

*A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*  
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*Selected reviews by G.P.V. Akrigg, Aerol Arnold, C.L. Barber, Jonas Barrish, Reuben A. Brower, Martin Dodsworth, Terence Hawkes, Frank Kermode, Harry Levin, Leo Rockas, Paul N. Siegel, M.B. Srigley, and two anonymous reviewers. Editorial additions are in square brackets.*

*Additional reviews are listed at the end.*

**1. Akrigg, G.P.V. "Well-Spun Scheme." *Canadian Literature* 27 (Winter 1966): 69–71.**

In 1963, in a notable series of Bampton Lectures delivered at Columbia University, Professor Frye set forth a thesis that Shakespeare's four final romances "are the inevitable and genuine culmination of the poet's achievement" [viii]. Now revised . . . these lectures fill the present reviewer with mounting irritation and deepening admiration.

The irritation springs from the fact that Frye is the great Aristotelian of contemporary criticism, constantly categorizing, obsessively setting up parallels and antitheses, and forever coming up with another neat literary paradigm. The present book, for instance, begins with a declaration that *all* literary critics are either (1) "Iliad critics," centering their interest in tragedy, realism, and irony, or (2) "Odyssey critics" (among whom Frye numbers himself), centering their interest in comedy and romance. We are then given three principles which lie behind the Odyssey the Odyssey type of criticism and launched on a journey which ends up with three moral levels being found to correspond with three groups of characters in *The Tempest*. Through it all, the categories are set forth with such remarkable literary sensitivity, such firm though quietly spoken authority, and such seeming precision that it is hard to keep from being hypnotized into acquiescence. One sees why the author's *Anatomy of Criticism* has become a *vade mecum* for graduate students in English. Frye's tidy formulae really do seem at times to define the development of Shakespearean comedy and romance. But often when one pauses for a double take, doubts and misgivings arise.

The sad truth is that, with his splendid schemata, Professor Frye starts twisting the plays ever so slightly, and sometimes not so slightly, to make them fit. And this is where irritation begins. Consider the author's proposition that the comic dramas center about two cycles, those of the disappearing and returning heroine, or "the white goddess" and "the black bride" as he prefers to call them. What are we to make of the following declaration? "We may call this, the movement opposite to that of the white goddess, the cycle of the black bride. I take the word black from the Song of Songs, although Julia, Hero, Hermia, Rosaline, and Juliet are all associate with the word 'Ethiopian'" [85]. One can only reply that Shakespeare, when he has a pair of girls on the stage, often finds it handy to distinguish between them visually by having one a blonde and the other a brunette, and that Juliet after all is likened to the rich *jewel* in an Ethiopian's ear, the Ethiopian being not Juliet but the night. Then again, it is true that Shakespeare, like Plautus often pits young lovers against hostile parents, but one boggles when, to fit *The Tempest* into the pattern, Frye makes a hostile father out of Prospero. At the back of the mind, one hears Shakespeare's Prospero speaking his wonderful lines: "I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter. . . / So glad of this as they I cannot be, / Who are surprise withal, but my rejoicing / At nothing can be more." Or, again with *The Tempest*, though a stage of confusion concerning identity may be part of the Shakespearean comic cycle, surely Frye is utterly wrong in making the question of who is rightful Duke of Milan "merge with the theme of uncertain identity" [77]. If the audience knows anything it is that Prospero is the rightful duke!

One of the more amusing passages in this book occurs when Frye turns to *The Winter's Tale*, and uncooperative Shakespeare does not come up with one of those balances and antitheses for which the author yearns: "In *The Winter's Tale* there might have been a winter song in the first part to contrast with Autolycus' song of the daffodils which begins the second" [155]. "Might have been"—those saddest words! But Frye, abhorring a vacuum, decides that the place of the winter song is supplied by the story (never told) of the old man who dwelt by the churchyard.

One turns to those things in this book which arouse the liveliest admiration—the skill, like that of a surgeon, with which dissections are made, the utter lucidity and rightness of the phrasing, the breadth of learning, never obtrusive but always available. Frye's chronic schematic way of thinking may impel him to some odd conclusions, but it also stimulates him to a series of brilliant insights. It is for the perceptions along the way that one is chiefly grateful. Thus, in a passage which may become a *locus classicus*, he superbly defines the relation of literary criticism to the actual experience of reading a book. Again and again Frye is so right—Jonson does instruct us in the art of enjoying Jonson, he is indeed a way station on the road to Beckett, there is a world of difference between imaginative faith and the suspension of disbelief. Nobody has offered a more penetrating statement of what is wrong with sentimentality in literature than that which Frye offers in his final chapter. One remembers gratefully what the author has pointed out concerning Shakespeare's "operatic" mode of handling themes, and the copresence of the elegiac and the ironic at the close of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Again and again Frye's schemata, even when one cannot accept them as valid, make one look at the plays in new and rewarding ways—Timon is a humour character, and there are parallels between Timon and Prospero. Often Frye's own categorical thinking does coincide with the hierarchical thinking of the Elizabethans and yields truths.

What it all boils down to is that Frye is one of the most stimulating critics writing today. Anyone interested in Shakespeare will benefit from this book. But Heaven help the reader who is naive enough to believe all Frye's dicta or is not aware of the danger of listening to credulously to a seductive spinner of schemes.

## 2. Anonymous. "As They Like It." *TLS* 12 August 1965: 698.

Of the classic of modern criticism Professor Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* is probably the most scintillatingly provocative. Many of its virtues, and one or two of its theories—comedy as social integration, comedy and the green world—reappear in the four lectures entitled *A Natural Perspective*. . . . They elaborate the thesis that Shakespearean comedy, like modern painting, represents a deliberate departure from the conventions of realism, a distortion or stylization of the subject which indicates an interest in more purely self-contained artistic values. The comedies and romances, so the argument runs, do not hold up the mirror to nature: their *raison d'être* must be sought in the comic structure itself, as that of music in the musical structure. Indeed, Shakespeare's thematic images and words, echoing, calling, responding, have the same function as similar repeated patterns in music, and sometimes, as in music, a new theme or second subject will be introduced which our ear accepts without explanation—as when Leonte's jealousy bursts out unheralded and unforeseen.

Comic structure, in Professor Frye's view, achieves unity by balancing a variety of moods, not all of them comic. Unlike mood, structure does not work kinetically, does not convert its audience into a mob, does not act *on* people at all, but pulls people into itself as participants, making the work of art the focus of a community. At the same time that part of every auditor which spectates but does not participate will, in well-constructed comedy, find its reflection in an *idiotes*, a character who remains isolated from the comic action and who, in Shakespeare, often pairs in antagonism with the clown—as Armado with Costard, Jaques with Touchstone, Malvolio with Feste, Parolles with Lavache.

Shakespeare's predilection for myth and folklore indicates another strength of his comic structure, and one which distinguishes him from Jonson: the continuing primitive, the creative design that makes its impact independently of special education.

Comedy creates an imaginative model of desire. It enacts a victory of the pleasure-principle which Freud warns us not to look for in real life. As a result it will evade the critic who reads literature as an allegory of nonliterary experience (the Iliad critic, in Frye's term), revealing itself only to the Odyssean critic, for whom the literary form is an end in itself. The Iliad critic demands instruction, but Shakespeare shows no signs of wanting to improve his audience or their tastes. He seems to start out in almost emphatic accord with his audience: their assumptions about patriotism and sovereignty, their clichés about Frenchmen and Jews, seem entirely acceptable to him as dramatic postulates. Such assumptions may readily be translated into opinions and propositions, and the Iliad critic will so translate them, but he will find that they turn into the most dismal commonplace. Hence the feeling expressed by Shaw, Eliot, and others that, great poet as Shakespeare was, he had a bewilderingly shallow philosophy of life. The obvious answer, in Professor Frye's opinion, is that he had no philosophy at all; had, indeed, no principles of anything except dramatic structure.

Professor Frye's position, though beautifully built, is not unassailable. Extreme positions never are, but they may still, as in this case, provide exhilarating and valuable vantage points. The most damaging counterattack might be a neo-Bradleian: an insistence that Shakespeare's comedies do frequently and inevitably remind us of human behaving in a moral context. To tell us that we ought not to find Bertram unsatisfactory, but should concentrate on the primitive response demanded from us by the festive union with Helena, may be to issue a directive which, as human beings, we cannot obey, unless we willfully close our eyes to some elements of the work we are criticizing.

### 3. Anonymous. "Why Comedy?" *The Economist* 216 (14 Aug. 1965): 615.

In the four sparkingly discursive essays that make up his new book Northrop Frye carries further the exposition of comic form already begun in his *Anatomy of Criticism*. As readers of the *Anatomy* will know, Professor Frye is a wide-ranging, perceptive, and original critic, who at times makes one feel that he is almost too clever for his own good: such wit and such mental agility may make him positively suspect in some quarters. And it is true that his new book is so unobtrusively well organized and so alluringly readable that its hard substance may actually be overlooked—swallowed at a gulp and forgotten rather than soberly masticated and remembered. It is short enough to be given (and it fully deserves) two immediately consecutive readings.

