

Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature

Ed. Robert D. Denham. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Selected reviews by Tom Adamowski, Ronald Bates, William E. Cain, C.P. Crowley, Bernard F. Dick, Fabian Gudas, Walter A. Hesford, Michael Hinden, Sean Kane, Lauriat Lane, Jr., David Lodge, Douglas Paschall, and Marjorie Perloff. Editorial additions are within square brackets.

Other reviews are listed at the end.

1. Adamowski, Tom. "Plaster Toads in the Bush Garden." *Books in Canada* 7 (June–July 1978): 18.

Marianne Moore once wrote that poems were "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Northrop Frye will not even make this concession to the "real." For his "archetypal critic," a poem is "not an imitation of nature" but "an imitation of other poems" [124]. Imaginary gardens with plaster-cast toads. What makes this collection of twenty-one review essays (from 1946 to 1960) so appealing is that it allows one to see Frye turn history, anthropology, and psychology into imaginary gardens.

In his review of Allen Tate's *The Forlorn Demon*, Frye, anticipating in 1953 the position of *Anatomy of Criticism*, warns that principles of criticism are not to be found in religion, metaphysics, psychology, or "social studies." In his introductory essay, the editor struggles manfully to defend Frye against the recurrent charge that his is a position that would seal criticism off from the world outside of literary studies; and Denham defends Frye quite well against the cruder varieties of this charge. But one is struck again and again by Frye's tactic of literary imperialism. Even as he seems to bow respectfully in the direction of anthropology (Frazer), history (Spengler and Toynbee), and psychology (Jung), Frye is actually just getting down low enough to pull the rug from under the feet of these representatives from other domains of knowledge whose work he has set out to review.

Not for Frye such a sweaty question as: "Do these historians, psychologists, and anthropologists tell us the truth about the West, history, the psyche, and myths?" Instead, he disarms the reader by asserting that he knows little about, for example, anthropology—and in that avowal of his "innocence," Frye finds all the room he needs for his witty notion that Frazer is really doing "literary criticism" [125]. Nor does it "matter two pins" whether the ritual of which Frazer writes "ever had any *historical* existence or not" [125]. Toynbee, on the other hand, "does not really 'prove' anything." He offers "vision" and "imaginative total apprehension which can skip over the logical and sometimes even the factual stage" [76]. As for Jung, his work, even if it may be "largely meaningless to most therapeutic psychologists," is "squarely within the orbit of literary criticism" [127]. One recalls that to be within such an "orbit" is to circle round a "body" that does not rely on psychology for its principles.

One seems to see Frye holding the business end of a great vacuum cleaner, one that sucks into its canister of the Imagination (Frye's talismanic word) all the messy remnants of the work of Frazer, Toynbee, and Jung. Their work is to provide a "kind of grammar of the human imagination" when "it tries to express itself about the greatest mysteries . . . of life and death and afterlife" [89]. Mystery indeed! Especially when those who provide the grammar are somehow absolved of the requirement that their hypotheses be adequate to the brute facts of the Real.

There are also essays on strictly literary matters, on Beckett, Pound, Hemingway, Cervantes, Valéry, Graves, and others. The judgments made in these essays are always instructive, but the stakes are not as high as they are in the reviews of the various "grammarians." Exceptions might be made for the review of Valéry's *Art of Poetry*, where Frye finds another critic for whom the Imaginary and the

Real make an unhappy couple, and the review of Kenner's *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*. In the latter, Frye takes issue with Kenner's jibes at the Romantic movement and reminds one of how important to his work that period has always been. It is also amusing to read him on Robert Graves. Rival mythologists confront one another here: the Reviewer against the poet of the White Goddess; the Critic Who Sings of Many Myths against the Poet Who Sings Only of One.

Although the editor disagrees with Harry Levin's remark that Frye's *Anatomy* is his own *Golden Bough*, it is charming to see a circle being closed and to see Frye's own work absolved from the criterion that it correspond to the reality of literature. Spengler, Toynbee, and Frazer would have been amused.

2. Bates, Ronald. "Centripetal Criticism." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 31–32 (1981): 227–30.

A selection such as this can often be a mere gatherorum of uncollected pieces with little or no unifying principle other than uncollectedness. Professor Denham's book is not this kind of haphazard assemblage. As he points out, "The essays were written . . . during the decade that Frye was also writing one of the most influential books of literary theory in our time" [vii]. Though they give no extra insight, in depth, into the *Anatomy of Criticism*, they do present a wider perspective. Moreover, Professor Denham's Introduction of sixty-four pages, slightly more than one quarter of the total text, adds an extra dimension.

There is a kind of introduction, too frequent in academic work, which seems to be merely an inflated—or, if you will, expanded—dust-jacket blurb. From such, the reader gets a quick trot through a series of encapsulated statements about each part, section or essay found in the following main text. The purpose of such introductions appears to be to supply the bare bones of the body of the work so that the slow reader, the mediocre-minded, or the glib skimmer can come across as actually having read the whole, a pretense which is "viable," not to say "relevant," at department parties, in faculty clubs, or at academic conferences. Allusion as illusion vs. the reality of firm, thorough intellectual engagement. Professor Denham's Introduction is not of this kind; it is a real introduction not only to the selection he has made of Frye's reviews but also to major themes in Frye's work as a whole. The end notes to the Introduction are also more than the usual bare documenting of quotations. Take note 3 to the remarks on Frye's second published work, a discussion of music, in which Denham makes a cross-reference to Edward Said's recognition, in *Beginnings*, of "music as a structural analogy in Frye's thought" [243]. Even though it is comparatively long, the Introduction is a very concentrated, critical treatment. Granted a certain complexity of argument, demanded by the subject, it is a good entry into the mind of Frye.

Years ago, in a review of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, I set up a polarity between two types of critic or criticism: centripetal and centrifugal. McLuhan was centrifugal and, though I did not name him, I was thinking of Frye as centripetal, with all his work circling back in, as it were, to a central core, a system. Both Frye and Denham use this polarity, centrifugal-centripetal, though in a somewhat different context: the centripetal focuses inward, on the work itself, the centrifugal points outward to other areas, other works, other disciplines. An important statement by Frye of what amounts to the centripetal perspective is quoted by Denham: "In reflecting on his work since the mid-fifties, Frye says that it has assumed the shape of what Professor Jerome Bruner would call a spiral curriculum, circling around the same issues, though trying to keep them open-ended . . . Emerson, as we know, deprecated what he called foolish consistency, but there is always one form of consistency which is not foolish, and that is continuity. With some people continuity takes a revolutionary and metaphoric direction: a philosopher may repudiate everything he has written up to a certain time and start afresh. Even so, I doubt if he can start afresh until he discovers the real point of contact with his

earlier work. With me, continuity has taken a more gradual direction, not because I insist that everything I have said earlier, in *Anatomy of Criticism* or elsewhere, must be “right,” but because the principles I have already formulated are still working as heuristic assumptions, and they are the only ones available to me” [3].

Such centripetal “circling around the same issues” is very much a characteristic of the essays collected in this volume. As this occurs over a decade, it is not a matter of a mere repetitive tic but of a consistently held critical viewpoint. As Frye says of Valéry’s essay on the theory of criticism, collected in *The Art of Poetry*, “In any such collection, there is bound to be a good deal of repetition” [188]. The element of repetitiveness is also, as it were, repeated at the very heart of Frye’s criticism, his archetypal approach. “Archetypal criticism is that mode of criticism which treats the poem, not as an imitation of nature, but as an imitation of other poems. It studies conventions and genres and the kind of recurrent imagery which connects one poem with another. The archetype is thus primarily the *communicable* symbol, and archetypal criticism deals with literature as a social fact and as a technique of communication. To an Aristotelian critic, poetry exists, as Sidney says, between the example and the precept. The events of a poem are exemplary and general, hence there is a strong element of recurrence in them. The ideas are precepts, or statements of what might be or ought to be, hence there is a strong element of desire in them. These elements of recurrence and desire come into the foreground with archetypal criticism” [124].

Professor Denham divides the reviews collected into two sections. Part 1, “Grammars of the Imagination,” contains review essays on some of the major figures of modern thought, such as Jung, Frazer, Toynbee, Cassirer; Part 2, “Orders of Poetic Experience,” treats individual novelists and poets, such as Cervantes, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, Beckett, Robert Graves, René Char. The unifying, systematic recognition of recurrence of themes and style appears everywhere, even in the treatment, in a single review, of a rather heterogeneous collection of seven novels, in which Frye starts with Hemingway’s *Across the River and into the Trees*—“The colonel is a lonely man. Around him is an impersonal hatred directed, like a salute, at his uniform” [207]—and ends with C. Virgil Gheorgiu’s *The Twenty-Fifth Hour*—“The hatred of occupied countries for an alien uniform, which Hemingway’s colonel discovers but fails to understand, is expressed here from its own point of view” [218]. Aside from the intellectual stimulation of ideas on literature and society, Frye’s writing has a style in the best sense of the word, that is, it is firmly based on a live being, indicated by the firm grounding in the speaking voice. Anyone who has heard Frye lecture cannot miss hearing him when reading his essays and reviews. Even those who have never heard Frye in person will still, I think, sense a living voice in the text. This is not a small matter. Consider how many articles in, say, *PMLA* read as though they had been spewed out by some monotonously programmed computer, emerging flat like paste from the tube on the brush. The scholar who shows he has a tin ear for the movement of language writes with a leaden hand and can scarcely be trusted, except perhaps for the few, meager mechanical facts assembled. You don’t read such material, you scan it as you would a map or chart.

