
Northrop Frye Newsletter

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Northrop Frye's 1942 Diary

Among the Frye papers at Victoria University are six holograph diaries which Frye kept, with greater and lesser degrees of zeal, during the 1940s and 1950s. At the beginning of his 1949 diary, Frye says,

In the course of my life I have made several efforts to keep a diary, & in fact have produced some better than average ones, notably one that ran from July 12, 1942 until the opening of term. They have always proved to be sizeable writing jobs, but have been useful in recording the contemporary stage of my imaginative development. This year I want to tackle the diary scheme again on a bigger scale, as a means of systematizing my life. I'm not working hard enough, and I feel that a diary would be useful, as my job is mainly thinking & writing, & I need some machinery for recording everything of importance I think of. As a moral discipline, too, it's important for a natural introvert to keep his letters answered, his social engagements up to date, and his knowledge of people and events set out in greater detail. There is hardly any phase of my life that a diary would not be useful for. Reading the morning paper & mail leads to recording the social side of my life, marking essays affords material for a possible book on how to write English. Conversation, even at Victoria, occasionally produces ideas; lectures are very productive of ideas I often just let go to waste. The thing is not to be alarmed at the miscellaneous character of one's life & stylize the diary accordingly, as I've tended to do. It should be a continuous imaginative draft, not itself a work of literature. I also hope it will be of some moral benefit, in passing a kind of value judgment, implicit or explicit, on whether I've wasted the day or not, whether my schedule is in shape, whether my unanswered letters are piling up, etc. The feeling of meeting my own conscience at the end of the day may cut down my dithering time. I should be careful, however, not to ascribe exaggerated values to secondary duties merely because they are duties & I don't like them, but always to put writing, thinking & reading first. (pars. 1-3)

Frye followed the blueprint given here for five of the next seven years, setting down his reflections on the day's work, recording his conversations with his wife Helen and with colleagues, reviewing his class lectures, planning his writing projects, analyzing his dreams, noting social events, and registering other daily activities. He was not, however, able to maintain the "moral discipline," never completing the entries for an entire year. The most extensive diary runs from January 1 to September 7, 1950. Entries for the 1955 diary end in March; for the 1952 diary, in April; for the 1949 diary, in May. The 1942 diary, referred to in the passage above, begins in July and carries through November. The 1953 and 1955 diaries are quite brief, the former recording the activities of

only a few days in March. Still, the diaries as a whole contain more than 250,000 words, and they provide an interesting record of Frye's life during the years that he was writing *Anatomy of Criticism*, editing the *Canadian Forum*, publishing scores of articles, writing in his notebooks, and teaching a full schedule of courses at Victoria College. What follows is a selection from the 1942 diary, reproduced with the kind permission of Jane Widdicombe, executrix of the Frye estate. Material in square brackets is an editorial interpolation. I invite readers who recognize people not yet identified in the notes to send me that information, or any other material that would help complete the annotations. Address your letters to Robert Denham, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24153, or e-mail me at denham@acc.roanoke.edu

July 12. [Sunday]

[1] A pleasant Sunday discovering how the other half lives: out with Beth & Ruth Jenking to Beth's boss's (say that five times quickly) palace in Port Credit.¹ Theatrical Hollywood black bathrooms, Second Empire bedroom, seven acres of dried-out vegetation (can't get men to manage it), a swimming pool, bar (uninhabited), etc. etc. First time in about four years for Helen & me to go swimming. Two very well-built women—Beth particularly most asymmetrical in a bathing suit. The boss, a mining engineer whose wife got sleeping sickness in Korea, belongs to the Bohemian Club in California (founded about 1880 & originally an artists' club: still has a summer camp where professionals give their all).² A tamarisk is a very delicate & lovely tree covered with tiny purple blossoms. Helen & I with our small white bodies looked inhibited & modest, as though born in a caul.

[2] Beginning to work my first piano programme, to consist of a Byrd group, some Debussy Préludes, some Bach (probably the 3-part Inventions, though I'd love to open W.T.C. [*Well-Tempered Clavier*] 2 again, perhaps a Mozart sonata, and some romantic, doubtless the Brahms Ballades op. 10. Debussy is really not so hard to play, at any rate not in the Preludes—he's for the most part a thoroughly practical pianist, and though when played he sounds like an ectoplasmic evocation, when worked at he feels like impromptu. I'm doing a group from the 2nd bk. now, *Bruyères* and *Les Terrasses*, going on to *Ondine* later. Langford says (I *must* remember to get him a wedding present) that even *Feux d'Artifice* isn't bad, but as long as I'm in an apartment I shall postpone it.³ The discovery of the impromptu effect is rather disenchanting, except in *Des Pas sur la Neige*, a powerfully disturbing and sinister piece of music.⁴ That's one of the few the programme of which I think I understand: steps on snow is a pattern of white on white, recalling Melville's great chapter on the symbolism of white as a "colorless all-color of atheism," symbol of the materia prima or substratum which is all colors & yet no color. Also the white fog into which Pym disappears in Poe's story—an underlying symbol in Henry James' *Golden Bowl*, incidentally—is connected with a curious black-and-white pattern there. I dare say Ben Nicholson's white-on-white abstract belongs too.⁵ As steps on snow make no noise, Debussy's irony rather bites its arse, but I don't mind that. It's the Rameau tradition, if it's true that Rameau predicted the eventual exhaustion of melodic combinations—one of the phrases of John Stuart Mill's accidie, by the way—in his treatise on harmony.⁶

[3] The French have consistently ignored the great forms, the sonata and the fugue, and have stuck to dainty descriptive pieces not to be taken too seriously. It seems to be an outlet for their crotch-bound paralytically caesured poetry. The pictorial tendency, often with a dance basis, is so persistent it should be worked out in some detail. The nihilist one too, referred to above & also in Ravel's

Bolero. Of course the Bolero isn't limited to that: its blow-up-and-bust orgasm rhythm is in *The Turn of the Screw*, but it's of perhaps wider application, to the crescendo-repeat-and-pounce technique of modern propaganda of all kinds, including advertising, and of the boom-and-crash periods of cyclic capitalism. The French are not a rhythmically-moving race—a Celtic-Latin alloy. Michelet says they hesitated between Rabelais & Ronsard & then chose Ronsard, but hesitation is impossible on such a point.⁷ Vulgar French is of course mere constipation disguised as Classical reticence & understatement: that's the exportable kind. The highlights of a musical history would probably be Couperin-Rameau fanciful titles, with some of Landowska's notes (lunatic but interesting).⁸ The attack on opera centring on the Gluck & the Tannhauser [*Tannhäuser*] fights: the impossibility of producing music while pretending to be a Roman (Revolution: Cherubini & Napoleon were both Italians): the 19th c. partition into a Provençal, a Belgian and a Pole (Franck is purely Teutonic and Chopin's music is entirely pictorial. His non-committal titles are a pose: one doesn't expect any other music to follow his Preludes. There's a closer link between Chopin & Debussy than one would at first think): the *opéra bouffe* parodies of the *Faust* type: revival of the Rameau tradition with Debussy & Ravel: Saint-Saen's [Saint-Saëns's] last-war journal. Do the French hate music? Why is it there's no lust of the flesh & pride of the eyes in it? no Renoir or Boucher or Hugo even? I'm getting cultural dysentery again. Hangnail is an incorrect form of angnail, a clear case of false etymology.

July 13. [Monday]

[4] Stiff from exertion yesterday. Helen is worse. We went back to Jenking's last night and everybody was very sleepy & tired & wished to hell we'd go. Some went: I did some playing but my left hand would hardly function. The old boy⁹ asked for Chopin & I played the A[insert flat symbol] Prelude. It's always been a theory of mine that the clock really strikes twelve in that piece but one beat is missed because the sound waves go in the wrong direction.

[6] A man in a pub evidently just returned from England said "I can't see religion at all." The word "religion" in that sentence is tautological, except that he was talking about Catholics.

[7] All minds are passive to impressions 90% of the time, and probably people are more affected by oracles than they admit. When I'm sleeping peacefully & Helen flashes a light suddenly in my eyes, my sense of confidence gives way in a curiously disturbing fashion and I lie awake for the next half-hour. The same thing happens when I give a confident tug on my shoelace and it breaks with a sickening jerk. On a larger scale, it must be the breakdown of the tentative pragmatic synthesis of experience which is the basis of confidence that accounts for the stunned paralysis following a catastrophe.

[8] I have always believed that to have several competing firms scrambling for my business on all lines was Utopia. A delight in this and a horror of any monopoly that could get along without me is my one real economic feeling. It has a censor in the fact that all my intellectually respectable friends are socialists & therefore it must be all wrong (no doubt because delightful: the feeling of jealousy of the gods leaks through every open pore of my imagination), but it persists. It's intensified now that business is all ganging up into a kind of super-monopoly, using the war for its entering wedge and adopting the motto of "help win the war by combining the maximum of inconvenience for you with the minimum for us."

July 14. [Tuesday]

[9] Thirty today. Many good resolutions, most broken already. I've come across a most remarkable katabasis, Gérard de Nerval's *Le Rêve et la Vie*, very useful for Blake. According to Symons he, when asked why he was leading around a lobster on a blue ribbon, said "because it does not bark, & knows the secrets of the sea." He carried around an apron string which he said first was the girdle Mme. de Maintenon wore to the first performance of *Esther* at St. Cyr, then the garter of the Queen of Sheba, then hanged himself with it.¹⁰

July 15. [Wednesday]

[15] Chapter 5 [of *FS*] is going fairly well. Got Yeats' Vision out of the library. Now Yeats is neither fool nor liar, & if I have received any help from spirits myself in the course of writing on Blake I am very grateful for it. But I'm sure he's all wrong. Submission to automatic writing is relaxation or passivity of the mind. If it's imaginative, it creates the spirits itself—Yeats himself has difficulty in not believing this. His spirits seem to be a rather dim-witted bunch of boobs and if he'd told them to go to hell, where they perhaps belonged, & worked his system out himself, it would have been clearer, surely. It may have been one such dope who persuaded me to get the book out of the library: such a dose of "mathematic form" is confusing at this point, and whenever he refers to or quotes from Blake, as he constantly does, Blake goes immediately out of focus like a pair of wrong glasses. He doesn't understand Blake at all: calls his prophecies unfinished. But he says he's figured out the M.T. [*The Mental Traveller*].¹¹

[16] I wonder why he doesn't? Thinking in racial terms is always a sign of confusion in me, but there is something Teutonic in Blake's almost sentimental receptivity to the infinite which Yeats' Irish mind can't grasp. Blake's links are German & American, apart from a few things like this wonderful de Nerval book.¹²

[17] Helen at work on a Standard article today—cut stems of flowers with a good sharp knife, she says.¹³ I made her cut the adjectives, which are a feature of bad writing: if they mean nothing they're filler: if they mean something it's an insult: "You're such a dumb cluck you'd probably go to work on it with a file."