Why has such a genre as comedy evolved? And, in particular, why such a form as Shakespearean comedy and romance? What aspects of reality nourish and shape it? What are its characteristic structural devices expressive of? Professor Frye's approach to such "formal" questions avoids triviality by continuously engaging with the substance of the plays. Thus, on *The Comedy of Errors*, he observes: "Strained as it may sound, I feel that one reason for the use of two sets of twins in this play is that identical twins are not really identical (the same person) but merely similar, and when they meet they are delivered, in comic fashion, from the fear of the loss of identity, the primitive horror of the doppelgänger, which is an element in nearly all forms of insanity, something of which they feel as long as they are being mistaken for each other" [78].

Professor Frye is seen at his best, sound as well as brilliant, when he insists on the essentially theatrical nature of Shakespeare's work and relates the structural devices of the plays to the presence of that mysterious entity, the audience. Several of the comedies have "outsider" characters, who either challenge or stand aloof from the festive mood in which the plays often end. Mr. Frye interestingly divides these outsiders into two groups—the fool or clown (Touchstone, Feste) and what he terms the

*idiotes* (Jaques, Malvolio)—and he points out the two are often linked with each other, “usually by antagonism, for isolated characters do not form a society” [93]. He explains that: “in any well-constructed comedy there ought to be a character of two who remain isolated from the action, spectators of it, and identifiable with the spectator aspect of ourselves” [92].

In accordance with his admirably clear-sighted structural approach, Mr. Frye has no truck with that school of critics concerned with adducing from the plays moral or philosophical propositions: the plays “are existential facts, and no understanding of them can incorporate their existence” [51]. And again: “Shakespeare’s ‘meaning’ or poetic thought can be expounded only through the structural analysis of the play which keeps the genre of the play in mind as an essential part of the critical context” [51–2]. The last clause is important; and Professor Frye is well equipped to illuminate those aspects of the comedies and romances that he terms “conventional, popular and primitive” [53]. Of special interest here is the attention he gives to Shakespeare’s marked preference for the old fashioned and archaic and to his fondness for “reviving the obsolete” [55]. The book is a delight to read; and its brilliant third chapter, which describes “the typical structure of Shakespeare’s comedy” [72], ought to become widely known.

#### 4. Arnold, Aerol. *Personalist* 47 (Summer 1966): 430–33.

Northrop Frye is the most fashionable literary theorist in academia today. His most recent volume . . . is another stage in the exposition of Professor Frye’s theory of the nature of literature and is more important from that point of view than it is as an addition to Shakespeare criticism. While Mr. Frye knows that “the bulk of Shakespearean criticism consists, rightly, I think, of commentary on individual plays” (viii), he is not interested in individual works as such, but in the comedies as a group and in comedy as a genre. Consequently, there is in this volume a good deal of repetition of ideas presented in the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and in *Fables of Identity* (1963).

The analogies to the viewing of paintings recur here as in his earlier work. The comedies and romances are viewed from the “middle distance,” not close up, for that would result in the kind of close analysis characteristic of the New Criticism. Also Mr. Frye divides critics into Iliad critics and Odyssey critics, in the manner of Coleridge, and finds himself an Odyssean critic more attracted to comedy and romance than to tragedy, realism, and irony. He also likes literature in which the conventions are obvious; the critic knows how the comedy will develop and can enjoy the work as a game. For Mr. Frye’s interest in literature is abstract and generalizing and, he would like to believe, not concerned with value, although . . . he uses value terms of an oblique sort: “We may . . . see in the romances the end of the steady growth of Shakespeare’s technical interest in the structure of drama. The romances are to Shakespeare what *The Art of the Fugue* and *The Musical Offering* are to Bach: not retreats into pedantry, but final articulations of craftsmanship” [8].

The romantic comedies are described as popular, conventional, and primitive. “Primitive” is soon equated with the “archaic,” and we are on the way to myth and ritual, which is where Mr. Frye wants to go. The “archaic” in Mr. Frye’s thinking is associated with the timeless, and he is eager to remove Shakespeare from the limitations of his own time: “it is pointless to make allowances for things that ‘date’ his plays where we do not need to make such allowances” [42].

The effect of the archaizing tendencies in Shakespeare’s romances is “to establish contact with universal and world-wide dramatic tradition. Shakespeare draws away from everything that is local or specialized in the drama of his day, and works toward uncovering a primeval dramatic structure that practically anything in the shape of a human audience can respond to” [58].

If what Mr. Frye writes is true, it would be interesting to hear him explain why so much explication is necessary to make the many jokes in the comedies meaningful to a modern audience,

and, further, why the comedies and romances have not been as interesting to popular audiences and scholars as the tragedies. *Cymbeline* is infrequently played and *Pericles* rarely. Of the romances only *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* seem to interest contemporary audiences.

Dozens of times throughout the reading of this most provocative book one comes up against statements that challenge rebuttal. The author's arguments are the most tendentious. There is much misreading and stretching to prove a point. Frequently the author uses the phrase "strained as it may sound" as if he knew he was going off the deep end. He tries to defend his practice in the opening remarks of his first lecture by writing: "These statements are clearly oversimplified, and are rhetorical rather than factual: they are designed to give us some perspective on the shape of a big subject, not to tell the truth about it" [1]. His daring analogies and reckless comparisons result from the belief, expressed in the *Anatomy of Criticism*, that "the literary universe is a universe in which everything is potentially identical with everything else" [124]. That conviction cannot produce statements that are verifiable or informative in any clear-cut way about any work of art or portion of it. Yet the faults of the author are related to the virtues of the book, for what interests one in Mr. Frye is his speculative daring. He seems to have taken seriously Blake's notion that if you don't invent your own mythology, you live under the tyranny of someone else's. In the end one begins to feel that Mr. Frye's critical system was erected to meet some deep felt need to deny death. He seems to *need* the notion of rebirth, for he forces facts to fit his need. Rebirth, he writes, is so central in Shakespeare's romances because what "really emerges in the recognition scenes of these romances is the primitive feeling, which is incorporated into Christianity, that it is death that is somehow unnatural, even though it always happens" [122].

He needs the world of romance because it is the world of wish-fulfillment: "The world of the final festival is a world where reality is what is created by human desire, as the arts are created" [115]. . . . He writes as if romance were all of drama and as if the end of drama was to create a model of desire. . . .

Professor Frye needs his conception of the "green world" of comedy and romance in a way that Shakespeare did not need it; for in *As You Like It* and *The Tempest* the characters who discover themselves and are redeemed in the "green world" return to the world of time and evil to live out their lives. Perhaps part of the greatness of Shakespeare lies in the fact that in all his plays, irrespective of genre, there is an awareness of time (death) and evil of a world where reality is not "what is created by human desire" but what must be submitted to.

##### **5. C.L. Barber. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1971): 68–70.**

It is unfair to ask a book to be something other than it sets out to be; it does not seem unfair to ask of a theory that it come down, finally, to cases. Northrop Frye's wonderfully strategic, organizing essay, "The Argument of Comedy," first appeared in 1948, and was restated, and was located in his great scheme for literature, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). . . . *A Natural Perspective* (1965) might have been the occasion for Mr. Frye to enter at least some of the plays and show in them, moment by moment, in the concrete, complex texture of the individual work, versions of the comic movement he has described typically. But Mr. Frye does not come down to cases; he hovers all over the cases at once, glancing now at this telling feature, now that. What the telling features tell is the affinity of all with the argument or archetype or mythic structure of the comedy. This procedure radically reverses our normal assumption that the individual work is everything, our interpretative frames heuristic scaffoldings.

Usually a writer who rides a theory over Shakespeare's work can be dismissed by applying Frost: "He has a theory, but it hardly does." But Mr. Frye in his Laputan hovercraft is no ordinary

crank; he is extraordinary, a Sir Thomas Browne among critics. As it happens, the English Institute has published a collection of unusually brilliant and balanced essays devoted to Frye's criticism and what to make of it (*Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger. New York: Columbia, 1966). The essays, pro as well as con, bring out drastic limitations: the shifting or shiftiness of his categories; his neglect of the individual work, its evaluation and its relationship to life; the mystification, tautology, and misplaced concreteness of his dancing archetypes. But taken together they make clear what an important thing Frye is trying to do in setting out to see literature whole, in allegiance to "a continuing vision transmitted by the arts." It is a brave enterprise, if precarious. *A Natural Perspective* is not encouraging as evidence of its progress. But its strange faults and virtues can be best understood in the context of Frye's whole program. He is not proving a theory in the ordinary sense, but pursuing a vision. In a "response" written for the English Institute volume, Frye speaks of "the dismal and illiberal impoverishment of literary experience which results from ignoring the structure into which that experience enters." His neglect of individual works is part of a commitment to something else: "It is only the individual and discrete literary experience that melts 'into thin air'; what does not vanish is the total vision that contains that experience."

