Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. With a new introduction by Linda Hutcheon. Concord, Ont.: House of Anansi Press, 1995.

Jonathan Hart, *Northrop Frye: The Theoretical Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Alvin A. Lee and Robert D. Denham, eds. *The Legacy of Northrop Frye*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994

What a delight to have these books that show so clearly that Frye's writings continue to command interest from critics! Hart's provides a sensible, cautious overview of Frye's contribution to the theory and practice of criticism. The anthology compiled by Lee and Denham presents a range of views of Frye's importance, including, of course, pieces of varying strengths. Two of its highlights, undoubtedly, are Hayden White's brilliant presentation of Frye as a philosopher of human freedom and a theorist of history who crucially substitutes for causal models of historical change a model founded on the pattern of prefiguration and fulfilment and Nella Cotrupi's analysis of Vico's influence on Frye's theories of metaphor and *kerygma*. In addition, Helen Vendler does a very deft job of showing how a generous love of the experience of poetry led Frye, in *Studies of English Romanticism*, into inconsistencies of interpretation in his remarks on Keats' *Endymion* and Julia Kristeva offers some tantalizingly suggestive comments about her longstanding interest in Frye's theories (which, unfortunately, go undeveloped.) I am, however, surprised how rare is the understanding of Frye as a Canadian thinker: with the exception of the very fine piece by York University's Clara Thomas on the influence the Social Gospel movement in Canada had on Frye and Margaret Laurence, and David Staines' interesting survey of Frye as a critic of Canadian literature, the question of Frye's place in the Canadian intellectual tradition goes unasked.

Perhaps the principal reason for commentators' failure to address this issue is that many identify Frye all too quickly as one of the New Critics. From the time of *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), the book that placed Frye among the great critics of his time, through *Anatomy of Criticism (*1957), which established him among the great metacritical theorists of all times, through *The Great Code* (1982) and *Words with Power* (1990), the late books that provide an unprecedented conspectus of the values of poetry, Frye argued over and over the proposition that the study of poetry and literature must be independent of the various disciplines that threaten to render secondary the analysis of the literary object in itself (among which, in our own time, the most likely pretender is that most baleful of all disciplines, sociology.) What requires that the study of literature be an autonomous discipline is that poetic language and ordinary language are incommensurate linguistic modes. Poetry remakes language.

In asserting that poetic language and ordinary language are fundamentally different, Frye redeployed an argument that the members of the various Russo-Slavic schools of Formalism and the New Critics took from Kant and placed at the centre of their critical doctrines. Critics belonging to all these schools argued that the literary language is distinct from ordinary language since poetic language is non-specific in its reference (and perhaps is not referential at all, in the sense that it intends nothing outside the poem.) Hence, they averred, the truth conditions that prevail upon ordinary discourse have no purchase in the language of poetry.

That Frye accepted this most fundamental of the New Critics' assertions explains why Frye often sounds like (and is sometimes grouped together with) the New Critics. All the New Critics proposed that words from ordinary language are transformed and acquire new meaning when they become part of a poem; each of the New Critics proposed a different name for the

aesthetic transformer that would alter the currents of meaning, charging a word from ordinary language with a poetic force whose effect on the word is to recreate it. For Cleanth Brooks it was irony, for Empson it was ambiguity, for Burke it was paradox that loosened the bonds that tie words to their conventional referents and endow them with a plurisemous, poetic sense.

