

Northrop Frye Newsletter

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The print on the first page was produced by Saul Field in 1985. During January of that year I took Saul Field and his wife Jean Townsend, both well-known Toronto printmakers, to Victoria College to hear one of the lectures Frye was giving in his course on “The Literary Symbolism of the Bible” on the second floor of Old Vic. At the time I was on sabbatical in Toronto and was staying with Field and Townsend at their home in Willowdale. Saul Field did a number of sketches of Frye, and when he returned to his studio he created this collograph, using a technique called “compotina,” which he and his wife invented, compotina being a paste of various consistencies that can be applied to a plate. I watched Saul Field create the print as he extruded the compotina onto a cotton fabric (tarlatan) with a hypodermic needle, inked the plate once the compotina had hardened, and then pulled the print from an etching press. Field pulled only one print, this artist’s proof, which he gave to me.

Field is perhaps best known for the color compotina prints called “Bloomsday Suite,” based on Joyce’s *Ulysses*. This series was handsomely published in *Bloomsday* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1972). Field (1912-1987) was a member of the Ontario Society of Artists and was president of Printmakers of Canada. A number of prints by him and his wife hang in the Bouraoui Master’s Dining at Strong College, York University. Field and Townsend were co-proprietors of the Upstairs Gallery in Toronto. (RD)

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Process and Possibility: Northrop Frye's Spiritual Vision

by Nella Cotrupi

Mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen, it was with real pleasure that I accepted M. Lemond's invitation to speak to you today about a man whose visionary faith and potent words profoundly touched and changed my life, as he has the lives of so many others.¹ Northrop Frye's reputation continues to rest primarily on his prodigious output in the realm of literary criticism and theory. Today, however, I want to invite you to explore with me the driving force that fuelled his work as a literary critic and teacher, and that has made his ideas so compelling, not just for those on the literary and critical path, but for thinking and socially-concerned people around the globe. My talk will focus on Frye's spiritual quest, on his unique, unconventional version of Christianity, and on some of the spiritual and philosophical traditions from which he drew inspiration and, dare I say it, hope.

But first, I want to tell you a story. Appropriate, I think, considering the occasion. This is a real life story about a committed young lawyer and activist who decided in the early years of her marriage to take some time away from her professional activities to look after her young children. Those days in the early 1980s were exciting and heady ones for a newly minted lawyer whose work revolved around law reform and advocacy for injured workers in Ontario. Granted, many of these workers were men and women with whom she felt a deep affinity, being, like her parents, immigrants, workers of Italian origin employed in manufacturing, and construction—working long hours in often dangerous conditions and unsavoury surroundings.

They were people determined to move forward, often at great cost, physical and otherwise, to themselves, in order to bring other options and possibilities to their children. And there were other clients too—all with similar dreams and aspirations—workers from the Caribbean, Portugal, and South America, Europeans and Asians from many lands and even a few Canadians whose history freed them from the need for hyphenation. All of them were

¹ Nella Cotrupi presented this talk at the annual Northrop Frye Literary Festival in Moncton, New Brunswick, 27 April 2002. Cotrupi, who practices law in Toronto, is the author of *Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Process*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2000.

hungry for the opportunities promised by this immense northern land, and all of them shattered by the possibility that the hard-won morsel of hope for a better life might suddenly be snatched from them by the physical and other injuries they had sustained.

To leave this work and vocation, even for a temporary sabbatical, was a difficult call to make. And yet, the value system was deeply ingrained and the family priorities won out. A leave was arranged, an application sent out for a part-time MA to keep the brain from getting too flaccid with diaper changes and baby talk and well, you can probably guess the rest. She walked into room 114 Northrop Frye Hall at Victoria College to sit in on Frye's Bible lectures and she has never really walked out. Suddenly those persistent, suppressed, *impractical* preoccupations which had haunted her since childhood were given legitimacy and a most articulate voice. So too were those emotions that had driven her as a child to try to capture in words, or with paint and brush the quiet majesty of the Laurentians, the heart-aching sunsets over northern Ontario lakes with their frame of wind-tossed pines, the hard cold beauty of star-filled winter skies over Nipissing, and even, on occasion, the harsh beauty of Calabria's mountains. She was free to confront these compulsions now and to ask: Why had she felt moved by these vistas to the innermost core of her being, why compelled to capture and hold the intensity of the moment and what, just what, was one to do with such powerful experiences?