The total vision that contains his experience of Shakespeare's comedy is centered in the late romances, for what interests him is the traditional, conventional, "primitive" side of Shakespeare's art, and the romances, "making nature afraid" to make myth plain, are for him the fulfillment of Shakespeare's development. Each of the books four chapters accordingly concludes with a discussion of one of the romances, led up to by general considerations illustrated by hovering over the comedies without regard for their chronological order. Apart from the difficulty of following the jumping, sliding argument, and of "the extreme and violent conjunction of schematism and concreteness" to which Professor Wimsatt objects in his Institute essay, this treatment almost completely ignores the ironies about romance in the comedies, as against the romances. The comedies are seen only as proto-romances; the "total vision" will "contain" only that side of them. Frye's blindness here is systematic. He starts by distinguishing comedy and romance from "the area of tragedy, realism and irony" [1]. And he insists on a complete disjunction of criticism from participation: criticism should consider the work only after it is over and we can see it "as a simultaneous unity," "in a frozen of spatial way"; in the direct experience of literature, "we are following a movement in time," and our attitude is uncritical or "precritical"; the distinction "is fundamental to any coherent act of criticism" [9]. Frye keeps insisting that the comedies like the romances invite a particularly naive response; so he completely ignores within the plays themselves the critical awareness of romance conventions which, in the most successful comedies, goes along with the appeal to romance, placing it, ironically, by a humor grounded in a larger awareness of life. So, too, for Frye the problems of the problem comedies disappear if we recognize them as "conventional descendants from myth" and give "the primitive response demanded" [64]. This magic second-sight will work, we are told, even for *All's Well*: the difficulty of its reversing the normal comic pattern, noticed in "The Argument of Comedy"—"the critics have not yet stopped making faces over it"—is ignored now. It is of course the development of conventional, folklore-like themes in a realistic direction which, as many have remarked, underlies the problem. But Frye largely ignores the realistic direction. Focussing on the relation of the particular work to archetypes, he never considers the artist's problem of finding embodiment for comic movement in the mimesis of actualities, of winning art from life.

The late romances themselves, facing as they do towards myth, are more adequately handled. But that is the wrong way to put it: Frye is not trying to be adequate to the "discrete literary experience"; he is concerned with working it up into a vision. The way to put it is that there is more of each late romance in the vision developed by each chapter than there is of the comedies. But even the romances are being melted into something else. Thus in the final chapter . . . Mr. Frye makes up, out of Shakespearean fragments and intimations, a myth of Orpheus and Leviathan; he environs *The*

*Tempest* with it. “If anything is to make sense of this play,” he says in conclusion, *a propos* of the mystified characters in *The Tempest*, “. . . it must be, as Hippolyta says, our imagination and not theirs” [159].

Frye writes so well, and with such wit and point and from such deep and wide literary experience, that this is a much better book than many books that do better what they set out to do. He is a droll fellow, with a rolling eye. While on one side, comic structure as he sees it faces toward “huge cloudy symbols of high romance,” on the other it reflects the empirical realities of theatrical convention. As his eye rolls from one to the other, his imagination uses literature as a great body of lore from which he can compose his own high but half-inscrutable designs—much as Burton or Sir Thomas Browne composed from their lore. It *is* imaginative action in its own right, “freely ranging onley within the Zodiak of his owne wit,” as Mr. Krieger aptly describes it in Sidney’s words.

Sadly, one must add in conclusion that, though this book is Frye’s special kind of thing, with his wonderful touch, it is not very successful in his mode. This is perhaps because it is a thrice-told tale, and told rather hurriedly. Too active a mind to repeat himself happily, his restatements of central theses tend to be shrunken or scattering compared to earlier versions; the best general points, made with the most life, tend to be developments out beyond what he has worked through elsewhere. The book raises, troublingly, the question, where does one go one to from a “total vision”? O, what is worth coming down to from Laputa?

## 6. Barish, Jonas. *Studies in English Literature 6* (Spring 1966): 362–64.

Northrop Frye remains our most redoubtable literary taxonomist; genres and archetypes yield their secrets to him as readily as botanical species did to Linnaeus. His latest book. . . *A Natural Perspective*, reveals his old brilliance at discovering patterns of structure on literary kinds, and charting the wilderness that stretches from archetype to stylistic detail. Occasionally, one must own, the relentless classifying wearies: the repertory of themes, symbols, and archetypes turns into a dizzying whirl; we set the volume aside with our heads spinning as from a confrontation with cones and gyres, or animus and anima. At times, also, the measuring and calibrating seems to go awry: Armado is not an *idiotes*,” by Professor Frye’s own definition [93], nor do Antonio and Sebastian, at the end of *The Tempest*, achieve the kind of realization attributed to them [151]. But the surprising thing, when these reactions have been duly registered and discounted, is the extent to which the schematisms of the arguments do, in fact, allow for nuances within individual works, and so serve to sustain and enrich our remembered experience of the plays. It seems useless to quarrel with Frye over his predilection for romance, or to regard the limitations of his approach as invalidating it, as it would be to quarrel with Bradley’s prejudice in favor of tragedy, or to dismiss his insights because of their psychological bias. What matters is whether the critic’s presuppositions have led him to dig deeply into the work, so as to shed light on it for others; surely Frye has done this, and surely we need to be grateful.

Of the four lectures, the latter two recapitulate much material on the structure of Shakespearean comedy familiar to readers of *Anatomy of Criticism*, and it is here that one is likely to feel most queasy. Can it really be that “Orpheus is the hero of all four romances” [147], except as a pleasant *façon de parler*? Even here, however, there are many rewards and pleasures, such as the passage on sentimentality, sharply differentiated from the kind of acceptance we are led to feel at the close of Shakespearean comedy as a consequence of its structure: sentimentality “denies the forward movement in art, the sense of fresh discovery in every renewal of familiar values,” just as in life it resists “the inexorable advance of all experience in time” [131–2], whereas the Shakespearean comic action involves a dialectical as well as a cyclical movement; it ends by lifting us into a realm above and beyond the one in which we started, even as it retrieves its treasures and consoles us for its losses.

The first two lectures address themselves more generally to the conventional nature of Shakespearean comic drama, which Frye sees as analogous to musical organization, where the spectator's pleasure arises from his recognition of familiar forms being freshly manipulated. This accounts for the markedly "operatic" character of Shakespearean comedy, which Frye distinguishes anew, and most acutely, from Jonsonian. Jonson is interested in illusion, in creating a semblance of actual life on the stage. His prologues aim to awaken the critical faculties of the audience, so that it may assess and savor the illusion. Shakespeare is not interested in illusion but in telling a story, and his prologues (e.g., Gower in *Pericles*) aim to lull our critical senses so that we may enter uninhibited into the story. This difference between Jonson and Shakespeare, in turn, reflects a division in every man between spectator and participant, which translates itself further, inside the bounds of Shakespearean comedy, into variations in mood and into the presence of a special class of "spectator" characters whose function is to sustain the ironic gaze of the detached observer.

Frye approaches Shakespearean particularity from its own unusual avenue: Shakespeare's is "an imagination so concrete that for it the structure is prior to the attitude, and prescribes the attitude. Shakespeare's impartiality is a totally involved and committed partiality: it expresses itself in bringing everything equally to life" [43–44]. Though this beautiful formulation differs from those of [L. C.] Knights or [David] Horowitz in its emphasis on structure, it resembles theirs in finding Shakespearean "attitudes" emergent from, rather than fastened onto, concrete dramatic facts. Frye's expostulation against the dogma of "correct response," again, has affinities with Knights's strictures on "guaranteed" and "ideal" meanings. "The notion that there is one right response which apprehends the whole play rightly is an illusion: correct response is always stock response, and it is possible only when some kind of mental or physical reflex is appealed to" [51]. Such statements need to be placed on the doorposts of our houses and bound as frontlets between our eyes. They help explain why Frye's criticism, despite its fearful symmetry, is in fact so uncoercive: it does not aim to legislate our responses, but to understand their multiplicity, discriminate them, and legitimize them.

## 7. Brower, Reuben A. "Myth Making." *Partisan Review* 33 (Winter 1966): 132–36.

Northrop Frye is a formidable critic for a reviewer to present, let alone disagree with. He is formidable in more than one respect: in the range of his reading in English and Classical literatures, in his detailed and ready knowledge of Shakespeare's comedies (which most of us find more elusive than the tragedies), in the multiple "structures" he invents, and in the masterly strategy with which he disarms criticism. In *A Natural Perspective*, as in the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye astutely warns us in advance that he is doing one kind of thing and not another, that he is exploring the structure of the comedies and of comedy in general, not offering detailed interpretations of single plays. If the reader nevertheless feels uncomfortable, he must agree ruefully that his objections are out of order, at least for the duration of the argument.

There are signs in *A Natural Perspective* of another and less awesome figure, a humane and sensible reader, who will take time for an amusing digression: "There was a composer Raimondi who in 1852 composed three oratorios that were performed on successive nights, and then performed simultaneously, all three being in counterpoint with each other. The applause was so tremendous that Raimondi fainted, and was dead within a year, but his prodigious feat appears to have died with him" [16–17]. Frye, the humanist and critic of education, easily wins our admiration and respect. He owes something to Arnold, but he improves on Arnold by refusing to turn culture into a religious or political creed. "The anatomy of culture," as he generously defines it, "is the total body of imaginative hypothesis in a society and its tradition." But both humor and humanism tend to disappear when Frye



strikes an *O altitudo* before his favorite “imaginative hypothesis,” of myth as a means for recovering in literature some of the magical power of ritual.