Frye argued differently in this respect. He did agree that the elements of poetic language make no sense if construed as items in the common idiom; thus, of an expression from a poem in Patrick Anderson's *The Colour as Naked*, when he writes, "We recognize at once that if the phrase "exploding like nails" says nothing to common sense it says exactly the right thing to the poetic sense" (*The Bush Garden*, p. 25). However, unlike Brooks, Empson and Burke, Frye denied that there was any single device that transforms the words of ordinary language into words with power; nor can we distinguish between ordinary language and poetic language on the grounds that words belonging to the latter mode of language are one and all more polysemic (perhaps nearly inexhaustibly polysemic.) Frye argued, rather, that the different modes of language reflect different relations between human being to the circumambient world; more specifically, he maintained that poetic language embodies a more primal relation between mind and nature than characterizes the epistemic relation that founds modernity. This more primal relation between mind and nature is one in which subject and object have not yet separated out from one another, one in which knower and known become identified. Time and again Frye quoted "they became what they beheld" to encapsulate the truth of the visionaries and the mystics, the truth of this identification of subject and object.

It was the recognition that there is no single armature of poetic transformation that makes Frye's literary theory so much richer, and infinitely less programmatic, than the New Critics.' Frye saw that the literary analyst must undertake an immeasurably more complex task than that envisioned by the New Critics—he or she must detect the traces of operation of this more primal epistemic relation in the language and structure of the poems they study. Though Frye did not (so far as I know) explicitly make the comparison, probably to avoid inviting further encroachment upon literary studies, this effort to detect the traces of the operation of a more primal form of awareness in production of literary works makes literary analysis somewhat akin to psychoanalysis. As regards language, Frye's repeated use of Gerald Manley Hopkins' distinction between "overthought" and "underthought," (a distinction between explicit meaning and a texture of metaphors, sounds and images that embody the poet's real thought), is likewise reminiscent of the distinction between the manifest and latent meaning of the dream that Freud offers in that final, momentous chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Frye's interest in the more primal powers of words not only explains the central place in the study of poetic language Frye accords the study of metaphor (for the power of metaphor identifies humanity with nature) but also explains Frye's introducing into Vico's triphasal historical cycle a fourth phase in which language becomes *kerygma* (i.e., proclamation, so that the kerygmatic phase of the history of language is the phase in which the power of words can accomplish the work of revelation.) As regards structure, Frye's famous assertions that a literary work exemplifies a mode of thinking that, although more primal (in the sense of being closer to primary rather than secondary human interests as well as in the sense of being allied to a pre-logical mode of thought) nonetheless has a history and tradition that contributes to the process by which what gives it expression is formed. This tradition is embodied in archetypal patterns which, because they have a context in history and tradition are not entirely natural but which also, because they relate to primary human interests, are not entirely arbitrary either. These archetypes are conventional patterns of images or story kernels that combine into the system that we call a myth. Like the dream images, associations and parataxes in Freud's psychological theories, these archetypes, in their recurrence, disclose the workings of desire and, more importantly, the conflict between desire and reality (cf. Freud's commentary on the

conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.)

The greater resources of Frye's literary theory (in comparison with that of the New Critics) and Frye's openness to epistemic modes different from those that found the modern paradigm meant that Frye was open to a greater variety of literary productions than were the majority of the New Critics. While the New Critics extolled metaphysical poets such as George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Traherne and the incomparable John Donne, Frye's mind soared towards the Romantics (those writers whom a renewed programmatic approach to literature once again tries to expel from the literature's Olympian heights). While the New Critics were chary of Romanticism's proclivities for elevated speech and lofty ideas, Frye nurtured, across the span of his long career, a passion he conceived early on, for the writing of William Blake, a poet who, before Frye laid the shape of his mythological system before readers, was widely considered to have been eccentric, mostly unintelligible and, certainly in his later phases, quite mad. Because he understood the language of metaphor, Frye was able to discern the mythological system of Blake's thought as none were able before him; for this reason contemporary Blake scholars continue to cite Frye's study of Blake even though it appeared nearly fifty years ago. Still more tellingly, Frye often cited Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, a poem finished in a madhouse to which Smart had been taken after repeatedly bothering shoppers on London's Oxford Street, imploring them to kneel down with him on the pavement to thank God for His many blessings. Frye's passionate commitment to the belief that the truths of poetry belong to a different epistemic mode than the truths of contemporary science also provides the reason why, as a reviewer of Canadian poetry, Frye displayed a marked dislike for those New Critical tenets that the Black Mountain school (et. al.), espoused, the conviction, that "everything in poetry should be hard, concrete, and precise" (*The Bush Garden*, p. 18.) Thus he deems the poetry of Canada's pioneer modernist A.J.M. Smith, as "intensely visual . . . but it does not dance." and more tellingly, after allowing that "Mr. Smith has the reputation of being a metaphysical poet in the tradition of Donne" remarks that Smith's "learning perhaps does interfere with his spontaneity." (*ibid*. p. 37,36,37) while of James Wreford he writes "Metaphysical poetry is not a good influence on him" and deems a pair of lines from Anne Wilkinson as "bad metaphysical poetry" (*ibid*, p.2,5.)