As it turns out, of course, her feelings and her questions are not at all unique. All of you in one way or another have been touched by this power, the power that long ago someone who may or may not have been named Longinus called the "sublime" and, whether the impetus for the intensity of your response was the awesome majesty of nature, or the awesome force of an artist's words or images, you have felt its power: you would not be here today otherwise.

What I want to ask now is, how did Frye come to engage this power, what did he make of its processes and possibilities, and just how does it connect with his faith and spiritual vision? In seeking even a preliminary and provisional answer to these admittedly daunting questions we should acknowledge that there are two Fryes we need to explore. One is the world-renowned polished, sophisticated and usually cautious *public* Frye (the Frye of *Fearful Symmetry*, *Anatomy of Criticism*, *The Great Code*, *Words with Power* and those smaller gems: *Creation and Recreation*, *The Well-Tempered Critic*, *The Critical Path*, *The Educated Imagination*, and *The Double Vision*). But in addition we also have today (thanks to the efforts of Alvin Lee, Bob Denham and other scholars involved in the Collected Works project) the private, no-holds-barred Frye—the Frye of the personal diaries and correspondence, and of the thousands of pages of notebook entries where he hammered out his impressions and his ideas without restraint and without, it would appear, much self-censorship.

Frye was born into a fundamentalist Methodist family, with the bulk of his early years having been spent right here in Moncton where his first spiritual struggles and insights (some have said, his first conversion experience) took place while still a student at Aberdeen High School. Frye described this pivotal religious experience in a 1979 interview where he recalled, "walking along St. George St. to high school and suddenly that whole shitty and smelly garment (of fundamentalist teaching . . .) just dropped off into the sewers and stayed there" (Ayre 44). What did not drop off into the sewers, however, and was to grow with the passage of years, was

that concern with building the new Jerusalem in the here and now, which was so much a part of his Methodist heritage.

There are many markers of Frye's allegiance to certain key strains in Protestant belief and practice, not least of which were his years spent at Emmanuel College working towards a divinity degree and his subsequent ordination as a minister of the United Church of Canada. There were also his years spent slugging away as editor of the left-leaning magazine, the *Canadian Forum* and his involvement with what he often described as the political counterpart to the United Church, the CCF or Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, later renamed the NDP or New Democratic Party. At the *Forum* he and Helen Kemp, his wife and, in many ways his preceptor, particularly in the early years of their marriage, advocated the implementation of progressive policies—arguing for social reforms that would ensure increased individual freedoms, greater tolerance, humane social programs and egalitarian community standards. This was certainly part and parcel of the Social Gospel movement that also nurtured the likes of Tommy Douglas and has fed many progressive social-change movements throughout Canada's history.

Although Frye's own published works contain statements that support the view that he placed himself squarely in the tradition of the Protestant faith (Walker 48) there is no question that the line of Protestant reformers with whom he felt most kinship and to whom he turned for guidance and inspiration were the visionary champions of liberal policies like Milton and yes, of course, William Blake. They, like Frye, were painfully aware of the concurrent development in Protestantism of its sacrilegious parody, where instead of the principle of liberalism, what holds sway, as Frye wrote, is "laissez-faire, the industrial anarchism which represents the doctrine of individual liberty transferred from the society of love to the society of power" ("The Church: Its Relation to Society" 263). Further, Frye insisted, the political manifestation or arm of laissez-faire is *not* democracy for it is democratic struggle which has brought about "every amelioration of labour conditions, every limitation of the power of monopolies, every effort to make the oligarchy responsible for the community as a whole" (264). Rather, democracy has played a containing and consistently moderating role vis-a-vis laissez-faire capitalism with its oligarchic and decidedly materialistic self-interests.

The paper I have been quoting from, "The Church: Its Relation to Society" was written by Frye in 1949 in the shadow of the Second World War and with the Cold War already looming. It was against this backdrop that Frye was surveying the role of his church and the state of the world. By this point he had been an ordained minister for over ten years and a Victoria College faculty member for about the same time. On the basis of his professional activities and his preoccupations we can conclude that his earlier indecision about which professional route to take, the clerical or the academic, was really resolved not by choosing one route or the other but by embracing both in his own unique way. Helen had, in a sense, pointed out this possibility to the tormented younger Frye when she wrote to him that, "The function of a teacher seems to me essentially the same as that of a minister—to bring color into a drab life" (*Correspondence* 1:58). As I'll be exploring with you in more detail soon, this invitation to focus on bringing color into life (or as we who are more attuned to the verbal rather than the pictorial

universe might say, the invitation to focus on bringing *intensity* into life) was one that Frye took up with a vengeance.

