
Northrop Frye Newsletter

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Some Reflections on Life and Habit by Northrop Frye

[The following address was presented as the second lecture in the F.E.L. Priestley Lecture Series at University of Lethbridge on 17 February 1988 and was subsequently published as a monograph by the University of Lethbridge. Reprinted by permission.]

It is a great privilege to be giving a lecture in honor of my old friend and colleague Professor Priestley. That should go without saying, which is a phrase we use when we mean that it is very important to say it. When the invitation came to me, I was reading Samuel Butler, the nineteenth-century satirist, and *Life and Habit* is the title of the book of his I happened to be reading. But the fact that it got into the title of this lecture was not pure accident. Another book of Samuel Butler's, the Utopian satire *Erewhon*, was featured in a course in nineteenth-century prose, an excellent course while it lasted. For many years the course was taught by Professor Priestley at University College and by me at Victoria College. My successor in teaching it at Victoria was Professor John Robson, the first Priestley lecturer. I think it was also taught at St. Michael's College by the late Marshall McLuhan: in any case there are several echoes from Butler in McLuhan's books. But while a lecture devoted entirely to Samuel Butler might be appropriate for the scholar I want to honor, it might be less so for a public occasion. I have therefore attempted a compromise, starting with Butler and working out to more contemporary concerns.

I was reading *Life and Habit* for two reasons. One, its first hundred pages or so are a brilliant and witty piece of writing, and if the entire book were on that level it would be one of my favorite books. Two, those hundred pages are essentially a theory of education, which naturally concerns me as a teacher. Butler's theory was not new, but the formulation and context for it were new in his day. The context was Butler's intense interest in Darwinian evolution: he was a contemporary of Darwin, and realized that the issue raised in the *Origin of Species* in 1859 was the central scientific issue of his time. Darwin's account of the evolutionary process, in which variations are thrown out by a species at random until one proves to have better survival value for its environment and becomes the channel for a new development, fascinated Butler but dissatisfied him too. He felt that the degree of precision and

skill shown by even the simplest organisms, along with their immense variety, pointed to a directing will within them. The title of another book of his, *Luck or Cunning?*, indicates his attitude. Here he was reverting to an earlier view, proposed by the botanist Lamarck in France and by Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, in England.

Biologists oppose this view on the ground that it appears to depend on the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and that there is no evidence, or not enough evidence, for this. As Butler went on, he became increasingly hostile to Darwin, and more and more insistent on introducing elements of will, design, and purpose into evolution. The consensus of biologists was that the Darwinian explanation described the process, the *how* of evolution, and that that was the whole business of biological science. The other elements, they said, belonged to speculative philosophy or theology, and could not be experimentally studied.

So Butler fell out of fashion, and became known as an amateur who blundered into a scientific controversy without really knowing what he was talking about. His reputation was further affected by that fact that his chief disciple was Bernard Shaw, whose doctrine of "creative evolution" in my opinion rather vulgarizes Butler's views. This is particularly true of his interminably gabby play, or series of plays, called *Back to Methuselah*, in which the human race evolves from Adam and Eve to a whirlpool of pure thought in something like twenty hours. More recently, there was the attempt of the pseudo-scientific politician Lysenko, in Stalin's Russia, to set up Russian biology on a Lamarckian basis, which proved an abysmal failure.

Well, as it happens, I am rather interested in people who are out of fashion, because they often indicate the limitations of the age that considers them so. If I knew more biology, I should not be surprised if many of Butler's speculations, such as his identifying heredity with memory, were eventually to come back on center stage. In short, I doubt that the luck-or-cunning issue is entirely closed. But it is clear that many aspects of that controversy have been put out of date by new discoveries about the DNA molecule and the transmission of genetic codes, and many of the things that Butler says should now be read as remarkably prophetic insights into these developments. He speaks, for example, of the embryo's "ability to compress tedious and complicated histories into a very narrow compass remembering no single performance in particular."

Butler's word "habit" recalls the medieval Latin *habitus*, an educational term meaning the accomplishment of a skill. In the Middle Ages a person who could read Latin was said to have the *habitus* of Latin. *Habitus* in its turn was the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *hexis*, which in Aristotle means something like stabilization, the way in which a thing continues to preserve the quality that makes it what it is. In Butler "habit" refers to the learning process in which a skill moves from the conscious into the unconscious. When we begin to learn a language, we consciously pay attention to every new word, to the grammatical rules of syntax and inflection, to the nuances of pronunciation and accent. When we can speak a language fluently, the attention to detail disappears from consciousness, but it is obviously still there. A first-rate pianist may play thousands of notes in a few minutes, attending to every rest, dynamic shading, and predominance of one voice over another. He does not consciously attend to each of these details, but there must have been a time when he did.

The principle involved is that complete learning is unconscious learning. When consciousness is brought into play, it means doubt, hesitation, and imperfect knowledge. It also sets up interference patterns against the smoothness and perfection of unconscious learning, once the latter has been attained. Anything like conscious choice or free will disappears with the advance of learning, and if we are playing the piano and still exercising free will about whether we shall play the right or the wrong notes, we are not playing very well. So Butler's "unconscious" is a form of distilled intelligence, or

intelligence moving so fast that we can no longer perceive the details. The pianist cannot consciously remember all the notes he played, but there is a data bank inside him which is vastly more efficient than his conscious memory.

In Butler's view the unconscious memory is part of our biological inheritance, but because we are conscious there can still be conflicts within it, a whole Parliament of ancestral voices where some dominate and others are repressed. Long before Freud, Butler realizes that the unconscious could speak, and that when it spoke it defined the speaker much more clearly than his conscious speech did. He quotes a famous evangelical preacher named Spurgeon as praying publicly that God would change England's rulers "as soon as possible," and pointed out that those last four words showed that while Spurgeon's consciousness may have been evangelical, his unconscious was clearly aesthetic.

But such anomalies are a feature of conscious uncertainties. The learning skill is perfect when we have reached the stabilization, the *habitus* or *hexis*, where no such conflicts remain. On this principle the best educated would be those who do not even know that they are educated. To Butler, as a nineteenth-century middle-class Englishman, the principle that unconscious knowledge is perfected knowledge meant that the best educated people in England in his day were the aristocracy. They had been accustomed to rank and privilege from birth, not counting centuries of heredity before that, and could live a privileged life with a spontaneity and ease that was the despairing envy of any jumped-up business man or politician who tried to imitate them by voluntary effort. If the noble lord happened to be as stupid as the pheasants he shot, that showed that he was even better educated: he had nothing of the uncertainty and hesitation that go with the investigating of new things.

It is clear that in this argument there are two levels of education involved. One is the education we acquire through our evolutionary heredity: we display most of this within a few hours of birth, but its afterglow remains all through our lives in our social and personal relations. The other is the specifically human education we develop from the fact that we are conscious beings. A little girl with a skipping rope would be a model of the first stage of education; a wise man telling us to take no thought for the morrow and to consider the lilies as an example of living would represent the fulfillment of the second stage.

One of Butler's most celebrated remarks is that a hen is simply an egg's way of making another egg. Why should this statement seem so paradoxical to us, when the reverse statement, that an egg is what a hen makes, seems so self-evident? Butler explains that the development of an egg into a hen is a matter of growth through repetition of previous growths. Every detail of this development can be, and has been, studied by embryologists. But when a hen makes an egg she cackles, and we are very impressed by noise, which we always associate with some kind of meaning. Also, we see an egg where there was no egg before, and that gratifies our impatience to get something tangible without having to wait too long for it. So when the Bible begins by saying that everything started with a revolutionary act of God in suddenly making the world out of nothing, we feel that that is the proper and inevitable way to begin a story of nature. In Genesis the cackle and egg are perhaps below the dignity of Holy Writ, although there are eggs in Hindu and Greek creation myths. But even in Genesis there is a spoken utterance and what seems like a brooding bird. However, God's ways are not our ways, and human creation is much more a matter of eggs trying to be hens in the hope of producing future eggs.

The real paradox in Butler comes from the fact that words are instruments of the conscious mind: they mean exploration, discovery, experiment, and consequently imperfect knowledge. The unconscious knowledge he is talking about is wordless. We do not feel complete confidence in the skill of a craftsman until he can no longer say how he does what he does. When we turn from human beings to plants and animals, this paradox increases enormously. A snail builds its shell and a warbler

its nest with an unerring precision, exactly as though they knew what they were doing. Why, then, do we deny the term “know” to them? A good deal of Butler’s wit comes from his applying terms of knowledge and consciousness to organisms that simply behave with the appearance of knowledge and consciousness. He says, for example, that the lichen could not grow on the rock unless it thought it could, and could not think it could unless it could, yet it does very well for itself in spite of arguing in a circle.

An organism struggles to achieve some kind of equilibrium with its environment, and so develops some patented skills to enable it to keep on absorbing nutriment and reproducing its kind. In a human being this is largely accomplished within a few days after birth. Butler says that a baby a day old sucks, which involves a profound practical knowledge of the laws of pneumatics and hydrostatics; it digests; it oxygenizes its blood millions of years before oxygen was discovered; it sees and it hears—all most difficult and complicated operations, involving a similar knowledge of optics and acoustics. Before that, it was an embryo constructing eyes and limbs and performing other fantastically complex feats of engineering.

If we say “nature” does this, we are using a superfluous metaphor: there is no such thing as nature, no mother goddess who does things for us. The metaphor means that behind what the embryo does is a long evolutionary process through which it learned how it does it. Why, says Butler, should we say of a man that he has never amounted to anything? He got himself born, and that is about ninety-seven percent of everything he can ever hope to do. Society confirms this view of unconscious knowledge: we admire healthy, handsome, and fortunate people; athletes get far more news coverage than specialists in semiotics; people with conventional views, or people able to get along with conventions, are the sensible, the nice people, the people it is comfortable to be with. We also cherish an intense if sometimes grudging admiration for billionaires and dictators, because we spring from an environment in which the predators are the aristocracy.

One of Butler’s inferences, that there must have been a time when there was something like intelligence and a learning process in the organism, takes him into biological speculations where it is hard to follow him and where at present we do not need to follow him. It is the analogy with human education that I am concerned with here.

II

We sometimes say of a student when he has got whatever degree he is pursuing that he has “completed his education.” But of course we know that this is only a way of talking, and a rather loose way at that: no human being can ever finish an education as long as he has any sort of brain to process his experience with. It is only such organisms as the lichen on the rocks and the medusa jellyfish who have finished their education, and even they might be caught short by a change in the environment. Humanity, alone of all organisms, has elected to transform its environment instead of simply adapting to it, and so only human beings have a lifelong commitment to experiment, trial and error, uncertainty, and all the other burdens of continuing knowledge.

Does this mean that we are still evolving, and if so, toward what? In my view this question is not simply unanswerable but can be profoundly misleading. In the first place, the fact that we are adapting the environment to ourselves instead of ourselves to the environment has totally changed the rules of the game, so perhaps the word evolution, in its traditional sense, no longer means anything as far as our own future is concerned. This does not prevent us from using a lot of conceptions of change and development that we call evolution, even though the word is only a metaphor for most of

them, and very probably for all of them. In Butler's day the German philosopher Nietzsche preached the gospel of the evolving of man into a "superman," who sounds like a remarkably unpleasant human being, however admirable as a god. Then there was the doctrine of progress, a doctrine much older than Darwin.

Some people who wanted to believe in progress thought that evolution had furnished scientific proof of it. But of course evolution is a principle in biology, and cannot be directly applied to human history except as an analogy. Whether we believe in progress depends entirely on what factors we select as evidence for it. Thus the processes known in some areas as pollution and in others as development, such as destroying a community by building a highway through the middle of it, are often rationalized by some such phrase as "you can't stop progress." "Progress" here is clearly an idol of some sort, and in totalitarian states, where thousands of people can be shot or starved to get a more efficient system of agriculture or industry in the future, we get some notion of how horrible such idolatry can be. Whatever ideals we may frame, in education or anywhere else, will take time to reach, and so will relate to the future, but a real future has to be built on what is available at present. To sacrifice the present, which exists, to a future which does not exist, and certainly will never exist in any presently recognizable form, is as perverse a notion as any in history.