Part of the vividness of Frye’s style is a wittiness not usually associated with academic writing. Commenting on F.S.C. Northrop’s *The Meeting of East and West*, Frye says, “The style is a lecturer’s style, ranging from lucid exposition to a habit of wordy repetitiveness doubtless acquired from watching difficult ideas bounce off faces of sleepy undergraduates” [107]. The wit, however, is not purely gratuitous; a point is made and made pointedly: “writers on the dance, for instance, at least the ones she quotes, seem to be a pretty inarticulate lot, and Mrs. Langer shows great tact and sympathy in translating their mooings into something more intelligible” [113]. Frequently the effect is produced by a sudden and apt insertion of the colloquial. “What we want, clearly is an equally impressive structure which will make room for humane values and established religion and not scare the pants off the middle-class reader” [76]. “The author of Spengler’s next book, *The Hour of Decision*, is just another Nazi stumblebum” [79].

Though the best introduction to Frye is still his short, succinct *The Educated Imagination*, originally a series of talks on the CBC, this collection of reviews, with the editor's lengthy, detailed Introduction could be a way to the ideas of one of the seminal thinkers of our day, particularly to "the liberating vision of life," which Professor Denham notes "is a recurrent theme in the reviews collected here" [45], and, one might add, in everything Northrop Frye has said and written.

3. Cain, William E. *South Carolina Review* 11 (November 1978): 123–5.

Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature extend[s] our sense of Frye's work and career in important ways. . . . [A]bly edited by Robert D. Denham, [it] gathers together Frye's review-essays written during the nineteen-forties and fifties. These are far from fugitive pieces, and often form substantial essays in their own right. As always, Frye's command of a vast body of material—whether he is dealing with books by Cassirer, Jung, Eliade, or Frazer, or else commenting on new studies of Pound and Wyndham Lewis—is very impressive. The review of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, for example, considers not only the book itself, but also the theory of translation, the nature of poetic language, and discursive thought. Frye's writing is lively and witty, as when he refers to "some phrases in Clive Bell's book on Proust that slither around in the mind like greased weasels" [114], or when he defines the aphorism as "working on the principle of the Bloody Mary: it has to be swallowed at a gulp and allowed to explode from inside" [239]. Thanks to Denham's selection and arrangement, we can observe in these reviews many themes and problems that recur (and are re-examined) in different contexts. Toynbee, for instance, is first treated in a separate review, and is then cited in a discussion of Frazer, who is, in turn, taken up again in reviews of Eliade's and Jung's books. *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature* allows us to see Frye in his workshop, defining himself against the other great system-builders and mythmakers (from Spengler to Toynbee) of modern times, and preparing the ground for his own system in the *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Denham also provides a sixty-page introduction to this volume, where he surveys Frye's career and analyzes his critic's attitudes towards history, society, and culture. A welcome aspect to Denham's account is his careful definition of Frye's key terms: imagination, symbol, archetype, ritual, dream, romance, identity, and analogy. He closes with a strong claim for Frye's "achievement," stressing the "practical value" of his system, his "creative and aesthetic" power, and his effort to defend "all the products of human culture" [52–3]. Denham stands with Angus Fletcher as one of Frye's most skillful and sympathetic readers, and he greatly enriches our understanding of his critic's labors; his introduction will serve as an excellent point of departure for students of Frye's work.

Denham's introduction, however, falls short in several areas. Though he confronts Frederick Crews's and others' attacks on the *Anatomy's* lack of social reference, he accepts Frye's own defense too much at face value. Frye views literature as a "self-contained universe" which is not dependent upon social contexts, but which is, at the same time related to them. Literature and society, Frye believes, should be kept in "balance"; each vitally contributes to the growth and development of the other, but each also has its own special terms and emphases. Through this "balanced" account, Frye aims to organize a body of knowledge—literature—that humanists may study, and that is free from the influence of political or social dogmatism. But what Frye regards as a necessary detachment of literature from social context, W. K. Wimsatt, on the other hand, judges as an example of one of Frye's "oddities, implausibilities," and "patent contradictions" (see his essay—which Denham does not discuss—in *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger, p. 80). Denham correctly perceives that Frye "wants the best of both possible worlds" [17], but Wimsatt and other critics are not content to let Frye have them.

Perhaps Denham should also have described Frye's relation to structuralism and continental theories of literature. Some structuralists have embraced Frye as an ally, but others, who are hostile to his emphasis on "humanism" and "human nature," as well as to his placement of man's imagination at the center of things, speak of him as an arch-enemy. Denham himself seems to advocate a critical pluralism which accepts many methods, and which, he feels, Frye's literary holism helps to foster. But several recent writers have denied the value and even the availability of pluralism. Paul de Man, for example, states that "if we start from a pluralistic perspective, we can never achieve a genuine reading. We can develop a reading only if we think it is somehow unique" (see his essay in *Symposium*, Spring, 1974). From this point of view, Frye's holistic approach ought to be resisted; de Man's account of the "genuine reading" may be a narrow one, but it does pose a challenge to Frye's method that Denham fails to consider.

Frye, unlike de Man, is rarely concerned with uniqueness or "difference" in literature. He highlights recurring patterns and images, describing what makes one text "like" another one and revealing the sources of literary and cultural continuity. But the danger of his schemes and over-views is that they too often ignore the experience of reading (and struggling with) specific texts.

4. Crowley, C. P. *University of Windsor Review* 14 (Spring–Summer 1979): 96–100.

Professor Robert Denham's fine collection of reviews by Northrop Frye is of great historical and literary interest. The reviews concern works and writers which were popular and/or significant in the fifties, and although many of the topics discussed now have a slightly nostalgic air about them, they form an excellent cultural mirror of the decade. They also reveal Frye in the process of creating a critical point of view which has been called the greatest global point of view in literature of any literary thinker. The reviews were written for the most part between the publication of *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) and *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Frye's magnificent books which helped to undermine the authority of the New Criticism and set their own stamp on a generation of critics.

Frye followers, and those who have not read the above Frye classics, will find helpful the summaries of his system scattered throughout, along with comments on topics, many of which are developed at length in his other books, particularly the *Anatomy*. Fourteen of the reviews were originally published in *The Hudson Review* and are written in the serious academic style which has always been its mark, lightened, however, by frequent Frye irreverences which have always been his mark: "The trouble with being a literary critic is that one gets filing cards in the memory, and one is continually having to fish them out and wonder if the clichés typed on them are really so bright" [230].

Frye was clearly not abashed by his position as a Canadian writing in a journal of such international distinction and played the role of teacher as he has always done at home: "There are traditionally two main centres of interest in the theory of criticism, sometimes described by the words *poesis* and *poema*. . . . Any complete theory of criticism needs both" [188–89].

While the other reviews (five from the *Canadian Forum*, one from the CBC, one from *The Griffin*) are somewhat less lofty in tone (Spengler in *The Hour of Decision*: "Just another Nazi stumble bum" [79]), they also possess the qualities which made critic Frye a great teacher. The precise summaries of subject matter, the sharp perceptions, the deep respect for an author's work and motivation, are continually revealed in clear and witty prose.

The most popular applied reviews are to be found in the section entitled "Orders of Poetic Experience," one of which, "Novels on Several Occasions," covers seven novels, a grab bag of American, English and European fiction in translation. This is Frye at his most succinct, what appears to be simple good taste hiding a sound critical underpinning: "The story lies around in bits and pieces,

with no serious effort to articulate it” [208]; “we do not feel pushed around, nor do we get claustrophobia from a closed system of thought” [215].

Particularly perceptive is the review of Boswell’s *London Journal, 1762–1763*, where he applies Yeats’s mask conception of the psychology of the writer to Boswell’s writing strategy, concluding, “like most people who struggle for impossible masks, Boswell had father trouble, and this journal polarizes him between his own father and a new father figure” [169]. Frye’s other comment on Boswell’s eavesdropping on his own thought calls to mind Michel Leiris who writes about himself and writes about himself writing about himself.

In most of these reviews, Frye is an insightful commentator on whatever lies before him. Occasionally, however, as with Pound and Wyndham Lewis, he understands writers who do not fit into his system. Pound lacks a myth or archetype to inform his poetry. One may be fascinated by Pound’s particulars but “the sense of an enveloping body of vision does not come and one continues to slither along on the surface, never out of reach of the excited, hectoring voice of direct address [202]. Donald Davie, much later, said of Pound: “Nevertheless Dryden and Keats and, yes, Shakespeare are the appropriate fellows for this poet of our time.” Wyndham Lewis, who “ridicules” the archetypal approach to fiction, reads most like a “delirious Dickens” [189]. Eliot, earlier, called Lewis “the greatest prose master of style in my generation.”

The Frye we have come to know best appears brilliantly in the section entitled, “Grammars of the Imagination.” The phrase, Frye’s own, makes an apt title for the section. It describes what he perceives as the ultimate category, the final value of the mental constructs of most if not all modern thinkers and writers who have connected vast intellectual systems. Frye’s preoccupation with the system appears in one of the early reviews.

In 1947, reviewing Somerville’s abridgement of the first six volumes of Toynbee’s *A Study of History*, Frye compares the Toynbee work to Spengler’s *Decline of the West*. After describing the latter as German romanticism at its corniest, he adds that we are all Spenglerians to some extent, and proceeds to make a loving detour into the Spenglerian shapes of history, the cultural organic analogues, the parallels, patterns and comparisons of disparate cultures of east and west. When he returns to Toynbee, it is to praise him for making the death-and-rebirth rhythm of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* an essential part of his structure.