July 16. [Thursday]

[18] Helen away to Hamilton: nothing more eventful than a haircut. Went down to the station for dinner & felt vaguely nostalgic. I wonder what sort of people find languages easy. Any I ever tackled let me in for fearsome complications of paradigms, idioms, irregular verbs, & syntax, followed, if at all, by looking fifty thousand words up in a dictionary. But then I'm bad at languages anyway: too careful & panicky—a curious combination, but it exists. Mother's deafness was made a lot worse by her habit of staring hard at people while they choked nervously through a sentence under the pressure of her lurid green eyes, and then saying in her terrific voice "Now I got it all but one word."

[19] Obscenity in language is an ornament except when it becomes routine, & in the latter event it approaches mere idiocy. The most horrid example of passivity & inertia of mind I know is Woodside's story of the soldier who gazed into a shell hole at the bottom of which a dead mule was lying, and said: "Well, that fuckin' fucker's fucked." (What sort of person is it, incidentally, whose feelings would be spared by printing the above as "that ____in' _____er's ____ed," or "that

obscene obscenity's obscenities"?) Probably much the same as the temperance crank reported in the *Star* (which is run by one & gives publicity to such vaporings) who said in effect "if they must have a beer pub (beverage rooms, they're called here) they should see that there's a good solid partition between the men's & the women's side," as though it were a urinal—as a matter of fact that's how Ontario thinks of it, as a slightly salacious necessity for the vulgar people who don't stay home. I remember being in Richmond Hill,¹⁴ which is as dry as a paper cinder, with [Bert] Arnold & asking where we could get a beer. The natives' expressions, confidentially coming out to meet the outside world or else shrinking correctly from it, were exactly what they would have been had we asked for whores.

July 17. [Friday]

[20] Beer with Bobby Morrison in the Babloor.¹⁵ He says Nick, the bald-headed waiter, was once a terrific ballet dancer. His friends, teamsters & what not, ribbed him about this until he put on a show for them after hours that knocked them speechless & stopped all ribbing. He says he knew Boris Volkoff when he was begging pennies at the stage door, & that he never got any nearer the stage. George, the brunet on the men's side, is a sergeant in the Indian service, on pension (pension & salary add up to about \$100 a week) & has a sort of country estate. All his friends are sahibs, nabobs, cheroots, pahits¹⁶ and the like. Kelly the manager was a prize-fighter & owned a string of race horses (with the picture of a famous one on the walls); Van the head waiter was in the army of occupation last war. Bobby doesn't like the Coldwell-McMann investigation into Gladstone Murray because they don't know anything about radio. Coldwell says it's true that some speaker (Earl of Bristowe I think) was withdrawn for Fred Allen? & McMann says that shows how our liberties are being curtailed.¹⁷ He says Cary Grant & Barbara Hutton's marriage drew a tabloid headline of "Cash and Cary." He says R.E. Knowles' son was jailed for 9 months for printing a story about necrophiles in *Flash*, then went into the Air Force & was killed. Interesting man, Bobby. He says at Newmarket they imported about 800 adolescent girls for a dance & at the entrance two sergeants were selling safes saying: "Here you are, boys, step right up & get 'em; you'll be needin' 'em tonight; here's your chance to get 'em cheap; get 'em while they're goin'." Next morning they rounded them all up again in a rubber salvage campaign. The girls ranged from 13 to 18, fighting to get in. When you think what the law says about under the age of consent! Jail, lashes, terrific curses from a judge gone all queasy in the belly: all the trimmings.

[21] I apologize to the spirits: it was a good idea to get Yeats out.¹⁸ Indirectly.

July 18. [Saturday]

[22] Hell of a holiday; sat around and panted, like Dol Common's father.¹⁹ Ned [Pratt], Earle [Birney], Esther [Birney] & Peter Fisher in in the evening. Ned dead tired, Earle with a broken ankle, Esther gone without sleep for a night or two. Lively party. More talk about Marcus Adeney & his magazine,²⁰ supported by I.B.M. which also supports *Think*.²¹ Earle wrote a twelve-page letter to the editors during his convalescence, mostly about dangling participles. Earle doesn't like Margaret Avison's poetry, which is a crime. Margaret told me once that she was picked up by some boys in a car who started to get fresh, whereupon she started reciting poetry at the top of her voice. "Say, are you nuts?" one of the boys asked. "No, I'm a genius," she said & continued to recite. "By God, I believe she is," they said, & she at once became an oracle: they asked her about God & the soul. That would do for a prelude or something some time. Well, anyway, Marcus & his magazine are in bad with Earle, Ned, Sirluck & to some extent [A.J.M.] Smith. Marcus is a pathetic example

of an adolescent fixation. In his teens he must have gone through the usual stages, building dream-castles, striking attitudes, receiving homage and developing through a brilliant career. But instead of settling down to a gruelling routine of reading & practice in writing, his image got in his own way, and here he is in middle thirties challenging men who have done the reading & the practice, posturing, scheming & sounding off exactly like a sixteen-year-old. Of course literature is strewn with such wrecks of the Selfhood—Gertrude Stein is an example—but these hole-in-corner cases, these unrecognized Emma Bovarys, are more pathetic than those who have accidentally broadened into charlatans. Eugene Cassidy is another, but cruder. I'd like to do a novel on a small-town genius *in vacuo*, by the way, ending up with a de Nerval finish: subjective apocalypse, objective collapse. That's really the kind of thing I've been trying to dope out all along.

[23] I bought my first hard liquor today: the process is typically Canadian.

[24] Every normal man has an alternative career he sometimes dreams about: [Walter T.] Brown told [Wilmot] Lane, with a touch of bravado, that he'd like to chuck his chancellorship & go back to building boats. I have music. Corresponding to this is the holding of an opposite mental state up as a reflector to the one one has. I'm a Blakean, a visionary disciple: hence the complement is scientific materialism & skepticism of the crudest kind. It used to tempt, or rather tease, but it's losing its appeal, which is perhaps unfortunate. But I'm always torn between feeling that the cock crows because he has a vision of the dawn, or because he feels stimulated by standing on top of a pile of horseshit.

July 19. [Sunday]

[25] Sunday. Didn't feel like working: too hot to move. Sat on ass reading Rimbaud & discovering what the French language can really do when it gets going.

July 20. [Monday]

[26] Writing spurt on the Blake. Chapter Four finished & in type. Went over to [John F.] MacDonald consulting on 2nd yr. Pass paper & dumped Lane's *Closed Book* on him (a viciously apt title, by the way).²² Then to collect Helen at Esther's [Esther Birney's], bugging around with the baby & going out for dinner. Set me back several hours, but finished in a burst of speed at eleven o'clock. I must cut down on beer in hot weather when I'm working: it makes me stupid & lazy. William is a charming baby, & I think Esther will be sensible about him. Most of my intellectual friends have brats. She said she took lectures from Karl Bernhardt in child-fluttering & asked when to "correct" a child. He said, "I am sure you did not intend to use that word, Mrs. Birney: the child is always right." Matter of terminology: the child is never "wrong": it is merely ignorant & unformed—still, Karl's a dope. Glanced over a book on nudism. I don't see the point myself: I don't wear clothes out of modesty. I wear them because they have pockets. Earle apparently has gone in for the straight what's-the-use-in-times-like-these line, which hardly seems intelligent enough for him. He has a very simple & honest mind, & tends to be attracted by the simplified clarity of extreme positions. Helps him as a poet, maybe.

July 21. [Tuesday]

[27] Chapter Five. The Blake takes all my time & energy: I shall never write a book under such conditions again. I've stopped playing the piano & stopped reading. And every once in a while I

suspect I'm writing shit. If the public doesn't like it I shall write a novel which shall earn me a million tax-free dollars, exclusive of movie rights, & lose me my job. The Verlaine-Rimbaud story would make a swell novel, as I dare say two or three thousand people have thought before. It could be combined with the de Nerval one.

July 22. [Wednesday]

[28] Eleanor in for dinner.²³ We discussed how it felt to write books and I said I had two audiences in mind: my friends that I could talk to, who inspired me to eloquence & short cuts, & the sort of barbaric academic who would probably read it, who made me repeat myself endlessly & pound the pulpit. A certain amount of gossip, of the kind Eleanor rather goes in for. Ray [Godfrey] & her social work: I said I thought social services were very healthy in their attitude, tolerant but not spineless, clean but not caustic or even antiseptic. A great many pretty, shiny, marcelled girls, waitresses & what not, do piecework on the side & come from homes where you'd prefer to breathe in a handkerchief.

July 23. [Thursday]

[29] Oh, God, when I finish this book I shall learn to compose music. I shall get my teeth fixed. I shall go to a horse race and bet on the horse that looks most like Aunt Dolly [Garratt]. I shall go to the Riverdale Zoo and sneer at the Great Crested Macaw (*Accius Pacuvius*).²⁴

July 24. [Friday]

[30] Eleanor [Godfrey] once more, calling at the office to take Helen & me out to the pub. George Beattie, who comes from a clerical family, talks about his god-damned priestly brother with gravity on his surplice, and has a little the *mauvais prêtre* look of Baudelaire, and a pleasant Catholic female exhibitionist who claimed to have an infantile uterus.

[31] I don't know why I have such a horror of animals. A recurrent nightmare is badly hurting an animal and then stomping it furiously into a battered wreck in a paroxysm of cowardly mercy. And that is to some extent what I'm like. Any intimate contact with any animal I dislike, & their convulsive movements give me panic. If I go to hell, Satan will probably give me a wet bird to hold. For one thing, they're afraid, & fear is something I'm an abnormal conductor of. There's a pigeon sitting outside my window now giving me pigeon-flesh.