As importantly, Frye's belief that the language of poetry embodies a primal epistemic relation to the circumambient world explains why, while most of the New Critics were Aristotelians, there is a strong Longinian strand in Frye's critical theories. It also accounts for Frye's making the Romantic lyric the centre-piece of poetry; the section in *Anatomy of Criticism* devoted to analyzing the rhythm of lyric (pp. 270–281) must surely figure among the greatest pieces of writing on poetry from the present century. What makes it great, aside from the acuteness of Frye's ear and the range of comparisons that his (apparently) eidetic memory allowed him to introduce, was his understanding of how the Romantic lyric conveys prelogical awareness.

Too many commentators, so as to score fantasy political points against some fantasy establishment, have shown themselves eager to condemn Frye as a typical New Critic ready to co-opt the subversive potential of literature to a religious ideology. This tendency began as long ago as 1969 with Pauline Kogan's ferocious quasi-Maoist diatribe, *Northrop Frye: High Priest of Clerical Obscurantism* (a diatribe that appears simply sad when one considers the atrocities that, at the very moment this squib appeared, were being perpetrated by the political system for which it spoke) and, nearly as early but not so nearly single-minded or so complete in its denunciation, "The Sweet Science of Northrop Frye," in Geoffrey Hartman's *Beyond Formalism*. More recently, this position has been advanced internationally by Terry Eagleton and nationally by Linda Hutcheon (who now, on the evidence of her new introduction to *The Bush Garden*, seems to be abandoning the position implied by her contribution to the Lee and Denham

anthology) and Robin Mathews. What is particularly galling about the fact that this accusation has received only technical defence from Frye's admirers (a valuable and, indeed, necessary piece of work) is that a historically-based defence is, perhaps, more telling. The hostility that Frye showed towards the influence that metaphysical poetry was having on Canadian writing reflects his realization, which he articulated roughly contemporaneously with similar insights being advanced in the Massey Report, that American values (such as those expounded by the Black Mountain School) were adversely affecting the arts in Canada. Correlatively, Frye's Romantic leanings, which helped foster that realization, were inspired by the longstanding Canadian sympathy for such philosophies of Romantic Idealism as that of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Frye's Romantic leanings, and the convictions about language to which those leanings led him, can be understood through appreciating the process by which Frye arrived at them and through fathoming his statements about the conclusion he drew after reflecting on the nature of that process. Frye counselled aspiring critics to take one writer as their spiritual preceptor—and to chose a writer whose mind was so large that, as one's understanding expands, it grows within rather that beyond that world. Frye wrote, "It seems to me that growing up inside a mind so large that one has no sense of claustrophobia within it is an irreplaceable experience in humane studies." With the current animus against the view that art is the product of especially ennobled intelligences, not many are likely to experience what Frye knew was central to humane studies and which, if experienced, so marks the work of any critic or any creator that it is possible to distinguish, simply on the basis of their productions, between those critics who have experienced such a genuine encounter with a truly creative intelligence and those critics who have not.