Thus, Toynbee’s material, which is not history but chronicle, needing an “imaginative total apprehension” [76] finds it in metaphor. Frye sums up the process involved in such system building as “an intuitive response based on an imaginative grasp of the symbolic significance of a certain data” [80]. This response, another name for myth, is essential for Frye because it is the work of the developed human imagination, the perceptive power which orders or constructs reality, making it intelligible. But myth, while constructive, is pure hypothesis.

In a review of Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1954) Frye notes that mathematics is an informing or constructive principle in the natural sciences, and wonders if literary myth might not perform a similar function in the social or qualitative sciences, giving a shape and coherence to psychology, anthropology, theology, history, and political theory. He stresses that, although acting as an informing or constructive principle, literary myth would retain its own autonomy of hypothesis. When the *Anatomy of Criticism* appeared in 1957, this function of myth was enriched and made applicable to all verbal structures, to everything built out of words, including law. Such reduction of all verbal structures to myth or metaphor, must, inevitably, include Frye’s own criticism, and Denham, who claims that Frye created a “metacritical” universe, analogous in range, variety, and power to the great metaphysical system such as those of Plato or Spinoza, has caught the implication. As a result, Denham’s generally fervent introduction closes on a diminished note. He suggests that Frye, as a metacritic, cannot help but be haunted by the many fallen structures which lie along the road to the eternal city of man’s intellectual and imaginative dreams. I doubt very much that

Frye will be seriously haunted by such fallen structures. In his final pages of the *Anatomy*, when pointing out one of Rousseau's social solutions is informed by the myth of the sleeping beauty, he comments that such an insight is valuable only if the myth is the source of coherence in the argument, and adds "such a view of the relation of myth to argument would take us very close to Plato, for whom the ultimate acts of apprehension were either mathematical or mythical" [354]. Frye, as a critic close to Plato, will hardly be depressed if he shares Plato's fate. As Michel Foucault wrote, "What philosophy has not tried to overcome Platoism?"

Professor Denham's introduction is thorough (64 pages), scholarly, and eminently readable. The notes to the introduction are generally helpful. Denham's enthusiasm reveals itself occasionally. He points out that Frye beat Lévi-Strauss by twenty years to his pragmatic and syntagmatic way of reading the Oedipus myth. He also praises Edward Said for being one of few readers who have understood the "centrality of music as structural analogy in Frye's thought" [243]. In fact Said does not describe music as Frye's central structural analogy, but rather says that Frye's analogies are tonal music and Platonic Christianity, something a great deal different.

Denham, in an otherwise splendid introduction, is a little too defensive in the face of Harold Bloom's criticism of the continuities in Frye's system, and comes close to arguing that Frye anticipated current theories of misprision. But Frye's "anticipation" of misprision is hardly a theory of misprision in Bloom's sense.

The weight of Frye's thought leans towards balance or integration of the continuous and discontinuous. Denham describes *The Modern Century* (1967) as a book about the interplay between continuity and discontinuity, but the direction of the book is towards a system which includes, absorbs, or at least keeps in tension discontinuous elements. "No idea is anything more than half-truth unless it contains its own opposite, and is expanded by its own denial or qualification." Frye's perception explains his analysis of a Modigliani or a T. E. Hulme, where the *discordia concors* of artistic discipline and natural untidiness evokes the sense of wit in the painting or poem.

In discontinuous poetry and prose, however, where Frye feels the *discordia concors* does not happen (*The Waste Land* or *Finnegans Wake*), Frye searches for continuity and goes outside the work to find it in the reader. The writer, he says, "hands continuity over" to the reader. Frye's momentum, then, is hardly towards the heuristic use of discontinuity to be found in a Bachelard, a Foucault or a Deleuze where the interest is in transformations, thresholds, or mutations.

The distinction places Frye as a critic precisely. Frye said not long ago that the principles laid down in *Anatomy of Criticism* and elsewhere are "heuristic assumptions . . . the only ones available to me" [*Spiritus Mundi* 100–01]. Professor Denham in his wise introduction might have been a touch wiser to have remained serene, and satisfied with Frye's assumptions which have been heuristic enough for most of us, including Frye, since the fifties.

5. Dick, Bernard F. *World Literature Today* 52 (Autumn 1978): 697–8.

It is difficult to believe that Northrop Frye once spoke of phrases "that slither around in the mind like greased weasels" [114] or reviewed novels like Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees* or Schulberg's *The Disenchanted*. Yet he did, as one discovers in this collection of reviews published between 1946 and 1960. The present volume compliments the prevailing image of Frye the formidable critic, for it presents him as a popularizer, not in the sense of a flashy simplifier but, to pay him the tribute he once paid Sidney, as one who makes "accessible the truths of revelation and reason" [*The Critical Path* 67]. And accessible is exactly what Frye makes *The Golden Bough*, the Jungian archetypes, Coleridge's imagination, and Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms.

Everything Frye touches takes on prismatic clarity; as if through some alchemy the opaque becomes translucent. Frye has the late Gilbert Highet's gift of wearing his learning with grace and writing with a stylistic economy that belies its own depth. He disentangles the knottiest problems by pulling a useless thread, unraveling the mystery of myth (it is just an equation, a metaphor of identity) and explaining the nature of archetypal criticism in one sentence: it treats poetry not as an imitation of nature "but as an imitation of other poems" [124].

As illuminating as the essays is Robert Denham's introduction, which not only explains why Frye gravitated to archetypal criticism as the most all-embracing type, but also why an understanding of the imagination is as central to Frye as it was to Coleridge, and as it must be to all who try to explain nature of literature. Denham also shows that for all his excursions into anthropology and psychology, Frye never ignored the text, which was so important to him that he once chided Susanne Langer for quoting Proust's critics instead of Proust. It is to be hoped that Denham will write a full-scale study of this most influential and most humane of modern critics.

6. Gudas, Fabian. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (Fall 1978): 106–7.

During the 1940s and 1950s, in addition to working on *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) and *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye wrote reviews of about three hundred books. In 1971, in *The Bush Garden*, he republished some of the articles in which he had reviewed the writings of contemporary Canadian authors. Now another selection from this huge number of reviews has been made available in book form. Robert D. Denham, who in 1974 published an extremely useful bibliography of Frye's work and of commentaries on this work, has selected twenty of Frye's reviews and, together with one of Frye's radio talks (on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*), has republished them in the present volume. Almost all of these reviews had appeared originally in the *Canadian Forum* and *The Hudson Review*. More than half are of books that have helped to shape modern thought in such diverse fields as history (Spengler, Toynbee, Niebuhr), psychology (Jung), philosophy (Cassirer), religion (Eliade), aesthetics (Langer), and poetics (Tate, Valéry). The other articles are reviews of the work of creative writers, mostly modern, or of books about the work of creative writers (e.g., Pound, Orwell, Hemingway, Beckett, Graves, Char).

Denham prefaces this collection of reviews with an introduction of over sixty pages to which he has added another ten pages of notes. In the introduction Denham provides a highly condensed account of Frye's position on six major topics: (1) the social context of literature and criticism; (2) the nature of the human imagination; (3) the diversity of poetic meaning and its relation to a general theory of cultural symbolism; (4) the philosophy of history; (5) procedures in practical criticism; (6) Frye's concept of identity. It is obvious that one of the principles that guided Denham in the selection of the reviews to be included in this anthology was the usefulness of the review for illuminating one or more of these topics. Thus some of the reviews have autobiographical value by showing Frye reacting to thinkers who influenced him and whose concepts he borrowed or reshaped. But in developing Frye's position on these six topics, Denham depends so heavily on the works that Frye has published since the *Anatomy* that the connection between the introduction and the reviews becomes very tenuous. However, as an independent statement, the introduction should be useful to the scholar who has a general familiarity with Frye's poetics and wishes a summary account of Frye's most recent views on the six topics listed.

Denham says that Frye is well known as a lecturer and essayist but that his skill in another of the "episodic" literary forms—the review—is little appreciated. This is true and is one justification for Denham's anthology. That Frye considers the review an important genre of criticism is attested to by the large number of reviews that he has published. Unfortunately, Denham's introduction says almost nothing about the place that Frye assigns to the review in his synoptic table of valid modes of criticism. Frye divides practical criticism into scholarly or academic criticism, the aim of which is to increase our

understanding of literary works and judicial or public criticism, the aim of which is to contribute to appreciation and development of taste (Frye frequently cites Lamb, Arnold, and Sainte-Beuve as outstanding practitioners of judicial criticism). Then there is poetics or literary theory. Frye says that poetics is a form of criticism “intermediate” between scholarly and judicial criticism and, ideally, informing both of them. Without it, scholarly criticism has no method or goal, and judicial criticism, in one of its forms, becomes “a series of amiable and enthusiastic gargles: we read sentence after sentence with no actual content, beyond a general emotional aim of deprecating analysis in favor of applause” (Frye’s comment on a book on Char’s poetry) [238].

Frye has practiced all three types of criticism. His contributions to poetic theory and scholarly criticism are universally known. Probably because there still is considerable confusion as to just what Frye’s position on evaluation and criticism really is, his great contribution to judicial criticism is only infrequently recognized. The review is one of the literary genres in which judicial criticism typically expresses itself. In several places in his works Frye speaks of the responsibilities of the book reviewer, his aims and purposes, his audience, his value, his limitations, his qualifications, and the criteria by which his work is to be judged. It is a pity that Denham has not brought together Frye’s scattered comments on book reviewing and discussed them in his introduction. Such a discussion would have several values. It would illuminate Frye’s aims and procedures in the reviews collected in this book; for example, it would point to the qualities that these reviews have which, in Frye’s eyes, distinguish them from being merely “gargles” (or even “gurgles”). More generally, such a discussion may make some contribution to clarifying Frye’s position on what gives one value judgment greater authority than another when persons are engaged in appraising literary works and other products of the human imagination including human culture itself. W. K. Wimsatt found Frye’s theoretical treatment of criticism and evaluation full of contradictions and vagaries. Joseph Margolis spoke of the “extreme *naïveté*” of Frye’s theory of values. A close study of Frye’s judicial criticism would lead to a reconsideration of these judgments.