July 25. [Saturday]

[32] Helen slept all afternoon and I got some books out of the library, determined to relapse into a couple of detective stories. I don't think that I have either a highbrow or a lowbrow pose about detective stories, but I don't really quite understand why I like reading them. I read them partly for the sake of the overtones. I'm not a connoisseur of them: I can never guess what the hell's up when the detective suddenly pulls out a watch and shouts: "My God, we may yet be in time!", shoves the narrator and half the country's police force into a taxi, dashes madly across town and finds the girl I'd placidly thought was the heroine all equipped with a blunt instrument & an animal snarl. I'm always led by the nose up the garden path in search of a false clue, and I never notice inconsistencies. And I always get let down when I find out who dun it. As I say, I like the overtones. A good style, some traces of wit & characterization, a sense of atmosphere, and a lot of

the professional intricacies of the game can go to hell. Yet I want a novel in that particular convention & no other. The answer is, I think, that I'm naturally a slow & reflective reader, & make copious marginalia. In the detective story I live for a moment in the pure present: I'm passively pulled along from stimulus to stimulus, and, ignorant & idle as that doubtless is, I'm fascinated by it. Yet I seldom finish without disappointment. The detective story is the opposite of the ghost story; the former is all intellectual resolution and poetic justice, the latter all emotional response & brooding evil. I'm also quite fond of good ghost stories, & a good ghost story is usually far better written than a good detective story—has to be, because of the importance of atmosphere. But I want to eat my cake & have it: I want a sustained emotional thrill, & when the wavering index stops & points the thrill goes out like a light. This is apart altogether from the highly implausible complications of alibis & time-tables and so on which usually disfigure the denouement. It's something to be carried off by sheer writing: I'm very fond of *The Moonstone*²⁵ although I think the denouement is a lot of eyewash. Organically new developments of the form are very rare. And why are all detective story writers, at least all English ones, stinking snobs? An offensive Jew almost always turns up; all radicals are long-haired heels; the hero or another detective is always a well-fed member of the British upper-middlers. Dorothy Sayers is the worst; Margery Allingham comes next. In the two I have, one, by Anthony Berkeley, contains a lot of pro-Conservative propaganda; the other, by John Dickson Carr, says the hero (another well-fed Tory: Carr seems to be a sort of Chestertonian Fascist Catholic) expected the manager of the hotel to be a Jew but found him belonging to the "island" instead. I suppose the ability to write a good detective story comes from a competence in complications and an intensive training in social conventions.²⁶ In a train wreck the most useful person present would probably be a woman, and an I.O.D.E. Past Mistress, or whatever they call them.²⁷ Or, if a man, a reactionary executive or a senior army officer. These are stereotypes, but so are detective stories. I should think a story in symposium form, with a Marlow [Marlowe]-narrator supplying the clues and his auditors all guessing shrewdly & wrong,²⁸ would have its points.

[33] Two difficulties in relating a detective story to a novel: (1) 99.9% of all the people who get murdered thoroughly deserve it. The rest are victims of homicidal maniacs who aren't allowed in detective stories. A motive strong enough to lead to murder is a justifiable one, nearly always. That's one reason for letdown, the feeling that the law isn't worth maintaining. (2) Most detective stories turn on a concealed clue: the character of the murderer. Hence character-analysis is out of place. For that reason I think the orang-utang of Poe was a good scheme,²⁹ though my students don't like it. There is no mystery in *Crime & Punishment*, as the whole point of the book is that Raskolnikoff has the only character in it capable of murder.

[34] The stimulus of the pure present I mentioned [par. 32]: it's the basis of movies and comic-strips & in fact nearly all stimulus-amusements. And a spoiled society playing with toys, like that of the 20-yr. truce, is a society which resents being reminded of anything that happened six months ago, and will elect a stupid politician on the strength of his wrong guesses: I mean, if he supplies a new stimulus. Hepburn knows that. He was so badly beaten in the Noseworthy & the other two by-elections he should have been finished. But was he? No: he instantly yells: "Where's the American navy? Their fleet's in hiding!" and everyone is so outraged at this they forget all about the elections.³⁰

July 27. [Monday]

[36] Terrific thunderstorm in the afternoon: over to Walter's at night: MacDougalls there. Arnold Walter is a heavy Teutonic bastard for whom small talk is difficult & very generalized discussions in very pedantic terminology about art & life in order. He feels that Spenglerian history-worship has been the ruin of Germany and is trying to fight it with a sentimental Catholic devolutionary version of the same thesis: everything clicked in the Middle Ages, Renaissance a staggering disaster but things held up until 1750–1800 with that awful revolutionary spirit & that dreadful democracy & that horrible Rousseauism. Romanticism was the complete buggeration of culture & things went from worse to worser until we came to Dadaism and that Pretty Pass we're in now. Meanwhile he composes music that sounds like bad Schumann. I tried some Blake on them: no fizz.

July 28. [Tuesday]

[37] Hot weather. Went to show, an English mystery, "Ghost Train."³¹ Swell. One of the things that interested me about it was the way the English can put the most typically English frozen-faced sourpussed jerks into a picture and preserve intact all their stupid social stereotypes, & then when you're just about to curse them for being such god-damned English jerks you suddenly realize the English have put them there. It's known, well-known in fact, as the "English Ability to Laugh at Themselves." I only hope it doesn't breed a self-conscious paralysis the way the discovery of their ability to muddle through did.

July 30. [Thursday]

[40] About this Rimbaud–Verlaine idea: I'd have to make something a bit more exciting out of Verlaine than he actually was. I get fed up with those people who act like bad little boys & finally collapse on the bosom of Mother Church, with a big floppy teat in each ear, and spend the rest of the time bragging about what bad little boys they used to be and how pneumatic the bliss is. Rimbaud stayed tough.

July 31. [Friday]

[41] I'd like to write a book on *How to Write Literary Cant*: I've had the idea for some time, but can't do more than just outline it now. I have my Shakespeare-Milton-Shelley thing somewhere. That would do as a preliminary exercise. Also a chapter on "The Art of Belittling"—source-hunting (plagiarism in a contemporary, & by inference in a classic), committee theories (Homer & Langland). Also one on "Manicheanism" or the art of reducing men & masterpieces to abstract nouns. Was Euripides a romantic? Was Lucretius, having no religion, a "truly great" poet (useful phrase in conversation if not publishing). Under belittling goes the bright young Strachey-Guedalla imitator with a target: New Statesman type.³² Good e.g. in Fausset's book on Tennyson.³³ "Dialectics": the evolutionary, clearing throat for century to utter a masterpiece; devolutionary, Catholic Spenglerian or Pretty Pass school (see above), etc. etc. Could do the sort of paragraph-shit + quote type of Shakespearean criticism. Introductory chapter on "Useful Words": note, essential, element, aspect; the Cautious Cough type of thing I cut out of my kid's essays.

Aug. 1. [Saturday]

[42] In the meantime I have to do that satire paper, but it should be simple.³⁴ [Here follows an outline of what Frye proposes to treat in his satire paper.]

Aug. 2. [Sunday]

[43] Sunday. Harold [Kemp] came with his girl friend. Late adolescence. She was “afraid” of us, and at first started to carry on a flirtation with him & ignoring us. Harold being a good friend of ours & an extremely sensible lad, she collapsed & sulked for the rest of the evening, apart from one or two remarks, addressed to him, but indicative of ownership to us.

Aug. 3. [Monday]

[44] Reading the *Four Zoas* all day. Blake *did* write a certain amount of shit, I’m afraid, and a certain amount of automatically produced drivel. Maybe not: maybe the F.Z. is just a draft & every letter of J [*Jerusalem*] goes into its fit place. But he *did* write shit, all the same.

Aug. 5. [Wednesday]

[46] Absolutely nothing has been happening lately. Conditions are ideal for work but I don’t seem to be doing any. Nevertheless, I want them to stay ideal. All evil is unnecessary; superfluous & evitable, as Thoreau called it.³⁵

Aug. 6. [Thursday]

[47] Lunch with Aunt Lily [Maidment] in the park. Aunt Lily’s programme for winning the war is worry, hoard, and boycott Italian stores. Dinner with Ruth Home in the evening. She showed me a swell book on Japanese prints, privately printed by some American amateur. Many of them are parodies of Chinese moral tales: it’s a witty, sophisticated, middle-class development. Dropped in to Godfrey’s after for a drink.

Aug 7. [Friday]

[48] When I start learning to compose I shall investigate modal harmony: I find myself quite baffled by the stupidity of musicians in ever dropping it. Arranged in order of sharpness, they are Lydian, Ionian or major, Mixolydian, Dorian, Aeolian or minor, Phrygian, Locrian. Lydian is a shade brighter than major, Dorian a shade more majestic than minor, Phrygian & Mixolydian, Phrygian especially, gloomy and plaintive. I dare say a lot of Bach’s minor music is really Dorian, a lot of Chopin’s Phrygian, a lot of Beethoven’s major Lydian, a lot of Mendelssohn’s Mixolydian. You see, it’s an interlocking scheme. A piece of B Lydian would have a key signature of 6#; in B major, of 5#; B Mixolydian, 4; B Dorian, 3; B minor, 2; B Phrygian, 1; B Locrian, none. I ran across a piece in G# by Sibelius (a set of tree-pieces op. I think about 85)³⁶ with 4#—G# Phrygian, in other words. Debussy’s *Hommage à Rameau* ends in G# Dorian. Wonder if a spectrum association would ever be made by some future Scriabine: Lydian red, etc. I’ve got more notes on this in Elizabethan music somewhere.

Aug 8. [Saturday]

[49] Mary Winspear in for dinner: still no certainty of a job in Alberta, but as usual she has hopes. The Eng. Dept. told her quite frankly they didn’t want her: they’re a small department and she’d “break up the gang.” Mary has adopted a curiously bitter & sterile cynicism about the war to cover some much deeper feelings. She says if the war stopped tomorrow they’d have to throw thousands

of planes into a junkpile & leave them for salvage in the next war, & isn't that amusing? The answer, as she knows damn well, is no. E.K. [Brown] has bounced back to Cornell, maybe to get his hat: A.S.P.W. [Woodhouse] has lost 30 lbs. & probably has a skinfold on his abdomen. I think a war job (she says Wees may put her in "ordinance" [ordnance], whatever that is) would be almost as good for her as for the army. I saw once where E.K. got his namesake Audrey Alexandra³⁷ into a P.M. speech: they'd left in a lot of prefatory harrumphing about her & her sublime thought, but cut the actual quotation of the s. t. [sublime thought]. She says George & Kitty won't hitch: one likes talking & the other parties; one's academic & the other Anglo-Saxon snobbery & upper-middle class.