In my student days, during the depression, it was widely believed that capitalism would evolve into socialism, with or without a revolution, socialism being assumed to be both more efficient and morally superior. A secondary assumption was that evolution never made a mistake, but always tended toward improvement. On the other side was the movement sometimes called social Darwinism, which was really a rationalizing of imperialism, taking on the white man's burden in Africa and south Asia. It asserted that there were developed and primitive societies, and that the developed ones were following the evolutionary laws of a competitive nature in enslaving or exterminating the primitive ones. "Developed" in this context meant that their military technology was deadlier. In our day there has been an invasion of teachers of yoga, Zen, kundalini, and other techniques of meditation, which often carry ideologies of evolution along with them, promising developments of consciousness that will usher in a new phase of human existence. Nobody can object to the teaching of these techniques, but the evolutionary metaphors seem, once again, to be mere analogies.

Our present mood is regard to education, however, is past-centered rather than future-centered, and is more inclined to ask: "Are we doing as well as we used to do?" This is mainly a reaction to elementary and high school educators who do not understand why we should transform our environment by reading Shakespeare when we can so easily adapt to it by reading Stephen King. I was recently looking through a book that has been on the best-seller list for a long time, and which propounds the thesis that students have been cheated out of their education, socially and morally as well as intellectually. I thought, in reading it: somebody writes this book every ten years; I have lived through four or five cycles of similar protests, and have in fact contributed to some of them. [On this last point I think I am speaking for Professor Priestley also.] Such books are often, like this book, warmly received and are accompanied by a feeling that something should be done. Nothing ever is done, so there must be something that the protest has failed to reach.

Two points occur to me in this connection. One is that there is seldom any recommendation for action in this field except to prod the educational bureaucracy. And a bureaucracy, as Mr. Gorbachev is undoubtedly discovering, cannot be improved by prodding: it can only be left alone and when possible by-passed. The other is that what the public picks up from such books is what literary critics call a pastoral myth. There was a simpler time, the myth runs, when things were a lot better, so let's get back to them. But just as the future does not yet exist, so the past has ceased to exist, and an

idealized past never did exist. I distrust all “back to the basics” slogans because I distrust all movements that begin with “back to.” It is more profitable, perhaps, to inquire into the reasons for the dissatisfaction with what our education has achieved, and this takes us “back to” Butler. Here the phrase “back to” is in its right context, as it refers to something in the past that can still be brought into the present.

The author of the book I refer to was clearly still smoldering from the anti-intellectual movement among students twenty years ago in the late sixties. I remember this period very well: it was a time when, although practically all students merely wanted to keep on doing what they should have been doing, there was a small group caught up in an adversarial trend that I think was almost entirely created by the news media. I notice that the news media are sniffing around this period again, perhaps in some hope of reviving it in a new generation. The minority I speak of were students who felt they were revolting against middle-class values, and didn’t realize how clearly they were expressing them. Much of their alleged activism consisted in dodging everything academic that looked difficult and repetitious. There were complaints about learning by rote, “regurgitating” lecture notes, plodding through memorization, and the like. They wanted every lecture to be an exciting existential event: they organized “teach-ins” with imported speakers who were usually left-wing political leaders giving one of their standard harangues, and they greatly resented the suggestion that these activities were entertainment and not education. Student representation, for them, did not mean sitting on committees but organizing sit-ins and demonstrations and disrupting meetings. Some of them were very agile in working out rationalizations for all this, and I am far from denying the good faith of the many idealistic students who believed passionately in what they were doing, and had not idea how or by whom they were being manipulated. But the movement was essentially one more outbreak of American anti-intellectualism, and it was discouraging to find it in the very place where it ought least to be.

Butler’s theory of education follows the normal pattern in being based on the traditional emphasis on habit and practice. If we take piano-playing as a typical educational activity, it requires endless patient repetition until conscious learning is finally digested into unconscious skill. The unconscious cannot be hurried or forced or consciously invaded; some learn more easily and quickly than others, but everyone learns in essentially the same way. Obviously, a good deal of this sounds like the emphasis on discipline and routine which in the past has given so penal a quality to education, reinforced as it so often was by savage beatings and the like. If the “unrest” of the sixties had been a reaction against this, it would have been quite normal; but, while there had to be a good deal of pretense that such elements still existed, they had in fact disappeared at least fifty years earlier.

Of course a dull or plodding teacher can envisage only a dull educational process, and can make education a dreary enough operation. I have had teachers myself who took a squalid pleasure in making drill-sergeant noises about the moral benefits of plugging and slugging as ends in themselves. That was in the twenties of this century, and of course such teachers didn’t realize that they were speaking for the capitalist work ethic and setting up the automatism of the Ford assembly plant as the model for it. Neither did I: I felt only that they were talking about their own mental processes and not about mine, and it was some time before I realized that the emphasis on routine was only the flip side of something very different.

Notice that we speak of “playing” the piano, just as we speak about playing tennis or chess, and just as we call dramas, even the most terrible tragedies, “plays.” In ordinary speech we distinguish work and play, work being energy expended for a further end in view, play being energy expended for its own sake. Doing any kind of playing well, whether on the stage or at a piano or chessboard, takes

an immense amount of work, but when the work has its end in play we can see the point in it much more clearly. Nothing gives greater pleasure than spontaneous activity, but the spontaneous comes at the end of a long discipline of practice. It never comes early except when it is something we have inherited as part of our previous evolutionary development—something our ancestors have practiced before us.

Education, then, is a movement toward the spontaneous, not a movement away from it. We speak of liberal education, which means essentially that something in us is getting liberated or set free. When we practice the piano, we are setting ourselves free to play the piano. The half-educated may follow rules or dodge around rules; it is only the thoroughly educated who can take liberties with rules. If we want to write, it is nothing very wonderful if we can produce acceptable or even remarkable poetry in early years: poetry at that age ought to be a natural secretion, like a pearl in an oyster. It is the writers who keep on writing who matter in the history of literature; and what their incessant practice aims at is a steadily purer and more direct simplicity. The simple, which is the opposite of the commonplace, is normally one of the last secrets of art to be mastered.

We often feel, ploughing through the gobbledygook and bumble of political speeches and the like: “why can’t they say what they mean.” Often, of course, they have excellent reasons for concealing what they mean, but the real answer is that lucidity is difficult. We may even be impressed by the kind of polysyllabic blather that merely throws words at the ideas instead of expressing them; we may feel that anything so hard to read must have been harder to think out. But eventually we realize that it is very easy to write this way: in fact it is the normal way to write when we are not thinking about what we are doing. It is the same with a kind of scholarly writing that we in the academic world are reluctantly familiar with, and which infallibly indicates a lack of understanding of one’s material.

III

It should be clear from what we have said that two kinds of memory are involved in education, and that their roles are often confused. There is Butler’s unconscious memory, a continuing of the evolutionary process we hooked into at the beginning of our lives, which is fostered by habit and practice, and there is conscious memory, the recall of an event of the past into the present. Conscious memory is certainly essential, as we soon realize if we talk to someone who has lost it. It supplies the continuity without which no learning is possible, hence the strong emphasis on the use of the conscious memory in education. But conscious memory is primarily an adjunct to unconscious memory, a means of getting hold of it and supplying the energy of the conscious will for continuing it. Only when conscious memory is treated as an end in itself does education become a treadmill of repetition.

Certainly there have been societies that approached education in this way, handing on traditions from the past without change, and demanding from the student only the acceptance of them through rote learning and repetition, no criticism or recreation of them being tolerated. There can be nothing here of the progressive developing of a skill or the setting free of undeveloped abilities, only of stagnation. The contrast between this and real education is not unlike the contrast between superstition and faith. The root meaning of superstition is vestigial survival. When we keep on doing something without understanding why we are doing it, but have only a vague feeling that something awful will happen if we stop doing it, we are in a state of superstition. Superstition of this kind is a frozen ideology, a pathological social condition that obstructs the developments in the arts and sciences, and so frustrates the central aim of education. Its usual cause is a fear that something in these

developments will conflict with something else thought to be beyond the scope or argument. Evolution itself, as we all know, had to contend with superstitions attached to false readings of the Biblical creation myths.

The wise man who wrote the book in the Bible called Ecclesiastes made two remarks that are very important for the theory of education. One is “there is nothing new under the sun,” the other “to everything there is a season.” He was speaking of two areas of the learning process, knowledge and experience. Knowledge may be new to us or to the entire human race, but new knowledge is not yet knowledge: we do not know anything until we have recognized it, that is, placed it into a context of what we already know, rearranging the familiar until the unfamiliar is fitted into it. It follows that we cannot know the unique as such. When we come to the phrase “to everything there is a season” and its corollary, “there is a time for all things,” we are in the realm of experience, where everything is new and unique. The function of knowledge is to set free the capacity to experience. The repetition and constant practice that underlies the acquiring of a skill, then, is, or certainly ought to be, a process of continuous discovery: the knowledge is not new, but the experience of getting it is. Knowledge that tries to do without experience becomes paranoid; experience that tries to do without knowledge becomes schizophrenic.

The anti-intellectual trend which is so deeply rooted in American life is linked to a tendency in American education to emphasize experience at the expense of knowledge. I say American because the same tendencies have extended to Canada, perhaps as much here in the West as further east. The tendency is often associated with the name of John Dewey, although it seems hardly fair to blame him for all the imbecilities of his disciples. But certainly such slogans as “learning by doing” can do a great deal of damage when they ignore the fact that thinking is also doing, and one as totally dependent on habit and practice as any other skill. There is a semantic difficulty here: we often speak, with Thurber’s Walter Mitty, of daydreaming or woolgathering as thinking, and when we repeat prejudices acquired from our friends or the morning paper we often imagine that we are thinking for ourselves. But thinking, again, is like piano-playing: how well we do it depends primarily on how much of it we have progressively and systematically done already, and at all times the content of thinking is knowledge. The age of hysteria in the sixties I spoke of developed the emphasis on experience over knowledge to great lengths. Drug cults, for example, were pursued as novel modes of experience, although they totally failed to link up with any genuine knowledge or creativity. Today the pendulum has swung the other way, and political leaders at least are required to have as narrow and conventional a background of experience as possible. Unfortunately, a lack of knowledge seems to be as highly prized as ever.

Samuel Butler was a humanist trying to relate, as a humanist should, what he observed in his reading to the quality of human life, actual or potential. His satire *Erewhon* depicts a society that has destroyed all its machinery. They had been persuaded to do this by a writer who told them that machines were not simply becoming more efficient, but were actually evolving as a new species, and evolving far too fast. They were, he said, just on the point of overcoming the last obstacle in the way of their taking over and enslaving humanity. That obstacle was their inability to reproduce their own kind, but they were now beginning to use human beings for that, as flowers use bees. So unless we destroy our machines we shall have no future except to become their genital organs.

Today we are faced with machines of a complexity that Butler himself, to say nothing of his imaginary pamphleteer, never dreamed of. Butler was writing satire, and knew that to say that machines are evolving was a false analogy. [The satire was directed against Darwin, because Butler believed that it would not be a false analogy on strictly Darwinian premises.] Nevertheless,

technological developments have certainly dragged us through several major social revolutions in this century, and many more are awaiting us. Hence they still illustrate the central question that Butler's view of education raises: the question whether we are to keep on transforming our natural environment for genuine human ends, or mechanically go on exploiting both it and another until we arrive at total chaos, a cultural black hole from which no light can any longer emerge. So the need is greater than it ever was for humanist writers and scholars to keep fighting in the front line of the constant struggle of humanity to stay in control of its own lives and habits.