7. Hesford, Walter A. *Christianity & Literature* 30 (Spring 1981): 104–6.

Robert D. Denham has gathered . . . twenty-one review essays by Northrop Frye, originally published between 1946 and 1960. Their significance, Denham asserts, “lies in what they have to say not only about a group of important thinkers, poets, and novelists, from Cervantes to Char, but also about the foundations and direction of Frye’s own thought” [vii]. Denham’s long, thoughtful introduction concerns itself with the latter subject. Because of its rather demanding erudition, the introduction will best serve those already fairly familiar with the contours of Frye’s criticism.

Denham sees Frye as a romantic liberal who places ultimate faith in the power of the imagination to transform self and society. Frye’s “foundations” in Blake are duly excavated; the full archaeology of Frye’s thought, however, will require the unearthing of the history of his response to the book he considers central to the Western literary and historical imagination: the Bible. One would like to know what the Bible meant to him before he read Blake and what it means to him now. Frye has been reticent about this matter, as one would expect of someone who views criticism grounded in religious faith as deterministic [131–4]. In this collection, as elsewhere, Frye concentrates on the archetypal structure of the Bible. “Its central structure,” he contends, “is that of a quest-romance: it tells the story of a progress from creation to recreation through the heroism of Christ in killing the dragon of death and hell and rescuing his bride the Church” [128]. Through such mythic formulations Frye has done his job famously well; a future interpreter of Frye might do well to undertake the job of investigating the relationship between Frye’s critical perspective and historical, biblically rooted religion.

Rooted as he is in the romantic tradition, Frye's cast of mind seems more apocalyptic than historical, more Gnostic than Judaeo-Christian. Yet Denham argues that Frye has used his methodology and talent in ways that prove him to be much more involved in understanding the "real" socio-historical contexts and consequences of literature than those who see him as a New Critic Writ Large or a solipsistic structuralist would suggest. The defense of Frye's accomplishment in the context of classical and Anglo-American critical traditions is well-balanced and convincing, though it might have been deepened by some attention to what, in comparison, contemporary European schools of criticism have accomplished.

Denham divides this collection of essays into two parts: "Grammars of the Imagination" and "Orders of Poetic Experience." The "indispensable" (to use Frye's favorite term of commendation) works reviewed in the first part are, indeed, evaluated as grammars. Frazer's *Golden Bough* is appraised as a "kind of grammar of the human imagination" [89]; Eliade's essays are described as "a grammar of the symbolism of religion" [98]; Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* is commended as "a grammar of literary symbolism which for all serious students of literature is as important as it is endlessly fascinating" [129]. The prevailing interest in the deep grammatical structure of the imagination evinced in this collection will surprise none of Frye's readers, nor will the almost intimidating scope of his knowledge and mythic powers, which makes even the intellectual grasp of a Cassirer, a Toynbee, and a Reinhold Niebuhr seem limited when under his review.

As Denham points out in his introduction, the essays in Part I are studded with sentences and paragraphs which find their way into *Anatomy of Criticism*. There were, however, at least for this reader, some surprises: a call for cultural pluralism, with a suggestion that if world unity is to be achieved, it will be an affair of economics and politics, not of the imagination [110]; support for the Marx-Engels view that the great fact of history can now be seen as the exploitation of labor [82], and that the Industrial Revolution catalyzed a new mentality that may free man from the bondage of history [146]; a concomitant faith in what the human imagination has been up to in the twentieth century, and thus scorn for the "Great Western Butterslide" view of history held by such conservative thinkers as Allen Tate, according to whom we have been sliding down hill since the Middle Ages [132]. Frye aligns himself, rather nervously, with Oswald Spengler, who contends that our culture has just been naturally aging [134].

Frye's openness to twentieth-century imaginative constructs is further evidenced in Part II, in which are reviews of works by and about Wyndham Lewis, Valéry, Pound, Beckett, and Graves, as well as some lesser luminaries of our age. I find, however, the essays on Don Quixote, Boswell's journals, and Coleridge's notebooks to have more substance, perhaps because their subjects are of greater interest to me. I suspect that, whereas the essays included under "Grammars of the Imagination" will engage the attention of readers whether or not they have read the works under review, the essays grouped under "Orders of Poetic Experience" will sustain the interest of only those who are familiar with the particular "orders" under consideration.

The concluding piece in the collection is a 1957 review of the poetry of René Char. Frye draws on another, unnamed critic in his assessment of the poetry and the poet: "His 'poetry is a total gesture of revolution,' looking for a bigger transformation of society than, say, Marxism could achieve: he 'is not a Christian,' but 'Salvation is always on his mind'" [241]. While Frye may appear here to be having some fun with a fellow critic's rhetorical reaches, his next sentence suggests that he finds admirable the stance they celebrate: "He [Char] sounds, in short, like an old-fashioned romantic liberal, and there are certainly many worse things to be than that" [241-2]. Though he does not say so, it seems likely that Denham would have us hear in this sentence Frye's plainspoken evaluation of himself.

8. Hinden, Michael. *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14 (April 1980): 105-7.

Many regard Northrop Frye as the most eminent literary theorist writing in English. Certainly no critic has exerted a more powerful influence on the direction of literary studies from the fifties to the early seventies, and few have been more prolific. In addition to the indispensable *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and fourteen other books, Frye has contributed more than three hundred critical reviews to various journals. A previous collection of book reviews, *The Bush Garden*, appeared in 1971. Now Robert Denham has gathered a collection of significant reviews written by Frye during those years when he was working on the *Anatomy*. These twenty-one essays . . . display Frye's multiplicity of interests as well as the constancy of his concerns. Readers familiar with the *Anatomy* will discover ideas and sentences that germinate and later find their place in that elaborate map of modes and phases. Scaled down, Frye's perceptions seem more manageable here. Students of literature will find the book readable and interesting; students of criticism will recognize it as important.

The book is divided in two parts: essays of theoretical criticism in which Frye expands the occasion of a review to speculate broadly on literature, philosophy, or history; and essays of "practical criticism" in which he focuses on individual authors from Cervantes to René Char. The pieces of part 1 cohere, but those in part 2 seem disconnected despite Denham's claim that they reveal in some significant way the development of Frye's thought. It is nevertheless exciting to peruse Frye in diversity. He is fine on Don Quixote's pathos, Boswell's biographical dialectic, Coleridge's failure to find his proper form, Valéry's *symbolisme*, Wyndham Lewis's literary offenses, and the "closed, autoerotic circle" [221] of Beckett's novels. But only in reviewing Hugh Kenner's *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* is Frye obliged in this section to address first principles extensively. He must say what poetry is ("It is a structure of images" [197–8]) before assessing what Pound does. (Frye grudgingly admires Pound but finds the texture of his work "as harsh and gritty as a pile of dirty spinach" [202]).

In contrast, Frye's essays in part 1 drive on toward synthesis. Whatever can be called a grammar or morphology quickens his eye. Considering their impact on literary criticism, the books reviewed here are intellectual monuments of the age: Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Jung's *Essays on Analytical Psychology*, Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Langer's *Feeling and Form*, studies of history by Toynbee, Spengler, Eliade, and Niebuhr. Reading these pieces in succession encourages us to regard these books as quest romances with Frye as the hero-as-reviewer. With sublime ease he unravels the plot of Jung's drama of the collective psyche; in another essay he discovers that Frazer's charting of unconscious symbolism in *The Golden Bough* implies the social side of Freud's and Jung's nearly identical portraits of the imagination. Spengler's cyclical view of history suggests to him another pattern of identity, although he sees it needs correction (as does Toynbee's linear, progressive view) by Marx. Langer and Cassirer provide a useful framework of symbolic forms but do not account sufficiently for genres.

It is fascinating to observe how these concerns grow into underpinnings for the *Anatomy*, which attempts to explain the great narrative patterns of literature with respect to ritual, myth, archetype, genre, history, and above all, the shaping power of desire. It may be said of Frye that no critic has attempted to explain so much, and it may be added that no critic is more appreciative of explanations. Thus he hails *The Golden Bough* as "a kind of grammar of the human imagination" [89], Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* as "a grammar of literary symbolism" [129], comparative religion as "the morphology of symbolism" [95], and Eliade's books as "a grammar of the symbolism of religion" [98]. With hindsight the reader knows where this is leading—to the grammar of all literary grammars, the *Anatomy of Criticism*.

To his credit Frye remains entirely free of the temptation to cannibalize his subjects, a ritual practice common among reviewers, which consists of devouring books, plucking out their hearts, and eating them in order to gain power over authors. Frye pays tribute to his sources even as he draws away from them. Here there may be arguments but never spats. As an added attraction, Frye indulges

(sparingly) a vein of humor the existence of which may come as a surprise to readers acquainted only with the *Anatomy*. Cautioning us on the methods of comparative study, he observes, “If you are studying natural history, no matter how fascinated you may be by anything that has eight legs, you can’t just lump together an octopus and a spider and a string quartet” [89].