Aug 9. [Sunday]

[50] Sunday again: the usual soul-crushing bore with Fulton Ave.³⁸ & the usual muddle of not taking a book out. Never do that again. I get isolated with the Star Weekly every time, and the amount of unreadable drivel that pulpy mass purveys is incredible. The Montreal Standard is infinitely better, even when Helen isn't in it.

Aug. 10. [Monday]

[51] Mary [Winspear] said the last person to have real intellectual guts was Bernard Shaw. I said writers were becoming a stereotype, a Brahmin caste, and I trotted out my anatomy theory. If I ever get around to writing a novel called *Liberal*, the motto for which will be Isaiah 32:8,³⁹ I want a sentimental weather-cocky Craggish hero with an anatomic "Jack" counterpoint and a fantastic "Regillus" one.⁴⁰ When my ideas are major, why is my execution so miserably stupid: is it just lack of practice? My opening scene with Kennedy is all right if he reinforces the liberalism. But it's so bloody Quixotic to think in terms of Dostoevsky and produce something on the level of *Cosmopolitan* or *Maclean's*. I'm getting fed up with it and all my wool-gathering dreary accidia.

[52] Bitched the day, celebrating because Ned [Pratt] liked the Blake. Show at night. Thurber's "Male Animal."⁴¹ Not bad: but Henry James was a bad dramatist and a master of Thurber's. The main theme,—a hot-headed undergraduate editor turning a piece of ordinary teaching routine into a crusade, is sound. The episodic clowning with his wife was a bit weak. But the Chairman of Trustees was too crude: one never gets them like that. They always turn up quoting Holy Scripture and John Stuart Mill on Liberty. A novel about a similar situation with the weakling's endlessly rationalizing would be all right. The other show was a bad English thriller based on fake "psychology": Flora Robson writing poison-pen letters because she was a spinster & her maternal impulse was frustrated.⁴²

Aug. 11. [Tuesday]

[53] Bitched the day again. Lunch with Norm Langford, who is gradually trying to piece his musical & theological interests together & make a pattern out of them, which, if he succeeds, will bring him very close to Blake. We discussed the failure of the R.C.'s [Roman Catholics] to make anything of the present situation, and I said I thought they'd overestimated the consistent importance of Latin civilization.

Aug. 12. [Wednesday]

[54] Bitched the day. Lunch with Peter Fisher & beer all afternoon. Discussed Blake: I've recorded the results in my notes. I seem to be suffering from schizophrenia. Helen had the fidgets too and I took her over to the island⁴³ for dinner.

Aug. 13. [Thursday]

[55] Bitched the day: finished ch. 6., what there was of it. My first sneeze of the hayfever season began at Yonge & McGill: I'd gone down with Helen to meet Harold [King] & Thornhill on Gould St. My mental life is a riot.

Aug. 14. [Friday]

[56] Bitching the day: the change of tense is not significant. I wish I knew what the hell was going wrong with me. Robins told me of a dream he had. He was in a committee meeting in which a proposal demanding large property qualifications for municipal offices was being discussed. Robins spoke long and eloquently against the measure. At the end a man rose holding a paper bag. "I agree with you absolutely, sir," he said. "My name is Ramsay MacDonald. Have a doughnut." This was 15 years ago.

Aug. 16. [Sunday]

[58] Sirluck's wedding reception. I hate all such affairs. I cannot make a remark worth throwing at a dead ape when I'm standing up. Took Helen down to Diet Kitchen afterwards for dinner.⁴⁴

[59] Events started early today. Helen was wakened at six or five or some equally esoteric hour by a bat that had flown in. Helen is deathly afraid of bats, because some fool woman once told her that bats got in women's hair and hung on. So when this creature appeared she dived under the bed clothes. My moral code is based on the central principle "Never do anything about anything until absolutely necessary." Particularly when, in the middle of sleeping off a hangover early Sunday morning, one is required to get up and chase bats. The subsection of my code dealing with bats is to the effect that if they can find their way in they can find their way out if one just leaves them alone. So I shut the creature up in the bathroom hoping it would find its way to the vent pipe: I couldn't see how else it could have got in. In the morning it had presumably done so. This evening a bat flew in the front window—whether a new one or an old one that had hung around all day we shall never know. I wanted to coax it back out the window, but it had got involved in the bedroom by that time and there was nothing to do but kill it. I hate killing things: its plaintive dying squeak will haunt me. The sparrows and squirrels in the park who flock around when we're eating know this, and they take no notice whatever of the most menacing gestures.

Aug. 17. [Monday]

[60] Hay fever much worse: yesterday I walked home through the ravine without a single sneeze. It's cool, though. Langford says Andy Lytle once called the penalty box the "sin bin."⁴⁵ Says a book on evangelical revivals pronounced one socially beneficial because it had decreased the number admitted to lunatic asylums for chronic alcoholism more than it had increased the number admitted for religious mania. His comment was that humanitarians are cold-blooded.

Aug. 18. [Tuesday]

[61] Hell of a day, close & muggy. “Devils, Drugs & Doctors” by Howard Haggard,⁴⁶ is crude & its view of history naive, & I know most of what I need of it, but it has some stuff I could use on my kids. [Here follows a long series of reading notes on Haggard’s book.]

Aug. 19. [Wednesday]

[63] Today the news was all about the Dieppe raid, & the Russian front also got a front-page splash. The fact that the Chinese stormed & captured Wenchow, a city of 100,000 on the coast, was recorded in a tiny box in the second section. I simply cannot understand this assumption that the Chinese front is of no importance or interest. It’s all the sillier when one realizes that the current of world history is now going through Asia & that Europe has ceased to be of any organic historical significance. China will probably have the next century pretty well to itself as far as culture, & perhaps even civilization, are concerned.

[64] Western historical dialectic gives me a pain anyway. God thought of us. He started us back in Nile slime & Euphrates mud, then the Greeks added reason, the Hebrews God, the Romans law and the British fair play, until here we are. Asia is irrelevant: it has no real history because it didn’t contribute anything to our great Western omelette. Phooey. In Sept. 1939 the New Yorker wrote a stentorous leader about a world of peace being plunged into war.⁴⁷ Two hundred million people, if that, go to war in Western Europe and that’s a world at war. Half a billion people have been fighting for years in Asia and that’s peace. I expected something better from the New Yorker.

[65] I read for the first time a story by Edgar Wallace, *The Shadow Man*⁴⁸ or something, which I found unexpectedly well written. There’s a creative energy in story-telling of a kind little short of major in him. It isn’t a good detective story because he’s got so much narrative skill he moves along from incident to incident & pulls the detective along: the detective doesn’t really manipulate the circumstances. But I suspect he’s worth looking into.

[66] Was told by someone that *Woman of the Year* with Katherine Hepburn was good, & went down to see it.⁴⁹ It was with a quite good propaganda film, *Confirm or Deny*.⁵⁰ Our propaganda films are surprisingly adult. The other show was about a quasi-Dorothy Thompson, who gave up a brilliant public career for the man she really luhved. She could speak every language in Europe but she couldn’t cook, & all the housewives in the audience gurgled. There was one good line, the moral of the picture, that women should be illiterate and clean, like canaries. All foreigners are funny. For small-town Midwestern isolationist consumption.

Aug. 20. [Thursday]

[67] I’ve been reading in Pepys, to avoid work. I can’t understand him at all. I mean, the notion that he tells us more about himself & gives us a more intimate glimpse of the age than anyone else doesn’t strike me. I find him more elusive and baffling than anyone. He has a curious combination of apparent frankness and real reticence that masks him more than anything else could do. One could call it a “typically English” trait, but there were no typical Englishmen then and Montaigne performs a miracle of disguise in a far subtler & bigger way. Pepys is not exactly conventional: he is socially disciplined. He tells us nothing about himself except what is generic. His gaze is directed out: he tells us where he has been & what he has done, but there is no reflection, far less self-analysis. The most important problem of the Diary & of related works is whether this absence of

reflection is an accident, an individual design, or simply impossible to anyone before the beginning of Rousseauist modes of interior thought. Cf. Logan Pearsall Smith on the language.⁵¹ There simply weren't the words for it, maybe.

[68] A man can tell me all about his tastes in food, clothes & women & tell me nothing. One remark about, say, Beethoven and I've got him: but if I sifted the stools of his subconscious for years I should learn only that, in common with all human beings, he possesses a sex instinct. And I can imagine a period like the Restoration so highly civilized that a socially disciplined member of it could actually send out a barrage of this generic information as a smokescreen. Why?

[69] Pepys knew perfectly well what he was doing: he wrote a book which he well knew to be an art-form. His motive in doing so is not obvious, because his *genre*, the diary, is not a branch of autobiography, as Evelyn's is.⁵² He was a supreme observer, making himself a visionary, *se faire voyant*, as much as Blake or Rimbaud. And he knew perfectly how effective & oracular the random is: his camera keeps on clicking after he gets in bed with his wife because he knows better than to shut it off. A real & artistic passion for observation in itself with no attempt at a creative follow-through is rare, but it exists. And there's a riddling, gnomic quality in the photograph absent from the painting. When I try to visualize Pepys I visualize clothes & a cultured life-force. I have a much clearer vision of the man who annoyed Hotspur or Juliet's Nurse's husband. I feel that Pepys makes the dead eerie and transplanetary, not our kind of species at all. He does not observe character either: I can't visualize his wife or my Lord. Even music he talks about as though it were simply a part of his retiring for physic.

Aug. 21. [Friday]

[72] Connected with this is a sketch somebody should do sometime on the personal background of English literature: what families lived where, who was related to whom, who patronized whom. William Herbert Earl of Pembroke; connected with the Herberts, George & Lord H. of Cherbury; connected with the Countess of Pembroke who was Sidney's sister—that sort of thing.

[73] [Peter] Fisher claims that the reason Westerners can't get any charge out of Buddhist monks is that the average Western scholar to them is not a seeker of wisdom but a scribe: it's a question of class. Ella Martin & Gordon Webber were in last night.