PhD Theses Supervised by Frye

From 1943 through 1979 Frye supervised thirty-one PhD theses at the University of Toronto. Seven were devoted to Blake, four each to Yeats and Joyce, three to Spenser, and two to Stevens. The following writers and topics were the subject of one thesis: Lawrence, Milton, Eliot, Woolf, Meredith, Sidney, Keats, Roger Fry, Anna Jameson, Johnson, Hopkins, Vaughan, Shelley, modern criticism, the pastoral, and eighteenth-century aesthetics. (Several were studies of more than one of the above writers). The complete list, compiled from Robin S. Harris, *English Studies at Toronto: A History* (Toronto: Governing Council, University of Toronto, 1988, pp. 241-80), follows:

- Ballin, Michael G. "D. H. Lawrence and William Blake: A Comparative and Critical Study" (1972)
Bates, Ronald G. N. "The Trivial Joyce: Studies in the Compositional Method of James Joyce" (1960)
Benson, Eugene P. "James Joyce: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy" (1966)
Blissett, William F. "The Historical Imagination of the English Renaissance: Studies in Spenser and Milton" (1950)
Bolgan, Anne C. "Mr Eliot's Philosophical Writings, or 'What the Thunder Said'" (1960)
Buckley, Ernest Bruce. "Many Truths: A Study of the Development of Gyre Symbolism in the Poetry of Yeats" (1975) [jointly supervised by Frye and M. Sidnell]
Carner, Frank K. "Four Contexts for the Study of Relationships of Text and Design in the Illuminated Books of William Blake" (1976)
Chamberlin, J. Edward. "Wallace Stevens and the Aesthetics of Modern Art" (1969)
Estok, Michael J. "Elements of Pastoral and Satiric Tradition in W. B. Yeats" (1971)
Fine, Donald F. "The Style of Alienation: A Study of 'Paralysis' in Joyce's Dublin and of the Consequent Effects of This on Joyce's Development as a Prose Stylist" (1971)
Fisher, Peter. "The Doctrine of William Blake" (1949)
Goldberg, Jerome E. "William Blake: A Study in the Human Sciences" (1978)
Graham, John W. "The Mind and Art of Virginia Woolf" (1952)
Heppner, Christopher A. E. "The Problem of Form in Blake's Prophecies" (1970)
Kerpneck, Harvey. "Image, Symbol, and Myth in the Novels of George Meredith" (1966)
Land, Stephen. "Aspects of the Theory of Language in the Philosophy and Aesthetics of the Eighteenth Century" (1971)
McIntyre, John P. "Poetry as Gnosis: The Literary Theory of Sir Philip Sidney" (1969)
Macpherson, Jay J. "Narcissus, or the Pastoral of Solitude" (1964) [jointly supervised by Frye and Milton T. Wilson]
Nicholson, Mervin E. "A Rock That Sparkles: *Eikasias* and *Dianoia* Imagery with Particular Reference to Keats and Stevens" (1979)

- Nohnberg, James C. "A Study of *The Faerie Queene*" (1970)
- Reaney, James R. "The Influence of Spenser on Yeats" (1958)
- Robertson, Duncan. "Modern Criticism: An Argument" (1965)
- Rose, Edward J. "Mental Forms Creating: A Study in Blake's Thought and Symbols" (1963)
- Slan, Jonathan H. "The Relationship of W. B. Yeats' Essays and *A Vision* to the Development of His Poetry" (1974)
- Taylor, David G. "Roger Fry: A Study of His Theories of Art" (1969)
- Thomas, Clara. "Anna Jameson: The Making of a Reputation" (1962)
- Tomarken, Edward J. "Critical Perspectives: A Study of *Rasselas* and Other Work of Samuel Johnson" (1969)
- Tzougros, Penelope. "Hopkins and Blake: A New Heaven and a New Earth" (1977)
- Wien, Clementine. "The Aesthetics of James Joyce" (1943)
- Willard, Thomas. "The Life and Times of Thomas Vaughan" (1978)
- Woodman, Ross. "The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley" (1957) [jointly supervised by Frye and F. E. L. Priestly]

Music in My Life

The following interview between Ian Alexander and Northrop Frye was broadcast on the "Music in My Life" series on CBC Radio, 1 February 1985. Transcribed by Robert Denham from the Arts National audiotapes in the CBC Archives, Toronto: reference nos. [S] 850201-6 (1) and 850201-6 (2). Reproduced by permission of CBC Radio.

IA Northrop Frye, you've said, "I'm really building everything around a highly personal vision I think I've had since I was a child." Can you talk about your childhood and what that vision might have been?

NF I suppose I'm really saying what is true of almost all members of the human race, that they get what I call their archetypes in their childhood and then spend the rest of their lives elaborating them in various ways. I was brought up in a middle-class, non-conformist environment. I have been more or less writing footnotes to the assumptions I acquired at the age of three or so ever since.

IA Do most of those assumptions and archetypes tend to come from your mother?

NF I suppose they came through my mother, yes. The kind of teaching one gets in very early childhood, I suppose, comes to one at any rate in the form of pictures and images. I used to say I always knew where heaven was because it was the other side of the St. Francis River in Sherbrooke that first dawned on my vision.

IA You moved when you were relatively young from Sherbrooke to the Maritimes, I believe.

NF Yes.

IA Was there a sense of being at that time relatively isolated? Was there a sense that you were not near a major metropolitan center?

NF That was very strong as I grew older—into my adolescence. In the Maritimes in the 1920s we were rather culturally isolated. There was no radio—or it was just beginning to come in. It was mostly scratching and screaming for a very long time. There was no bookstore that I remember in Moncton. Everybody there who was an adult simply regarded Moncton as a kind of remote suburb of Boston.

IA It's interesting that you say Boston rather than a Canadian city. The Maritime ties are to the south rather than to the west?

NF The Maritimes tend to refer to New England as the Boston states. When I graduated from high school, practically all my female classmates went off nursing in either Boston or Providence. A lot of them returned, but that certainly was their headquarters.

IA By this point, I gather, you had become deeply involved with music through the influence of a very important teacher. Can you tell me a bit about George Ross and your first encounter with him?

NF Well, George Ross was the organist at the St. John's Presbyterian, later United, Church in Moncton. He had been a student of Sir Hubert Parry, and he was a properly trained musician. He was a music teacher who had a tremendous influence on me, not so much from what he said or did but simply from the authority which he carried from knowing his subject.

IA I want to speak more about George Ross and Northrop Frye as teachers. But first some music. Was it about 1928 that you were working on the Schubert Impromptu?

NF 1928 was the centenary of the death of Schubert, and I played a couple of movements from Schubert's sonatas over the Moncton radio, which was called CNRA in those days. Fortunately, that was long before the age of tapes.

IA So we haven't preserved it. But we do have a Schubert recording here—Murray Perahia playing the Opus 90 Impromptu. Was that a work you studied?

NF Oh, yes, I worked on the first Impromptu. It was one of the things I came across.

IA Let's listen to it now.

Murray Perahia plays Schubert's Impromptu, Opus 90, No. 1, in C Minor. Columbia Masterworks IM 37291]

IA Professor Frye, I know that the piano music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a special interest of yours. What does that particular Schubert Impromptu say to you. Why is it the sort of music that grabs hold of you?

NF I suppose because of the rather simplified, rather square-cut tunes. The music expresses to me the kind of sanity which is the front entrance, so to speak, of a very profound serenity. I have cultivated composers who are not as well-known as Schubert, like Clementi and Hummel and Dussek, because they seem to me to be eminently composers of sanity, which I find is very important to my general emotional stability.

IA When you became deeply interested in music as a young man, it was in large part because of your teacher, George Ross. I think of you as a teacher above all else—above being a writer or a critic. Do you think of yourself as a teacher?

NF Oh, yes.

IA You've spoken of the impersonality of the teacher and connected this with what you saw of how George Ross taught. Can you explain that a bit?

NF Well, I suppose what impressed me about him, or at least gave me complete confidence in him, was that he was never pushing his students to do dramatic things which would redound to his credit. All that he cared about was the music and transmitting that to people.

IA Can you carry that over to your own approach to teaching English literature.

NF Well, I've always said that the teacher is subject to the temptation to make himself a substitute for what he's teaching, whereas his real efforts have to be directed toward making himself a totally transparent medium. If he disappears in the student's mind as a medium between what he's teaching and what the student learns, then he's accomplished what ought to be his ambition.

IA In Moncton in the late 1920s there were, in fact, two keyboards that figured prominently in your life. We've talked about the piano, but some people may not know that you were a champion typist at that time.

NF Well, yes. I came up to Toronto to operate an Underwood typewriter for a contest that the company was running. I got my way paid to Toronto, and that was how I managed to get to the University of Toronto. The two forms of touch don't seem to have clashed a great deal, although many people said that I played the piano as though it were a typewriter.

IA I understand—and this surprises me a bit in terms of what I know of your personality—that when you came to Victoria College of the University of Toronto you threw yourself into all kinds of extracurricular activities.

NF I was rather apart. I suppose a teenager, an adolescent, is a rather ingrown person anyway, and I was unusually so because I was not athletic and not well-coordinated. So I lived my own life at high school. Then when I came to university, I suddenly found myself in a community where I felt I had a function. And, of course, I just swung over to the opposite extreme and threw myself into everything going.

IA Tell me about the Gilbert and Sullivan musical and its role in the future Frye marriage—your meeting your wife.

NF Oh, well, the Music Club at that time was organized largely around a Gilbert and Sullivan performance, and I got in on that. I didn't actually take a part in the performance. I never did. I was running the arc-light, or helping to do so, in *The Pirates of Penzance*, which was put on in my first year. The second year was *The Gondoliers*, and I remember operating the arc-light on the left side, while keeping an eye out on the rather cute girl on the right side, who was the prompter and who had previously played the piano for the rehearsals. And she is the present Mrs. Frye.

IA You asked that we play a particular excerpt from *The Gondoliers*. Could you set the excerpt up for us here.

NF I was very impressed by Brian MacDonald's *commedia dell'arte* show of *The Gondoliers*. I thought it was amazing. But being the kind of show it was, he was compelled to cut out some of the numbers. My impression of *The Gondoliers* was so intense that anything left out was like missing a tooth. I noticed particularly that the rather delightful gavotte late in the second act had been cut.

IA I think we can reinsert it for you right now.

[Sir M. Sargent conducts the Pro Art Orchestra in Sullivan's "I am a courtier grave and serious" from *The Gondoliers*. Angel 3570 B/L.]

IA Does that fill in the gap from the Stratford production?

NF Yes, indeed, yes.

IA You spoke of your coming to the University of Toronto and realizing, in a sense, that you were coming home—coming to your natural environment. Was that the feeling?

NF I suppose I'm an urban type, and with my tastes I can live only in a city.

IA What about the fact that you have spent such a long time in one place, professionally as well as geographically? Victoria College has been home to you since you were an undergraduate. You have taught there for many years and are now chancellor. Has it been a good and important thing for you to be rooted there?

NF I suppose that it has. I've never seen any occasion to move. That is, I've had suggestions that I should move, which I have had to consider very carefully, and sometimes it's been quite an agonizing

decision. Toronto and Victoria have always been very good to me, and I've never regretted having stayed here. I found, as I grew older, that my roots were going deeper and deeper into the Canadian society and that I couldn't really pull out of that.

IA Is it possible to generalize about how university life, life at the University of Toronto at least, was different, say, about fifty years ago? You got your B.A. in 1933. What was different in the university environment then?