In fact, we could say that this was the role, the vocation that Frye embraced as both educator and critic. In doing so he really assumed responsibility for the type of evangelical and prophetic undertaking that he saw as necessary, yet somehow unattainable for any organized church. In an important essay called “The Responsibilities of the Critic” first delivered in 1976, Frye focuses on the need in society for the prophetic role that operates outside of the flat, time-bound dimension of legal, political and religious institutions. He underscores the need to recognize and heed the voice that “breaks vertically and discontinuously into society” presenting to it an overarching vision of the social order (134). Frye observes the general principle that “the prophet is most likely to emerge from an unrecognized quarter of society, from a place that society has overlooked or forgotten to enclose and protect” (135). Perhaps this recognition—that prophecy springs from unexpected secular quarters rather than the pulpit of the priest—was shaping the direction of Frye’s visionary commitments and undertakings from a very early date.

Although Frye would, in official contexts, accept the role of “undercover agent” for the United Church of Canada (*Double Vision* xiii), he was privately as unhappy with the state of his own church as he was with developments in other branches of Christianity. Admittedly he did describe himself, a “liberal Protestant democrat” (*Diaries* 59), but in a diary entry dating back to the year 1949, he stressed over and over again his concern over conversion of friends and acquaintances to the “anti-liberal, anti-democratic” Catholic faith, while also and just as adamantly expressing his unhappiness with the direction being taken by the United Church. “Protestantism is done for here, he wrote, unless it listens to a few prophets. I don’t want a Church of any kind, but if, say, a student of mine were quivering over conversion to Catholicism, I’d like to be able to point to something better than a committee of temperance cranks, which is about all the United Church is now” (59-60).

It was not from the pulpit but in the lecture hall and on the written page that Frye took up the mantle of Milton and Blake and began, like them, to spin out his prophetic and visionary spiritual message—a message that focussed as much on freedom as on love. Frye, who described himself in 1949 with only mock misgivings as “not much of a priest” (*Diaries* 71) was very conscious of the broader spiritual implications of his professional undertakings and did not hesitate, in his private musings, to acknowledge that in choosing the academy, he certainly did not leave his spiritual preoccupations behind. In one of the late notebooks of 1990 he describes academia as a “refuge” and goes on to say that rather than having “abandoned preaching for the academic life” the academy gave him a safe harbour from which to try and “peak out into the congregation and make a preacher of himself” (*Late Notebooks* 2:621). But this, of course, is a minimalist description which does not begin to reveal his reasons for choosing to fulfill his ministry by way of literature and criticism. It is this question that we now need to broach.

If we scan Frye’s immense critical output, we note immediately that the two key poetic categories that he turns to again and again are metaphor and its narrative formulation, myth. Myths, as Frye tells us, are stories that have to do with primary human concerns, with those

aspects of life that connect us all, such as our need for food, love, shelter, and freedom. Myth does not address secondary or ideological concerns that have more to do with particular or vested interests that tend to divide us into groups rather than uniting us in commonality. Secondary concerns operate in the realm of ideology, not myth. It is the function of the literary critic, says Frye, to “distinguish ideology from myth, to help reconstitute a myth as a language, and to put literature in its proper cultural place as the central link of communication between society and the central vision of its primary concerns”—a vision that it is the function of prophets to enunciate and keep alive (“The Dialectic of Belief and Vision” 103). The critic’s role is not to judge, but rather to recognize, and, like the prophet John the Baptist, the critic too must be a prophet in order to be capable of recognizing a still greater prophetic power (“The Responsibilities of the Critic” 138). In elaborating this model of the critical path, his chosen one, Frye is laying before us a road map for the manner in which his life’s work represents a committed vocation, a collaboration in the work of renewing, that is, of *making new* the vision of a world founded on, dignified by, and united in shared primary concerns.