Aug. 23. [Sunday]

[75] Stayed in bed all day: even so not a good night. Read Jane Austen's *Love and Friendship*, a skit which proves to me, as none of her novels prove, that she is an important & not merely an intelligent & amusing writer. Jane is a blind spot to me: I enjoy reading her for relaxation and I admire her skill and ingenuity, but I never feel much sense of cultural infusion, of the kind I require from a great writer. This boils down to the fact that I have nothing to say or discover about her, & so take her merits on faith. In the same volume there is a "History of England" on the *1066 and all that* plan which contains a takeoff of the Jacobitism of sentimental romantics, of the kind also ridiculed in George Borrow.⁵³ I can't forgive Jane for the vulgarity and Philistinism of *Mansfield Park*: if she hadn't written that absurd book I could enjoy her without reservations. But her explicit preference for her dim-witted Fanny to her intelligent and sensible Mary Crawford means that in the long run she accepted her county families, and had no positive basis for her satire of Lady Catherine or Collins or Sir whatsisname [Walter Elliot] in *Persuasion*. In the long run she stands for the "dismal

& illiberal,” for the exclusion of the free air of culture & intelligence. *Mansfield Park* gives her away—well, it gives the whole 19th c. away.

Aug. 24. [Monday]

[76] Our fifth wedding anniversary but even so an irritating day. Discovered at Britnells⁵⁴ that Freud has been banned in Canada. Helen was restless & we went to the show: two irritating pictures. In one a D.A. accused the wrong man of a murder: his wife, the accused’s aunt, nagged & bullied her husband, plundered his office and lied extensively about it, seized her suspect and tortured him to exact a confession, which he gave finally in the usual slapdash way of a sloppy movie. I suppose this woman, who, instead of being well strapped and locked in her room, was finally justified on the ground that “feminine intuition” is infallible, is more escape for housewives. There’d be more point to it if women were not so spoiled already. “Intuition” as generally understood is a mental short cut employed by the unintelligent, who are no doubt pleased to be told that it’s superior to intelligence.⁵⁵

[77] People are human beings first and men and women afterwards. Their bodily functions are different; their environments are different, though the difference in this century has been greatly decreased. So there may be generalizations of the “men are like *this* whereas women are like *that*” kind which may have some hazy and approximate truth. I don’t know. Men’s conversation is more abstract & less personal than women’s, but whether that’s an accident of training or an essential sexual trait I don’t know. I do know that the kind of mind that thinks along these lines of facile antitheses is a dull & tiresome mind. It betrays a fixation on sex-differences which is mere adolescence, & in an adult unhealthy.

[78] In literature I find the war of the sexes a most unheroic theme. I’m enough of a disciple of Blake to believe that the domination of the female will is evil, and therefore I just don’t find the wife-beats-husband theme funny. James Thurber does, or pretends to; Bernard Shaw does, & pretends not to, the comic strips do & the movies do. I’m sorry, but I don’t. I don’t find Mrs. Pinchwife’s final line funny;⁵⁶ I don’t find the Venus of *The Merchant’s Tale* funny; I just don’t find any irresistible female funny. And it’s not funny now because it’s not the inverse of a convention. True, women’s labor is exploited more than that of men, & the various prostitute rackets that are allowed to run, notably the alimony, the “breach of promise” and the “rape” rackets, are superficial compared to that fact. But there is no real subjection of women today of the kind that makes *Bringing up Father* a criticism of life. I don’t want male authority reestablished: I just want the whole silly business of inferior sexes and self-conscious “equality” of sexes dropped & forgotten about. It’s no longer amusing, if it ever was.

Aug. 26. [Wednesday]

[81] I don’t know why I keep reading this idiotic Braybrooke Pepys, for which Everyman’s Library obtains money under false pretenses.⁵⁷ It’s not only heavily expurgated but some of the most important musical references are left out. For the expurgation there is only the faint excuse of 19th c. publication and the facts (a) that milord B. [Braybrooke] was in the Pepys family (b) that he was presenting a historical rather than a literary document. That Everyman should ask \$1.50 for his croquette is nonsense. I’d like to write an article on Everyman prudery sometime. Geoffrey of Monmouth; the translator’s smug sneer on p. 248.⁵⁸ Malory, according to Blunden. The Gulliver’s Travels “For Young People” has been modified. The Pepys is the worst, of course, for B.

[Braybrooke] has even been allowed to tamper with the family text to the extent of printing “prostitute” for “whore,” on the three-point landing principle: I remember the New Yorker’s account of a play, I think Sean O’Casey’s, where Lilian [Lillian] Russell was billed as a “Young Whore.” Several papers printed it as a “Young Harlot” (more cushion for sensitive moral fundamentals in two syllables). One “blushed prettily and whispered ‘A Young Girl Who Has Gone Astray.’” One said “with Miss Russell and the following cast.”

[82] This combined with the banning of Freud makes me wonder if we are in for a wave of prudery as a defence against the licentiousness of war. That is, it puts me in a gloomy state of mind in which I wonder. I hope we’ll continue the tendency to greater frankness and less bother about it which the popularity of, say, *The Grapes of Wrath*, would seem to indicate. But as people instinctively do the sillier things, there’s a danger of a huge wave of sullen prurience pouring over us again, welling up from the deep & bitter hatred of culture in our middle class: especially, I think, the women and the women-dominated males. The sexual obsessions of our civilization are not settled yet, by a long way.

[83] Magda [Arnold] was in and told us about her rats. Seems she picks them up and shoves a hypodermic needle full of adrenalin into their peritoneums, and they droop. Proves the James-Lange emotional theory wrong, the theory of reducing all emotions to “fight or flight” (anger & fear) wrong, and the theory that the physiological states of all emotions are the same wrong. The last always did sound pretty silly: Cannon, in 1915, thought it up.⁵⁹ Bitter opposition from the head of the pharmacology department, who saw himself on the skids, evidently, but she got her Senate Chamber.

Aug. 27. [Thursday]

[84] I resolved today to (1.) keep up my diary (2.) read all the books I own, before reading much else (3.) write Blake (4.) practise Byrd. Saw Beverley Burwell, who looks taller & older & tells me Jerry Riddell has gone to Ottawa for {censored}.⁶⁰ He’s pessimistic about the war. Bickersteth’s letters home are mimeographed & circulated & contain many vicious comments about the War Office: full of antiquated crocks hanging on to their salaries & avoiding being pensioned off on various pleas of emergency. He seems to feel that the German account of Dieppe as a fozzled invasion attempt was correct: I’m not sure: it’s too symmetrical. Of course if it proved only that Canadians are not cowards it didn’t prove much.⁶¹

[85] Lunch accidentally with the Langfords & [John] Line, discussing the negative nature of evil. Line not in too good form: scared of me, maybe. Then Norman [Langford] came in in the evening with his long-legged wife. He tells me that Giesecking was one of the few people who successfully snubbed Bickersteth. He had lunch at Hart House & then the Warden casually mentioned that their Steinway was a very good piano, if, uh—. The great man went to it, played a scale & an arpeggio, tapped one note for the repeating action, and then said: “Ja, good piano!”

[86] I remember Woodhouse once telling me that Will once gave a series of Room 8 lectures. One was on Pascal & Lafontaine, a weird combination he did nothing to ameliorate. At the end he proudly boasted to [Herbert] Davis that he had performed a masterpiece. Then he gave an account of writing it the day before, sitting before some papers & having nothing emerge until 11:00 p.m. or thereabouts, when he suddenly began to write furiously. “Why is it, Davis,” he spluttered, “why is it that I can only work under the most terrific pressure? Is it because I’m so *damm*ed phlegmatic?”

Aug. 28. [Friday]

[87] Discovered something called Allergitabs, which make me feel funny but seem to work. Picked up that souse George Beattie at the pub & then went to a kosher place on College & Spadina, George making love furiously to Helen all the way. Then to Ruth Jenking's where we pounded hell out of a couple of Mozart fantasias—amazing things he wrote in 1791 for music boxes, his last year when he was picking up anything he could get in the way of a commission.

Aug. 30. [Sunday]

[89] Out to Fulton Ave., finding Roy [Kemp] very gloomy about the draft. The draft is getting rather horrible, with this hypocritical pretence that they're only calling "single" men, including all men married since summer 1940 who now have businesses & small children coming along. Our three noisy female neighbors are getting it: one husband in army, one in air force, one category E with a game knee expecting to be re-examined and shoved in.

Aug. 31. [Monday]

[90] Speaking of war, I sometimes feel that women are bad for morale: they go in for catastrophe, funerals & oracles. They're the sex of Cassandra, and they're extremely short on humor. They hate obscenity, an essential part of humor, and the female magazines never go in for it. Cartoons, jokes, breezy comic stories, have little place in the *Ladies Home Journal*. It isn't just mediocrity: the male magazines for mediocrities always have humor: but what the average woman wants is something maudlin to attach her complex of self-pity and I-get-left-at-home and my-work-is-never-done and nobody-appreciates-it-anyway to. There's something morbid about the domestic mind which weeps at weddings & gets ecstatic over calamities. During the war they keep making woo-woo noises prophesying large drafts & taxes with no we'll-get-along-somehow reserve. Partly of course because they're not in it. If people only believed in immortality & a world of spiritual values! But it might only make the war more ferocious.

Sept. 1. [Tuesday]

[91] Spent the morning bugging around with little odd jobs. Saw Archie Hare, who looks haggard. My druggist tells me that a new drug act has been passed preventing several drugs, including codeine and phenobarbol [phenobarbitol], to be sold over the counter without a doctor's prescription, thus greatly reducing the effectiveness of such potent medicines as the one that's helping me. Sounds like a medical stranglehold on their apothecary enemies of 3000 yrs. There may be a lot to be said on both sides, but doctors today are such ignorant barbarians, & their sense of heresy is priestly rather than scientific. They are in fact the modern priests, supported by women, with the advantage over the priests of being able to tickle their bellies as well as ask them about their sex lives. They shouldn't win too complete a victory over anyone.

Sept. 2. [Wednesday]

[92] The radio is going: why is so much dance music thin, wailing, dismally melancholy and wistful, like a train going through a forest at night? Is it intended to reproduce the complaining of the

libido? Certainly it's aimed at below the waist, & suited to a dimly lit dance hall with adolescents shuffling up & down the floor rhythmically rubbing their genitals together.

[93] I'm acquiring too many vulgar expressions, like bum's rush for W.C. & cowflop for female wallflower.

Sept. 3. [Thursday]

[94] Day buggered by being stood up for an hour at lunch by George Beattie. He outlined an interesting family situation: father an upright if narrow Plymouth Brother, who according to his lights has tried to be a good father, is detested & ignored by his family, especially a daughter who yanked her mother away from him. Another son is an Anglican priest. When he comes to town he finds that only his unrighteous souse George really respects the old boy, sees what he's driving at, and will go to church with him.