NF Well, there was surprising little really. The university is an enormously continuous institution. While Victoria fifty years ago was, I suppose, a small Methodist College and now it's a big cosmopolitan university, nevertheless people who have been around it for half a century, like myself, don't feel any violent discontinuity in what has taken place in that time.

IA Your sense of the university then and now might lead some people listening to think of it as closed or cloistered, or to use a word of yours, as a garrison. But your own scholarly activities, it seems to me, have always tended to modulate out into social commentary and to speak of things beyond what we consider traditionally to be the realm of academic study.

NF Oh, yes. I think that that stupid phrase "ivory tower," which has all the wrong contexts and echoes, is particularly misleading when applied to the university. The university is the engine-room of society. That's where the source of society's energy is.

IA After you got your B. A., you spent some time at Oxford and took a degree there. Was it not at Oxford that you got deeply involved with *The Magic Flute*?

NF When I was at Oxford, a classmate of mine had bought a recording of *The Magic Flute*—a 78 recording. While I had known about *The Magic Flute*, this was the first opportunity I'd had to study it in detail. It's my favorite opera not because the libretto by itself is anything wonderful, but because when it's presented through Mozart's music it gives the impression of revealing all the mysteries that ever were.

\[James Levine conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera Chorus in "O Isis and Osiris, grant the spirit of wisdom to the new pair!" from Act II of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. RCA CTCA-4124.]

IA You've been interested in romance—use the term in its cultural sense—or a very long time. Why would a critic be drawn to what is in some sense a kind of trashy, popular literature? It's not essentially high art.

NF Well, I've never thought that starting civil wars between highbrow and lowbrow literature was very helpful. I notice that popular literature in the first place is often better than it's said to be, and in the second place it contains the formulas that the greatest literature does and sometimes in a form that's a little easier to explain if you're a critic. So I've often found myself using popular literature as a guide to what literature as a whole is all about.

IA Would it be fair to say, then, that your academic preoccupations over a very long time have been variations on a theme, or as the title of a recent book of yours puts it, divisions on a ground?

NF I think so. My life has been a kind of spiral, expanding from and always revolving around the same issues. I picked up a remark in a review of a book of mine which said that I was always rewriting my central myth in every book I wrote, and it occurred to me that every writer I ever read or trust has done the same thing.

IA Certainly, as a lot of people know, books of yours like *Anatomy of Criticism* and the more recent *The Great Code* are rooted in your early interest in the poetry of William Blake.

NF Yes, I suppose I learned everything I know from Blake in one way or another.

IA You've spoken of your coming to an awareness of Blake as a kind of epiphany. Can you describe that experience?

NF Perhaps you mean the time when I was taking a graduate course with Herbert Davis, who later went to Oxford. I was assigned a paper to write on Blake's *Milton*, for which there was, of course, no secondary material whatever. My very bad habit in those days was to start a paper the night before I was to read it. About half-past three in the morning some very funny things started happening in my mind, and I began to see dimensions of critical experience that I never dreamed existed before—a sudden expansion of the horizon. When I went out for breakfast—I remember it was a bitterly cold morning—I knew that I was to write a book on Blake. And fifteen years later I did.

IA That was *Fearful Symmetry*.

NF Yes.

IA Probably the piece of William Blake's poetry that people know best is the piece from *Jerusalem* that Hubert Parry set. There is a connection between yourself and Parry, I think.

NF He was my musical grandfather—the teacher of my teacher. George Ross always had a great respect for Parry and spoke of the intelligence of the exercises that he set his students to do. As for the Blake, "Jerusalem" is the greatest hymn in the English language. While I'm not sure that any musical setting of it is definitive, that's as good a one as I know.

[Alan Wicks directs the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral, the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, and Organist David Flood in "Jerusalem": words by William Blake and music by Sir Hubert Parry]

IA Do you ever feel at all uncomfortable with the kind of image, the kind of position you now hold not just in the academic community but in the minds of people in Canada and around the world? Does that position disturb you? Do you wish you didn't hold it?

NF I really don't know that it does disturb me all that much. I wouldn't care to be idolized, but then I don't think I am idolized. If I get, say, a crank letter from somebody, I think, well, he must believe that I'm accessible or he wouldn't write to me.

IA You do remain quite accessible. That must cut into the time available for your own ongoing original work.

NF Well, it certainly does, yes, but there's no way out of it that I can see. I have an unlisted telephone number, and I have a wonderfully efficient secretary, but there are still limits, and I don't want to shut myself away. That would turn me into a different person.

IA We've spoken about early nineteenth-century piano music by composers less well known than Franz Schubert, and you mentioned in particular Muzio Clementi. I'd like to find out a little more about your interest in Clementi. You play the piano a good deal yourself, and have done so throughout your life.

NF At first, of course, I took the standard keyboard repertoire, starting with the Beethoven sonatas. But the thing is that you get so completely absorbed in the standard composers that eventually, if you're still playing, you look around for more variety. Because I'm an amateur pianist and don't play in public, I have looked for keyboard music from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which an amateur can play and enjoy.

IA I think you have quite a collection of Clementi.

NF Yes, I have a fairly large collection of that.

IA You asked for us to play a particular sonata by Clementi. Does it have not only musical resonances for you but mythological, programmatic resonances too?

NF Yes, it's Clementi's sonata on the abandoning of Dido. It always amused me, because Clementi was such a level-headed composer, and he starts off in a minor ninth, which for him, of course, was a

frightful dissonance. Before long he marks the movement *con disperazione*. But in a very few minutes you're in the regular finale rondo of early nineteenth-century piano music. It's a triumph of musical conventions over literature, a kind that rather amuses me.

IA We'll listen now to the last movement of the sonata.

[Pianist Lamar Crowson plays Clementi's "Didone Abbandonata," Opus 50, No. 3 in G Minor. L'Oiseau-Lyre Sol 306]

IA Before and after Clementi, many composers dealt with the story of Dido and Aeneas, and many writers made use of it in prose and poetry. Why do stories like that get set into human consciousness and keep floating to the surface?

NF Well, it's one of the central stories about how a woman dies for love, so she became a saint and a martyr in the courtly love tradition that's celebrated all through the Christian centuries down to the seventeenth and eighteenth. What I like about that movement is that if Dido had only had the sense of proportion that Clementi she would have never thrown herself away on a jerk like Aeneas.

IA But what I wanted to get at was the idea that no matter how original a work of genius may be the best are always rooted in things that are furthest from originality. Aren't they often?

NF The original writer is the person who returns to origins. The man who produces the imperishable classic is not a man with a new story but a man who tells one of the world's great stories again and tells it better.

IA I think Yeats said something about choosing between the unity of the life and the unity of the work. You seem to have been able to organize both life and work pretty well. Has that been good luck or good management?

NF It's been a mixture of both, but I think mostly good luck. That is, the things that look as though I had planned them from infancy I just blundered into. I think that I have always kept my life as quiet and uneventful as I possibly could in order to keep my work more or less in balance.

IA What remains to be done? What is at the top of your list of priorities right now?

NF Oh, another big book on how all literature comes out of certain metaphorical and mythological patterns, most of which are in the Bible.

IA I've been most interested in some of the things you've had to say about music this evening. This last operatic excerpt, though, is of a different sort. It's the finale to Act III of Verdi's *Falstaff*. Tell me why this is an appropriate way for us to end.

NF Well, if I were asked who my favorite composer was the answer would have to be Sebastian Bach. So I suppose I have a particular affection for somebody who can display the acrobatic skill that Bach does in things like *The Art of the Fugue*. It's partly for that reason that the greatest single moment in opera for me outside of Mozart is that finale of Verdi's *Falstaff*, the great fugue at the end.

IA Are they sentiments with which you can agree—everything in the world is a jest?

NF Well, I think of a very profound devotional, religious poet, George Herbert, who said, "All things are big with jest; nothing that's plain / But may be witty, if thou hast the vein." I've always had a strong interest in the nature of comedy and the way in which even tragedy seems to fit inside as a kind of episode in a total story which is comic. While I'm not sure that everything in the world is simply a jest, there is a point at which the witty and the oracular do come together.

IA Northrop Frye, I've enjoyed chatting with you once again. Thank you very much.

[The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra plays the Finale to Act II of Verdi's *Falstaff*.]

Introduction to Canadian Literature by Northrop Frye

[At the invitation of the Union of Soviet Writers, Frye presented three lectures in the Soviet Union during October 1988: he spoke about Canadian literature at the Library of Foreign Literature in Moscow on October 10, at the Institute of Foreign Literature in Kiev on October 13, and at Leningrad University on October 19. He also met in an informal session with literary critics and translators in Leningrad on October 20 and was interviewed by *Foreign Literature Magazine* in Moscow on October 6. The essay printed below comes from a transcription of Frye's talk in Moscow on October 10. Thanks to Jane Widdicombe for providing me a tape-recording of the lecture. Ed.]

A century ago one thought of Canada as situated at the ends of the earth, but in the contemporary world, it occupies a place similar to that of Switzerland in nineteenth-century Europe. It is bounded on the south by the United States, on the west by Japan and China, on the east by the European Common Market, on the north by the Soviet Union. Its closest relations are with the United States. It is largely ignored by the United States, which causes some resentment in Canada. But then the reason for its being ignored is that Canada has always been a quiet country that does not bother its neighbors, and that fact may become even more important in the future.

If you look at a map you can see why Canada's development was different from that of the United States. In the far west of the country in the Rocky Mountains, rivers flow down through the prairie provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—into the Great Lakes that separate Ontario from the United States, then into the St. Lawrence River, which runs through Quebec, and finally into the great inland sea in the center of the four Atlantic provinces. This tremendous open eastern waterway is the historical backbone of Canadian development. This main waterway is flanked, or was in pioneer times, by various canoe trails up tributary rivers and forest trails into the hinterland. So there has been no frontier in Canadian history. The frontier is not a boundary. It is a circumference, and Canada has grown up as a series of isolated communities, widely separated from one another and connected in various rather devious ways. But the frontier has always been a circumference of a relatively small area in the different cut-up sections that constitute Canada. In the American frontier life was often violent—the bad men of the wild west are well known. But what violence there has been in Canadian history has been largely repressive violence from the top down. It was held down by a military occupation in the eighteenth century and by a police force in the west and north in the nineteenth.

This means that the Canadian imagination is preoccupied with the theme of communications. The building of the first transcontinental railway was almost a national neurosis, because it was a formidable engineering feat without parallel, I should think, in the United States. One can see in the perspective of Canadian landscape painting that faraway look of a canoeist's eye who is gazing at the horizon to see what is around the corner of the river. Our best known social philosophers—Harold Innis, the economist, and Marshall McLuhan, the humanist—have been preoccupied with other aspects of the theme of communications. But growing up as it did, Canada was forced to accept the mercantilism against which the American Revolution was revolting. It was compelled to devote itself to producing natural resources—furs, lumber, minerals from the Precambrian shield which covered much of the country, grain from the western farms—with the head office always somewhere else.

Canada was settled by the French during the baroque expansion of the seventeenth century and it became a nation during the English romantic expansion of the nineteenth century with its world-

girdling naval empire. I said “seventeenth” and “nineteenth” century. It is important that Canada never had any eighteenth century, the time when American culture came to its fruition and its climax. The British and French spent the eighteenth century in Canada battering down each other’s forts. Canada had no age of enlightenment and no culture heroes corresponding to Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson. I have spoken myself of the garrison mentality which Canadians have inherited from their history and from pioneer conditions. It is a mentality which we are gradually outgrowing, but it remains something deep in our imaginative consciousness.