What characterizes prophetic voices, voices like those of Nietzsche, Blake, Emily Dickinson, and Dostoyevsky is intensity of vision. Since the time of the nebulous Longinus with his exquisite treatise “On the Sublime” and possibly even earlier, metaphors of verticality have been used to describe the sense of transport that results from certain poetic uses of language. “Elevation” “heightening” “pitch” and “lift” are common expressions that one encounters in the literature of the sublime from the classical period through the eighteenth-century revival of the sublime, and on to the Romantics. It should not surprise us to find that Frye too, perhaps in an even more explicit, intentional fashion, harnesses images of verticality as the means to express the expansion or intensification of consciousness that poetic language with its metaphorical base has the power to achieve. *The Great Code* is, in a sense, an exploration of the operation of the sublime in the Bible. Most of the complex formulations Frye works out for the uniquely Christian imagery in the Bible, including the symbol of the cross, may be reduced to the vertical break or ascension from the horizontal repetition of types that provides the narrative and figurative machinery for this work of “literature plus.” “Language is a means of intensifying consciousness, lifting us into a new dimension of being altogether” wrote Frye in a late notebook (Notebook 11h, par.31; *Words with Power* 28). In the Bible, as in other verbal formulations with visionary import, it is the paradoxical inter-penetration of categories of being, achieved through the “this is/is not that” formulation of metaphor that allows this level of intensity to be achieved in a particularly radical and significant way.

Frye explains that in the Bible we encounter a radical use of metaphors which push the mythopoetic connection-building mind set into those realms of experience which he describes with the word “kerygmatic.” Here there is a flow of identification between the individual and the collectivity, the self and the other through the operation of a kind of existential double vision that only metaphor allows. And it is this imaginative or metaphorical meaning which *is the literal meaning* of the Bible where a universe may be enclosed in a grain of sand, and a Word may become Man, and one Man may become all humanity. In the Bible what is central is not the historical event, but the verbal event unfolding in metaphor (*Double Vision* 76). Whether it

be the Eucharist, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, Apocalypse, or Crucifixion—in short all of the key Christian theological events are linked by Frye to the processes of metaphorical inter-subjectivity or inter-penetration. And it is in this counter-logical and counter-historical verbal event, an event that propels us out of the trap of temporal linearity and existential alienation and into an experience of the identification of self with the entire cosmos, that the possibilities for empathy, understanding, and transformation are contained.

This brings us to a second epiphany in Frye's life that I would like to bring to your attention. In his final, posthumously published *Double Vision* book he described it this way: "The first book of philosophy that I read purely on my own and purely for pleasure was Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* [1925], and I can still remember the exhilaration I felt when I came to the passage: '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.' *This was my initiation into what Christianity means by spiritual vision*" (*Double Vision* 40–1, my emphasis; see also Notebook 34). Much could be said about Whitehead and other thinkers like Teilhard de Chardin whose work in the realms of science and theology have established a distinctive branch of Christian thought and belief called "Process Theology." But this will have to be for another time. Suffice it to say, for now, that process theology rests on the central principle of a cosmos that is inevitably interpenetrative and organic with any postulated independent and isolated existence of entities rejected as an impossibility. The cosmos, stretched out in space/time is likened to a quickened organic multiplicity, which, in its unity, constitutes the very body of God. Every emerging event or particular occasion in this continuum, in Whitehead's formulation, is its own unique synthesis of everything that has led up to it, the many having thus become one and the many thus being capable of being extrapolated from the one. Blake's parallel formulation, you may recall, was "seeing a universe in a grain of sand." There have been other similar formulations, including those of certain branches of Zen Buddhism with which Frye was also familiar.

Frye adopted the same word, "process," as a shorthand way of describing the approach to literature and criticism that focuses not on the structural aspects of literary works, but rather on the relational interactions and transformations that literary works may convey. Of course, Frye's process poetics is part and parcel of his visionary and spiritual approach to literature with its privileging of myth and metaphor, and you will not be surprised by now to learn that another term Frye used to describe process poetics was "Longinian." But Whitehead's impact on Frye went much further than this parallel use of terminology. Whitehead, like William Blake and the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico, was among the seminal thinkers who helped Frye work his way to a Christian theology that not only left behind the dated notion of God as some transcendent, distant and judging other; they also helped Frye reach the conclusion that the "lugubrious old stinker in the sky" had another name, Satan, and "that his function was to promote tyranny in society, and repression in the mind" (Ayre 45).