The concentrated discipline of following the lines of thought of a single, exemplary intelligence has two interrelated effects. Firstly, it reveals the extraordinary force of a truly creative intelligence: an intelligence that is truly creative transfigures everything to which it turns its attention, and its unusual capaciousness means that it turns its attention to a wider than usual range of interests. The experience, then, is one of encountering an intelligence that is broad enough to encompass a range that would elude the grasp of most of us and, at the same time, powerful enough to be able to transform almost any material given to it, even material that seems resistant or with little capacity for imaginative expansion. Thus, if one has really encountered the genius of a Bach or a Shakespeare, one cannot fail to be humbled—humbled not only by recognizing the range of forms within which the artist could work, but also by realizing how endlessly he could rework them. More than that, one is staggered to observe how every bit of material that comes to a Bach or a Shakespeare gets worked and reworked, and transformed into an endless variety of new and ever richer constructions.

This effect of encountering such creative power is, in itself, personally transformative, but this effect goes along with another. This second effect occurs with the realization that any genius, even for all its individuality, is in a way typical—that any genius' activities are a timeless paradigm of creative activity across the ages, but embodied in the particular form which the creative spirit assumes in a particular age. Thus if one encounters Shakespeare's genius one understands something more about Dante, Goethe, Milton and Pound; at the same time, one understands how this activity which, as timeless, is self-identical across the ages, took the particular form it did in the time and the place that was Shakespeare's England.

The dual characteristics of this confrontation with genius, was what Frye was getting at when he remarked that a formative experience for him occurred while, as a young man, he was working on the texts of Blake and Milton. He described the experience to his friend Pelham Edgar as "a glimpse of something bigger and more exciting than he ever before realized existed in the world of mind;" assessing its meaning, he proposed that it expanded his awareness in

such a way that he was brought to see that these two poets—and (though he doesn't say it explicitly) all poets—are connected by the same thing. Thus, as Frye put it in another context and describing something quite different, the encounter opened him to "an infinitely active personality that both enters us and eludes us." (*Myth and Metaphor*, p.107) and furnished him "the glimpse of a boundless energy which . . . has always the power to create all things anew [a statement that goes a good distance towards explaining why Frye treated genius as a human manifestation of a Divine attribute]" (*Spiritus Mundi*, p. 227). The statement encapsulates the significance of a genuine encounter with creative genius, an experience which is at the heart of the purpose of humane studies (and which is, unfortunately, now almost universally neglected when faculties consider what demands they should make of students.)

This encounter, as I commented, marks the work of any critic or any maker who has undergone it. When a student such as Glenn Gould (to take just that shining example) comes up against the genius of Bach, his performance of all music changes and, in this example, all composers become contrapuntalists whose fundamental source of interest is their musical architectonics, including Beethoven (to his, and our, misfortune), Hayden (to our good fortune), to Schönberg (to our delight) and Wagner (to our enlightenment.)

As this example shows, one can learn a great deal about any critic or any maker by discovering the particular intelligence who opened him or her up to the world of intelligence. The mind of Blake is the mental universe within which Frye's thought moves. Blake taught Frye that language is the material of myth and that myth is the house of our being. Thus, what the study of Blake revealed to Frye made Frye's critical theory into a political theology of language. Indeed, by reason of the enormous influence that Blake exerted on him, nearly everything Frye wrote assumed the form of a *tractatus theologico-politicus* on the subject of language and literature, and this character of his work became increasing evident as his work proceeded. The religious assumptions of Frye's literary theory assured him that truth is active in the world, while its linguistic orientation derived from the conviction that truth becomes incarnate only in words. Frye often used the Viconian formulation *verum factum est* [what is true is what is made] for this idea, but the source of Frye's understanding of the assertion is really the Romantic theory of imagination. This strain in Frye's thought also ties his theories to deep tendencies in the Canadian intelligence.