Again, the American War of Independence, and the Constitution which is a part of it, established a strongly deductive pattern in the American constitution. There is a sense of a new identity established in America which continued until our own time, a sense of what is sometimes called “hundred percent Americanism”—strong pressures on immigrants to conform to American standards, an unvarying sense of American identity, and a melting pot designed to absorb other peoples and other ethnic units. Along with this went the feeling of being able to turn its back on history, to start something new in the affairs of men. You can easily document from such poets as Walt Whitman the sense of a country proceeding like an express train, never looking back at what it has recently passed. This state of mind lasted without much change until the Vietnam War, when it began to occur to many thoughtful Americans that their empire, like every other in human history, was a parabola and not a straight line.

In contrast, Canadian history has always been inductive, full of compromise and temporary arrangements. It always gives the appearance of a country just about to come apart at the seams. But it never quite does. It makes one more compromise and staggers on for another decade. The British conquest of the French was consolidated by the Quebec Act of 1774, which by eighteenth-century standards was a surprisingly moderate and liberal agreement, giving approximately equal rights to both peoples. Nevertheless, because of the isolation of different parts of Canada, there are strong feelings of separatism everywhere in the country. Quebec separatism made most news because it was based largely on the demand for the autonomy of the French language. But Quebec is in the middle of Canada, and perhaps the western part of Canada has an even better case for separatism.

Of course, in Canadian history, the entire country is separatist. That is, the American War of Independence was a victory of the spirit of what corresponded to the Whigs in eighteenth-century England, and most British eighteenth-century Whigs were sympathetic to the American Revolution. English Canada was settled for the most part after the Revolutionary War by disaffected Tories. What happened in English Canada has its counterpart in French Canada. After the departure of what was left of the aristocracy, French Canada fell under the rule of the church, which repudiated what it considered the atheistic values of the French Revolution of 1789, and the flag of the province of Quebec is still the prerevolutionary French flag of the lilies.

So the values that Canada grew up with were nostalgic values turned to the past, along with a number of more radical and populist ones that grew up with the next generation in the country. When anti-American statements appeared in the Canadian press in the nineteenth century, they tended to attack both from the left and from the right. On the one hand, they deplored the democratic anarchy and the leveling of classes. On the other, they attacked the oligarchic inequalities in wealth and privilege and the fact that the southern states continued to own black slaves. An early nineteenth-century writer in the Atlantic provinces—Thomas Haliburton—has an American pedlar as his chief spokesman—Sam Slick—who speaks of the American national holiday, the fourth of July, as a glorious spectacle with fifteen million free men and five million slaves celebrating the birthday of liberty, a remark which in his day would hardly have seemed ironic in the United States.

But as the country grew up from the eighteenth-century conquest into the nineteenth century, it seemed to become a country that nobody much wanted. The French lost Canada to the British largely because they had very little interest in holding it. They were preoccupied with continental wars and were much less concerned with what Madame de Pompadour is said to have called a few acres of snow; so that if the French had held Canada, they would very probably have sold it to the United States, as they did Louisiana a few years later. In their dealings with the British, the Canadians constantly found that the British had far more respect for the independent nation of the United States than they had for their own colonials. Haliburton, whom I just mentioned, was a conservative, even reactionary, writer, but even he compares the colonists in Canada to the freed black slaves. That is, a black slave in the United States in his day was technically a free man, but he could hope for very little assistance from the white man's law. The Canadian, according to Haliburton, was in a similar position vis-a-vis Great Britain.

The good side of having been developed as a neglected and unwanted country is perhaps a very unusual degree of tolerance of ethnic minorities. If you look at the origins of the authors of Canadian literature, I think you, will be astonished not merely by the proportion of them who have come from outside Canada but the variety of ethnic disciplines and groups which they represent. Much of Canadian literature is produced by Czechoslovakians, Italians, Sri Lankans, Japanese, Ukrainians, Scandinavians, Germans, and of course Americans and British. There is in consequence very much less of the melting pot, the tendency to homogeneous assimilating in Canada than there has traditionally been in the United States. I used the phrase "hundred percent American," which was fashionable fifty or sixty years ago in the United States. Nothing comparable exists in Canada because nobody can ever discover what a hundred percent Canadian could conceivably be.

The Confederation, which united the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and two of the Atlantic provinces, joined later by British Columbia on the Pacific coast, after they started building the railway across the country—this Confederation was Tory and British in its inspiration. It made Canada a part of that world-wide naval empire that I mentioned. It was a romantic and conservative movement and was opposed by the liberal party which held more to the obvious economic connections with the United States and thought more in terms of Canada as a series of northern extensions of the United States. That distinction between conservative and liberal policies no longer holds, but it did hold a century ago.

After Confederation there was some attempt on the part of Canadian poets, less so of the fiction writers, to find a Canadian identity in cultural nationalism. But this did not really work. Canada was too large, too divided, too disparate a country for a Canadian cultural consciousness to take root. Besides, Canadian writers could not support themselves without a London or a New York publisher. That meant that many Canadian writers either had to move to the United States for long periods of their lives, or if they were fiction writers to place their settings in America. Stephen Leacock, for example, wrote stories of communities which could only be communities in southern Ontario. If you met his people in the jungles of New Guinea, you would know that they came from southern Ontario, and yet Stephen Leacock was compelled, again, to provide American settings for the benefit of his readers.

In French Canada there was a great deal of poetry about the peasant bound to his land. The church had a kind of fixation on rural and small-town ethos. It resisted the urbanizing of the country as long as it could, and writers tended rather to follow suit. The most influential nineteenth-century work of fiction in French Canada, *Maria Chapdelaine*, was written actually by a Frenchman from France. It was a tourist's novel, and it describes a heroine having to choose between a suitor who would take

her to Boston and out of the hard, pioneering peasant life in Quebec and another suitor who would offer her more of the same. She chose the second suitor. But if you compare the novel with the immigration statistics of the time, you will see that ninety-nine girls out of a hundred would have settled for the one-way ticket to Boston.

The same fixation on the rural and the small-town ethos was true of the church in English Canada too, but in Quebec the church assumed a temporal authority to which it had no legal right but still exerted. There was a fairly rigid censorship, but the French Canadians discovered what other people also have to discover, that however rationalized it may be censorship is always an attack on human intelligence and imagination and is always a sign of weakness, not of strength, in those who enforce it.

I have been painting a picture of a somewhat confused country, uncertain of its identity and of its destiny and place in the scheme of things well up into the twentieth century, about the time of the Second World War. It was later than that that Canada acquired a national flag. The centenary of Confederation in 1967 was accompanied by a sour little joke that when Canada was established it was hoped to make it a mixture of British political institutions, American economic buoyancy, and French culture, and that what they had after a century was French politics, British economic buoyancy, and American culture. That statement was beginning to be obsolete by 1967, but it had a good deal of truth even then.

In the mid-decades of the twentieth century French Canada went through what is known as a quiet revolution. That is, the country suddenly became secularized, the church lost its influence and was unable to exercise any form of censorship, and of course became liberalized itself in the process. This was partly the result of the constant increase of urbanization and the urbanized ethos of the larger cities. Again, the French writers had a very clear sense of their social function in defending a beleaguered and threatened language. They were under no illusions about the importance of the writer in their culture. About 1960 there suddenly began to come a tremendous outpouring of writing in English Canada as well. I am convinced that one reason for this was a kind of backlash or reaction to what had happened in French Canada. French Canada had suddenly acquired a sense of cultural identity, and English Canada very soon followed suit.

One may interpret the word "revolution" in hundreds of ways, but for a humanist like myself it tends to mean primarily the setting free of the creative energies in society without any enemies except stupidity and bigotry. If this has any truth in it, Canada went through a genuine revolution in the 1950s and 60s. I think it is a general law of culture, at any rate in the twentieth century, that while political and economic movements tend to centralize and to form larger and larger entities, culture, on the other hand, the arts, literature, and the more serious forms of film and electronic media, tend to decentralize, to address more restricted audiences in more limited areas, but acquire greater communicative value across the world by simply addressing that more limited audience. That seems a paradox, but if you think of American literature, you realize that it really consists of Mississippi literature, New York literature, Chicago middle-western literature, and a dozen others. What you learn about the United States through its culture, you learn by adding up all these various regional developments. The same thing is true of Canada. We have had experiments which are, I think, both in the wrong direction. We have tried to hitch culture on to political and economic centralization. I spoke of the poetry of the national consciousness a century ago. But that produces a kind of pompous imperialism without much substance or meaning. We have also experimented with trying to attach political and economic developments towards cultural decentralization, which has produced what I have called separatism and

which produces certain anarchic, neo-Fascist elements which are extremely and undesirable and have been repudiated for the most part in Canada.

The political and economic centralization includes, of course, certain technological developments. With the coming of the jet plane and satellite communication, Canada began to make more sense as a cultural environment in the background of its regional cultural developments. One region after another began to become articulate through its poets and its novelists. Naturally there has been a domination of a uniform mass culture. Canadians call this "Americanization," which in fact it is. Yet one has to remember that this kind of mass culture, with so much violence and vulgarity in it, is as great a threat to genuine American culture as it is to Canadian culture and that America itself is being Americanized in the same way. In any case, since 1960 there has been a tremendous quantity of poetry and fiction and other types of literary writing produced in Canada, and so great an increase in quantity eventually makes for a qualitative change as well.

A project in which I was concerned myself, a literary history of English Canadian literature, was published in 1965, with a revised and updated version covering the next ten years. The critic who had to cover the poetry of those ten years had to examine something like a thousand volumes, exclusive of anthologies, in English Canada alone, which for a country of Canada's population is something colossal and means that the bulk of this poetry was produced on what really amounts to a kind of resistance press. One thing that catches your eye at once when you look at Canadian literature is the very high percentage of it produced by women. That again is a historical and traditional element in Canadian culture. In pioneering days, the women certainly were as busy as the men, but they made a more civilized use of what leisure time they had instead of going hunting or sitting around drinking, of which they complained a good deal.

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, Canadian culture was a provincial culture, and it is characteristic of a provincial culture that its standards are imported from other centers. Canadian writers wrote echoes and imitations of what they had read in British, French, American literature. As culture matures, it tends to become more and more of an export trade. One thinks, for example, of the amount of English literature in the twentieth century produced by the Anglo-Irish group, which is certainly not written for a Dublin market. Canadian literature is not as ignored in its own country as Irish literature tends to be in Ireland. At the same time, it has met with a worldwide recognition during the last twenty or twenty-five years. Institutes of Canadian studies have been set up in most countries in western Europe, as well as in Asia—Japan, China, India—and Latin America, besides of course the United States. The United States and Great Britain, as one would expect, were a little slower in awakening to the merits of Canadian literature, but they seem to be more awake now.

French writing in comparison with English is perhaps more widely experimental and covers the whole spectrum of the avant-garde from fantasy to the most vigorous forms of socially committed writing. The English literature of eastern Canada is more conservative and traditional in its form, the west coast much less so but perhaps more imitative of American trends. The fact that French Canada broke loose from a fairly rigorous cultural supervision in the 1950s made for a curious quality of rage and fury in French Canadian writing which it would be hard to match elsewhere, I think.

There has also been a number of linguistic developments of considerable interest. There is, of course, a standard French spoken in Quebec. There is also a patois which is known as *joual*, a word which is intended to represent the patois pronunciation of the word *cheval*, horse. This development of *joual* was greatly disapproved and ridiculed by the adherents of standard French in Quebec. But many writers seized on it as the actual language of the people and wrote plays and novels in *joual*, so that the language has been from the point of view of the upholders of standard French attacked from the rear

as well as from the front—the latter the threat of being obliterated by English. Yet it seems to be a lively and interesting development, or so it is said by those who can follow it.

I think every nation with a history has certain traditional guilts and fears which it inherits from the past. It is part of the social function of the writer, it seems to me, to work through those guilts and fears. He may be working through the guilts and fears he finds simply within himself. But if he does so, he is not writing subjectively or ignoring his society. He is bringing to light and putting in an imaginative form something that is shared by his compatriots and performs a very considerable social service in doing so. It seems to me that there are two kinds of guilt and fear in the Canadian consciousness of particular importance.