The spiritual vision of God that Frye embraced with the help of these and other like-minded thinkers was instead predicated on the creative powers that are latent in us and may be unleashed through the transforming and constructive possibilities implicit in metaphorical

language. God is not so much dead, he suggests, as entombed in a dead language that projects God as a noun, an entity that belongs to the objective category of things or objects. But what, says Frye, if instead of encasing God in the tomb of misplaced concreteness (to use Whitehead's terminology) we took the metaphors of the Bible literally and approached the word "God" as a verb, "and not a verb of simple asserted existence but a verb implying a process accomplishing itself"? (*Great Code* 17; *Creation and Recreation* 70). What if we take biblical phrases such as "I am the way" and "I am that I am" at their word? This, says Frye, "would involve trying to think our way to a conception of language in which words were words of power, conveying primarily the sense of forces and energies rather than analogues of physical bodies" (*Great Code* 17). And this, of course, is language in its most radically metaphorical modality where the intense awareness of inter-subjectivity between self and the cosmos is at its highest pitch, where center and circumference are untethered and reverberate, mind containing cosmos, cosmos containing mind.

In *The Double Vision*, a publication Frye knew would be his last, he took up this challenge and explored, more directly than ever before, the implications arising from such a view of language, that is, language as creative power, as a means of intensifying experience, as a means of overcoming alienation, as a means of moving closer to expressing and realizing his vision of God. Through such language we are given the power to make manifest and experience the chasm that still exists between the society we have built and the one we still have the ability to build *because* we have imagined it. Through the telling paradoxes of metaphor, we can grasp that God may be all and yet one, that God exists in us and we in God; that there can be unity without uniformity; that community need not preclude freedom but rather be its guarantee. That nature is not a passive and distant other to be exploited, ravaged, and defiled with impunity. Rather she is our helpmate and our co-voyager in life's journey. Not an "it", but a "thou," to use Martin Buber's sacred marriage metaphor. The binocular or doubled vision of metaphorical language reminds us that just as the cosmos was experienced as a burgeoning and teeming of world of personifications and deified powers in the mythopoetic mind-set of the *Iliad*, so too today, what we perceive is really part of us and forms an inescapable identification with us. Finally, through the commonality of those primary concerns that our myths, our stories and our poems tell us we must all live by, we are reminded, again and yet again, that we are, collectively, the incarnate body of the Spirit.

We are living again and unbelievably, through a period when our capacity for creating hell on earth is being all too powerfully displayed. Frye, most painfully aware of the atrocious record organized churches and religions have chalked up for keeping hell in front of us, made his repugnance for organized religion unmistakable in his private writings, and quite accessible in the works he published during his lifetime. Frye wanted very little to do with these power structures, their vested interests and ideological preoccupations. It was to the prophetic voice in myth and its ongoing reiteration in the secular scriptures of literature that he looked for a lifeline of hope. And, for Frye, hope was intimately linked to faith.

Faith, he wrote, is the substance of the hoped-for; it is not a state of mind but a course of action ("The Dialectic of Belief and Vision" 94, 98-9). And, it is vision, the ability to project

models or ideals by which to guide our actions, that allows hope to have a foundation that goes beyond simple personal interests and desires. Although these models may be cast in the literary constructs of myths, or stories, they are not unreal. “Reality,” says Frye, picking up on Vico, “is in the world we make, not in the world we stare at” (“The Expanding World of Metaphor” 122).

The basis of Frye’s faith was a vision of the creative possibilities and opportunities that literary and artistic efforts afford for building models of better worlds. He lived his faith, using the classroom, the radio, the community hall and the printed page to remind us, again and again that, “Hell is in front of us because we have put it there; paradise is missing because we have failed to put it there” (*Words with Power* 312). And, just in case we may not yet have our role clearly worked out, Frye left us a convenient and concise summary with which I will close:

What do the poets ‘say’?
They say that everything is everywhere at once.
They say that all nature is alive.
They say that all creation is dialectic, separating heaven and hell.
They say that the material world neither is nor isn’t, but disappears.
They say the created world neither is nor isn’t but appears.
They say the containing form of real experience is myth.
They say that time and space are disappearing categories.
They say that men are Man, as gods are God.

