

Chronology

The following chronology is from *Northrop Frye: A Visionary Life*, by Joseph Adamson (ECW Press, 1993).

- 1912** Born on 14 July, in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Son of Herman Edward Frye and Catherine Maud Howard, the youngest of three children (his sister Vera, the middle child, is 12 years old at the time). Both parents are devoutly Methodist.
- 1917** His brother, Howard, is killed in action in the First World War.
- 1919** With the failure of his father's business, the family moves to Moncton, New Brunswick, where Herman Frye becomes a hardware salesman for the Maritimes.
- 1928** Graduates from Aberdeen High School, and in the fall takes a three-month secretarial training course at Success Business College.
- 1929** In September, enters Victoria College, University of Toronto. In October, the stock market crashes.
- 1930** In the summer, working at the Central Reference Library, discovers Denis Saurat's *Blake and Modern Thought* and starts reading Blake. In the fall of his second year at Vic, meets Helen Kemp. Takes Pelham Edgar's Shakespeare course. Discovers Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* in the Hart House Library.
- 1933** Graduates with an honours degree in Philosophy and English. In the fall, enters Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, as a theological student to prepare for ministry in the United Church of Canada.
- 1934** In addition to his studies at Emmanuel, presents a seminar on Blake's *Milton* in Herbert Davis's graduate class, with Pelham Edgar in attendance. Spends five months (May to September) as a student minister on a mission field in rural Saskatchewan. The experience convinces Frye that he is not suited for the ministry.
- 1934-35** Helen Kemp spends a year at the Courtauld Institute in London. In the fall of 1934, Frye reads Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Emile Male's *The Gothic Image*.
- 1935-36** Spends his first full year of teaching at the University of Toronto. In the spring, ordained as a minister in the United Church of Canada. First essays published in the *Canadian Forum*.
- 1936-37** Travels to England to study for a degree in English literature at Merton College, Oxford University. His tutor is Edmund Blunden. Attends lectures by C.S. Lewis.
- 1937** Spends part of the summer touring Italy with friends

Chronology

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- from Oxford. Returns to Toronto, and marries Helen Kemp on 24 August.
- 1937-38** Takes up a one-year appointment as "special lecturer" at Victoria College.
- 1938** Returns to Oxford to complete his degree. Makes a month-long tour of Paris and environs with friends over the Christmas holiday.
- 1939** On 20 June, appointed a member of the permanent staff at Victoria College. In the summer, tours Italy with Helen and friends. Returns to England and leaves for Canada on 12 August, less than three weeks before the outbreak of war.
- 1942** Promoted to assistant professor. Publishes "Music in Poetry" and "Anatomy in Prose Fiction," his first major articles, in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* and the *Manitoba Arts Review*.
- 1946** Promoted to associate professor.
- 1947** Publishes *Fearful Symmetry*, a study of William Blake. Promoted to full professor.
- 1948** Becomes managing editor of the *Canadian Forum*, a position he will hold until 1952. In September, presents "The Argument of Comedy" at the English Institute.
- 1950** Granted a Guggenheim fellowship to write a study of Spenser.
- 1951** Publishes "The Archetypes of Literature," the so-called mini-anatomy, in *Kenyon Review*. "Letters in Canada: 1950, Poetry," appears, the first of 10 annual surveys of Canadian poetry that Frye will write over the next decade for the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.
- 1952** Becomes chair of the Department of English at Victoria College.
- 1953** Serves as chair of the English Institute.
- 1954** Appointed Class of 1932 Visiting Lecturer at Princeton University. *Anatomy of Criticism* is an expansion of the four public lectures delivered there in March.
- 1957** Publishes *Anatomy of Criticism*, a landmark study of structural poetics. Appointed visiting lecturer at Harvard University.
- 1959** Becomes principal of Victoria College, serving until 1967.
- 1962** Presents "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism" at a conference on Romanticism he chairs at the English Institute; the other participants are M.H. Abrams, Lionel Trilling, and René Wellek. The proceedings are edited by Frye and published as *Romanticism Reconsidered* (1963).
- 1963** Publishes *The Well-Tempered Critic; The Educated Imagination*, a series of talks aired by the CBC; *Fables of Identity*, a collection of essays; and *T.S. Eliot*, which provokes letters of outrage and protest

Chronology

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- from the publisher, Faber and Faber, and from Eliot himself.
- 1965** In September, the English Institute holds a special session devoted to Frye, with a panel composed of Angus Fletcher, Murray Krieger, Geoffrey Hartman, and W.K. Wimsatt. Frye publishes *A Natural Perspective*, a study of Shakespeare's comedies, and *The Return of Eden*, a study of Milton.
- 1967** Appointed University Professor at the University of Toronto (the first person to receive such an appointment). Establishes an office at Massey College. Jane (Welch) Widdicombe, who becomes his secretary, will remain his invaluable assistant until his death. Publishes *Fools of Time*, a study of Shakespeare's tragedies, and *The Modern Century*.
- 1968** Publishes *A Study of English Romanticism*. Appointed member of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, serving until 1977.
- 1969** Begins to work on a successor to *Anatomy*, a study of the myth of concern that grows into the two books on the Bible.
- 1970** Publishes *The Stubborn Structure*, a collection of essays.
- 1971** Publishes *The Bush Garden*, a collection of reviews and essays on Canadian literature, and *The Critical Path*, an extended essay on the myth of concern.
- 1972** Made a Companion of the Order of Canada.
- 1975** Appointed Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, Harvard University.
- 1976** Elected president of the Modern Language Association. Publishes *The Secular Scripture*, a study of romance, and *Spiritus Mundi*, a collection of essays on literature, myth, and society.
- 1978** Named chancellor of Victoria University.
- 1979** Gives an extensive lecture tour of Italy, speaking in Milan, Florence, Padua, Vicenza, Venice, Urbino, and Rome.
- 1980** Publishes *Creation and Recreation*.
- 1982** Publishes *The Great Code*, his first study of the Bible.
- 1983** Publishes *The Myth of Deliverance*, a study of Shakespeare's "problem" comedies. *Centre and Labyrinth*, a Festschrift in Frye's honour, is published by friends and colleagues at Victoria College.
- 1986** Death of Helen Frye in Australia during Frye's tour of Australian universities.
- 1987** Wins the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction for *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, a collection of essays based on his undergraduate lectures on Shakespeare's plays. In May, attends an international conference on his work in Rome.
- 1988** Marries Elizabeth Brown on 27 July.
- 1990** Publishes *Words with Power*, his second study of the

Chronology

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- 1991** Bible.
Dies, 23 January. A family funeral is held in the Victoria College Chapel on 26 January; a memorial service for the Victoria University community is held in the same location on 28 January. The following day, a memorial service for the larger community is held in Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto, with the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in attendance, and many testimonial speakers, including Bob Rae (Premier of Ontario), Margaret Atwood, Pauline McGibbon, and Pierre Juneau. Blake's "Jerusalem" is sung by the congregation at the end of the service. *The Double Vision* appears posthumously, only months after his death.

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