According to Frye, a key revelation that comes from concentrated attention to the creative work of a single, surpassing intelligence is that all poets (creators) are related in that they all contribute to a single, overarching form of creative intelligence. Frye underwrote the venerable proposition that poets possess intelligences that are especially aware of the potentials of language—aware of the potentials of language in a way different from, and grander than, the way that other modes of intelligence are. The poet takes inspiration from the order of words; and this inspiration yields insight into how language's hitherto unreleased powers might be activated. All the poems that will ever be written are therefore implicitly contained within the order of language.

But, in activating the hidden powers of language, the poet impresses on language a human stamp, as the order of words, which in itself seems impersonal, is made instead transpersonal and words, which previously seemed to belong to an alien order, become (to borrow a thought from Heidegger) the home of our being. The idea that the intelligences of individual makers contribute to evolution of transpersonal intelligence that, reciprocally, is both the source and the project (the alpha and the omega) of our being, is a Hegelian notion that Frye, like several exemplary Canadian thinkers, both before and after him, have adopted. So, too, is the associated idea that also appears in Frye's writings, that the humanizing struggle is an agon between concrete and universal, or, as Frye puts it, between individual and archetype. Frye's writings present the dialectical tension between individual and archetype as the source of

creative energy as much as Harold Bloom's, a critic whom Frye's writings on Blake, and on Romanticism generally, influenced greatly, represent the Oedipal agonistics in the struggle between the paradigmatic poetic intelligence and the emerging poet as origin of creativity's motivating dynamic. Frye depicts the archetype as a transhistorical pattern of creativity, as a pattern after which all creativity is fashioned, as the Word whose force animates all speaking. Frye thus explains in a very Hegelian fashion that the archetypes form God's creative understanding of the world.

And Frye did depict the creative struggle as one between individual and archetype and not, in the first place, between creator and society. So, as interested as Frye was in questions around tradition, he was not much concerned with the poet as a social critic. However, in a new introduction to *The Bush Garden* that punctuates passages composed of fashionable banalities with lines proposing egregious nonsense, Professor Hutcheon tries to make Frye into a social critic who would have been sympathetic to the movement for "political correctness" and would have been sympathetic to the call to bring poets to their social responsibilities. Professor Hutcheon's efforts at revision are rather astonishing given the book contains so many judgments like "[Dudek] realizes that the enemy of poetry is not social evil but slipshod language, the weasel words that betray the free mind: he realizes that to create requires an objective serenity beyond all intruding moral worries about atomic bombs and race prejudice" (p. 21) or "bits of the cocoon of his [Patrick Anderson's] apprenticeship cling to him here and there: he writes with conviction when he is the only person in his world, but the impact of "social significance" is usually disastrous" (p. 24). Indeed, such judgments occur with sufficient frequency to raise serious doubts whether Professor Hutcheon heeded in the least what Frye actually wrote when she came to write the introduction to this book, or whether she ignored what she read so that she might present Frye as anticipating her own enlightened views.

One's doubts intensify when one considers the mythology of artistic creativity that inspires Frye's writing. According to this myth, creativity is a highly individual, highly disruptive force to which no society can allow free expression. Every society is bound to repress creativity to a greater or less extent for, if it fails in this task, it permits the expression of a force that will destroy it. So Frye considers society in much the same way as the later Freud did—as a repressive structure that, by containing forces that would dismantle its structure, ensures stability and the possibility of cooperation. However, much more than Freud, Frye was tempermentally favourably disposed towards creativity, however disruptive it might be—in fact he was so tempermentally disposed towards artists that he often slides into depicting as society a vast, murderous machine that ruthlessly devours talent and imagination. Professor Hutcheon and her ilk, on the contrary, do not viscerally recoil from the social order in the same way. They are much more accommodating to the social system, for their great wish is to call artists back to their social responsibilities (and they condemn artists who get up to indulgent activities that do not make questions of race and gender the heart of the writing.) They side with collectivist social concern against the disruptive spirit of the creator, while Frye, to the contrary, tempermentally favoured the disruptive spirit of the individual artist. How moving it was to see Mr. Frye, who looked for all the world like a cross between an accountant and small-town, United Church minister, speaking out on behalf of the wild intelligences of Blake and Smart and, as importantly, of their present-day successors, celebrating their disruptive tendencies and defending creative talent generally against the social forces that would contain and discipline it. I couldn't possibility count the number of times in recent years I have felt required to defend those who possess such savage intelligences and to remind those who would punish the possessors of such spirits that if you want your artists to behave like business persons or sombre members of academic institutions, they will make art that pleases business people, university administrators and the operators of our parallel galleries. Unfortunately most of those to whom I