Though we recognize that Shakespeare is not a writer of purely ironic comedy of Molière’s kind, and though we grant (reluctantly) the analogy between serious comedy and the *Commedia*, we may feel as we read *A Natural Perspective* that Malvolio has got the better of Sir Toby, that there are to be no more cakes and ale—an impression that is surprising in view of the position from which Frye attacks his subject. He begins with a dichotomy that makes all critics either *Iliad* critics or *Odyssey* critics: those who are most interested in “tragedy, realism and irony,” in literature as a criticism of life; and those who are “attracted to comedy and romance,” who read for sheer delight in the self-contained conventional pattern of a work. The argument that follows, both in its historical and formal features, is fairly familiar. The model for Shakespearean comedy, inherited from Plautus and Terence, is the typical formula for Greek New Comedy in which two young lovers, after being oppressed by cantankerous elders and arbitrary laws, are at length joined in marriage. This pattern is defined on a more abstract psychological level as “the comic drive toward identity” [82], whether social, in which a “new society crystallizes around the marriage of the central characters,” or individual, “an awakening to self-knowledge, which is typically a release from a humor or a mechanical form of repetitive behavior” [118]. As might be anticipated, the conventional patterns are traced back to myth, which in turn is descended from ritual. The myth and ritual patterns are “popular” in the sense of “primitive,” that is, they belong to earlier social orders and the modes of behavior associated with them. The typical mythical pattern in all comedy, increasingly evident in Shakespeare’s career, is the cycle moving from death to rebirth. In the romances, we are to see a kind of grand recapitulation of earlier Shakespearean conventions and patterns (there are still others I have not mentioned). There is also a new emphasis on the cycle of rebirth, and especially on “the return from the sea,” the dark area of chaos and unreason. Such, in a crude reduction, is the structure of Shakespearean comedy.

The outline is hardly adequate to Frye’s presentation, either in its strength or weakness. The strength, it seems to me, lies in the negative and cautionary rather than in the more positive phases. The two earlier chapters, with their warnings against the danger of forgetting the formal, conventional character of all comedy are highly recommended to readers and critics. Frye rightly insists that we must not overlook the conventional character of the comedies of Shakespeare in particular, that we need to keep “the genre in mind as an essential part of the critical context” [51–52], that we should not try to find moral allegories, but be content with the “concrete” stuff of each play. He protests against those who would assign particular beliefs to Shakespeare, and he shrewdly points out that the beliefs we infer are often determined by dramatic structure. But in asserting that “Shakespeare had no values, no philosophy, no principles of anything except dramatic structure” [39], he is in danger of throwing out the baby with the bath. There is a possibility, as we shall see, that the theory may leave no place for significance of any sort: the structure is the structure is the structure. Even in these earlier chapters difficulties begin to appear that are traceable to the initial dichotomy and the temptation it invites to further oversimplifications.

Having divided critics into two camps, Frye makes a corresponding between writers of comedy, setting Shakespeare in opposition to Jonson, Shaw, and others writers who offer direct criticisms of manners and morals. While insisting on the stylized character of Shakespearean comedy, Frye disregards the stylization of Jonsonian comedy, and while noting the operatic features of plays like *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, he seems unaware of the operatic mode of *Man and Superman*, *Misalliance*, and *Heartbreak House*, to name only the more obvious examples. It might be argued that Shaw is more consistently operatic in his technique than Shakespeare, and it is worth recalling that Shaw himself said that in time his plays would live not by the ideas they presented but by their form. On Frye’s own principles, it is no easier to determine *from the plays* what Shaw believed than it is to determine what Shakespeare believed from his plays.

In his commendable advice that we should attend to the form first (it is odd to think that D.H. Lawrence would agree with him), Frye pushes his arguments so far that he underlines the potential limitations in his criticism of Shakespeare and of all drama, if not of all literature. We can agree with him when he says: "In Shakespeare the meaning of the play is the play, there being nothing to be abstracted from the total experience of the play. Progress in grasping the meaning is a progress, not in seeing more in the play, but in seeing more of it" [116]. But the use of the word "meaning" implies that some residue of significance, at least some total feel of experience—a "taste in the head," as Empson says—arises from our "seeing more." It is, moreover, one of the critic's chief functions to attempt to define and place the particular quality of this "total experience.." In the next sentence following our quotation, Frye's mythical theory leads him to a curious definition of the meaning as a progress "from the individual plays to a class of things called plays, to the 'meaning' of drama as a whole" [116]. And what is that? It is what drama does "through the identity of myth and metaphor" [116], and that in turn is "what ritual predecessors tried to do by the identity of sympathetic magic: unite the human and the natural worlds" [116–17]. Abstraction, it seems, is inevitable at some point in critical discourse, as it is in all discourse.

If we overlook the circular character of an argument that begins by establishing the ritual cycle in drama through the analogies between plays and actual ritual and that ends by concluding that the meaning of the plays is to be found in this generalized ritual cycle, we nevertheless can see the death's-head of all myth criticism peering through these statements. The critic and his readers must finally conclude that all plays are one universal Play, that there are no individual meanings, but only the Meaning. We need no deny that the ritual analogies are "there," or that they tell us something (probably) about the genesis of comedy. But having found the pattern, what more is there to say? The original discovery of analogies with ritual, made by Jane Harrison, Murray, and others, some fifty years ago, was an exciting event, and every reader of Greek drama must remember his own initial thrill in learning of their discovery. For the past twenty-five years we have seen some interesting applications of the formula to the plays of later writers, especially Shakespeare. But once the critic has pointed out the analogy, he may feel a little like Frost's Witch of Coos—"When I have done it, what have I done?"

This is hardly to suggest that Frye's treatment of individual plays in the later and more "mythical" half of his book is without value. We learn interesting things, not about myth in general, but about particular parallels and overtones, such as the hints in *The Tempest* of analogies to the ordeal of Aeneas or the presence of the myth of metamorphosis in the *Comedy of Errors*. There are also some fine pages on the way a character quite incidental to the main action, like the clown Lavache in *All's Well*, may express in a joking aside the essential comic vision of mingled sympathy and ridicule.

But in much of Frye's application of the cyclical theory, we find a mechanical routine leading to conclusions that are sometimes true, and sometimes forced. It is thus we learn that in *The Winter's Tale* "eventually the sacrificial role settle on Mamillius" [114], or that in *All's Well* "the natural society" equivalent to that of *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline* "is contained in Helena's magical power of healing the diseased king" [145]. As we go through more examples of mythical forms in each play, the sense of monotony and critical busy-work increases. The method so pursued leads to disposing with literature, rather than exploring it, and raises questions about myth criticism and its future that takes us far beyond the limits of Frye's book, and this review.

## 8. Dodsworth, Martin. "Hit or Myth." *The Guardian* 18 June 1965

Books about comedy tend to be duller than books about tragedy, another example of the invincible inferiority of life and scholarship to art, for surely comedy is more grateful to us than tragedy. After seeing *Oedipus Rex*, I suppose, we are ready to be edified by pages of theory; the critic continues in the

mood of elevated misery established by the dramatist. Studies in laughter, on the other hand, betray their very subject matter; the reader is not expected to laugh, but is perpetually reminded how much he would prefer it if he were. In any case, comedy can be of so many different kinds—romance, farce, fantasy, for example—that it resists the attempt to impose a theory. Northrop Frye's excellent new book on Shakespearean comedy is all the more remarkable for overcoming such large difficulties.

*A Natural Perspective* is not another unsmiling disquisition on the laugh. Mr. Frye's subject is, more amiably, the pleasure we get from plays like *The Merchant of Venice* or *Pericles*; he derives this pleasure not from the stories' essentially dramatic qualities, but from their likeness to the myths of annual death and rebirth and to the primitive celebrations of the victory of spring over winter. This will not sound so crazy to those who have read his earlier essay, *Anatomy of Criticism*; others will need time to think the idea over. There are several lines of argument to support it. Mr. Frye points to the many archaic and self-consciously primitive elements in the comedies which demand an equally unsophisticated response from the audience—the improbable circumstances of Claudio's reengagement to Hero in *Much Ado*, for example. Many kinds of Shakespearean characters find their origins in Roman comedy, and Roman comedy is at least within spitting distance of the rituals. Finally, Shakespeare displays an operatic or balletic interest in the plot of his comedies which is indulged at the expense of character study, whose proper place is in the more realistic mode of tragedy. Mr. Frye is most persuasive on this last point, though few readers are likely to go with him all the way in describing the question "Is Falstaff a coward?" as a "pseudoproblem" [40]. We should be grateful to be so stimulated to disagreement; *A Natural Perspective* is a brilliant book, full of insight, imbued with the spirit of its subject, and beautifully written.

## 9. Hawkes, Terence. *Yale Review* 56 (Summer 1967): 563–4

Northrop Frye's new book quests for "natural" unity . . . the "natural perspective, which is and is not" where extremes meet. His prevailing interest in the mythic and ritualistic aspects of literature makes him . . . very much aware of Shakespeare's debt to an oral tradition and the conventions of folk tale rather than those of "naturalism." The "deliberate distortion of normal experience" in the interests of stylization forms part of the "logical evolution" [7] of the plays from comedy to romance.

Indeed, the late romances exhibit an Artaud-like quality of "total theater," "a union of the three major arts, *melos*, *lexis*, and *opsis*" [30] which results in drama quite distinct from that of the sequential "literary" type in that it comes from a "scholar of the ear" [22], whose plays offers "a drama beyond drama, a kind of ultimate confrontation of a human community with an artistic realization of itself" [30].

The "great simplicity" of such plays causes extremes . . . to meet. Unlike the "literary" drama of Ben Jonson (whose claims in that direction their author irascibly supported—unaccountably as it seemed to his contemporaries—by the production of an elaborate edition) that of Shakespeare is "pure" drama, and its communicative mode that of the "real" world of sound and gesture. Hence the valuable distinction can be drawn that "the kernel of the Jonsonian tradition is something abstract and sophisticated: the kernel of the Shakespearean tradition is something childlike and concrete" [33] ("concrete" here seems to have the connotation of "experienced," "felt," "lived" that it acquires in Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*).