One was the obliterating, or the attempt to obliterate, the culture of the native indigenous peoples, who were called, by a very curious blunder, Indians. The culture which begins by trying to obliterate the culture of its predecessor is, of course, cut off at its historical roots, except so far as it can import its roots from elsewhere. The social philosopher George Grant says in looking at the Rocky Mountains that there ought to be gods here, but there are no gods in Canada because of what we are and of what we did. The poet Earle Birney says, "It's only by our lack of ghosts that we're haunted." And the poet Douglas Le Pan has a poem called "A Country without a Mythology." But these three writers, who tell us that we have no gods and no ghosts and no myths, are all writers of my own generation.

The younger writers are talking very differently. They are trying to attach themselves to the indigenous culture which preceded them. There is a very considerable part of the most serious Canadian literature, both English and French, devoted to the struggles of Indian and Eskimo, or Inuit people as they are called now, to achieve some kind of identification in the white man's society. I think of the remarkable young woman in British Columbia, Susan Musgrave, brought up in the Queen Charlotte Islands which are largely inhabited by the Haida Indians, and of the way in which her earliest poetry recaptures the spirit of Haida mythology. And I think of such novelists as Rudy Wiebe in the west and Yves Thériault in Quebec dealing with Indian and Eskimo figures with the same problems. That means, I think, that English and French writers no longer feel that they belong to an army of occupation, that they and their ancestors have been in the country long enough to be natives and to make common cause with those who were natives before them.

The French treatment of the Indian population was slightly better than the record of the British or the Spanish, not because the French were better human beings but because they needed the cooperation of the Indians as guides in the canoe trails and in exploring the hinterland. There was also much more intermarriage between the French and the Indians, and in the west there grew up the half-breed tribe known as the Métis, which organized a revolt against the British penetration from the east in the nineteenth century. The revolt was put down, and its leader, Louis Riel, was hanged. But Louis Riel is taken to be a figure of French Canada, rather than of the Indian population, and the hanging of Riel embittered English and French relations for many years. He is still a formidable scar in the Canadian conscience. There has not been, strictly speaking, a war with Indians in Canada, as there was in the United States. But there was some brutal treatment, including massacres of, for example, the Indian tribes in Newfoundland.

That sense of one ethnic group being separated from another, which, as we saw, was deeply rooted in the Canadian tradition, extends to the two main white groups of English and French. I was brought up myself in two small towns which are half English and half French. I do not remember any real antagonism between the two groups, but because of the difference in language and in religion, we simply never came into contact. A celebrated novel dealing with the English and French relations in

Montreal by Hugh MacLennan is called *Two Solitudes*. To that we may add what is sometimes been called the third solitude, the solitude of other ethnic minorities in other parts of Canada.

The second origin of guilt and fear in the Canadian consciousness springs ultimately, I think, from an uneasiness about having founded the economy on the fur trade, that is, on the torturing and murdering of fur-bearing animals. The death of animals of all kinds has an extraordinary resonance in the Canadian imagination. I even know of one poem by Irving Layton which attaches some dignity and pathos to the squashing of a mosquito. The attitude to nature in Canada has altered a great deal in the past century. Nineteenth-century Canadian poetry tended to regard nature as the enemy. It dwelt on the two solitudes, the waste spaces, the intense cold of the winter, the indifference to human and moral values on the part of nature, and the pessimism which gave man so precarious a survival in such an environment. Along with this went the original settlement of the country, with the Cartesian mentality which was a part of that settlement. We can see in the grid patterns of our cities, the checkerboard designs of our streets, and the burying of fertile land under asphalt and concrete the conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it.

Within the last twenty-five years, as the country has become more articulate, I think there has been gradually a growing realization that the exploiting of nature may in its way be just as evil as the exploiting of other human beings. Writers in Canada today tend to be fiercely patriotic, but their patriotism is not connected so much with the nation or even the society of Canada. It is connected rather with the natural environment of Canada, with their insistence that Canada is not just a place to be looted and plundered by commercial interests—cutting down trees, polluting the lakes, exterminating the fish and the animals.

If we look at nineteenth-century Canadian literature, both English and French, we see that the attitude to poetry especially is a deeply serious one. Poetry is not an activity to be engaged in lightly. It is something that should require a very deep and profound commitment on the part of the poet. We get odes to Canada beginning “child of nations, giant limbed” and the like. But poetry of this kind is rather out of touch with the normal attitudes in Canada, because Canadians for all their cold winters are a humorous and observant people. One thing which one is bound to notice in more modern and contemporary Canadian literature is a growing sense of fun and humor, even ribaldry, and a sense of playing with words as well as working with them. That observant quality in Canadian culture is now, I think, working to its advantage in its literature.

I have taught for brief periods at universities in the United States, and my American students often ask me if I notice any difference in my students coming from Canada to their country. They expect the answer to be no, but the answer in fact is yes. I tell them that students conditioned from infancy to be part of a world power are bound to be very different in their attitude to the world from students conditioned from infancy to watching the game from the sidelines and seeing more of the game perhaps than the participants. The American students did not like the suggestion that they themselves had been conditioned from infancy to anything. They felt that they had been thinking for themselves from the age of two. But the difference is obvious, I think, to anyone who has experienced both countries.

It has been of immense benefit to the United States, whether the United States knows it or not, to have on its northern boundary-line a neighbor which is neither uncritical nor unfriendly. Yet, for all the differences in culture and in imagination, Canada and the United States are both part of a vast North American development. It is obviously essential at this time in all parts of the world to understand something of the American temperament and American attitudes. But I feel that that understanding can never be rounded out or complete unless it includes a knowledge of Canada as well.

Questions

Question Dr. Frye, I'd like to say that, of course, all of us present here are very grateful for having you as our distinguished guest, but we feel ourselves to be your guests today, because consciously or unconsciously all of us are your pupils here; and your pupils of course would have some questions.

I know that at the present moment you're working on the continuation to your very important book, *The Great Code*. And one question is, why do you feel it is so important to give an extra analysis of the Bible?

NF I suppose in many respects the culture of the Western world has been really founded on the Bible. I began working on the Bible largely as a result of my interest in English literature. I was teaching Milton and finding it difficult to reach my students in teaching such works as *Paradise Lost* and trying to write a book on William Blake, an intensely Biblical poet. I was attracted to Blake originally because my own background is that of a nonconformist Protestant of much the same class origins and much the same religious point of view as Blake himself had. Blake made a degree of imaginative sense out of my own background that I never dreamed could ever be made. So instead of repudiating my background I wrote a book on Blake instead, confident that he would help me to explain it.

Canada itself, English Canada, is shot through and through with Biblical allusions and ideas. The work I have done in Canadian literature has been a kind of field work, showing me how important that Biblical influence has been in Canada, as well as in Great Britain, in the United States, and in other countries too, such as Germany. I keep finding that there are parallels between Biblical history and Canadian history, which would be of no importance if Canadian poets themselves were not aware of it. The sense of a country which grew up as a kind of promised land of refugees from elsewhere and yet turned into a beleaguered land which had to be protected against neighbors and was not a land flowing with milk and honey but a land where a living had to be wrested from the soil—in all of that I caught Biblical echoes wherever I turned. I brought with me Margaret Atwood's anthology, the *Oxford Book of English-Canadian Verse*. I can find conscious and unconscious echoes from the Bible on almost every page. So the two interests naturally coalesced in my mind.

Question Professor Frye, what do you think about Canadian criticism in comparison to the English and American? And what are your views on the themes of guilt and fear in Russian literature?

NF Well, Canadian criticism follows, I think, the general trends of American criticism. I don't know that there is a distinctive body of Canadian criticism. I myself have adopted certain positions in critical theory, and, as some of my work has been connected with Canadian literature and Canadian people, I have had a certain amount of influence in that direction myself. My late colleague, Marshall McLuhan, who was interested in the effect of the electronic communications as compared with print, was one of the people I mentioned who were preoccupied with the theme of communication. Margaret Atwood, whom I've mentioned and who was a former student of mine, has spoken of the Canadian penchant for putting everything into its place somewhere in the universe. Perhaps that is a distinctive Canadian characteristic. I'm not sure. But Canadian criticism since 1960, I would say, has followed international trends, which originate very frequently in France and which have come to English Canada partly through American intermediaries. That is, the deconstruction theories of Derrida, to a much lesser extent the dialogist criticism of Bakhtin here in Russia, the structuralist criticism deriving from

Lévi-Strauss and others—all these sweep across the whole world, and they have made their mark in Canada as well.

As for Russian fear and guilt, I can only say there is plenty of it in Dostoevsky and that my knowledge of contemporary Russian literature is not sufficient to be able to continue it into the present age. But I imagine that there have been developments in Russian history which are, if I understand correctly, now being opened up to the Russian imagination in a way that they were not before. And the effect of that in Russian literature is certain to be extremely impressive in the next few decades.

Question I want to ask you about French Canadian literature. What French Canadian authors would be of interest for us now in our period, when Soviet literature is so interesting?

NF I mentioned Yves Thériault. The book I referred to was *Agaguk*, and that deals with Eskimo life. I would mention, among others, Marie-Claire Blais' *La Belle Bête*, which is a book that is almost impossible to describe, but it was the book I had in mind when I spoke of the unexampled rage and fury in so much French-Canadian writing. Ann Hébert's book *Kamouraska*, which made a very successful film, is a much more complex book, but I would think it would be fascinating to a Russian audience. There's a remarkable book by an Acadian, that is, the French from the Atlantic provinces—Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charette*, a book about an eighteenth-century pilgrimage from Louisiana back to Nova Scotia—a tremendous book. And Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion*. Perhaps Roger Lemelin's *Les Plouffe*, the Plouffe family. I could mention many others, but those, it seems to me, would be the primary ones that would be of interest to a Russian audience in translation. There are others, much more avant-garde ones, Réjean Ducharme, for example. Of the older people, I suppose, Ringuet's *Trente arpents*, thirty acres. That's his pen name; his actual name is Panneton. It's a book that breaks away from the old peasant-bound-to-the-soil cliché. It turns it inside out.

Question Our publishers right now are looking high and low for good books to translate, so could you recommend English Canadian books that should be translated into Russian?

NF I should be inclined to recommend fiction writers primarily, because of the difficulties in communicating poetry. I mentioned Margaret Atwood. Perhaps the book that might be of most interest here is one called *The Handmaid's Tale*. The title is Chaucerian, but it's a kind of nightmare vision of the immediate future in the United States, when there's a tremendous reaction against feminism and a downgrading of women again. It belongs to a genre that is sometimes called the dystopia, the utopian satire. Margaret Laurence is another extremely able novelist. I would be inclined to say *The Diviners* is her most translatable book, though not everyone would agree. You might get a second opinion on that. One writer that I admire very much is Alice Munro, who writes a series of short stories which make up a continuous story, a full-length novel. I would say that *Lives of Girls and Women* is her most accessible book. There is Timothy Findley, whose book called *The Wars* I would recommend very highly. There is Robertson Davies, who is quite an international figure by now. He writes his books in series—trilogies and tetralogies. The first—what is called the Deptford trilogy—is *Fifth Business*. The phrase “fifth business” means a minor actor on the stage. That would go over very well here, as it has elsewhere. I spoke of the interest in Indian and Eskimo literature, and the Mennonite western writer Rudy Wiebe, who wrote a book called *The Temptations of Big Bear*—Big Bear is the name of an Indian leader—would be, I think, of great interest. Mordecai Richler, who writes about Montreal Jews for the most part, has had a great deal of success in the United States as well as

Canada. The one of his that I think I would choose first is *St. Urbain's Horseman*. St. Urbain is a district in Montreal. It's the theme of a rather unheroic little Jewish boy in Montreal who makes a culture hero out of another Jewish friend of his. The title comes from that. It's a very funny book, but it's also more deeply serious than most of his are.