tell this think that would be altogether a good thing. Such are the times; but I must say I find it just so sad that there are so few thinkers of Frye's type left.

The mystery of the creative word, that intimate of the poet's savage intelligence, has long fascinated creative writers and it was a central topic of Frye's theory of mythopoesis. This mystery is often understood as a going down to a nether realm or associated with the vegetable world (where creativity is unconscious)—hence the myth of Demeter and Persephone and the modern use that Pound made of that myth; hence, too, the Romantic identification of the imagination and the force that pervades the green world. When Frye presented the remark that a poet "may be much more at ease with the vegetable world than the human world," he meant much more by it than the humorous accusation that artists tend to have "anti-social" characters that Professor Hutcheon wants to make it into (but insensitivity to the vegetable mysteries of creativity is so often the reason why writers such as Professor Hutcheon conceive of literature as having principally socio-political purposes.)

Words, Frye constantly pointed out, have many powers, and it is the physical power of the primal word that most concerned Frye. Frye's interest in the physical powers of words embodied in his commentary on what he called language's hieroglyphic phase, contains many of the same insights as Julia Kristeva's concept of semiotike, but without such high investment in the concept of gender. Such beliefs become clear by contrasting them with the deconstructionists' ideas about language. When Derrida and the deconstructionist critics despair over the lack of a Transcendental Signified, they are implicitly petitioning to representational theory of meaning as the gauge of language's repletion; the discovery of the lack of the Transcendental Signified is the revelation of the emptiness of the order of words.

If the various Russo-Slavic schools of Formalism of the 1920s and the New Critics of 1940s and 1950s showed that poetic language is distinct from ordinary language insofar as it is polysemous and lacks extrinsic reference, Derrida and the deconstructionists have turned that effort upside down: instead of showing that poetic language can be distinguished from ordinary language by reason of possessing those features, they show that ordinary language can be assimilated to poetic language because it, too, possess those properties. In attempting to show that poetic language was not constrained by any imperative to mirror either the world outside the poem or any discursive order, the New Critics developed a demonstration of Kantian inspiration that there is scope for freedom in language, and that this scope is coextensive with the domain of self-reference, the deconstructionists show that language generally (including both ordinary language and poetic language) has no purchase beyond what belongs to the order of words itself, and so all language's reference is restricted to the domain of language itself. For deconstructionists, all linguistic reference is really self-reference; hence all language is free play, unconstrained by demands of extrinsic reference. Thus, the deconstructionists argue that attributes which the New Critics believed characterize poetry or literary language alone are features of all language constructs. Truth in philosophy is just as equivocal as in literature; the looseness of the denotative relation that characterizes the poetic word is an inevitable lexemic feature; metaphoricity is an attribute of all linguistic constructs, not just of poems; and plurisemicity is an unavoidable condition of all uses of language since words are, without exception, arbitrary and, therefore, somewhat muzzy. All writing, they argue, displays attributes of Writing.