It seems a pity that, despite their brilliance and energy, Frye's arguments tend to lose their own hold on the "concrete" experience of the plays so quickly, dissolving into abstraction whose goal seems to be symmetry rather than sympathy. What interests him is not comedies but Comedy, itself no laughing matter: "A comedy is not a play that ends happily: it is a play in which a certain structure is

present and works through to its own logical end, whether we or the cast or the author feel happy about it or not" [46].

The pursuit of that primeval structure informs the body of the book. Comedy has three stages. First, an anticomic "old" society which imposes restrictive laws from the "outside"; a world of uninvolved "spectators." Second, a period of confusion and loss of identity, socially and sexually (boy-actors playing girls "disguise" themselves as boys and so on). Third, confusion is resolved, socially and sexually, through the institution of marriage. The result is a "new" society whose laws are permissive because concrete; "felt," "lived," "internalized" by people who are involved participants in the society.

Such a structure, Frye argues, mirrors that of the dramatic experience in the theater, and so serves to unite the "extremes" of man and nature by means of art, man's "second" nature. Our "total experience" of drama derives from the fact that "drama is doing, through the identity of myth and metaphor, what its ritual predecessors tried to do by the identity of sympathetic magic: unite the human and natural worlds" [116–17]. Such a unity cannot be achieved in the world of ordinary experience "in which man is an alienated spectator" [117]: it can only take place in the theater where, paradoxically, the "world of the spectator" vanishes, and we become participants in the play which, as art, is identical with nature at its highest level.

The structure, of course, cries out to be measured against the concrete experience, as Frye concedes. And here, surely, whatever "we or the cast or the author" [46] (the totality of elements involved, after all) "feel" about the play *must* override any abstract view of it. The play doesn't exist unless and until it is realized on the stage, by the actors, in front of an audience. And the manner and mode of that realization—which is precisely where what we feel comes into concrete existence—significantly modifies the occasion and so the play. A great deal depends on the *sort* of people "we," "cast," and "author" are outside the theater, and what our expectations may be in it. These are not the anonymous interchangeable units that Frye's theory seems to require.

#### **10. Kermode, Frank. "Deep Frye." *New York Review of Books* 4 (22 April 1965): 10–12.**

The one thing certain about modern criticism is that there is too much of it, and it is only rarely that one can say of a practitioner that he cannot safely be left unread. But no one has to say it of Frye; ever since the publication, in 1957, of *Anatomy of Criticism*, we have been trying to come to terms with him, and he has been writing a succession of shorter books to help us do so. Shakespeare's final plays have always been important to his theory, and he has now devoted to them a series of lectures which should enable us to make up our minds.

One striking aspect of Frye's system is its theological rigor. He insists that his theory, however primitive in its present form, is the only true one; you must, according to him, accept or reject it *in toto*. This new book is lucid and self-explanatory (Frye writes excellent prose); but it implies the dogmatics of the *Anatomy*, and readers who cannot find the time to absorb that vast and surprising book should at least read two of the essays reprinted in . . . *Fables of Identity*; these give the gist of the doctrine under the rubrics "The Archetypes of Literature" and "Myth, Fiction and Displacement." They will then notice that this new book, freshly thought out as it undoubtedly is, is an application, to works Frye regards as crucial, of the general theory. I may as well say right off that I look for a way of saving some of the special insights without accepting the doctrine; exactly what Frye regards as an impossible compromise.

According to Frye, we must not confuse the experience of literature with criticism. In this book he "retreats from individual plays into a middle distance, considering the comedies as a single group unified by recurring images and structural devices" [viii]. The reader "is led from the characteristics of the individual play . . . to consider what kind of form a comedy is, and what its place is in literature." This is what he calls "standing back," the way you stand back to look at a painting. One step back gives you the view of Wilson Knight or Bradley—occult thematic or psychological

patterns—and the second enables you to see the object in its genre: *Hamlet* as a Revenge Play, for example. One more step and you have Frye's view: *Hamlet* as myth, probably multiple: the *Liebestod* and the leap into and out of Ophelia's grave. From this distance you see a work of literature as frozen in space, devoid, like myth, of temporality, and fit for inclusion in an all-embracing mythical system. "It is part of the critic's business to show how all literary genres are derived from the quest-myth. . . . the quest-myth will constitute the first chapter of whatever future handbooks of criticism may be written that will be based on enough organized critical knowledge to . . . live up to their titles" [*Fables* 17]. Criticism is a progressive system of description. It cannot value literature, but by describing its mythic fundamentals it can enable us to deduce its political role, which is identical with that of myth: "the central myth of art must be the vision of an end of social effort, the innocent world of fulfilled desires, the free human society" [*Fables* 18].

This is not the whole of Frye, but it is, I think, the essence. And before disputing it one must insist that the mind which gives it embodiment, whether in the glittering structures of the *Anatomy* or the various and resourceful invention of the present book, is well-stocked, cogent, and sane. Some of its principles deserve to be regarded as laws: "there is no passage in Shakespeare's plays . . . which cannot be explained entirely in terms of its dramatic function and context . . . there is nothing which owes its existence to Shakespeare's desire to 'say' something" [36]. Or, to take another instance, Frye's denial of allegorical readings applied to such works as *The Winter's Tale*. The argument is dubious (there is no room for allegory because the drama does by "identity of myth and metaphor" what ritual did by "the identity of sympathetic magic" [116–17]), but the conclusion is right: "the meaning of the play is the play" [116], and abstractions from it are all wrong.

Nevertheless, all critics proceed by abstraction from that meaning. Some of them, however, seek to stay as close as may be to the "total experience of the play" [116]—as W. K. Wimsatt once put it, they work out *pi* to as many decimal places as possible. Frye abstracts by *standing back*, and finds strength in his analogy with looking at painting; but, as Philip Hallie has pointed out, the analogy is useless, merely a way of dignifying Frye's generalities. What could be more abstract than the observation that the heroines of romances are Andromeda-types; unless it is the observation that the hero of them all is Orpheus? The method can produce insights, as it does when Frye discusses the wedding "masque" in *The Tempest*—a passage that has always seemed to fit rather loosely in an otherwise tight play. The accumulation of such insights is in fact an important part of the true history of criticism, though Frye does not think so; for him, of course, their value is determined solely by their adaptability to his total system. He is the polar opposite of Blackmur, who was essentially a very unsystematic critic and believed, dangerously but correctly, that criticism is most anarchic, though dependent on a difficult act of submission and then on the critic's having a mind with useful and interesting contents. The insights are quite unsystematic; their history is certainly not that of a "progressive" system. And of course the general history of criticism very powerfully suggests that it isn't progressive; which is why Frye has had to strike such a revolutionary pose, representing himself as being to Aristotle the critic what Linnaeus was to Aristotle the biologist. The cost of the system is fairly faced in the opening pages of the *Anatomy*, which deny the critic the right to make judgments of value. What is more serious is the assumption that the farther he gets from the work the more accurate his descriptions will be.

These are the issues that arise once more in *A Natural Perspective*. Characteristically, they have to do with Frye's system rather than with Shakespeare's plays. How, to borrow Frye's neat quote from *The Comedy of Errors*, should we "entertain the offered fallacy"? Frye is saying that the romances, rather than the tragedies, are the culmination of the "logical evolution" [7] of Shakespeare (one of those disguised value judgments one often finds in his work) because tragedy pays more respect to the reality principle, whereas romance deliberately moves back toward myth: "the story seeks its own end instead of holding up the mirror to nature" [8]. In other words, the more the work deviates from the reality

principle the better he likes it, just as he believes only in criticism which has backed so far away from literature that all the little things that make one work different from another drop out of view. The closer it gets to myth, the more completely the story identifies itself with ritual magic, as Shakespeare must have known when he regressed at the end to the “childlike and concrete” [33] romance conventions, and so lent himself more easily to a criticism which “deals entirely with literature in this frozen or spatial way” [9]. At the stage in his development marked by *Pericles* Shakespeare is ready for the full Frye treatment.

“Drama,” says Frye, “is born in the renunciation of magic” [59]; but instead of drawing the more obvious conclusions from this sound observation, he goes on to show not only that magic was never totally renounced, but that the best drama is always trying to get back to it. When Shakespeare isn’t returning directly to ritual origins he is at least getting as far back as the New Comedy, stock characters of which recur in the romances under very ingenious disguises: Leontes, for instance, is the jealous *senex*. It is true enough, though probably too general to be very useful, that Shakespeare’s comedies are like the Latin ones in that they show the reformation of an anticomic society and the festal inauguration of a comic one. But Frye’s real purpose in so arguing is simply that a general resemblance between Shakespeare’s plays and the Roman comedies is a large step back toward myth and ritual. In taking the step Frye argues well and makes many interesting points; but the essence of the situation is that he is the critic of regress, writing regressive criticism about plays he finds to be regressive.

There is nothing new, of course, about telling the romances as a group; to do so is at once to begin the regression, to lose sight of the differentiae. If one holds one’s ground for a moment, it will be clear that few plays could be different from one another in more obvious ways than *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, the first and second of the series. To forget that the mythic patterns of *The Winter’s Tale* are qualified by the actuality of Leontes’ putrid talk and the sexual realism of Perdita; or that the play of multiple recognitions, *Cymbeline*, is also one in which the talk of the characters achieves a new level of ratiocinative complexity; or that Prospero’s insistence on the need for magical chastity and the total obedience of his inferiors colors his language with prurience and fuss—to forget such obvious facts is to sacrifice the plays to a satisfying generalization, and this seems no more acceptable in Frye than in Dowson or Strachey. And to prefer the romances to the tragedies, at any rate, is to dismiss as irrelevant everything that constitutes the personal presence of a work of art, its existential complexities, all that makes it mean something *now* to a waking audience.