The remark sparkles and is a reminder that Frye’s sense of history and difference is almost as deep as his quest for archetypes and identity. In his long (64 pp.), useful introduction to the volume Professor Denham stresses the social aspects of his vision. Denham shows that over the years Frye’s criticism has developed dialectically, embracing interpenetrating contexts of literature and culture. The essays printed here support that view.

“The incompetent critic,” Frye writes in one of his review essays, “has a delicate instinct for avoiding the center of his subject; [the competent one] has an infallible instinct for finding it” [131]. His own ability to root out central issues is exemplary. With the exception of Philip Morrison, who does wonderfully literate book reviews for *Scientific American*, Frye the explainer has no peer.

9. Kane, Sean. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 48 (July 1979): 431–3.

It is fashionable to excavate the early thinker from beneath the reputation of the later authority. Such activity may be informed by the myth of the fountain of youth, but I’m sure even Professor Frye thinks fondly of that hard-working period in the fifties when these twenty-one reviews (and a hundred more essays besides) were written. He will observe that editors often reissue early work to present a mind as if free and untroubled by its later orthodoxy, and that just as often the editing is done to reverse the myth and suggest a development that proceeds like one inexorable current. It probably doesn’t matter to Frye which account is the truer in his own case—he is generous with his reputation—but his editors have to make a choice, and Robert D. Denham, with the resources of his Enumerative Bibliography of Frye, flows with the myth of continuity. He has selected many of the reviews to show a response to grammarians of symbol and other critical authorities during the period of the *Anatomy*. This is useful enough. But more striking in the collection is an absence of spatial theorizing, and if Denham must present the reviews as foundation stones in the great cathedral of Frye’s thought, I prefer to regard them as side-chapels.

For they are modest reflections which pause with tact and commitment before often beautifully painted subjects. The concerns are as various as Dante, Don Quixote, the eighteenth century, Valéry, René Char. And the writers treated are as apparently off the apocalyptic highway as Pound, Hemingway, Orwell, and Wyndham Lewis. On balance, the pieces show the bookmanship of a man alert to his cultural time and place, who is drawn to human oddity and genius with a humanism that is exemplary in that it doesn’t quiver. There is wise writing here, especially about the psychology of the young Boswell, the Coleridge of the notebooks, and Beckett’s fictional people. The writing probes steadily towards the specific contradictions that animate a particular writer or critic, a probing which pushes these short reviews in the direction of the reflective essay or illumination.

In other words, the reviews do not seem especially disturbed by a larger project, but if with Denham you prefer the continuous, the uniform, and the totalizing, you will find it, say, in Frye’s effortless linking of the rite of passage and yoga (Eliade) with fertility ritual (Frazer) and with individuation and alchemy (Jung). In reactions to other critics, particularly Allen Tate, one hears the familiar note of the heightened matter-of-factness as criticism is adjusted away from the determinism which assumes that “literary standards, in order to be effectively literary, must be more than literary” [132]. And there is an early response to Spengler’s view of cultural aging. But on the whole, and in spite of Denham, the reviews seem to proceed from an obligation to the various concerns of the journals for which they were composed, the *Hudson Review*, mainly, and *Canadian Forum*.

I say in spite of Denham because he has used the occasion to assemble a 64-page introduction in seven parts to “dispel the view that Frye’s work represents a myopic commitment to the disinterested study of literary structure” [10]. It has an indexed, documented, and perhaps forced correctness in the way it sets Frye’s synoptic understanding in motion in time. Denham uses the word “develops” too often to justify what is really a cross-reference, and in earnestly rehearsing the more apologetic passages in Frye’s writing he gives an exaggerated sense of the theorist as a Los struggling to repossess his emanation. Some misprints, incongruous in a Frye book, also tend to put the introduction out of tone with the reviews. Really, the purpose of the introduction is to bring the past into conformity with the present and so to welcome the cultural historian of the Standard Authorized Version, the “Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature.” This has the license of discipleship, which is to say it is ritualistic, encyclopedic, committed myth-making. Can we hope that as such it will generate the contrary impulse? That is, to edit against the flow of “intellectual development” and select from Frye’s three hundred other reviews, including the ones on painting and music, a discontinuous, casual series of illuminations, allowing us to see the many tributaries of the creative mind, and to discern a more natural sense in which Frye means “the end of book reviewing is the beginning of criticism proper” [vii].

10. Lane, Lauriat, Jr. *English Studies in Canada* 7 (Spring 1981): 123–8.

In *Literature against Itself*, Gerald Graff criticizes the literary and cultural theory of Northrop Frye for several pages in a chapter titled “How Not to Save the Humanities.” Robert Denham’s edition of twenty-one of Frye’s reviews forms the second volume of a kind of trilogy whose first volume is *Northrop Frye: An Enumerative Bibliography* and whose third is *Northrop Frye and Critical Method*. The essay-reviews in the present collection have an obvious relation to Frye’s other writings, especially the *Anatomy*, which has already been noted elsewhere by many reviewers and need not be restated here. In addition, however, *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature*, like Denham’s other two books, may help us respond to Graff’s criticisms.

Graff finds that Frye’s ideas, when taken to their logical conclusion, deprive literature and criticism of any claim to referential truth to reality and hence, by Graff’s reckoning, of any epistemological or ethical authority: “Useful as it as a methodological principle enabling critics to perform technical analysis, the concept of autonomy becomes a source of mystification when it presents itself as the final word on the relations between literature and the world” [22]. Of the two complementary versions of this mystification, the formalist, which separates literature wholly from reality, and the visionary, “a kind of formalism on the offense, projecting the autonomous imagination and its categories outward onto the practical world” [14], Graff places Frye within the latter as one whose “theory asserted that poetic vision is the paradigm and model of all our attempts to impose a human significance and pattern on the brute and inhuman world of nature” [16]. The effect of such a theory, for Graff, is that “the cognitive function ambitiously claimed for literature conflicts with the cognitive emptiness of the definition of literature” [184]. Thus, although Graff does not “doubt Frye’s sincerity when he says that his way of disposing matters does not renounce the concept of truth,” nevertheless, “Frye’s argument commits him to something close to such a renunciation” [185]. But does Frye’s theory insist on literature’s visionary authority and that alone, and if so does it thereby commit him to renouncing any claim to truth, to authority? How might Frye, and Denham, reply to Graff?

The material by and about Frye cited in *Northrop Frye: An Enumerative Bibliography* suggests two preliminary points. First, Graff’s criticisms are representative of a significantly large opinion about Frye’s writings. Second, Frye’s writings extend beyond the *Anatomy* and his other books. Any

Anatomy-centered or *Anatomy*-biased view of his opinions as to the relation between literature and reality, or literature and truth, especially one that slights *Anatomy*'s special purposes or its "Tentative Conclusion," is bound to be unfair. The reprinted reviews previously noted in the *Bibliography* and Denham's long introduction (most of it reprinted in *Northrop Frye and Critical Method*) add to our knowledge of where Frye stands on such issues. Moreover, the material reprinted in this collection is, as Denham points out [5], potentially more referential to some extra-literary reality or truth than Frye's more "favoured" subjects, from Shakespeare's late comedies to Stevens's poetry. This is not to say that the reviews constitute an unexpected, simplistic tribute to naive, undisplaced realism and its strictly empirical "truths"; nor, to be fair, would even Graff wish them to.

The editor has divided the reviews into two groups: "Grammars of the Imagination" and "Orders of Poetic Experience." But the second group deals directly with poetry in only two of its eleven reviews. The remainder consider less autonomous forms: prose fiction, political fable, journals, notebooks, and critical and biographical studies of specific writers. The reviews in the first group are of even more thematic writings, to use Frye's distinction. They involve such familiar figures, to readers of Frye, as Cassirer, Toynbee, Frazer, Eliade, and Jung; other "thinkers," Northrop, Langer, Niebuhr, Löwith; and again certain literary critics and historians, this time of more general topics. Frye's choice of such books for review—I think we can assume the choice was his—already answers by implication Graff's accusations of visionary autonomy and cognitive emptiness.

The last words of *Anatomy of Criticism* are "the social and practical result of their labors." The result, that is, of criticism of literature such as that reviewed in these essays. Earlier in the "Tentative Conclusion" Frye drew an analogy between literature and mathematics: "Both literature and mathematics proceed from postulates, not facts; both can be applied to external reality and yet exist also in a 'pure' or self-contained form" [351]. He then went on to ask a question: "But if the analogy is to hold, the question of course arises: is literature like mathematics in being substantially useful, and not just incidentally so?" [352]. Much of Frye's other writing tries to answer, theoretically or practically, directly or analogically, this question.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the first essay in *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature* should be "Myth as Information," a review of the English translation of the first volume of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Published three years before the *Anatomy*, this essay uses Cassirer's "general conception of symbolic form" to reaffirm the importance, meanings, and functions of myth for our time as it produces "that uninterrupted flow of talk which is generally called, and sometimes accompanies, a steady advance in thinking" [68]. Although "the word *myth* means different things in different fields," for Frye "it is gradually settling down to mean the formal or constructive principles of literature" [74]. Cassirer's principles may develop in time to the point where "we shall come to see literary myth as similarly a constructive principle in the social or qualitative sciences, giving shape and coherence to psychology, anthropology, theology, history, and political theory without losing in any one of them its own autonomy of hypothesis" [74–5]. On some such basis Frye can claim in his review of Samuel Beckett's trilogy: "a good deal of the best fiction of our time has employed a kind of myth that might be read as a psychological, a social, or a religious allegory, but remains a myth, moving in all three areas life at once, and thereby interconnecting them as well" [219]. How this can happen or fail to happen is shown in "Novels on Several Occasions," a survey of seven American, Italian, British, French, and Rumanian novels. In "Ministry of Angels" Frye argues that Dante "passes Kierkegaard's 'either-or' dilemma . . . moving into the sphere of ethical freedom" [139], a liberation attributed in the *Anatomy* to the archetypal view of literature. In a generally sympathetic review of Susanne Langer's *Feeling and Form* Frye expresses concern that "the main tendency of her argument is to insulate art as a thing by itself" [115]. As Denham says in his introduction, "Frye will not be cornered into accepting the Kierkegaardian 'either-or' position. He wants the best of both possible worlds" [17]. But wanting is not always the same as getting, as Graff's courteous skepticism reminds us. For even *The Critical*

Path's proposed “both-and” tension between the myths of freedom and of concern, the truths of correspondence and of vision, fails to reassure Graff and others.