The ensuing poeticization of the ordinary word (and the ordinary world) displays the same utopianism that has characterized many of the greatest art movements, and several of the most regrettable social movements, of the twentieth century. Accordingly, that deconstructionism should have had deleterious influences (along with much that is good) was not entirely unexpected. It was to be expected, for example, that, nourished on the thin soup of sociology, some would use these teachings as foundational doctrines in a purportedly foundationless

affirmation of an abyssal relativism, for on this matter the example of Nietzsche was foretelling. What was not expected was that, having extended the teachings of the various Russo-Slavic schools of Formalism and the doctrines of the New Critics into the realm of ordinary language, the deconstructionists would suddenly do an about-face and would treat poetic language as though it were as straightforwardly discursive as ordinary language—that they would begin to fix the words of poets and other imaginative writers to a social position which can be evaluated according to ethical norms, i.e., norms that obtain in an extra-poetic realm. Having argued that ordinary language possess characteristics that the Formalists and New Critics had argued uniquely characterize poetic language, the deconstructionists went on to assess literary works on the basis of the social claims that poets make; so Leonard Cohen, to choose just one example, was reviled for beliefs about women that he was, on the evidence of his poetry, alleged to hold—or, rather, he was so reviled until *The Future* became a pop-music hit, when many came to the realization (fuelled by fantasies of a Roderwickian ilk of becoming rock and roll heroes themselves) that he had been talking about something else all along.

If Frye avoided collapsing poetic language into ordinary language (as the deconstructionists end up having done), it is because he could not agree with any programme that devalued the power either of the poetic word by setting it askew from the Word and bringing it into alignment with ordinary language. While deconstructionists attempted to show the dispersive effects of language—and above all, that of metaphor which, despite all efforts to expel it, inevitably creeps into all discursive texts, including philosophical works, and by virtue of its polysemy introduces disruptive effects into the text—Frye refuted these claims by patient, exhaustive demonstration that myths provide literary works with a source of coherence. A vast network of metaphoric identifications in a poem makes the poem (and the imaginative world it contains) into a unity in which everything is identical with everything else.

However, Frye's extreme respect for the creative power of language did not make Frye oblivious of the possibility that the (re)creative effects of the poetic word might dwindle. On the contrary, Frye often pointed out what happens when the epistemic relation that founds mythological consciousness is expelled from the centre of the prevailing paradigm of knowledge—our thinking thins out. Like George Grant, Frye saw in the modern era a diminuation of the primal modes of awareness that are the province of poetry and, again like Grant, Frye maintains that the rise of modern science separated the myth that envelops literature from the epistemic stance that founds the dominant paradigm of knowledge. Frye makes this abundantly clear in the most Grantian of all his works, *The Modern Century*, a work he first presented at Grant's own university, McMaster. In its treatment of the dysfunctions of modernity's metanarrative, its critical awareness of the spiritual devastation that has occurred with modernity's advance, and its depiction of how technology (in this case, especially the technologies of communication) are flattening experience into one dimension even as it sunders communities by engendering ever greater degrees of solipsism, and, finally, its steadfast Christian refusal to abandon hope even while presenting a thoroughly worked out historigraphy of spiritual impoverishment, this work strongly resembles Grant's *Technology and Empire* and *Technology and Justice*.

In spite of all that, Frye refused to believe that these occurrences were what deconstructions have taken them to be: the inevitable effects of language and of the constraints under which language operates.What more than anything distinguishes Frye's views about language from those of the deconstructionists who commit their efforts to revealing how deceitful and treacherous language is that Frye, unlike Derrida, believes that the order of words ultimately aligns itself with the order of *Logos*, that all the words that make up, collectively, the text of art are aligned with the word of God.