And here, I think, is the clue to what finally invalidates Frye. If literature does the work that ritual and myth once did, the arrangement is providential, for myth and ritual can obviously no longer do it. What makes literature different is, roughly, a different reality principle, appropriate, in an expression of Eliade’s which Frye himself quotes, to *this* time as myth was appropriate to *that* time. The difference between *illud tempus* and *hoc tempus* is simply willed away in Frye’s critical system, but it is essential to the very forms of modern literature, and to our experience of it. I do not mean simply that in the literature of our own time, which is itself considerably complicated by the prestige of myth, we are made aware of the conflicting claims of rigorous fact and conforming fiction; in my generalization I include Shakespeare, and especially the Shakespeare of the tragedies. King Lear dies on a heap of disconfirmed myths, and modern literature follows Shakespeare into a world where the ritual paradigms will not serve, and magic does not work; where our imaginative satisfactions depend on a decent respect for the reality principle and our great novels are, in the words of Lukács, “epics without god.”

And even Shakespeare’s romances belong *in hoc tempore*. We do not accept their conventions as we accept those of popular tales, simply as given for our ease and comfort. The tough verse forbids that, and so does the particularity of what happens on the stage. The statue that moves might enact the Pygmalion myth, were it not that Perdita in all her vitality stands motionless beside it; and that it is

shown how no chisel could ever yet cut breath. It is the breath of Hermione, the presence of Perdita, that are lost to view as you stand back; you sacrifice them to a system and a myth. The conclusion seems obvious: when you hear talk of archetypes, reach for your reality principle.

#### 11. Levin, Harry. *Comparative Literature* 17 (Summer 1965): 278–9.

. . . Since “each play of Shakespeare is a world in itself,” Northrop Frye reminds us in his preface, “the bulk of Shakespearean criticism consists of . . . commentary in individual plays” [viii]. Professor Frye has now stepped back to “a middle distance,” whence he displays his demonstrated gifts for long-range observation and quotable formulation. “From this point of view [the comedies] seem more like a number of simultaneous chess games played by a master who wins them all by devices familiar to him, and gradually, with patient study, to us” [viii]. No tyro at such games himself, Professor Frye begins, not uncharacteristically, by turning a confession into a generalization. “All literary critics,” he tells us, “are either Iliad critics or Odyssey critics” [1]. This means, he goes on to explain, that their interest centers either in the area of tragedy, realism, and irony or in that of comedy and romance. We are thus prepared for the declaration that we are hearing from an Odyssean critic; but he may be unfair to his own originality when he assumes that there are others in this category. He concedes that most are Iliadic, but just where does that leave them? Given the two dichotomies, *tragedy/comedy* and *realism/romance*, there would seem to be no objective reason why critics should limit themselves to any particular set of coordinates. As for irony, we lose a good deal in excluding it from our considerations on comedy, if not on romance.

“Tragedy, irony, and realism see the human condition from inside the machine of nature,” says Mr. Frye at a later stage of the argument; “comedy and romance tend to look for a person concealed in the mechanical chess player” [70]. This would seem to bring us somewhat closer to Poe than to Shakespeare, who resists our attempts to pin him down in one segment or the other of a dichotomy. Again the metaphor from chess seems to emphasize the mechanical at the expense of the organic. Mr. Frye’s conception of nature, however, includes not only art but also magic and any number of gods—as well as white goddesses—in the machine. His epigraph from *Twelfth Night* is ambiguous in its original context: “*A Natural Perspective*, that is and is not.” We might well concur with his preference for another title, *The Bottomless Dream*, wryly suggesting—as Bottom’s account of his vision does—the unfathomable depths of fantasy. Here, as elsewhere, the inevitable contrast is with Ben Jonson, and Mr. Frye makes some illuminating juxtapositions and apt cross-references. Jonson indeed has more in common than Shakespeare has with Moliere and Aristophanes. Insofar as Shakespeare stands apart from their more realistic tradition, he is well worth the infinite attention we devote to him for his own sake, but he hardly offers a clear-cut basis for deducing the norms of comedy. Those four late comedies which we classify as romances seem to constitute a uniquely Shakespearean genre. For Mr. Frye they likewise “represent the climax of Shakespeare’s technical interest in playwriting” [17].

It could be added that they accommodate themselves, more readily than most other works of literature, to the sort of analytic machinery assembled in the *Anatomy of Criticism*. “We may say with some confidence,” Mr. Frye asserts, “that if the archaeologists ever discover a flourishing drama in Minoan or Mayan culture, it may not have plays like *King Lear* or *The Alchemist*, but it will almost certainly have plays like *Pericles*” [59]. Plays, that is to say, in which “the action cannot be lifelike; it can only be archetypal” [32]. *The Winter’s Tale*, though Mr. Frye may underestimate its dependence on Green’s *Pandosto*, typifies “the archaizing tendencies” [58] he seeks, with its seasonal cycle, its utilization of folklore, its stress on providence and regeneration. But we should not confound him with those ritualists and allegorists who have sought to impose their private apocalypses on Shakespeare’s last period; rather, we should look upon his study as extending and complementing the valuable work of

C.L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*. Mr. Frye explicitly distinguishes between the magical and the mythical, and shows how myths become conventionalized in the very process of being dramatized. "Drama is born in the renunciation of magic, and in *The Tempest* and elsewhere it remembers its inheritance" [59]. The myth of Orpheus, which symbolizes poetry capturing those lost enchantments, has its special role in the imagery of the romances, as Mr. Frye points out. He is always happy in discussing the musical aspects of literary material, and the operatic nature of this material is well brought out by such discussion.

His structural approach is in accord with the tendency of twentieth-century criticism to allow Shakespeare full credit for deliberate artistry; Mr. Frye would even regard anachronisms as part of a conscious effort to achieve universality. On the other hand, he would not take the dramatic expression of ideas very seriously. His interpretation of Ulysses' monologues in *Troilus and Cressida* would be purely functional and psychological, yet he does not hesitate to extract ingenious meanings from the two set speeches of *As You Like It*. He cavalierly ignores theatrical history, when he maintains of the didactic Terence: "All our evidence indicates that he had no interest in anything beyond trying to entertain an audience with a popular, and therefore highly conventionalized, dramatic structure" [44–5]. But Mr. Frye's emphasis on the chthonic side of comedy may be acceptable as a counterpoise to the overintellectualization of many theorists. And he is at his inventive best in outlining a master-pattern of the kind that F.M. Cornford laid down for Old Comedy. Middle-distance analysis probably entails a certain amount of *a priori* reasoning, special pleading, and straining of terms: to call Prospero a *senex iratus*, for example, obscures more than it clarifies. Some of the generalizing is too general to define very much; "a drive toward identity" [118] could be tragic no less than comic. It may well be that the lasting benefits of Professor Frye's inquiry are what I venture to call his telescopic insights, such as the brief digression applying his method to *Macbeth*, or his pregnant paragraph on the relation between *Pericles* and T.S. Eliot.

## 12. Rockas, Leo. *Criticism* 9 (Summer 1967): 298–301.

In a recent letter to the English Institute, Frye protests that he has already said on the first page of *Anatomy of Criticism* that he doesn't care for systems themselves, only the insight they provide. . . . This is apparently in answer to the standard review of Frye's books, which mentions its approval of separate insights here and there, but says of the work as a whole, of the systems it proposes: As for *those* who would take them seriously?—just Frye drawing some of his amusing diagrams again, that's all. Frank Kermode and Reuben Brower, reviewing *A Natural Perspective* in the *New York Review of Books* and *Partisan Review*, for example, try to save some insights, while ditching the system.

The question is, what kind of insights are we talking about? Kermode and Brower nod with approval at an insight that might pass for some other critic's analysis of a particular play. But that is not mainly what Frye is up to at all. In the Preface to *A Natural Perspective* he says: "the bulk of Shakespearean criticism consists, rightly, I think, of commentary on individual plays. The present book retreats from commentary into middle distance, considering the comedies as a single group unified by recurring images and structural devices. From this point of view they seem more like a number of simultaneous chess games played by a master who wins them all by devices familiar to him, and gradually, with patient study, to us" [viii]. Here is an "insight" on *Timon* I doubt would appeal to his reviewers: "If we are to see the action of *Twelfth Night* through the eyes of the madly used Malvolio or the action of *The Merchant of Venice* through the eyes of the bankrupt and beggared Shylock, the tone would not be greatly different from that of the second half of *Timon of Athens*" [98]. Here the Kermode-Brower reviewer shudders over the lumping of Malvolio, Shylock (and Timon!), but Frye is exactly carrying out his promise of revealing Shakespeare's chess strategies. Frye's most characteristic



insights are always those heading toward a generalization or system, and that is where he leaves his reviewers behind. Any one system may be dispensable, but the possibility of some system, with the presents ones as instances, is crucial to Frye.