Part of the problem rests simply in Frye’s term “myth,” which should trouble his critics less and less as he continues to use it variously, as in these reviews, with the meaning and force it has for him. Part of the problem rests in Frye’s assumption, made here in his review of Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, that “metaphysical materialism is as dead as the dodo, or would be” [205], if only Marxists and certain others were not so misguided. Frye’s tone in this admittedly early review (1946) suggests an unexamined premise that may remain, even thirty-five years later, insufficiently examined in Frye’s own writings to satisfy those readers whose consent to this particular truth of vision may not be so easy as it seems here.

These reprinted reviews show Frye’s attempt, in practice, to grant literature a truth to reality. Pound’s theory of imagery has implications that “go far beyond literature” [198]. Wyndham Lewis “is the satirist of an age whose drama is a flickering optical illusion in a darkened room, whose politics is an attempt to make clichés into axioms of automatic conduct, whose spiritual discipline is a subjective exploring of the infantile and the perverted” [187]. Beckett’s fictional silences speak, paradoxically, to and for “a world given over to obsessive utterances, a world of television and radio and shouting dictators and tape recorders and beeping spaceships” [229]. “The literary historian needs a sharp eye for the historical epiphany” [150] and the other materials from reality that fill the background and foreground of the “underpainting” needed for his “sense of the interlocking relevance of all the literature of his age, conceived as a unit of culture complete in itself” [152]. Above all Frye finds it “surprisingly reassuring” that the French poet René Char is “a man with a heroic personal record, and not less a poet for having it; who is both ‘engaged’ in his life and yet exact and difficult in his art” [241]—yet Frye cannot resist half-bracketing “real” with quotation marks. Finally, Char “sounds, in short, like an old-fashioned romantic liberal, and there are certainly many worse things too be than that” [241–2]—a down-to-earth, Orwellian tribute. All this might only mean, of course, that engaged by particular literary occasions Frye lets his practice contradict his theory. Here we can turn again to Denham’s introduction for some, but only some, reassurance. At the beginning Denham acknowledges the criticisms of which Graff is only a more recent example: “A number of other readers have had similar misgivings about Frye’s work, suggesting that he shows an unqualified reverence for the literary text, that his critical system always points inward and thus neglects the relationship of literature to life, that his attention to questions of form and convention necessarily precludes all interest in questions of engagement” [4]. Denham goes on to argue why “this view of Frye, however, is a caricature, resting as it does upon half-truth” [4]. Significantly, Denham uses as an introduction to *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature* just those sections from his subsequent book on Frye that speak most directly to this issue. As a result, Denham’s introduction is a more direct rebuttal to Graff and others than is the same material when restored in a different form and arrangement to Denham’s overall exposition of Frye’s critical method, useful as that survey may be to many students of Frye’s writings. Supported, as we have seen, by the reviews it introduces, Denham’s argument is also supported by his discussion of certain of Frye’s other writings—especially *The Critical Path*, which for Graff too, as we have also seen, is a crucial text.

After summarizing the Tentative Conclusion of *Anatomy of Criticism*, Denham calls attention to the application of it in such books as *The Critical Path* and *The Modern Century*, and in the first parts of *The Stubborn Structure* and *Spiritus Mundi*. He then summarizes the concluding chapters of *The Well-Tempered Critic* and *The Critical Path*. He fails, however, to go much behind or beyond these important statements to make them even more convincing. Is it, for example, enough of a reply to the honest doubters described above to outline the final chapter and quote the eloquent, Arnoldian final page of *The Well-Tempered Critic* without adding more explicit philosophical foundations or more persuasive existential authority of the sort that Denham’s other mentor, Wayne Booth, provides so well? Is it

enough to recapitulate Frye's dialectic between the myths of freedom and concern, or his claim for the powers of the imagination or the social force of archetypal criticism, or his celebration of the anagogic way to the highest levels of human and social identity, without benefit of some meta-Frygian or post-Frygian version of these matters, of how and why they work? For presumably Graff and other responsible skeptics have read and reread many times what Frye himself has said, yet some of them still ask for more.

In review of several Jungian studies, Frye identifies ours as "an age of charismatic leaders in culture and thought as well as in action . . . such a leader has two types of followers; the centrifugal ones who find his ideas useful and apply them in their own work, and the centripetal ones who keep revolving around the Master expounding his message for our times" [95–6]. Robert Denham has more than proved himself an informed, helpful centripetal follower of Frye. I suggest that it will be among Frye's centrifugal followers of the future, including perhaps Denham himself, that we shall find further, firmer answers to Graff's questions.

11. Lodge, David. "The Myth of Decline." *New Statesman* 96 (29 September 1978): 412–13.

The shrewdness of Matthew Arnold's prophecy that poetry (read "literature") would take over the function of a discredited theology has been frequently noted. In England, the takeover has stressed the ethical improvement of the reader, presenting literature as a reservoir of life-enhancing values, or as a kind of moral-psychological gymnasium where one might test oneself in arduous but hypothetical exercises. There is, however, another way of interpreting, and fulfilling, Arnold's prophecy, which is to see the total body of literature as continuous with the production of ritual and myth, three historical stages in the endless human effort to make bearable sense of the world. This is Northrop Frye's way, and it has the incidental advantage of explaining how Christian theology has survived "demythologisation" by borrowing back from literary criticism an honorific conception of myth and interpreting its Scriptures as serious fictions.

When the great *Anatomy of Criticism* was published in 1957, attention, whether friendly or hostile, was focused on its highly schematic, deductive account of literary form, its bold claim to set criticism on a scientific footing, and its provocative scorn for "evaluation." The *Anatomy* was certainly, in one sense, a formalist enterprise, and those commentators who have seen Frye as evolving singlehandedly a kind of literary structuralism long before the European variety became intellectually fashionable are not entirely wrong. Frye's demonstration of the recurrence and mutation of literary archetypes points to a conception of literary "structure" lying deeper than the level of verbal nuance (where the New Criticism tended to stop) which has much in common with the analysis of narrative by the Russian Formalists and their successors.

This view of Frye, however, tended to overlook the Romantic-utopian inspiration of his criticism, and the quasi-religious role he assigned to literature in human society. He did, after all, begin his higher education as a theological student, and wrote his first book on Blake. It is a merit of Robert D. Denham's partisan but thoughtful introduction to his collection of Frye's early fugitive writings that it brings out the dialectical nature of Frye's theory of criticism, having "as one pole the total acceptance of the data of literature, and as the other the total acceptance of the potential value of those data" [*Anatomy of Criticism* 25]. Focus on the former leads to a formalist or centripetal investigation of the structure of literature, focus on the latter to a centrifugal investigation of its place in civilization, as nothing less than an imitation of "the total dream of mankind". As Denham comments, "His primary interest in the *Anatomy* is centripetal. . . . Much of his other work, however, is directed outward toward the social context of literature" [9]. The two poles between which the critic is compelled to operate

correspond roughly to the two opposing yet complementary myths upon which Frye sees Western culture as founded—the myth of freedom and the myth of concern.

There are not many critics whose 20-year-old book reviews one can read with pleasure and instruction, but Frye is an exception to most rules. He combines a North American academic professionalism with a witty, apparently effortless fluency of style that one associates with the best English literary journalism. He is a wonderfully crisp, lucid expositor of complex ideas, and a merciless punisher of cant and pretentiousness. “Criticism, like poetry,” he declares, “is either precise statement or blather” [199], and the healthy influence of this principle on his own writing is everywhere apparent in these review essays.

The main interest of the collection is, however, historical, as a record of Frye’s intellectual development and a testimony to its consistency. We may trace in these book reviews of the early 1950s the germination of ideas systematically expounded in the *Anatomy*, and even encounter phrases and whole sentences later incorporated in that book. Not surprisingly, works of metahistory, anthropology, psychology, and comparative religion proved especially stimulating to Frye in these years. From Spengler, it seems, Frye derived his cyclic theory of literary modes; Frazer and Jung suggested the possibility of constructing a universal grammar of symbolism; Eliade showed how ritual and myth enabled primitive man to transcend the limitations of life in time—but failed to see how literature performs an equivalent function for civilized man. Frye does not subscribe to that very popular modern myth, the myth of decline, though he has identified it and refers to it humorously as the Great Western Butterslide. “It is not merely that science has destroyed the sense of sacredness in time and space, but that poetry has recovered it for the world to which it really belongs” [106]. That world is, of course, the imagination; and it is Frye’s unshakable Romantic faith in the human imagination that makes him such an optimistic and ebullient inheritor of Arnold’s mantle.