(Notebook 18, par. 12)

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Illustration by Joseph Salina

Northrop Frye and the Afterlife of the Word

Semeia, a journal of the Society of Biblical Literature, has recently published a special issue, edited by James M. Kee, containing papers from the conference on "Frye and the Word," held at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario in May 2000: *Semeia 89: Northrop Frye and the Afterlife of the Word* (ISSN 0095-571X). The contents:

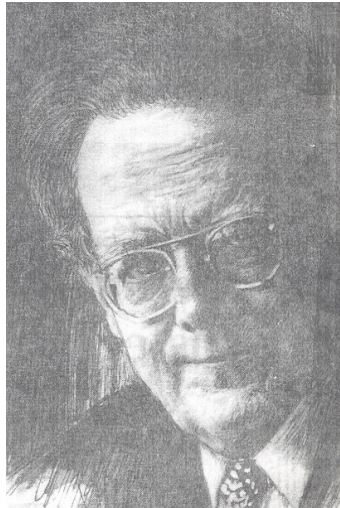
ESSAYS

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|---------------------|---|
| 1. Robert Alter | <i>Northrop Frye between Archetype and Typology</i> |
| 2. Joe Velaidum | <i>Towards Reconciling the Solitudes</i> |
| 3. David Gay | <i>"The Humanized God": Biblical Paradigms of Recognition in Frye's Final Three Books</i> |
| 4. Michael Dolzani | <i>The Ashes of the Stars: Northrop Frye and the Trickster-God</i> |
| 5. James M. Kee | <i>Northrop Frye and the Poetry in Biblical Hermeneutics</i> |
| 6. Patricia Demers | <i>Early Modern Women's Words with Power: Absence and Presence</i> |
| 7. Margaret Burgess | <i>From Archetype to Antitype: A Look at Frygian Archetypology</i> |
| 8. William Robins | <i>Modeling Biblical Narrative: Frye and D.H. Lawrence</i> |

RESPONSES

9. David Jobling *Biblical Studies on a More Capacious Canvas: A Response to Joe Velaidum and James M. Kee*
10. J. Russell Perkin *Reconfiguring the Liberal Imagination: A Response to Margaret Burgess, Patricia Demers, and William Robins*
11. Robert Cording *The "Something More" in the Bible: A Response to Robert Alter, David Gay, and Michael Dolzani*

Semeia 89 may be ordered online at <http://www.sbl-site2.org/Publications/Semeia/index.html>



The Collected Works of Northrop Frye:
Progress Report, May 2002

by Alvin Lee, General Editor, Collected Works of Northrop Frye

As large editorial projects go, the preparation for publication of the Collected Works of Northrop Frye is proceeding quickly. In the minds of several of us deeply engaged in the project, however, there are frustrating delays that slow down the appearance of the handsome volumes that are being produced by the University of Toronto Press, and so delay their availability for readers.

We anticipate a total of 31 volumes, plus an overall index volume. The first two, *The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp, 1932-1939*, edited by Robert D. Denham, appeared in 1996. Volume 10, *Northrop Frye on Literature and Society, 1936-1989: Unpublished Papers*, also edited by Denham, has just appeared, six years later in 2002. The intervening volumes are: [Volume 3] *Northrop Frye's Student Essays, 1932-1938* (1997, ed. Denham); [Volume 4] *Northrop Frye on Religion* (2000, ed. Alvin A. Lee & Jean O'Grady); [Volumes 5-6] *Northrop Frye's Late Notebooks, 1982-1990: Architecture of the Spiritual World* (2000, ed. Denham); [Volume 7] *Northrop Frye's Writings on Education* (2000, ed. Jean O'Grady & Goldwin French); [Volume 8] *The Diaries of Northrop Frye, 1942-1955* (2001, Denham); [Volume 9] *The Critical Comedy: Northrop Frye's 'Third Book' Notebooks* (2002, Michael Dolzani).

In addition to the ten books now in print, three others are in production at the Press: [Volume 11] *Northrop Frye on Modern Culture* (ed. Jan Gorak); [Volume 12] *Northrop Frye on Canada* (ed. Jean O'Grady & David Staines); [Volume 13] *Northrop Frye's Notebooks and Lectures on 'The Great Code' and Other Religious Texts* (ed. Denham).