At stake is whether criticism must forever remain discrete and analytic, or whether synthesis is another acceptable option for it. Frye's "rightly" above suggests that he can be more charitable of analysis than his critics can to synthesis. True, every literary work is different from every other literary work; does that prohibit one from observing any similarities between them? Synthesis abstracts, simplifies, hence makes criticism available to many; analysis, though also "right," particularizes, complicates, hence is essentially esoteric; it keeps you ever separating, differentiating, while relishing. Dilettantism (always analytic) rejects synthesis, for mystery and intrigue are its way of life, "restricted," as Frye says, to ritual masonic gestures, to raised eyebrows and cryptic comments and other signs of understanding too occult for syntax" [*Anatomy* 4]. In contrast, Frye says of a couple of his structures: "The full understanding of these two structures is complicated for the teacher, but their elementary principles are exceedingly simple, and can be demonstrated to any class of normally intelligent fifteen-year-olds" [*PMLA* 79 (May 1964): 16].

Like other reviewers I find his separate insights stimulating, but I want to discuss the structure, the theory, which is what the book is trying to be about. First I wish to correct a mistake—a mistake of theory; there may be several mistakes on points or plays without affecting the validity of the argument. Frye differentiates between the direct experience of literature, which moves in time, and criticism, which looks at literature spatially. "Criticism," he says, "deals entirely with literature in this frozen or spatial way" [9]. Burke's "Psychology and Form" is a striking refutation of this statement, and there is no more necessity for criticism to remain frozen than to remain analytic, though I am sure it is mainly both.

What Frye has written after *Anatomy of Criticism* (except for a treatment of styles in *The Well-Tempered Critic*) appears to be *pro-* rather than *metalegomena* to it. The present book is both an amplification and simplification of the comedy section in the "Third Essay. Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" of Frye's big book. This section . . . had already made considerable use of Shakespeare's comedies and romances. Now he takes up many missing or abbreviated points, characters, situations, plays. The third (of four) chapters in the present book is frankly a rewriting of that section, and he says he will try to avoid repeating himself "beyond the irreducible minimum" [72]. But the question arises. If "there's nothing new in literature that isn't the old reshaped" [*The Educated Imagination* 70], isn't there in criticism either? If every comedy tells the same story, does every account of comedy too?

One important difference between the two accounts arises in characterization. The structure of characters in the *Anatomy* was to pairs of Aristotelian vices, *alazōn-iron* (impostor-ironist), *bomolochos-agroikos* (buffoon-churl). Now he introduces a new role "in which a character personifies a withdrawal from the comic society in a more concentrated way" than does the clown (*bomolochos*). "There is, as usual," he says, "no word for this role, and I am somewhat perplexed what name to give it. Names which I have used elsewhere, such as *pharmakos* and churl, belong rather to the different character types that may or may not have this role. I select *idiotes*, more or less at random" [93]. The *idiotes* ("private person not holding public office"), then, is not a character but a role. Examples are Don John, Malvolio, Falstaff, Jaques, Shylock, and, in the passage I cited above, Timon. "Although the villainous, the ridiculous, and the misanthropic are closely associated in comedy, there is enough variety of motivation here to indicate that the *idiotes* is not a character type, like the clown, though typical features recur, but a structural device that may use a variety of characters" [93]. But in the *Anatomy* examples of the "character type" *agroikos* (churl) are Malvolio, Jaques, Bertram, and Shylock, and the type may be "miserly, snobbish, or priggish," which would seem as great a variety and villainous, ridiculous, and misanthropic. There was already in the *Anatomy* considerable shilly-shallying in characterization, and

the *idiotes* doesn't help much. Frye had better straighten it out before the rest of us adopt Kermode's embargo on synthesis.

In the larger structure of this book (also in *The Educated Imagination* 97) Frye regroups his structure of four myths into two pairs: comedy-romance, tragedy-irony, of which he discusses the first pair. Now either this pairing is right and should have been given in the *Anatomy*; or else the pairing is arbitrary and the opposite pairing, equally insisted on in the *Anatomy*, between comedy-irony and tragedy-romance, remains to be discussed. All critics, he says now, are either Iliad critics (tragedy-irony) or Odyssey critics (comedy-romance). Most modern critics, he says, are Iliad critics; if he has, as he says, "always been temperamentally and Odyssean critic . . . attracted to comedy and romance" [2], it is partly, I suspect, in response to the ponderous Bradley-Lily Campbell school. Comedy and romance, he says, are the primary myths; "they can be taught to the youngest students" [*The Educated Imagination* 114]; "comic and romantic stories are the ones to stress in elementary school" [*PMLA* 79 (May 1964): 16]. In *A Natural Perspective* Frye presents his most childlike face: I wonder how many will want to buss it.

**13. Siegel, Paul N. *Shakespeare Studies*, 2. Ed. J. Leeds Barroll. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 1966: 330–32.**

A series of lectures, Douglas Bush has said, is like a fugue in which themes come in one by one and people go out two by two. I did not attend the Bampton Lectures at Columbia University, of which *A Natural Perspective* is a revision, but I doubt that the audience at the last lecture was smaller than the first one. For, although the lecture was concerned with certain themes, he did not develop them relentlessly. They flow easily along, borne on the rippling surface of his wit. It is a bravura performance. This does not mean, however, that this small book is a lightweight affair. Although it does not do for Shakespearean comedy what A. C. Bradley's lectures did for Shakespearean tragedy, lacking the systematic orderliness and lucidity of Bradley's book, it is highly suggestive in its comments on the form of that comedy. Some of Frye's sentences, the product of his remarkable capacity for generalization, will no doubt be the seeds for future doctoral dissertations. . . .

Much of what is in *A Natural Perspective* will be familiar to those who have read the authors "The Argument of Comedy" and *Anatomy of Criticism* . . . but there is enough elaboration of old themes, enough introduction of new themes, and enough animation in the performance so that one does not feel cheated. Once more Shakespearean comedy is seen as a popular art whose conventions, descended from myths, are used by a highly conscious craftsman, but now we have the thesis that the romances, dealing with what Ben Jonson called "mouldy tales," old stories of the long ago and far away, are the culmination of Shakespeare's archaizing tendencies.

The theme of life emerging from death, which has long been perceived to be central to the romances, Frye shows to be a development of what is implicit in other comedies. It is usually the heroine who, through a disappearance and return, brings about at the conclusion the birth of the new all-inclusive society free from the irrationalism of the anticomic society and the beginning of the play. The disappearance and return can take place in the form of sexual disguise or in the form of death and revival. Hero in *Much Ado* and Helena in *All's Well* in a sense die and return, and even the formerly shrewish Katharina is, in the words of her father, "changed, as she had never been." If the "trace of the same thing" which Frye finds in the fact that "a picture of Portia which looks miraculously like her is found in the leaden casket" [84] is doubtful, it is obvious that Portia's disguise as Belario is a disappearance-and-return device which resolves the discord in the world of the play so that we have the marvelous harmony of the last act.

So too the natural surroundings in which the royal children who are to renew an old, corrupt society are reared that we have in *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* are a development of the forest world of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the forest world itself is a structural principle present in different forms in other comedies. This structural principle is represented by dreams, magic, and other things which seem unnatural but which are in reality the reviving power of the natural society that antedated the society we know and that continues to work upon it. The conclusion is an awakening to a world which has been transformed by the bewildering dream through which we and the characters have passed.

These and other concepts provide a rough sketch of the domain of Shakespearean comedy that enables us to come back to its exploration with greater understanding. Their value can be seen from the few sentences in which Frye applies it to *The Comedy of Errors*. This play has been commonly thought of as merely an attempt by the youthful Shakespeare to out-do Plautus before he found his true bent. However, Frye points out—he was anticipated in this, to be sure, by G.R. Elliott, R.A. Foakes, and others—that, in the nightmare world which seizes its characters, in the emphasis being on the reunion not of the twins but of their father and mother, and in its hinting at a resurrection from the dead, *The Comedy of Errors* anticipates the romances.

The danger, however, of such a gathering together of categories of structural devices is that distinctions may be blurred. In “The Argument of Comedy” Frye stated that one of the things which make the problem comedies different from the romantic comedies is that they have no “green” or forest world. Here, intent on tracing a development, he makes no mention of this distinction. Instead he finds that the structural principle of the reviving power of natural society, of which the “green world” is only one form, is contained in Helena’s magical healing. It is helpful to see Helena in this way, but it remains true that the difference in atmosphere between the corrupt Renaissance court which is the setting of *All's Well* and, say, the forest of Arden separates it from the romantic comedies. So too the difference in tone between the romances and the romantic comedies is glossed over.

Another danger of Frye’s method is the possibility of doing violence to a play by pushing it out of shape in fitting it into a system. This happens in Frye’s discussion of *Timon of Athens*, where he revives Oscar James Campbell’s notion that it is a satiric comedy. Refusing to find Timon to be an alienated tragic hero because then the play must invite unfavorable comparison with *King Lear*, he finds him to play the role of what he calls the *idiotes*, the spectator withdrawn from the comic society. “This extraordinary play . . . has many features making for an *idiotes* comedy rather than a tragedy. If we were to see the action of *Twelfth Night* through the eyes of the madly used Malvolio, or the action of *The Merchant of Venice* through the eyes of the bankrupt and beggared Shylock, the tone would not be greatly different from that of the second half of *Timon of Athens*” [98]. But if we were to see the action through the eyes of Malvolio and Shylock the comedies in which they appear would cease to be comedies: sympathetic identification is incompatible with derisive humor. Far from being a comic humors character, Timon is another one of Shakespeare’s openhearted noble heroes, as the choric comments of Flavius make clear.