12. Paschall, Douglas. “Continuity in Northrop Frye’s Criticism.” *Sewanee Review* 88 (Winter 1980): 121–5.

“When I published *Anatomy of Criticism*” (in 1957), Northrop Frye writes in *Spiritus Mundi*, “I had never heard of the word ‘structuralism’: I realized only that structure was a central concern of criticism, and that the ‘new critics’ of that day were wrong in underrating it” [100]. Few of Frye’s readers at the time were familiar with the word either, so that no one who joined the controversy over Frye’s dissection and taxonomy of the *corpus litterarum* had this polysyllabic label to pin on the professor’s white coat.

As late as 1965, when Frye’s criticism was unprecedentedly chosen as the topic of the English Institute seminar that year, none of the participant—not even Geoffrey Hartman who was guardedly sympathetic, nor W. K. Wimsatt who was sharply critical—used the term *structuralist* in characterizing Frye’s work. Nor, by omitting the tag, were they guilty of misrepresenting what Frye had done. How swiftly, then, the context for reading Frye has altered, even while paradoxically his own principles and methods have stayed virtually the same.

By temperament Frye is, as he describes himself, a loner, one who has sought neither to establish a school nor to gather disciples. Nonetheless Frye is well aware that he has been influential, not only on other critics but also on literary pedagogy, and hence on a certain number of so-called common readers. In fact, when pressed to defend his ideas, he has more than once justified them on the ground that his system is heuristic—that it has been successfully taught, even to children, and that it enables the student to discover things for himself.

Frye admits to being pleased about the advent of self-declared structuralisms, not for what they have so far contributed to literary studies (that contribution, he rightly says, is “rather disappointing” [*Spiritus Mundi* 106]), but because they offer anew the possibility, adumbrated in the *Anatomy* of

“interpenetration, the interrelating of different subjects in a way that preserves their own autonomy, instead of subordinating them to some grandiose program of mental imperialism” [*Spiritus Mundi* x].

Like the Paris “new” new critics, Frye is seeking nothing less than a universal “grammar” of the human imagination as manifest in verbal forms; he too is determined to pursue fully, in their consequences for literature generally, the discoveries made by the Romantic poets, the symbolists, and modernists. That Frye shares with these critics certain assumptions, or conclusions, will already be clear: that “poems can only be made of other poems”; that literary conventions and the “texts” of history and society more truly may be said to “write” the poet than he to write the poem; that any individual literary work is an instance of *parole*/performance within an autonomous and self-reflexive system of *langue*/competence; that literary works, neither imitating nor referring to any “reality” outside themselves, unconnected to external beliefs, are not subject to authoritative judgments; that literary studies can and should be conducted as a coherent, objective, and progressive science.

That these assumptions account but little for Frye’s considerable authority and persuasiveness as a critic does not change my view that seeing him in this revised context (for which, in any case, he is partly responsible) may help in clarifying the nature of his work. Some differences are striking: where structuralists critics worry about readers boredom, Frye suggests passionate attention and delight; and where the former tend to be militantly antihumanist, Frye is individualist and liberal, committed even to such a bourgeois institution as the modern university, for him still “the source of free authority in society ... the place where the appeal to reason, experiment, evidence, and imagination is continuously going on” [*Spiritus Mundi* 43]. Above all there is his style, which aims at clarity and animation, and is directed, not to a coterie of neologists and technicians, but to the widest possible audience of intelligent readers.

What is more difficult to compare and assess is Frye’s insistence on the objective nature of the structures that he perceives as informing literature, and hence his stress on the necessity, as well as the adequacy, of his elaborative system to deal with the subject properly. Mr. Denham, in his overlong and overweighty introduction to Frye’s post-war essay-reviews (which runs to sixty-five pages), acknowledges that “sometimes Frye seems to offer literature as an explanation for his categories rather than vice versa” [58]; and he adds: “Whether the patterns Frye observes—his five modes of fiction and five levels of symbolism, his four *mythoi* and twenty-four phases and so on—actually exist in literature or whether they exist in the mind of their beholder is not always an easy question to answer” [56]. Though Frye may now and then qualify his answer, admitting that his view of the “total schematic order” of literature is “colored by [his] preferences and limited by [his] ignorance” [118–19], his usual response comes plainly enough: “The order of words is there, and it is no good trying to write it off as a hallucination of my own” [118].

That literary works, taken all together, constitute an order of words is beyond question; but it may well continue to remain beyond our power, once and for all, to define the precise nature of that order. Despite Frye’s genuine commitment to “freedom” in the societies of men and of letters, his concern to demystify criticism, and his fondness for the ostensibly neutral metaphor of “interpenetration,” it is difficult to resist the conclusion that rigorous application of Frye’s categories would tend to “subordinate” one’s own knowledge of particular works to the demands of Frye’s scheme—to what, to use Frye’s own words, it is not wildly misleading to call his “grandiose program of mental imperialism” [*Spiritus Mundi* x]. For instance what Gabriel Josipovici has written about Barthes and *Tel Quel* is highly pertinent in its application to Frye: “The French ‘new criticism,’ like the new novel and the new music, moves very close to one of the poles towards which modern art inevitably gravitates, but which it reaches at its peril: the pole of total organization and total abstraction.”

The extent to which (as Denham puts it) “the central principles in Frye’s universe have remained constant over the years” [3] is amply demonstrated in these quite different collections of

discrete pieces. Denham's selections range from a review of Orwell written in 1946 to one on Beckett from 1960. . . .

Very little in the essay-reviews seems original, not because Frye was dull in them but because their best points have reappeared in later writing. Thus Denham notes that "a number of sentences and paragraphs from the works reprinted here were later to find their way into *Anatomy of Criticism*" [vii]. Nor is this surprising: what became the Polemical Introduction in that book was first published in 1949 (proclaiming a bold challenge to Arnold and Eliot) as "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"; and the section on archetypes, the Tentative Conclusion also, appeared some years before the book itself. . . .

The matter of "continuity" in Frye's thought is touched on in "Expanding Eyes," the essay in *Spiritus Mundi* which he calls "the keystone of the book, raising most of the assumptions around which my work at present revolves" [x]: "My work since [the *Anatomy*] has assumed the shape of what Professor Jerome Bruner would call a spiral curriculum, circling around the same issues, though trying to keep them open-ended. This may be only a rationalization for not having budgeted an inch in eighteen years, but the most serious adverse criticisms of me still seem to me to be based on assumptions too remote from mine for revision [of the *Anatomy*] to meet them. . . . With some people continuity takes a revolutionary and metaphoric direction. With me, continuity has taken a more gradual direction, not because I insist that everything I have said earlier, in *Anatomy of Criticism* or elsewhere, must be 'right,' but because the principles I have already formulated are still working as heuristic assumptions, and they are the only ones available to me" [*Spiritus Mundi* 100]. The essay-reviews show that Frye has not budged an inch for a still longer time, and they suggest, moreover, the critic's readiness to colonize at will, within the imperium of archetypal criticism, virtually any cultural territory in his ken.

Frye writes, for instance, of Spengler and Frazer in 1975: "They were both literary or cultural critics, without realizing it, and as soon as I got this clear, my conception of the real area covered by the word 'criticism' vastly expanded." Frazer "demonstrated the existence in the human mind of a symbolism often latent in the unconscious" [*Spiritus Mundi* 111]; Spengler "provided the basis for the conception of modes" in the *Anatomy* [*Spiritus Mundi* 113]; and Jung is seen, like these two, as "of greatest significance as a critical and cultural theorist" [*Spiritus Mundi* 116]. At least three times in reviews from 1953 and 1959 Frye wrote of *The Golden Bough* that though it was intended to be a book on anthropology, it was "more a book for literary critics" and had "far more influence in literature than in its alleged field" [123]. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* is seen as "a cornerstone of archetypal criticism" and as "strikingly similar" to *The Golden Bough* [123]; and his *Psychology and Alchemy* is described as "a grammar of literary symbolism which for all serious students of literature is as important as it is endlessly fascinating" [129]. Cassirer, Eliade, Spengler, Freud are all seen in these reviews as "literary critics with out realizing it," working out respectively their "grammars" of "the human imagination," of the "symbolism of religion," of "literary symbolism," of "unconscious individual symbolism as expressed in dream." While Frye has done more than any other single critic to demonstrate the pertinence and utility of such thinkers for literary studies, he cannot, except by appropriation to his scheme, and by exclusion of most other writers on literature, make of them literary critics or of their writing literary criticism.

Frye has unquestionably earned his right to continuity in his principles, even to his numerous reiterations of them, but less because they have provided a complete universal system than because—as "the only ones available" to him—they have enabled him at best to enliven and inform his readers as few other living critics have done. Those who are ambitious to make the art of criticism a rigorous and irrefutable science, whether structuralists or other, seem loath to depend on such fallibly humane qualities as intelligence, imagination, and tact. But systems must in the end suffer evaluation by the same instrument that judges poems—the calm open mind of the sensitive experienced reader.

13. Perloff, Marjorie. *South Atlantic Bulletin* 44 (January 1979): 113–16.

On the first page of the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye warns the reader that the system he is about to present is there for the insights it contains; the insights are not there for the sake of the system. The twenty-one review essays brought together by Robert D. Denham in this new collection (written for the most part, for the *Hudson Review* concurrently with the *Anatomy*) serve as a powerful reminder that, whatever the shortcomings of his “system,” Frye’s “insights”—into a particular literary text or particular oeuvre, or, most frequently, into the relationships that exist among a number of text—constitute what is probably the most impressive body of criticism written in English in our time. And not only criticism, for Frye emerges, almost despite his system, with its heavy dependence on anthropology, psychology, and mythography, as a great literary historian.