Almost all the remaining volumes are in a state of active preparation by the individual editors and co-editors. We are aiming for completion of the preparation of all volumes of the CWNF within another six years. Within the next year, several manuscripts are expected to arrive at the Frye Centre, for in-house and Press reviewing. For the benefit of *Newsletter* readers anticipating particular volumes or wishing to communicate with individual editors, the remaining assignments as follows:

Fearful Symmetry (Nicholas Halmi)

Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* Notebooks (Robert D. Denham)

The Educated Imagination and Other Writings on Critical Theory, 1933-1962 (Germaine Warkentin)

The Critical Path and Other Writings on Critical Theory, 1963-1975 (Eva Kushner)

The Secular Scripture and Other Writings on Critical Theory, 1976-1991 (Joseph Adamson & Jean Wilson)

Anatomy of Criticism (A.C. Hamilton)

The Great Code (Alvin A. Lee)

Words with Power (Joseph Adamson & Jean Wilson)

Frye's Writings on Shakespeare and the Renaissance (2 volumes, Garry Sherbert & Troni Grande)

Frye's Writings on Milton and Blake (Angela Esterhammer)

Frye's Writings on the 18th and 19th Centuries (Imre Salusinszky)

Frye's Writings on 20th-Century Literature (Jeffrey Donaldson)

Frye's Interviews (Jean O'Grady)

Frye's Notebooks on Romance (Michael Dolzani)

Frye's Notebooks on Drama (Michael Dolzani)

Frye's Notebooks on Music, His Own Fiction, and Miscellaneous Subjects (Robert Denham)

Professional Correspondence (Michael Dolzani and Robert Denham).

The above list on the whole is fairly stable, although experience shows there may be changes. Volume numbers are assigned as the manuscripts move toward actual production.

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Frye and the East

by Jean O’Grady

Northrop Frye: Eastern and Western Perspectives, edited by Jean O’Grady and Wang Ning, is forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press in its Frye series. The book had its genesis in the international conference on Frye’s work held at Inner Mongolia University, Hoh-Hot, in July 1999. The book provides a kind of double mirror, wherein Frye’s critical theory is reflected in China, and China reflects back to the West the use it has made of it. The structure of the book after the preface preserves this pattern, opening with an introduction by Chinese professor Wang Ning, and closing with an epilogue by Jean O’Grady from the perspective of a Western scholar. The essays—which include all the major papers given at the conference, rounded out by other invited contributions—are divided into three sections. The first, Frye as theorist, consists of seven essays by Western critics on specific aspects of Frye’s theory, including an introductory essay by Robert D. Denham on Frye’s knowledge of Eastern religion and philosophy. The second, Frye and Canada, looks at some of Frye’s involvement with his own country’s literature. The third, Frye and China, consists of three essays by Chinese scholars on the reception of Frye’s work in China and the possible applicability of his theories to Chinese literature. It also includes a selected bibliography of 36 recent books and articles in Chinese expounding or using myth-archetypal criticism, the latest of some three hundred such works.

The extraordinary interest in Frye’s work in China—this being the second Chinese conference devoted solely to him—raises intriguing questions about the universality of his theory. Archetypes at least claim to transcend individual cultures, but to what extent does a conspectus of genres derived from Western literature apply to a totally different literature, where the term “tragedy” was not even known until introduced by a Western-influenced scholar around 1900? Is the devolution from mythic through to ironic modes found in a country whose social and political history is very different from that of the West? So far, such *Anatomy*-related questions have been predominant with Chinese scholars. The Chinese had become familiar with what

they call “myth-archetypal criticism” through a number of explanatory essays and translated selections from the late 1970s on; *Anatomy of Criticism*, *The Critical Path*, *The Great Code*, and *The Modern Century* were all translated in 1998. Only when *Words with Power* has been translated will it be possible to judge fully how much Frye’s wider thoughts on the role of verbal imagination in culture, based as they are on symbolism drawn from the Bible, will prove applicable to non-Bible-based cultures such as the Chinese.

This collection makes a small start in investigating such questions. Frye himself, thinking of the “vegetable” nature of the imagination which takes root in a particular soil, prized local diversity and remarked that “There is no earthly reason why the world should be culturally federalized” (*Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature*, 109). Yet he also valued the potential in the world of scholarship to cross national boundaries and produce its own community. One such collaborative effort and experiment in cross-cultural fertilization is commemorated here.

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