational Contract” in *New Society*, 14 (20 November 1969): 811-14.

40 Frye did include a very similar sentence in *Words with Power*: “So while my critical approach has been said to be deficient in rigor, this does not matter so much to me as long as it is also deficient in rigor mortis” (xx).

41 The four gods mentioned here—Prometheus, Eros, Adonis, and Hermes—appear throughout Frye’s notebooks as “informing presences,” as he calls them in *Words with Power*, 277, where they represent, respectively, the deities that preside over lower wisdom, higher love, lower love, and higher love. But their symbolism continued to evolve for Frye throughout the notebooks. In a later entry of the present notebook he remarks that “the HEAP [Hermes, Eros, Adonis, Prometheus] scheme keeps reforming and dissolving.” Notebook 6, the separate sections of which are entitled “Eros,” “Adonis,” “Hermes,” and “Prometheus,” is Frye’s first notebook exposition of the symbolism of these four gods.

42 Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963); A.E. Waite, *The Holy Grail: The Galahad Quest in the Arthurian Literature* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1961).

- 43 Frye filed his notes and drafts of various chapters of *Words with Power* in colored folders.
- 44 Francis Sparshott, Frye's colleague, reviewed *GC* in *Philosophy and Literature* 6 (October 1982): 180-9, calling it "an appallingly bad book."
- 45 "Cracking the Great Code, or History Is Bunk," *Dalhousie Review* 63 (Autumn 1983): 400-7.
- 46 A reference to Helen Frye, who had died on 4 August 1986.
- 47 Frye gave a talk at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Toronto on 23 November 23 1989. The talk was published "Literature as Therapy" in the *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, 3 (Spring 1991): 23-32, and rpt. In *The Eternal Act of Creation*, 21-34.
- 48 Vera was Frye's older sister.
- 49 "In a certain sense everything is everywhere at all times. For every location involves an aspect of itself in every other location. Thus every spatio-temporal standpoint mirrors the world" (*Science and the Modern World*, 93). Frye refers to this passage in several on his notebooks, and in his interview with David Cayley (*Northrop Frye in Conversation* [Concord, Ont.: Anansi, 1992], 61), but the only place he quotes it is in *Double Vision*, 41. Wallace Stevens quotes the same passage in "A Collect of Philosophy" (*Opus Posthumous* 273), and Frye, citing the reference in Stevens, does refer to Whitehead's "great passage" in "Wallace Stevens and the Variation Form" (*Spiritus Mundi*, 292).
- 50 D.T. Suzuki remarks that the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, "the consummation of Buddhist thought," represents "abstract truths so concretely, so symbolically . . . that one will finally come to the realisation of the truth that even in a particle of dust the whole universe is seen reflected—not this visible universe only, but the vast system of universes, by the highest minds only" (*Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930], 95-6).
- 51 "Such Harmony of Colouring is destructive of Art One species of General Hue over all is the Cursed Thing calld Harmony it is like the Smile of a Fool" ("Annotations to the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982], 662).
- 52 NF's marginal note was probably a reference to one of several statements in Plotinus's *Enneads*.
- 5.8.4. In his chapter "On the Intellectual Beauty," Plotinus says, for example: "Every being [in the divine realm] is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere then is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory." Or again, "In our realm all is part rising from part and nothing can be more than partial; but There [in the divine realm] each being is an eternal product and is at once a whole and an individual manifesting as part but, to the keen vision There, known for the whole it is" (*The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna. 2nd ed. [New York: Pantheon, n.d.], 425).
- 53 Frye presented a lecture on "Poets and the Double Vision of Nature" at Carleton College in April 1990, three weeks before he gave his Emmanuel College lectures.
- 54 That is, the news about the fall of Communism in 1989.
- 55 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). In the analysis of the text, which Frye refers to as a "summary," J.N. Findlay writes, "Cf. Plotinus: Everything that is yonder is also here" (517).

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1932-1938

Edited by Robert Denham

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