

her trial had aroused soon dissipated, and she fell victim to the shadows of history. Now, a century plus later, this major study provides a richly detailed analysis that is rewarding reading. *Walk Towards the Gallows* is an indispensable source for anyone who wants to learn about a female murderer who was *sui generis* even in the small category of female murderers within her late Victorian world. It should attract a wide readership among the diverse audience that is interested in Canadian crime, women's/gender history, the world of late Victorian Canada, and the West. Let us hope it is not confined to academic libraries.

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Jan Gorak, ed. *Northrop Frye on Modern Culture* ("The Collected Works of Northrop Frye" volume 11). University of Toronto Press, 2003. 409 pp. + xlix.

The reception of Northrop Frye's writings, by both his supporters and critics, is curious. In the present context, Frye is perceived by some as one of the last great ivory tower thinkers—living inside his own mind, having something to say only about the theoretical world of literature and art, and nothing to say about the daily events that make up our historical context. Readers of this latest volume of the *Collected Works of Northrop Frye* will surely find such claims unjustified. Here is a Frye engaged with questions involving technology, democracy, war, and even Charlie Chaplin and Disney. There is, however, a difference between Frye's writings on aspects of modern life and what we find all-too-often in what is now called "cultural criticism." In Frye there is a vision of the possibilities of deliverance that mythology affords to awakened citizens. Through the products of its creations (art and literature, as well as war and television), the educated mind finds a narrative of loss and possible recovery, while others become slaves to their ideologies.

This volume, edited by Jan Gorak, includes almost all of Frye's writings on twentieth-century art, politics, and culture, and is divided into three parts. The first section contains the entirety of Frye's seminal statement on the modern situation, published originally in 1967 as *The Modern Century*. Delivered as the Whidden Lectures at McMaster University, the first of its three essays involves a somewhat uncharacteristically pessimistic portrayal

of the modern individual as an alienated and isolate self, separated from social contexts (family, religion, etc.) and impotent to create a genuine community. In the second essay, Frye shows the role of art in overcoming such alienating tendencies. The products of human initiative offer models for creatively participating in culture, and thus afford a glimpse of a life more abundant. The final essay shows the centrality of the educational process, as culminating (though not ending) in the University. Intellectuals in modern culture serve to keep alive imaginative possibilities for human life when various forces within society itself constantly seek allegiance to their ideological presuppositions. Frye is, however, not only offering a theoretical discussion here. In the background of these lectures is the Centennial celebration of Canada's Confederation—a time when Canada faced the burgeoning of a Superpower that threatened many aspects of its identity. Frye's *Whidden* lectures, and indeed all of his writings collected in this volume, address a specific cultural issue, and reveal a Frye who is critically engaged with the cultural trends of his day.

The second section (*The Arts*), and the third (*Politics, History and Society*) contain predominantly short pieces that illuminate the breadth of Frye's vision, but not necessarily his depth. The longer pieces in this volume (*Academy Without Walls*, *The Renaissance of Books*, *Trends in Modern Culture*, and *Spengler Revisited*, for example) are the exceptions, and clearly show Frye's mastery in distilling critical issues and exploring their ramifications for imaginative freedom.

At the conclusion of his informative and insightful introduction to this volume, Jan Gorak identifies what he believes to be Frye's fourfold contribution to cultural criticism: first, he realized that cultural theory was mired in elitism; second, he showed that our own social action is shaped by social mythology; third, he provided an optimistic account of how we may imaginatively live *within* our society; and fourth, he translated (the Kantian) autonomous self into the necessary conditions for modern citizenship. This volume succeeds on all counts. It shows that Frye always had, as he notes himself, one eye on the very structure of literature and the other on the social environment out of which literature operates. Taken as a whole, this collection illustrates Frye's conviction that myth and narrative serve to liberate us from a life limited by time and also by myopic cultural ideologies. As such, this volume is a much-needed corrective in establishing the true legacy and worth of Frye's thought on twentieth century culture.

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