[95] Anniversary of the war, so we're told: see Aug. 19. It occurred to me a short while ago that I never really considered the possibility of our losing the war. I mean by that that I had never sat down and figured out how I could conscientiously go on living if we did. I'm beginning to understand how paralyzed, hopeless, hag-ridden and stupefied the average intellectual anti-Nazi on the European continent must be—or rather have been.

Sept. 4. [Friday]

[96] Mary Louise & Peter got married today, by Betty [MacCree's] father, who did an awful job but let me out. I hate wedding receptions, & the only thing the service reminds me of is that "for fairer, for loather" was the original form of "for better, for worse." Helen probing to see how much Jerry's house would cost us to live in: too much. Helen's been restless lately: the war gives her claustrophobia & she has the feeling that everyone else is doing something more interesting. Jerry [Riddell] going to Ottawa to take a government job, Eleanor being mysterious about a career in advertising or publicity or something & taking a trip,⁶² Mary [Winspear] going out to Edmonton to be Dean of women, Beattie collecting a salary of \$6100 a year: with my hopelessly non-essential background she feels that everyone's playing a game she's left out of.

Sept. 5. [Saturday]

[97] Listened to Information Please programme last night. I wonder what the popular appeal of that programme is based on: I think partly on the enormous prestige enjoyed by a man who is well-informed on non-controversial subjects. The amount of actual erudition Kieran gets a chance to display is not impressive, as such things go, but such things go a long way, like the polysyllables of Goldsmith's schoolmaster [*The Deserted Village*, l. 213]. By means of it I succeed in scaring the shit out of [Bobby] Morrison & Beattie, who make three times the money I do. One doesn't realize the immense social prestige of the university until one gets a little outside it. Speaking of them, I wonder if the dry rot at the basis of their lives is significant of an economic change in which the bustling, successful, money-making, super-selling young man is no longer a pure clear-eyed Alger hero but an embittered souse.

Sept. 6. [Sunday]

[98] A cousin of Helen's living in Forest dropped in. Interested in music, & apparently planning to teach it. Asked her what she was working on & she said "Grade Ten." Probed farther & she said "Beethoven." "One of the sonatas?" I suggested. "Guess so," she said. She has a voice like a kitchen stove falling downstairs. I can't understand the superstitious & barbaric notion in this country that it's sissified to cultivate an accent. The idea that correct & well-modulated speech is a fundamental cornerstone of culture doesn't occur to my students, many of whom make noises like the cry of the great bronze grackle in the mating season. As it isn't part of one's education, I can't teach it: I'm just the best friend who won't tell them. The Yankee method of talking through the nowse and hawking like a fahghowrrn is very widespread; some whine like flying shells, some mutter like priests, some chew & gurgle like cement mixers. Ten minutes of frank talking to this girl and I could raise her several notches in the scale of culture: she's a bright kid and can take things on.

[99] The problem has two complications. One is the Victorian native Canadian, i.e. American, prejudice that an educated & cultivated accent is an English one. I've been told I have an English accent because I speak standard American. I remember trying to get Harold [Kemp] at the age of twelve to say "I've got ants in my pants, I can't dance": he protested violently because he thought I wanted an English a, or what he thought was an English a. I said I wanted a flat Canadian a, but I did not want *his* a, which defies all phonetic analysis and sounds like an unsuccessful attempt to imitate a cockatoo. To Victoria, anyone who cultivates an Oxford accent is a hypocrite, a sissy, a snob & probably a Fascist. The fact that it is far better to cultivate an Oxford accent than not to cultivate an accent at all is something that just never penetrates. The other is a hazy pseudo-democratic impression that correct speech is stuck-up. A great deal of what Mencken calls the vulgate is produced by a deliberate & conscious attempt—this, I perceive, is drifting into an article, & I'd better make it one. Written for the Forum as "Reflections at a Movie."⁶³

Sept. 9. [Wednesday]

[102] Stayed in bed all day: the process doesn't seem successful, as I'm worse off than ever. Went out last night to Fulton Ave.: poor old Harold [Kemp] still finds the Air Force tough going & Roy [Kemp] is still worried.

Sept. 10. [Thursday]

[103] The hay fever seems to have passed its meridian: maybe I'm just getting asthma & I shall regret ever having given up hay fever. Got check today, the incredible sum of \$165.11: I thought with the new tax it would be far less. So we went to the Eglinton, meeting Saunders on the way, who said he thinks Jenny's job is some form of counter-espionage (he said "National Research Council" to me), to see a new Dashiell Hammett, "The Glass Key."⁶⁴ Beautifully paced, very well acted, directed & photographed: a swell tough and utterly amoral movie about a successful, ruthless & quite likeable Tammany gangster. A curious color-cartoon, on the invasion of Holland, done in puppets.

Sept. 11. [Friday]

[104] Restless & at a loose end, besides being full of shit owing to my giving Helen breakfast in bed & lying down to eat it with her. At a loose end, bitching the day apart from a memorandum for the Retreat discussion on the 27th, which [Walter] Brown has asked me to take. I had Jessie

[Macpherson] to lunch yesterday to see if she had any ideas about it: she hadn't. I don't know why I've written down "at a loose end" twice, unless it's a Freudian wish that I had one.

Sept. 12. [Saturday]

[105] Down to collect Helen & we went to downtown Diana's: absolutely jammed with females.⁶⁵ I never knew there were so many women in the world, or so few men. I felt a little like a stud: if I'd been in uniform I'd have felt completely so. There's a curious sensation about being surrounded with so much female flesh that's hard to analyze. Also on the street, but not quite so bad there. If the war lasts long enough they may start drafting civilian males for stud duty: they're very near it in Germany now and we generally do what Germany does a year or so later. I'd be category E for the Army, but I'm afraid 1-A for studding. The sedentary are the most sex-ridden of all men, despite a popular superstition to the contrary largely invented by them. The Kings had lunch with Brough Macpherson today, who is leaving for U.N.B. A cheap & lousy second-hand bookstore has opened on Yonge & Charles. I went all through it to the back, where they had a shelf of semi-erotic books on what they refer to as "sex harmony" and emerged with a Hanford Milton Handbook for 15¢.⁶⁶ It's about time to read it.

[106] Possible novel situation: man's mother dies when he's about 17 & entering college. Father marries again, has a daughter & dies himself when the son's about 20. Widow wants to remarry & get rid of the kid, so the man marries earlier than he would otherwise have done, around 22 or 23, & brings up his half-sister as a daughter. On second thought, the situation would be quite normal.

[107] I wonder how far-reaching the stopping of travel & touring will be: an enormous amount of our economy was tied up with it: in the Maritimes, for instance, the roads were a solid line of piss-and-postcard places between villages, where they thickened. Unsound economy, certainly, but wiping it out is a revolution of no small proportions. The effect will be healthiest in Quebec, I think, which was freezing into a Maria Chapdelaine pose of ye olde picturesque rutting & rooting queynte paysan, with of course the Fascist Catholic twist—the Vicious circle of church, pub, field & kitchen.⁶⁷

[108] I've been brooding about that movie: I have to do more under the Sept. 6 title.⁶⁸ Friends of democracy are seldom frank about its failings & I don't know if anyone has researched the persistence in it of the Aristides complex.⁶⁹ The great heart of the people can put up with conscientious, honest, efficient government just so long and then they arise in their wrath and demand some form of picturesque graft or colorful tyranny. Recently the Socialist mayor of Milwaukee, who had served his city faithfully for years, was defeated by an obviously incompetent crooner. Now that "Glass Key" picture showed that it's gangsters, not saints, who attract fanatical loyalty and are impossible finally to crush. Cf. the frank support of child labour in "The Great McGinty":⁷⁰ another film along much the same lines. As compared with the intellectualized & comparatively superficial analysis of a Fascist type in Citizen Kane, I think that's an important thing for the films to do.

[111] I often wonder about intuitive racial-stereotype thinking: a lot of it's balls. For instance, there's a big good-natured German in Moncton called Lichtenberg who had been a peaceful, thrifty, industrious contractor there for thirty years. For two wars the local Gestapo have cut their teeth on him: when the news is bad or they get tired of reading spy stories they'd go up and practise on him. Recently the Gestapo combed his whole house over, in response to some silly anonymous "tip," &

one of them found two large knobs in a dark closet. “Aha!” he said, stepped into the closet & gave one a twist, thinking of course it was a private transmitter set. It was an extra shower he’d installed. Incidentally, he’s a naturalized Canadian citizen, but married before that, so his wife, who belongs to one of the oldest Maritime families, is an enemy alien. Well, Dad’s friendship for Lichtenberg has come in for much unfavorable comment in that stinking little kraal Moncton, & the stinkers point out gleefully that “Frye” is really a German name, & that I look just like a German. It’s a beautiful theory, only it just happens to be wrong.

[113] I’d like to do a New Yorker type of story with echoes from a club like our S.C.R. [Senior Common Room]. Krating: “. . . you see it isn’t the Espinani Jews,⁷¹ the real Jews, that are the trouble; it’s the Polish kind that cause . . .” “. . . So when the inspectors arrived they found the coal all stacked up in the bathtub. You see, you can’t just . . .”

[114] Alice Eedy was in tonight: she’s been doing social service work & seems depressed by various anomalies about the situation of our forgotten men.

Sept. 15. [Tuesday]

[115] Called for Helen & took her to see “The Magnificent Ambersons,”⁷² highly recommended by some people including Eleanor [Godfrey], but I found it a blowsy and turgid piece of Byrony. I’ve been writing out a paper on William Byrd,⁷³ which is taking too much time but seems to be inspired. If I’m going to do movie articles I should get Leo Rosten’s book on Hollywood: he’s the Leonard Q. Ross of Hyman Kaplan.⁷⁴ Peter Fisher was in in the morning with a hint he might be going overseas. Discussed German-Russian war as based on a Rajas-Tamas⁷⁵ clash of Albion & millennial ideals: both proximate apocalypics.

Sept. 16. [Wednesday]

[116] Dull morning on committee for admissions: one of Jessica Lambert’s: her father being referred to as a refugee. Gabriel Wells, the New York bookseller, has two Coleridge notebooks, offered to Yale at a terrific price they won’t pay. Kay [Coburn] says they’re probably stolen, as the Coleridges had a book thief for butler once. Down on streetcar with Hugh McTaggart, now at Honeywood, who talks as though he had a brass plate stretched across his windpipe.