What is literary history? Frye considers this vexing question in an interesting review of Bonamy Dobrée’s *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century* (1959): “The point of literary history is not to articulate the memory of mankind by putting a mass of documents into an ordered and coherent narrative. Its documents are far better worth reading than any history of them could ever be. Its task is to reawaken and refresh our imaginative experience by showing us what unexplored riches of it lie within a certain area. In every age there is a large group of writers who all seem to be more or less the same size. Those who eventually turn out to be the greatest writers are seldom wholly ignored in their own day; but even more seldom are they regarded as greatly superior to their contemporaries” [148]. If, for example, a poem like *The Rape of the Lock* is “embalmed in a freshman survey course,” it will strike students as no more than “a long poem in heroic couplets about airy fairies” [149]. Again, if Pope’s poem is studied by itself, as one of the assured masterpieces of its age, readers may conclude that the other works are probably pretty dismal. The proper way to understand the *Rape*, Frye believes, is to read it in the context of Gay’s *Trivia*, Mandeville’s *Grumbling Hive*, Philips’ *Splendid Shilling*, and Matthew Green’s *The Spleen*. Only then will the special quality of Pope reveal itself, for the greatest writers of an age should be regarded as “mountain peaks and not passing clouds. And mountain peaks should be reached by climbing and descent, not by dropping on and off in a twentieth-century helicopter” [150].

It is such “climbing and descent” that distinguishes Frye from a critic like Harold Bloom, whose pantheon of “strong poets” (a term that always makes me think of Men from Mars, engaged in some sort of wrestling match) has no room for, say, Pound and Eliot, poets who are dismissed as the Cowley and Cleveland of their age. Frye’s keen sense of context also distinguishes him from the deconstructionists for whom the literary text becomes a mere springboard for the consideration of the way meaning is created and de-created. Indeed, Frye is almost alone among critics today in his ability to accommodate and appreciate a Pound as well as a Yeats, Valéry as well as Spenser, Beckett as well as Blake.

A good example of Frye’s generosity may be found in a 1952 review of Hugh Kenner’s *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*. Frye himself is not especially drawn to Pound, partly because of the “fascist terminal moraine that continental romanticism helped to push into our time,” and of which Pound is the terrible victim [201], and partly because Pound’s poetry lacks, in Frye’s estimate, “the faculty of mythopoeia” which Milton and the romantics had so preeminently. All the same, Frye deplores the inattention to Pound’s poetry during the postwar period and argues that “our perspective on our culture is bound to be astigmatic until [Pound] comes into focus” [196]. Hugh Kenner’s significant contribution in this, his first Pound book, is recognized at the same time that Frye puts his finger on a crux in Pound criticism: he sees that Pound’s Dante is not, as Kenner supposes the medieval poet but rather the Dante of Rossetti and Ruskin, that indeed, “Pound the critic is a late pre-Raphaelite sniffing

eagerly along the trail of the English romantics, of Blake's minute particular, Coleridge's esemplastic power, and Keats's life of sensations" [201].

Frye is able to establish these relationships because he has read and absorbed nearly everything and has, by means of his habitual "climbing and descent," learned to see in what ways they don't and can't. The same discrimination and tact are displayed in his essay on Valéry's *Art of Poetry*, translated by Denise Folliot in 1958. For the New Critics, Valéry had become a sort of ultimate authority, the poet-critic who made the most persuasive case for the distinction between ordinary language and the language of poetry, between, that is, the correspondence to external reality which characterizes rhetoric and the internal coherence of the literary artifact. Frye himself goes along with the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary language, a distinction which has become one of the main targets of structuralist, poststructuralist, and affective critics. But he also recognizes that Valéry drives the distinction into the ground, regarding as "poetry" only his own kind of poetry, which is to say symbolism: "Valéry as critic is simply the disciple of Mallarmé's great idea of the poetic universe (*le Verbe*) that informs all his criticism" [194]. Accordingly, Valéry downgrades both narrative and drama: his theory cannot admit that prose works may be as "poetic" as are lyric poems, and even the supreme Aristotelian genre, tragedy, is denigrated in that "the tragic genre is completely opposed to producing in the soul the most elevated state that art can produce there: the contemplative state" [193]. Frye concludes that "If we are to take Valéry seriously as a poet, we cannot afford to take him too seriously as a critic" [196].

Here, as in the Pound essay, Frye demonstrates his readiness to make value judgments, despite his famous disclaimer in the *Anatomy*. Indeed, a typical Frye review expands little energy on its ostensible subject—X's critical study (or biography or edition or translation) of Y—launching, as rapidly as possible, into a discussion of the special strengths or weaknesses of the primary text. Thus Frye's review of Samuel Putnam's translation of *Don Quixote* (1949) pays little attention to the question of translation; its concern is to define the mode of "the world's first and perhaps still its greatest novel," a novel unique in its treatment of "private mythology, of how one's behavior is affected by a structure of ideas in which one thinks one believes" [163]. Similarly, Frye's review of Boswell's *London Journal 1762–63*, brought out by Frederick Pottle in 1950, has little to say about Pottle's editorial procedures, preferring to define the qualities that make Boswell's *Life of Johnson* as well as his journals works of art rather than fact. Here Frye has an excellent discussion on the complex interplay of voices in the *Journal*: Boswell the childish exhibitionist clashes with Boswell the perfect courtier, and "In this deadlock a third character takes over, cold, precise, and ruthless: the character of Boswell the writer" [167]. Such subtle interplay of self and mask is, by contrast, absent in the work of Wyndham Lewis. Reviewing Geoffrey Wagner's study of this "neoclassic" writer (*Hudson Review*, 1958), Frye concludes that Lewis was incapable of writing real satire because he "understands nothing of what goes on outside his own mind" [187].

Perhaps the most unusual review to be found in Denham's collection is Frye's piece on René Char's *Hypnos Waking*, translated by Jackson Matthews. When Frye reviewed this book in 1957, Char was considered a rather hopeless enigma by even the most sophisticated American readers. Only in recent years, with the help of such critics as Mary Ann Caws, has Char's poetry become more accessible to an English-speaking audience and even now, he is held to be an unusually difficult poet. Frye approaches Char just as he approaches Wallace Stevens in his famous essay "The Realistic Oriole" or as he treats Emily Dickinson in his important introduction to her work. He begins by noting the poet's chief influences (e.g. Rimbaud) and affinities (the Surrealists); moves on to Char's characteristic mode: "aphorisms: sentences which have the rhythms of prose but the imagery and concentration of poetry. . . . Char works in the tradition 'fragmentation,' deliberately breaking down everything that is continuous into a series of epiphanies or illuminations" [239]; and then outlines Char's structure of

imagery, which he regards as a Heraclitian dialectic of opposites, a dialectic that sometimes seems humorless in its metaphysical fervor but is nonetheless brilliantly executed.

In such an essay, one admires Frye's astonishing power of assimilating a new body of poetry and clarifying its modes of operation. Other reviews in the collection are especially interesting as workshop pieces for the *Anatomy*. Thus the review of Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* defines myth as "the formal or constructive principle of literature" and argues that a drama like *Oedipus Tyrannos* is not to be explained by Freud's doctrine of an Oedipus Complex; on the contrary, it is the dramatic myth of Oedipus that informs and gives coherence to Freud's psychology at his point [75]. In another essay, Frye calls Frazer's *Golden Bough* "a grammar of the human imagination" [89] and in discussing Jung, he speaks of "archetypal criticism" as "that mode of criticism which treats the poem, not as an imitation of nature, but as an imitation of other poems" [124]. This notion of a criticism that "studies conventions and genres and the kind of recurrent imagery which connects one poem with another" [124] is, of course, at the heart of the *Anatomy*.

Unfortunately, Robert D. Denham's long introductory essay does little to clarify these connections or to give a clear exposition of Frye's theory. Denham seems to regard his role as that of defender: he fights various enemies, for example, Harold Bloom (who regards Frye's myths of freedom and concern as a Low Church version of Eliot's Anglo-Catholic myth of Tradition and the Individual Talent) or Frederick Crews (who argues that Frye's system is too narrowly literary and hence parochial). Repeatedly, Denham insists that Frye is, despite what his accusers say, a centrifugal critic, that Frye *does* "receive both delight and instruction from other disciplines" [30]. I am puzzled by Denham's defensive posture, for one would think that Frye hardly needs such anxious apologizing, that, for example, the list of those who do admire Frye on p. 51 (Bate, Krieger, Kermode, Empson) is quite superfluous. But Denham is evidently writing with an eye to current fashion which has it that Frye is *passé*, that his archetypal criticism has been replaced by *la nouvelle critique*, and so on. In justifying his master's work, Denham devotes too much space to *The Critical Path* (1971), a book which is not immediately relevant to the concerns of the essays he reprints, all of which date from the period prior to 1960.

For the novice, Denham's introduction is thus confusing; for the Frye specialist, on the other hand, this argument for the defense is hardly likely to be news. The organization of the book also strikes me as inadequate. Denham has divided the twenty-one pieces into two roughly equal groups: "Grammars of the Imagination" (more or less broad treatments of twentieth-century thinkers such as Jung, Spengler, Frazer, and Cassirer) and "Orders of Poetic Experience," that is, treatments of specific literary works or figures. But Allen Tate's critical essays appear under the first rubric while Coleridge's notebooks fall under the second—a division that doesn't make much sense. In both groups, moreover, the essays are scrambled chronologically, so that the 1947 piece on Toynbee follows a 1954 review of Cassirer, and so on.

Despite these cavils, we must be grateful to Robert Denham and to the University of Chicago Press for reprinting such a rich sampling of the occasional pieces of a critic who will be centrally important to anyone interested in literature long after his detractors, to whom Denham behaves so apologetically, will have disappeared from the scene.

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