Question Do you regard Brian Moore a Canadian writer or not? There's is a quarrel here about his national belonging—whether he's Irish or Canadian.

NF Well, you're not the only body that quarrels about him. I was on the Governor-General's Awards Committee for some years, and his name invariably came up, and the question also came up with it, Should we give this award to Brian Moore? At that time he had retained his Canadian citizenship, so he always got the award. But he's an example of the great difficulty in describing Canadian literature except in terms of an environment. That is, he has written some of his novels while living in Canada. That's about as much as one can say. *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* is one which he wrote in Canada, and there's another called *Catholics*. Yes, he's a very able writer, but for the reasons which you just suggested, he rather slipped out of my mind.

Comment Well, if there are no more questions, on behalf of everybody present, Dr. Frye, let me express our deep thanks for your kindly coming to our library. You were very helpful and enlightening, and you are welcome to our library again.

Frye and the Citation Indexes

From time to time the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)*, which began publication in 1975, compiles data from its elaborate bibliographic records on the most-cited authors in the arts and humanities. A decade ago Eugene Garfield combed through the more than 900,000 items in the *A&HCI* for 1977 and 1978 to arrive at a list of the one hundred most-cited authors in periodical literature. The list, published in *Current Contents* 32 (6 Aug. 1979): 5-10, reveals that Frye was cited in 386 articles during the two-year period. Those who ranked ahead of Frye were Marx (704), Aristotle (624), Shakespeare (594), Lenin (545), Plato (500), Freud (462), and Barthes (420). A second list published by Garfield in the same article shows that for 1978 and 1979 *Anatomy of Criticism* was the most frequently cited book written by an author born in the twentieth century.

Eight years later Garfield updated and expanded the list, publishing the results in "The 250 Most-Cited Authors in the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index, 1976-1983*," *Current Contents* 48 (1 Dec. 1986): 3-10. Marx remains in first place, his work having been cited in 4635 articles. Following Marx are: Aristotle (4033), Shakespeare (3807), Lenin (3450), Plato (3255), Freud (2950), Barthes (2647), Kant (2271), Cicero (2220), Chomsky (2216), Hegel (2210), and Frye (2000). Based on the data from the *A&HCI*, then, Frye is the third most-cited author born in the twentieth century.

References to Frye's work are also recorded in the *Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)*. The records of the *A&HCI* and the *SSCI* through 1988 indicate that the *Anatomy* has been cited in more than 1,045 publications. This led to the book's being recognized in a recent issue of *Current Contents* as "This Week's Citation Classic." The authors of the "citation classics" are asked to comment on the

books that have been so honored. Frye's remarks on the *Anatomy*, published in *Current Contents* (30 Jan. 1989): 14, follow:

Critical Theory: Structure, Archetypes, and the Order of Words

The *Anatomy of Criticism* emerged from my earlier study of William Blake, *Fearful Symmetry* (1947); indeed, some of its material was actually a part of that book, whose manuscript was actually double the size of the final volume. I mention this because it was Blake's work that taught me the central insight of the *Anatomy*, which has become the organizing principle of my criticism as a whole: that literature is not just an aggregate of texts but a total structure articulating a total vision of reality. The units of that structure are the recurring formal elements of literature: its conventions, genres, symbols, rhetorical patterns, plot and character types, and so on. I called these recurrent units *archetypes*, and the schematic design of the *Anatomy* reflects how these archetypes interlock to form a total *order of words*.

Blake himself was influenced by the rudimentary beginnings of what was to become comparative mythology and folklore, and the *Anatomy* attempts to apply to the whole of literature the same kind of analysis of types, motifs, and so on, that has been commonly applied to folktales and myths. Leaving aside questions of origin, belief, and social function that would interest an anthropologist or psychologist, myth and folktale can be studied as the most primitive forms of literature, "primitive" in this context meaning, not crude, but reduced to essentials, so that the basic structural principles are clearly on display. Later literature adapts these structural principles to new circumstances: whether directly, as in popular romance; through accommodation and disguise, as in realism (a process I call *displacement*); or through parody and subversion, as in satire and ironic writing. As Western culture derived its archetypal framework most directly from the encyclopedic mythological and metaphorical patterns of the Bible, the path that led me from Blake to the theory of literature in the *Anatomy* has brought me recently to a study of the Bible, of which I am completing the second volume.

For a theoretical book bristling with terminology, the *Anatomy* has acquired an unexpectedly wide audience: I continue to get letters from people who have found some of its insights applicable in contexts as various as theology, film study, and city planning. Most gratifying has been the interest in using its structural approach in educational theory and practice. In literary theory itself, the *Anatomy* seems most often regarded as a book of its time, a transitional successor to the New Criticism and precursor to later movements such as structuralism; in its "Polemical introduction" and "Tentative conclusion, the book in fact takes a rather similar view of itself. (For reviews and articles about *Anatomy* there is R.D. Denham's recent bibliography.) Nevertheless, it is possible that its perspective is due for a return to fashion someday, for I suspect that some of its "datedness" is due to four still-prevailing misconceptions. (1) The amount of space devoted in the text to myth and romance, and the absence of detailed examination of particular works or passages, implies the subordination neither of realism and irony to myth and romance nor of particulars to general patterns; such emphases are merely inevitable in a book with its kind of focus on universal formal principles. (2) The archetypes do not turn literature into a quasi-Platonic or Symbolist world of essences divorced from reality—though they do call into question the naive subject-object view of reality tacitly assumed by much criticism even in these poststructuralist times. (3) What the *Anatomy* says about value judgments is that they follow from structural knowledge and not vice versa, and therefore are not a part of criticism as such—not that they are necessarily invalid or that we can or should avoid making them. (4) There has been a recent tendency to deny the universality of any structural patterns in the name of "interpretation," to maintain that all forms and categories are merely projections of ideology. Conditioned, yes;

determined, no: such a vision seems to me itself ideologically conditioned and at any rate impossible to preserve from the consequences of its own determinism.

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Frye Bibliography

The list that follows continues the supplement to the Frye bibliography that was begun in the Winter 1988 issue of the *Newsletter*. Entry numbers, as well as cross references (C2, M10, etc.), either follow or extend the system of classification in *Northrop Frye: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1987) or they refer to bibliographic entries in the previous issue of the *Newsletter*. Readers are invited to send me copies of materials for inclusion in the next supplement. (Ed.)

A. Books

- A8. *The Return of Eden*. Chapt. 1, "The Story of All Things" rpt. as "Au sujet de Milton" in *POÉSIE* 46 (1988): 88-104. Trans. Claude Mouchard.
- A14. *The Critical Path*. Chapt. 5 rpt. in *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Univ. Presses of Florida, 1985. 252-64.
- A16. *Spiritus Mundi*. For the Italian translation of "Charms and Riddles", see D224, below.
- A17. *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature*. For the Hungarian trans. of five essays from this collection, see C13, below.
- A23d. *Shakespeare et son théâtre*. Trans. Charlotte Melançon. Paris: Boréal-Express, 1988. 272 pp. French translation of *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*.
- A24. *On Education*. Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1988. 211 pp. Hardcover. A collection of thirteen published and four previously unpublished addresses, along with an interview.
- Contents:
1. The Beginning of the Word (see D269)
 2. The Study of English in Canada (see D96)
 3. The Critical Discipline (see D123)
 4. Academy without Walls (see D121)
 5. Design for Learning: Introduction (see D131)
 6. The Changing Pace in Canadian Education (see C3)
 7. The Social Importance of Literature (see D175)
 8. The Day of Intellectual Battle: Reflections on Student Unrest (see I54)
 9. A Revolution Betrayed: Freedom and Necessity in Education (see I65)
 10. Education and the Rejection of Reality (see D208)
 11. Research and Graduate Education in the Humanities (see D182)
 12. On Teaching Literature (see C6)
 13. Criticism as Education (see C8)
 14. The Bridge of Language (see D264)
 15. Culture and Society in Ontario 1784-1984 (see I169)
 16. The Authority of Learning (see D279)
 17. Language as the Home of Human Life (see I178)
 18. The Emphasis Is on the Individual. . . ["A Conversation with Northrop Frye"] (see G20)
- A24a. *On Education*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1988. 211 pp. Hardcover. U.S. edition of A24.

C. Monographs

- C12. *Some Reflections on Life and Habit*, ed. A. F. Cassis. [Lethbridge, Alberta]: Univ. of Lethbridge Press, 1988. 47 pp. Wrappers. For annotation, see I214. For F's lecture, see pp. 11-32 of the monograph, which also includes a biographical sketch of F. E. L. Priestly and a list of his publications (pp. 33-47).
- C13. *Idő nélküli világ*, issued as a special supplement to vol. 9 of *Harmadkor*. Szeged, Hungary: Atila József Univ., 1988. 56 pp. Paper wrappers. A Hungarian translation of "The Shapes of History" (D29), "Symbolism of the Unconscious" (D109), "World Enough without Time" (D103), "Forming Fours" (D72), and "The Rhythm of Growth and Decay" (D36) from *Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature* (A17). Includes an introduction by Tibor Fabiny (pp. 1-2) and an afterword by Sándor Kovács (pp. 46-51).

D. Essays and Contributions to Books

- D29. "Toynbee and Spengler" rpt. as "A történelem alakzatai" in C13, pp. 3-9. Trans. Katalin Edit Molnár.
- D36. "The Rhythm of Growth and Decay" rpt. as "A növekedés és hanyatlás ritmusa" in C13, pp. 41-45. Trans. Márk Gyukity.
- D37. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2nd ed. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1989.
- D49. "The Archetypes of Literature" rpt. in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. Ed. David Richter. New York: St. Martin's, 1989.
- D72. "Forming Fours" rpt. as "Négysek kialakulása" in C13, pp. 30-40. Trans. Anna Fenyvesi.
- D103. "World Enough without Time" rpt. as "Idő nélküli világ" in C13, pp. 19-29. Trans. Anikő Buzsáki.
- D109. "Symbolism of the Unconscious" rpt. as "A tudatalatti szimbolikája" in C13, pp. 10-18. Trans. Katalin Fejér.
- D216. "The Search for Acceptable Words" rpt. in *Daedalus* 117 (Summer 1988): 251-72.
- D224. "Charms and Riddles" rpt. as "Incantesimi ed enigma" in *Revista di estetica* 25 (1988): 3-28. Trans. Francesco Guardiani.
- D233. The Hungarian trans. of "Conclusion" to *Literary History of Canada*, noted in the last issue of the newsletter as forthcoming, appeared as "Részletek a Kanada irodalomtörténete címu kötet második kiadásához írt utószövből" in *Helikon* 1-2 (1988) 166-73. Trans. Tibor Fabiny and Katalin Kürtösi.
- D291. "The Symbol as a Medium of Exchange." *Symbols in Life and Art: The Royal Society*. Ed. James A. Leith. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1987. 3-16. For annotation, see I171 in NFB.
- D292. "Critical Theory: Structure, Archetypes, and the Order of Words." *Current Contents*, 30 Jan. 1989: 14. See "Frye and the Citation Indexes," this issue.

K. Books

- K9. Hamilton, A.C. *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, forthcoming, Fall 1989. Approx. 368 pp.
- K11. Denham, Robert D. *An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988. 449 pp. Hardcover.
- Reviews:
Anon. *Reference & Research Book News* 3 (June 1988): 31.

Morgan, Eleanor. *Canadian Book Review Annual*, 1988: 4-5.