Frye's response to literary works was not to discover the haunting absence of meaning, for he did not rely on any representational theory of meaning. Frye's extraordinary sensitivity to

poetry as sound, revealed in the very fine commentary on rhythm that is a motif of *The Anatomy of Criticism* and the topic of his collection of articles from the English Institute conference of 1956, makes evident just how physical his concept of poetic meaning was. The physical effectivity of poetic language assures that the poetic word is never empty and never uncreating. Leonard Cohen expresses a similarly religious conception of the word when he writes "You say I took the Name in vain;/ I don't even know the name/ But if I did, well, really, what's it to you? There's a blaze of light in every word./ It doesn't matter which you heard,/ The holy or the broken Halleluja." (*Stranger Music*, p. 347)

Frye's intuitive grasp of this dimension of language was also the capacity that permitted him such expansive literary sympathies as his work conveys—he could read the difficult poems of the later Blake, which most of us can comprehend only with the aid of a pony, and grasp the dynamics of their sense as simply as though he were reading any other poetical work, so open was he to the creative word. Frye understood that the power of the poetic word is as much a matter of the body as of the mind, for this is why the analogy of poetry to dance occurs in his writings and this is why he was so attuned to sound as sense in poetry.

When Frye proposed that one best discovers the order of words by serving an apprenticeship that involves focusing one's attention on the productions of a single mind, Frye offers an analogue of his position that all Western literature is held together by a pattern of recurring archetypes that endows all literature an all-comprehending dimension. It is as though all Western literature issued from a desire of a single, grand body and the intelligence of a single (but multi-modal), expansive intelligence. According to the mono-myth whose contours Frye traced out for us in a thousand variations, nature confronts this intelligence as something alien, something that stands over against it, something indifferent, if not actually hostile to its nature; but, through the production of literature this intelligence builds a home for itself within the formerly alien world of nature. Nature is thus transformed from a given (alien) to a nature that has been shaped by human concerns. Frye committed himself to the view of the purpose of literature this myth embodied. Citing Vico's "*verum factum est,*" Frye avers that because literary works are products of human activity and arise from human desires, we have an more intimate knowledge them than we do of natural objects; they do not present them as objects that stand over against us but as objects that mirror our natures back to us. This Romantic principle, Frye never tired of pointing out, became Marx' inheritance and represents what is strongest in Marxist philosophy. But it is also a profoundly Hegelian principle—and I am sure that Frye was aware of the fact even as, with such delicious irony, he pointed to Marx' acceptance of the principle. In his underwriting this Romantic principle, as in his maintaining the belief that the total corpus of Western literature reveals the operation of a single but plurimorphic and expansive consciousness, and as in his expounding the conviction the real form of Human Being, which belongs to a timeless, eternal realm, emerges through a temporal process, there is a profoundly Hegelian strain in Frye's thought as there is in the thought of so many great Canadian thinkers. And, while many believe that Hegel's philosophy, a philosophy of reconciliation in which the Universal reconciles with the particular, the Absolute with the contingent, Spirit with matter, represents a grand effort to cast the religious truths that Christianity offers into philosophical concepts, Frye proposes that

> Jesus is the Logos or Word of God, the totality of creative power, the universal visionary in whose mind we perceive the particular. But the phrase 'Word of God' is obviously appropriate also to all works of art which reveal the same perspective, these latter being recreations of the divine vision which is Jesus. The archetypal Word of God, so to speak, sees this world of space and time as a single creature in eternity and infinity, fallen and redeemed. This is the vision of

> God (subjective genitive the vision which God in us has). In this world the Word of God is the aggregate of works of inspired art, the Scripture written by the Holy Spirit which spoke by the prophets. Properly interpreted, all works of art are phases of that archetypal vision. The vision of the Last Judgment, said Blake, 'is seen by the Imaginative Eye of Every one according to the situation he holds'. And the greater the work of art, the more completely it reveals the gigantic myth which is the vision of this world as God sees, the outlines of that vision being creation, fall, redemption, and apocalypse. (*Fearful Symmetry*, p. 108)

These views are unpopular, even reviled, at the moment, but I think there are none that are more true. Certainly, they state the faith to which I, as an artist, strive to bear witness. That is why I consider Northrop Frye among the greatest teacher anyone could have had.

Thanksgiving Day, 1995.