[117] Ideas for article on movie music:⁷⁶ Orson Wells’ incessant woo-woo noises, a dull series of drum rolls & trombones slithering from solemn burp to gloomy blop. Most incidental music is just “flourish,” “sennet,” “exeunt with a dead march” stuff, a bag of tricks: “sound effects,” in short. Oscar Levant describes the “sweep” (Aug. 29)⁷⁷ & feels that the producer always wants tutti, like the parvenu who wouldn’t have any second violins in his orchestra. He quotes a Russian film (Shostakovich) opening with a lone piccolo, followed by a flute. This indicates lack of enterprise in experimenting with timbre.⁷⁸ Hollywood can’t use woodwinds: they can’t shiver their timbers: only brass. The piano’s very effective percussion tone they leave out: they overdo harps & leave out tom-toms & gongs even for horror films. Conventional orchestra background for everything: no regrouping. Motto from Ecclesiasticus. Nobody listens, so no leitmotif, an obvious point, one would think. Quotation, of course, & plagiarism. Uniformly heavy scoring: all harmonic tricks & a general air of having found the lost chord, mostly the dominant discords. Why not long stretches of scenery & music for real drama, towards an operatic movie? Because nobody listens. This all the more essential as real music has dropped behind. There’s no amusing popular song: just bawling &

nasal honks. Swing is stuck on a treadmill of rhythm, even Duke Ellington. Might recall “motion picture moods” of Rapee as showing plagiarism basis. Often more effective. Farmyard Symphony vs. Fantasia, use of Beethoven Pastoral. Even good tricks, high pedal-point on Snow White, 19th c. What I mean by vocal music is that musical comedies can’t last. Songs are painful to photograph, singers even more so, & the camera is too relentless in its pursuit: musical comedy plots are pretty fragile. Moncton & O Katherina. Need more Gershwins? Might explain about “syncopation” of jazz. If chromatic harmony is played out the movie is the place for new experiments, not the concert hall. Of course there is a good deal going on, the train-boat sequence in *The Reluctant Dragon*. Oh, we’re getting there: that should be enough for a necessarily rather vague & ill-informed article. After all, I don’t know anything about montages or pan shots or fadeins or the rest of the patter.

[118] The Garretts dropped in suddenly: Helen’s a week late with the curse & was asking my Helen for advice. Apparently you have to know what to ask for at the drug store: if you just ask for help they can’t do a thing. The hands of the law are as clean and pure as the devil’s arse hole: at any rate in its attitude to abortion & its support of the various prostitute rackets, alimony, breach of promise & rape.

Sept. 17. [Thursday]

[119] Another point about “what the public wants” is that there isn’t anywhere else for a young couple to go. Hence out of sheer self-respect they can’t allow themselves to be bored. The dollar they paid to get in is a hole in their expense money: they’re not going to walk out of it & leave the dollar behind. Besides, what else are they to do with their evening, read Shakespeare? There’s no use telling them to practise the art of boredom & improve their taste. The situation is there & nobody can do anything about it—I guess that’s got it.

Sept. 18. [Friday]

[120] College creeping back: for the first time I don’t want to see it open. I didn’t get enough of the Blake done. Faculty reunion dinner tonight, very dull. There’s going to be occupational therapy for the girl patriots, there’s a lot of pro-Vichy propaganda in Quebec, arts colleges are now being closed up right away—ho hum. Havelock back—his Socrates will run to two volumes.⁷⁹

Sept. 19. [Saturday]

[121] Helen down with a cold. Bust my glasses for the first time in eight years, which vexed me, as Pepys would say.

Sept. 20. [Sunday]

[122] Staggered around with my glasses trying to read Morris’ Early Romances, which I got yesterday morning from Britnell’s along with several other second-hand Everymans for my new course. Harold & parents⁸⁰ dropped in with the Lambert kids. Jessica goes into Trinity—a very sweet kid as far as I could see, which of course wasn’t very far.

Sept. 21. [Monday]

[123] Still without glasses, so spoiled myself loafing. Nobody can tell me impressionist painting of the Pissaro type is myopic. I find that when outlines are fuzzy I become very sensitive to splashes of color.

Sept. 23. [Wednesday]

[125] Lectures began this morning: all lectures begin half an hour early: T.T.C. [Toronto Transportation Commission] request for staggered hours. I told my kids they'd been staggering into 9 o'clocks at 9:30 for years. Opening lecture to 2e⁸¹ thorough but dull. I don't do the Trinity this year: Child does it, or part of it. To Marion Darté's for a party including Eleanor [Godfrey], Ray [Godfrey], the Callaghans & a chap with one leg from Winnipeg.⁸² Very dull evening: tiresome discussion with wild generalizations about the sexes which I engaged in only because I didn't want to sulk. Eleanor was stewed and sullen and Morley has a thick streak of ham in him anyway. But he does tell a story well—when he does.

Sept. 24. [Thursday]

[126] Morley [Callaghan] & Eleanor [Godfrey] dislike the English but don't fully understand why: it's because they're Catholics, of course. The confusions of interests today are curious. Heywood Broun turned R.C. after he'd become convinced, wrongly of course, that it wasn't inherently Fascist. He judged the church by a political standard assumed superior to it. Yet if he had realized this he'd have sold out to the reactionaries. Funny deadlock.

Sept. 26. [Saturday]

[129] Chancellor Wallace in a sermon quoted George H. Palmer on the death of his wife: "Who can contemplate the fact of her death & not call the world irrational if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter it excludes so fair a spirit?" Remarks like that don't usually impress me, but this one does.

Sept. 27. [Sunday]

[130] Well, today was the Retreat. I got through it somehow, dividing it into "The Search for Wisdom" (morning) and "The Search for the Word" (afternoon). I said everything is learned by the scientific method and absorbed in the personality as an art, a knack or flair. The former is knowledge, the latter wisdom & the goal of an "arts" course. Knowledge of itself is lumber or a machine: a liberal education implies the elimination of pedantry & vulgarity & the achievement of a fully integrated personality. Students come to college because they want to grow. Mental growth is a fact like physical growth. But the possessor of a liberal education is not his own end, nor do his class affiliations or social responsibilities exhaust his duties, for there are no *donanes* in culture. Hence wisdom is the entry into a universal order and a world of spiritual values. The discussion was good but the staff talked too much. I stressed "scientia," knowledge, as against "love of wisdom," philosophy, which defines the human attitude towards the knowledge. Love today is interest, the difference between the good & mediocre student of equal intelligence. In the afternoon I went on with "The Search for the Word": wisdom reveals spiritual values but does not save more than a few Stoics of exceptional strength who have the very rare quality of *heroic* wisdom from an evil physical world. Besides, the personal is superior to the impersonal. Hence wisdom becomes less an abstract noun & more a concrete entity of mind, or person: a saviour, furthermore, a God also man. Hence

wisdom which arrives at the Logos has expanded into revelation or vision. The kids couldn't get that, of course, and fought over whether you could know if God exists or not. However, I really think the Retreat was less hideously futile than usual.

Sept. 30. [Wednesday]

[134] Met Kay Mabee at Feinsod's: Children's Aid on Isabella. Just through with taking five kids to court, packed in rumble seat, to charge parents with neglect & get custody. She noticed they seemed to be playing some sort of game, & she discovered it was seeing who could amass the biggest collection of fleas. Tonight Helen stayed down & I strolled over to Yonge for dinner, found Murray's⁸³ jammed, drifted down to Bloor, picked up Roy [Kemp] & had dinner at Babloor. Full of his draft, of course. So I'm depressed, irritated, nostalgic & half-sick, & I suspect that tooth, which bothered me last year at exactly this time, is acting up again. The Forum sent up a ragtag staff too & that adds to the depression. Oh, God, I'm bored with the war: I can't even rise to a nobler expression.

Oct. 1. [Thursday]

[135] Another S.C.R. [Senior Common Room] one: "they always assassinate the wrong man."

[136] Jingle has been underestimated: a great deal could be done by a novelist in making the actual cuts of ordinary speech. Coming home with young Victor Butts after the retreat, I said it was too bad Brown had preached his entire sermon at three boys. He said, "Yeah, did rather. Wave length."

[137] Rosemarie [Schawlow] in for lunch: thrown up C.I.L. & is considering a job leading to personnel work in Scarboro where she'll be on a shift, 7-3 one week, 3-11 next. Wants to take a course with me on top of that. Frances Bower, a girl who lives all the time in a Beulah of enthusiasm, being happily without a sense of criticism, breezed in from O.C.E., where everything is wonderful, including Diltz, who easily replaces the English people here in her affections. She wants essentially to study anthropology (Indian) in Chicago & do field work in South America. A girl without beauty or exceptional brains, she's made the most of what she has. She says her grandfather, having retired at 70, promptly went to Northern Vocational to do machine-shop work. He wanted to build the road to Alaska but his womenfolk intervened.

Oct. 2. [Friday]

[138] Reading the *Golden Bough* again and Blake & Spenser chase each other's tails all through it. My graduate Spenser course is waving gently in the breeze: Bishop dropped out, a Ph.D. man named Grant is pending, Rosemarie [Schawlow] is pending, Ruth Jenking is pending.

[141] Reading Wooley's book on Ur last night.⁸⁴ The Sumerians mystify me. There's nothing archaic about them. Their art is blocky, unrhythmical, realistic, over-sophisticated. Their government is typical monarchy and their royal sacrifices seem to be less barbaric than the Charge of the Light Brigade. They must have had millennia of development behind them wherever they came from.

[142] Anthology of war stories: Hemingway. He says in his preface: "Cowardice, as distinguished from panic, is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend the functioning of the imagination."⁸⁵

So *that's* why I'm afraid of the dentist. Anthology of light verse by F.P.A. looks better than Auden's in some ways.⁸⁶ Hell, Christopher Isherwood in this New Yorker has swiped an idea I had years ago: married couple arguing with each other by diary.⁸⁷

[143] I've had three fan letters on my Forum article, described on Sept. 6.⁸⁸ One was a mash note from an Alberta girl who said she was a schoolteacher, had a high I.Q., wrote poetry, was quite pretty and was twenty years old. If I was interested, would I write?