- K12. Balfour, Ian. *Northrop Frye*. New York: Twayne, 1988. xiv + 132. A “study of the whole range of [Frye’s] works.” Balfour devotes separate chapters to (1) the roots of Frye’s thought in Blake, (2) *Anatomy of Criticism*, (3) F’s views on romance, especially as presented in *The Secular Scripture*, (4) his understanding of the social function of literature and criticism, (5) his writings on Canadian culture, and (6) *The Great Code*. The mode of the book is basically expository, laying out F’s central theses about literature and criticism and so serving as an introduction to F’s work. Balfour, however, does glance at the relation between F’s thought and contemporary critical currents, and he defends F against the charges of aestheticism and antihistoricism.

L. Essays and Parts of Books

- L701. Adams, Hazard, and Leroy Searle. “Northrop Frye.” *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Tallahassee: Univ. Presses of Florida, 1985. 251-52. An introduction to the selection from *The Critical Path*, which is rpt. in this anthology. The editors point to the dialectic of the myths of freedom and concern in *The Critical Path* and observe that the book represents “the unfolding of a theory of the relation of literature to society and culture.”
- L702. Culler, Jonathan. “Beyond Interpretation.” *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981. 3-17 [7-9]. Argues that F’s “failure to question interpretation as a goal [of criticism] creates a fundamental ambiguity about the status of his categories and schemas.” “Though it began as a plea for a systematic poetics, Frye’s work has done less to promote work in poetics than to stimulate a mode of interpretation which has come to be known as ‘myth-criticism’ or archetypal criticism.”
- L703. Fischer-Seidel, Therese. *Mythenparodie im modernen englischen und amerikanischen Drama*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1985. In her interpretation of works by Williams, Beckett, Albee, and Pinter, follows F’s definition of *mythos* as characterizing the function of the formal mythological elements in literature.
- L704. Johnsen, W. A. *The Study of Literature as a Systematic Disciplinary Practice* [Elementary Subjects Center, Series No. 7]. East Lansing: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State Univ., 1989. 1-31 [4-13]. Argues that F’s work “gave us a shove forward, from kindergarten to the graduate seminar, in the direction of a real understanding of what disciplinary practice is specific to the study of literature and what social use that practice uniquely serves. The next step in following Frye is to further situate literary theory within a specific language, literature, culture by asking, What is the *content* of the “English” canon, what has been specifically excluded as well as included by this historical formation.” Examines the problems of literary study addressed by Frye, the answers he offered, and the limitations of his theory. Offers “a revision of Frye by means of the work of René Girard, which coordinates Frye’s work with the dominant theories that have outmoded him.”
- L705. Maioli, Galilea. “La Torre Abolita: una lettura di *Invisible Man* di Ralph Ellison.” *Il lettore di provincia* 16 (1985): 60–6. A brief, schematic essay that applies F’s theory of romance to Ellison’s novel.
- L706. Moller, M. *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 2 (1988): 156-61.
- L707. Ohmann, Richard. *Politics of Letters*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1987. 107-110. Draws upon F’s idea of the radical of presentation, on which he bases his theory of genres in the *Anatomy*, but believes that the relationship between the poet and the public, which is for F the foundation of generic criticism, can lead us only to “the crudest discriminations if it is abstracted from history.” In order to understand the form of certain nonfictional prose works, Ohmann seeks, therefore, to extend F’s radical of presentation to include the social context.

- L708. Searle, Leroy. "Afterword: Criticism and the Claims of Reason." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Univ. Presses of Florida, 1986. 856-72 [856-58]. Takes the 1965 English Institute program devoted to F as one point from which to view literary criticism in the past two decade. Notes F's immense importance in the 1960s in graduate programs, the uncertain reaction of the English Institute papers to his work, and his connection with structuralism. Argues that the most obvious change in criticism since the late 1960s "has been the reversal of perspective about what must be included in the conceptual universe of 'criticism.' Frye's recommendation of 'naive induction,' to try to find in literature alone an account of literary meaning, now appears not only naive but precritical."
- L709. Smith, Barbara Herrnstein. "The Exile of Evaluation." *Contingencies of Value*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988. 19, 21-22, 24-25, 27. Maintains that F's distinction between the history of taste and the structure of criticism is a false one because the evaluative practices used in the history of taste are a part of the systematic study of literature; and argues that F's remarks on comparative value judgments (e.g., the claim that Milton is more rewarding than Blakemore) beg such questions "as the relation of canonical and noncanonical texts in the system of literary value in eighteenth-century England."
- L710. Ullman, Pierre L. *A Contrapuntal Method for Analyzing Spanish Literature*. Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1988. Uses F's theories to examine nine works of Spanish literature. "The method expounded in the present volume depends on a rigorous classification of metaphors and motifs according to a scheme relying on the correspondence of the five modes of Frye's historical criticism to the five phases of his ethical criticism." The book includes revisions of three previously published essays, which were listed in vol. 1, no. 1 of the *Newsletter*: L691, L693, and L694.

M. Reviews

M14. NORTHROP FRYE ON SHAKESPEARE

- M14.31. Cole, Camille. "The Three Faces of Shakespeare." *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle* 2 August 1987. 700 words
- M14.32. Fletcher, Janet, et al. "The Best Books of 1986." *Library Journal* 112 (January 1987): 55-6. Brief notice.
- M14.33. Howard, Jean E. *Studies in English Literature* 27 (Spring 1987): 333-34. 325 words. Believes that much of what F says, e.g., his views on the structure of comedy, would be instructive for undergraduates. Says the "most productive thing about the book. . .is its opinionated and argumentative style": F makes a case about Shakespeare and so invites rejoinder. "There is a rhetorical bite and a critical intelligence on display in the work that just might help undergraduates sense that there is something more to literary study than getting either the 'facts' or the moral pieties down pat."
- M14.34. Lyle, A. W. *Review of English Studies* 39 (Aug. 1988): 434-35. Says the book has little interest for the Shakespearean scholar and the modern European student. But what the book does offer is "a series of brilliant demonstrations of how to combine teaching with delight. . . In all these pieces we hear the distinctive voice of a great teacher—witty, civilized, urbane, simplifying but never condescending, forceful but never dogmatic—showing us with irresistible enthusiasm how Shakespeare is a country of endless cultural pleasure in which we ought all to feel *naturally* at home. These lectures may help the uninitiated become settlers and confirm the *habitués* in their rights of citizenship."
- M14.35. Stephenson, James. *Library Journal* 111 (1 Oct. 1986): 97-98. Brief notice.

P. Miscellaneous

P199. White, John P., and Peter Quartermaine. "Frye, Herman Northrop." *20th Century Culture: A Biographical Companion*, ed. Alan Bullock and R. B. Woodings. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. 246–7. Brief biographical sketch.

Frye and the Comix

"Literature most deeply influenced by the archetypal phase of symbolism impresses us as primitive and popular." —*Anatomy of Criticism*, 107-8

The last issue of the *Newsletter* contained a half-dozen or so examples of Frye's having entered into the poetry and fiction of our time. We continue a (first-phase ironic) form of that column here by reproducing a bit of dialogue from Marvel Comics. In "The Pajusnaya Consignment," which appeared in the July 1984 issue of *The New Defenders*, the villain-hissing plot is interrupted by this little *entr'acte*.
Frame 1

[Walking across a college campus and followed by several students is the blue-faced Hank McCoy. Coming toward them is a man, slightly stooped, carrying a briefcase. Val, the archetype of the dumb blonde, has just made a remark about Treasure Island.]

Narrator: And on that literary note we turn to the missing member of The New Defenders, Hank McCoy, a.k.a. The Beast—as he holds forth to a gaggle of undergraduates following another of his fast-becoming-infamous college lectures across the nation.

McCoy: [to the students] —so then I thought, "Why not an Edward G. Robinson mask?"

Frame 2

McCoy: Er—excuse me for interrupting myself, but—who's that man? He looks familiar! Prof. Frye? Professor Frye??

Student: Him? That's Prof. Frye—dry Frye, we always call him, *heb, heb*—

McCoy: [doing a superman handspring and sailing through the air toward Professor Frye] 'Scuse me, folks! —Pardon me, Professor! Pardon my boldness, but I had to speak to you!

Frame 3

Prof. Frye: Good heavens! Please—!

McCoy: Professor, I just had to tell you that your book on Blake was one of the most brilliant pieces of criticism I've ever read. It really enabled me to see the visionary epic form as quite distinct from the Romantic! It opened up worlds to me!

Frame 4

McCoy: I particularly appreciated the insight into the apocalyptic imagination that the events of his era generated.

Prof. Frye: Why—I believe you do understand the thrust of my inquiry, young—er, man!

Frame 4

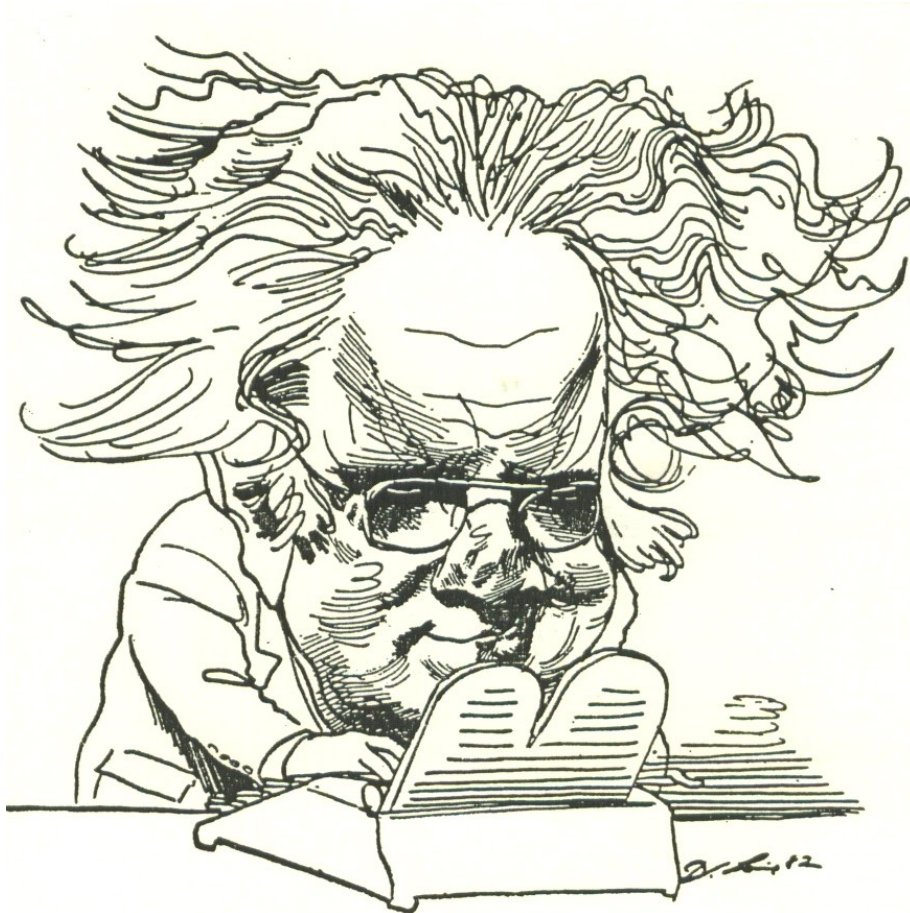
McCoy: [walking away from students and holding on to Prof. Frye's arm] Have you, I wonder, read Bloom's book on Blake and revolution?

Prof. Frye: Of course! But a political approach seems almost tangential. . .

Student: [now from a distance] Gee. . .!

Another student: Who'da thunk it—maybe there's more to Frye than we thought—?
Has Marvel Comics confused Frye with Schorer? Bronowski?

To receive a complimentary subscription to the *Northrop Frye Newsletter*, please send your name and address to Robert D. Denham, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24153



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