Finally, in making structure all-important Frye sometimes is cavalier with regard to other approaches and modes of analysis. It seems disingenuous to state that the question “Is Falstaff a coward?” is a pseudo-problem, as the heroic code governing the warfare in the play is a “dramatic postulate,” not a “value” [40–41]. In accepting the dramatic postulate, we have to characterize Falstaff in terms of it. This does not mean, of course, that if we characterize him as a coward our response to him has to be a simple one. The acceptance of the dramatic postulate by playwright and audience allows for complexity.

The dramatic postulate, moreover, is more than a convenient gambit arbitrarily chosen. “If one starts to tell a story about Tom Jones,” Frye comments, “one needs such a contrasting character as Blifil for structural reasons, not merely to symbolize the author’s disapproval of hypocrisy” [40]. But

Fielding's choice of a hero in the first place and accordingly his choice of his contrasting character was surely an expression of his values. The structure of a great work of art is shaped by the author's view of life. "It seems a strange critical procedure," says Frye, "to equate so skillful a dramatic use of theme [legitimacy, divine right, order and degree, the chain of being, Christian eschatology] with a belief in it which was mere commonplace in his own day and a mere superstition in ours" [41]. But surely Shakespeare believed in these things intensely at least while he was writing his great histories and tragedies and very probably at other times. For it was this intensity of feeling (and his ability to order it) which made the commonplaces of his time come alive in his plays so that they ceased to be "mere" commonplaces for his audiences. As for us, on suspending our disbelief we find that his vision of life has meaning for us even if we cannot accept the ideology which lies behind it.

But these disagreements with Frye are disagreements with only a few of the ideas which he casually throws out in the course of his discussion. Where there are so many challenging ideas, some of them are bound to be merely provocative. On such matters, however, as the irrational society at the beginning of Shakespearean comedy, the anticomic themes and moods, the period of confusion and sexual license, the amoral clown, nature as a power and a harmony, and the discovery of identity at the conclusion, he is, as I have said, immensely suggestive. The chart of Shakespearean comedy he has provided will be the basis for more detailed maps.

#### 14. Srigley, M.B. *Studia Neophilologica* 38 (1966): 375–8.

This work . . . is made up of a revised and extended course of lectures. . . , a fact which may in part explain both the liveliness of style and a certain diffuseness in the book that makes it difficult to keep track of the author's line of argument, and to follow each twist and turn of this stimulating study of Shakespeare's comedies and romances. . . .

The book is divided into four sections, and in each of them the author perambulates with wit and conversational ease around the various aspects of his theme.

The first section, entitled "Mouldy Tales," is devoted to a general description of the features of comedy. Professor Frye sees it as central to comedy that "the story seeks its own end, instead of holding up a mirror to nature" [8]. Analogies with the everyday world are discouraged, and the audience watching a comedy is required to make an almost willful suspension of disbelief. All the improbabilities, the bafflements of disguise, mistaken identity, the wild coincidences should be accepted uncritically, and when in the fifth act the heroes and heroines emerge safely and happily, the captive audience should, with Tertullian, murmur "Credo quia absurdum." This "uncritical" attitude of an audience to a Shakespearean comedy is regarded by Professor Frye as a prerequisite to the full enjoyment of the play, even of a problem play like *Measure for Measure*. All "the wild farrago" [12], as the author calls it, that has been written about this play arises only because critics have refused to accept uncritically the comic conventions that shape it. Accept these and the problem dissolves, leaving only a story to be enjoyed.

The problem in a comedy like *Measure for Measure* has, however, a disconcerting way of reasserting itself. Professor Frye describes it as "a disturbing fantasy" [12], but herein lies the disturbance of this fantasy comedy? Is it not inherent in the clash between the seamy-sided and bitter material handled by Shakespeare and the comic form in which it is cast? It can be argued that Shakespeare deliberately forced his audience to make those analogies to reality which comedy would normally inhibit. Like Timon's guests, the audience is invited to a banquet of pure comedy, and then told "Uncover, dogs, and lap." It is hard to believe that an Elizabethan audience was so spell-bound by watching one of the problem comedies that it would not have sensed the incongruity between content and form, and even relished it, or that it was not "allowed to think at all . . . had no right to

raise questions, as long as the action is going on, about the plausibility of the incidents or their correspondence with their habitual view of life" [13].

Professor Frye's general ideas on Shakespearean comedy are particularly illuminating when he compares and contrasts Shakespeare's and Jonson's comedies, showing that Jonson in inviting the audience to draw analogies with the outside world is more truly the ancestor of the comic tradition in English drama than Shakespeare. This leads him to the perceptive conclusion that the successors of Shakespeare's comedies and romances are to be found in opera and ballet, and that *Pericles* "is one of the world's first operas" [28].

In the second section, "Making Nature Afraid," the author examines three features of Shakespearean comedies which he terms the "popular," "conventional," and "primitive." By primitive is meant an archaizing tendency the effect of which is to establish "contact with a universal and world-wide dramatic tradition," and "to uncover a primeval dramatic structure that practically anything in the shape of a human audience can respond to" [58], thus making it "popular." The conventional feature is in origin a myth, and it is to the mythical outline beneath the surface of the play that an audience instinctively responds.

This mythical approach to Shakespeare's plays, of which perhaps the most extreme example is Colin Still's discovery in 1923 that beneath the surface of *The Tempest* lay the ritual contours of the Eleusinian mysteries, is still capable of illuminating and deepening our appreciation of the plays. It is used with discretion by Professor Frye, and in the case of his discussion of the function of anachronism with brilliance.

The third section, "The Triumph of Time," is concerned with giving an outline of the "typical structure of Shakespeare's comedy" [58]. In brief the author's view is that most Renaissance comedy including Shakespeare's is based on the formula of the New Society, derived ultimately from Plautus and Terence, and involving the struggle of a younger generation to establish a New Society in the face of opposition from the old. He distinguishes three main phases in this struggle. The first is an anticomic phase in which the obstacles to the realization of the New Society are set up, frequently in the form of an irrational mood or law. The second phase, associated with the Saturnalia, darkness, and loss of identity, is dominated by the build-up of the "erotic pleasure principle" [75], to use Professor Frye's bleak phrase, which ultimately explodes beneath "the social anxieties sitting on top of it and blows them sky-high" [75]. In the final phase the Old Society crumbles, parental opposition vanishes, disguises are dropped, and true identities discovered, and in a festive finale the New Society is inaugurated through the marriage of the young and general reconciliation.

This bald summary of Professor Frye's analysis does scant justice to the finesse with which he elaborates it. He presents a patterned and harmonious prospect that only a middle-distanced view can give, and which is often denied to those down in the thickets of textual commentary. Like all such orderly schemes it is satisfying and even seductive. Nevertheless, one or two queries raise themselves. It is possible that his view of the basic structure of Shakespearean comedy is so comprehensive that it is in danger of embracing tragedy too. In *Lear*, for example, it is possible to trace the anticomic phase in Lear's irrational demands on his daughters' affections, and his belated unwillingness to allow the evolution of a New Society based on a fresh generation. The second phase in which "the images of chaos, tempest, illusion, madness, darkness and death . . . confused identity" [137] predominate, is clearly traceable to the storm scenes in *Lear*, and in Lear's progressive loss of identity. Even the final phase is embryonically present in the reconciliation of Lear to Cordelia and Gloucester to Edgar, the recovery of identity, the putting off of masks, and the assumption of government by the young. Lacking only the festive conclusion, and this of course is decisive to the character of comedy.

On the subject of this final and most decisive phase of comedy Professor Frye offers his most convincing insights. Arguing that in comedy the New Society is born out of laughter and concord, whereas in tragedy it arises out of tears and discord, he relates these endings to two opposed responses

in any audience. In comedy the response is to a world of wish-fulfillment, while in tragedy it is to a world of stark and terrible reality.

In the fourth and final section, "The Return from the Sea," Professor Frye makes the important claim that the romances are "the inevitable and genuine culmination of the poets achievement" [viii]. He rejects the view that they are the products of a tired or bored imagination. They are to Shakespeare "what *The Art of the Fugue* and *The Musical Offering* are to Bach: not retreats into pedantry, but final articulations of craftsmanship" [8]. He sees them as the positive outcome of the comedies, not least in their development of the theme of the cycle of nature. He opposes this cycle to the wheel of fortune, which is a tragic concept and alien to comedy.

The case for the vindication of the romances is made with eloquence and learning, and yet it remains incomplete. Why is it necessary to deny Shakespeare's tragedies and histories a part in the shaping of the romances? The recognition scene between Lear and Cordelia foreshadows that between Pericles and Marina. The Machiavellian, power-seeking ruthless villain of the histories and tragedies finds a final incarnation in Antonio in *The Tempest*. And in *The Tempest* it is not only the cycle of nature which turns, but also the tragic wheel of "bountiful Fortune" that has brought Prospero's enemies into his clutch, their crime the great theme of the histories, usurpation of political power. Professor Frye writes of this play that "the vision of the brave new world becomes the world itself, and the dance of vanishing spirits a revel that has no end" [159]. Maybe, but one remembers too the harsh disruption of the wedding masque, and the sardonic figure of Antonio aloof at the festive end. W.H. Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror* still remains the most profound commentary on *The Tempest*.

It remains finally to pay tribute to the author for having written a scholarly work which is also a pleasure to read. In setting out to uncover the basic structure of Shakespearean comedy he has performed a herculean task well and provocatively. Occasional disagreement in no way detracts from the value of this pioneer work.

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