Nov. 1. [Sunday]

[145] Well, let's try again. Today I preached a sermon on Job 24:1,⁸⁹ a good text and not a bad sermon, but Helen said not loud enough. Yesterday I walked down behind a woman, not fat, but mature and solidly built. She had rayon stockings on, and her thighs rubbed together with a little cricket chirp at every step. At the [Norman J.] Endicotts the other night Bee Wallace said she went over on a boat with some undertakers going to a conference in England. One said "Know what's the latest thing in caskets? Sagless springs, the bed of eternity." We've come a long way from ancient Egypt. It was last Thursday we were at the Endicotts. Norman said he thought my anatomy article⁹⁰ was erudite, which is spoiling me. Last Friday we had tea (apple juice) at the [Walter] Browns to consummate the Lawson wedding by proxy.⁹¹ Mrs. Barber & some other women were laying into the apple juice as though it were what it obviously wasn't. "I never touch intoxicants," said Mrs. B. "If I did, I'd just roll around."

[Notes follow the ad on p. 26]

The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp,

1932-1939

Edited by Robert D. Denham

Collected Works of Northrop Frye, Volumes 1 and 2

ROBERT D. DENHAM HAS collected in these volumes the 266 letters, cards, and telegrams that Helen Kemp and Northrop Frye wrote to each other during the six periods when they were apart, from the winter of 1931-32 until the summer of 1939. The letters form a compelling narrative of their early relationship. They tell of a romance in which two people fall in love, want to get married, and are confronted with obstacles blocking their path, including lack of money and the education they both need to advance their careers. But the story is much more than a romance. The letters reveal Frye's early talent as a writer, illustrating that both the matter and the manner of his criticism had begun to take shape when he was only nineteen. Helen Kemp's expressiveness and intelligence come through clearly in her letters, which were only discovered in 1992. Kemp and Frye share their thoughts on literature, music,

religion, politics, education, and a host of other topics. They discuss their alma mater, Victoria College; artists and musicians of Toronto; southwestern Saskatchewan, where Frye spent a summer as a pastor on a United Church circuit; Frye's hometown, Moncton, New Brunswick; and Kemp's neighbourhood on Fulton Avenue in Toronto. We travel with them around the world, from Ottawa to Rome. We see through their eyes the early years of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the struggles of the United Church of Canada, the activities of the Student Christian Movement, the appeal of Communism, the rise of fascism, and the beginnings of art education in the galleries of Canada.

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Notes

- ¹ Port Credit, about twenty kilometres west of Toronto, was, at the time, an affluent unincorporated area in Peel.
- ² Beth Jenking's boss was C.D. Balding, a mining-engineer consultant. His home, Mississauga House, was eventually sold to Roy Thomson, the newspaper tycoon.
- ³ When NF returned from his study at Oxford in 1939, he and HKF rented a walk-up apartment at 1574 Bathurst St. (near St. Clair Ave.). They lived there for six years. See Ayre, 160.
- ⁴ *Brygères*, *La Terrasse des audiences au clair de lune*, *Ondine*, and *Feux d'artifice* are four of Claude Debussy's *Douze Préludes*, second book (1912); *Des Pas sur la neige*, one of his *Douze Préludes*, first book (1910).
- ⁵ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: Norton, 1967), 169 (chap. 42); "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Edmund Clarence Stedman and George Edward Woodberry (Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1895), 5:244–50 (chap. 25). From 1935 to 1939 Ben Nicholson did a series of relief paintings in various shades of white.
- ⁶ Jean Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722). In his *Autobiography* Mill speaks of being "seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations" (chap. 5).
- ⁷ See "Ronsard contre Rabelais" in Jules Michelet, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Paul Viallaneix (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 7:118. Here Michelet sets up the opposition between Ronsard and Rabelais as cultural models, and he maintains that the elites chose Ronsard. The "hesitation" to which NF refers appears to be his own invention. Michelet simply presents Ronsard as the poet of the aristocracy, a writer who was touted as the great poet of the age by another aristocratic poet who hated Rabelais, Joachim du Bellay.
- ⁸ Wanda Landowska's essays on Couperin and Rameau are found in her *Musique ancienne* (1909). An accessible trans. is in *Landowska on Music*, ed. and trans. Denise Restout (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), 259–73.
- ⁹ C.D. Balding, Beth Jenking's boss.
- ¹⁰ Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1899), 15–18.
- ¹¹ Yeats says that "the student of *A Vision* will understand [Blake's *Mental Traveller*] at once" (*A Vision*, rev. ed. [N.p.: Macmillan, 1956], 189). He sees the man and woman of Blake's poem as representing, respectively, the symbolically masculine Will and Creative Mind and the symbolically feminine Mask and Body of Fate (262). "Mathematic form" is a phrase from Blake's *On Virgil* (Erdman, 270).
- ¹² "Such a writer as Gérard de Nerval, who had presumably not read Blake, is much closer to him than Yeats, who edited him. In the study of Blake it is the analogue that is important, not the source" (FS, 12).
- ¹³ See Helen Frye, "Help Yourself to Field Flowers," *The Standard* (Montreal), 15 August 1942, 13.
- ¹⁴ A town located about twenty-five kilometres north of Toronto.
- ¹⁵ A beer parlour, where students and faculty often gathered to talk comfortably with each other, on Bellair St., about a block from the junction of Bay and Bloor Sts.
- ¹⁶ "Pahits" is apparently a nonsense word, as is "cheroots" in this context.
- ¹⁷ Major James William Coldwell and J.J. McCann (rather than McMann, as NF has it) were members of the 1942 Radio Committee, established to examine the annual reports of the CBC. The committee was critical of Murray's handling of his expense accounts and asked him to step down as general manager of CBC Radio. See "Review Expenses Paid to Gladstone Murray," *Toronto Daily Star*, 10 July, 1942, 3, and "Demands the 'Truth' on CBC Finances," *ibid.*, 13 July 1942, 2.
- ¹⁸ See par. 15, above.
- ¹⁹ The allusion is to a remark by Mammon to Dol Common in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610): "Had your father / Slept all the happy remnant of his life / After the act, lie but there still, and panted, / He'd done enough to make himself, his issue, / And his posterity noble" (4.1.60–4).
- ²⁰ NF is apparently referring to the *Canadian Review of Music and Art*, which began publication in 1942 and for which Adeney had served as book editor in the late 1940s.
- ²¹ *Think*, a magazine of the International Business Corporation, began publication in 1935.
- ²² *The Closed Book (An Epic of the Soul's Quest)* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1943), a narrative poem by Wilmot B. Lane, professor of ethics at VC and EC.
- ²³ This is almost certainly Eleanor Godfrey, editor of the *Canadian Forum*, as her sister Ray, a social worker, is mentioned later in the entry.
- ²⁴ NF's proposed activities conclude with a fictional bird and an equally fictional Latin name: Accinus and Pacuvius were two second-century B.C. Roman tragic poets.
- ²⁵ The novel by Wilkie Collins (1868).
- ²⁶ NF was a lifelong reader of detective stories. His library, now housed in the special collections of the Victoria University Library, contains a great deal of such fiction, including three detective stories by Dorothy Sayers, two by Carr, four by Allingham; these titles, however, were all added to the collection after NF was writing the present diary.
- ²⁷ IODE = Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, a patriotic and philanthropic women's organization.
- ²⁸ The reference is to Raymond Chandler's private detective, Philip Marlowe.
- ²⁹ See Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."
- ³⁰ Mitchell Hepburn, premier of Ontario from 1934 to 1942, had supported Tory leader Arthur Meighen in the 1942 by-election. Meighen was defeated by J.W. Noseworthy, a popular high school teacher and CCF candidate, in the North York by-election. The constituency had been Conservative, and because of the wartime political truce the Liberals did not nominate a candidate to oppose Meighen, the newly chosen Tory leader. Many Liberals wanted a contest and crossed over to elect Noseworthy. On 10 February 1942 the American press reported Hepburn's

remark that the Japanese navy was superior to the American navy, which was “in hiding”—a remark that caused the Canadian government some embarrassment and resulted in Mackenzie King’s sending a note of apology to Franklin Roosevelt.

³¹ A 1933 film directed by Walter Forde and based upon Arnold Ridley’s *Ghost Train: A Play in Three Acts* (1931).

³² The reference is to Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) and Philip Guedalla (1899–1944), English writers known respectively for their biographies and popular histories.

³³ Hugh P’Anson Fausset, *Tennyson: A Modern Portrait* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1923).

³⁴ This paper was pub. as “The Nature of Satire” in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 14 (October 1944): 75–89. NF’s essay draws on a number of the ideas and examples in the eight-sec. outline here.

³⁵ “We live meanly, like ants . . . and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness” (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. Bill McKibben [Boston: Beacon Press, 1997], 86).

³⁶ Each of Sibelius’s *Five Pieces* (op. 75) is named after a tree.

³⁷ Audrey Alexandra Brown (b. 1904), an author and poet from B.C.

³⁸ That is, to the home of HKF’s parents, S.H.F. and Gertrude Kemp.

³⁹ “But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.” NF used “By Liberal Things” as the title of his installation address as principal of Victoria College.

⁴⁰ Jack and Regillus are characters in the novel NF was working on, *Locust-Eaters*, the first part of a larger fictional project entitled *Quiet Consummation*. “Craggish” refers to Art Cragg, NF’s college friend and classmate, and a UCC minister. NF never completed the novel, but see NBs 1 and 2 for the chaps. that survived (NFF, 1991, box 22). Some of the material in the latter notebook exists in a revised fifteen-page typescript, in the NFF, 1991, box 37, file 2. For an account of NF’s fiction-writing efforts, see Jonathan Hart, “The Quest for the Creative Word: Writing in Northrop Frye’s Notebooks,” in *Rereading Frye*, 55–71.

⁴¹ A 1942 film based upon a play by James Thurber and Elliott Nugent (who directed the film) and starring Henry Fonda and Olivia de Havilland.

⁴² The movie playing on a double bill with *The Male Animal* was *Poison Pen*. NF saw the movies at the Alhambra Theatre at Bloor and Bathurst Streets.

⁴³ Centre Island, one of the Toronto Islands in Lake Ontario, about one mile south of downtown Toronto.

⁴⁴ The Diet Kitchen was a restaurant on Bloor St.

⁴⁵ Lytle, a sports reporter for the *Toronto Star*, was referring to the penalty box in hockey.

⁴⁶ Howard Wilcox Haggard, *Devils, Drugs and Doctors: The Story of the Science of Healing from Medicine-Man to Doctor* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946). A copy is in the NFL. The numbers in square brackets refer to the pages in Haggard from which NF is drawing his notes for this entry.

⁴⁷ “Notes and Comments,” in “The Talk of the Town,” *New Yorker*, 15 (9 September 1939): 9–10.

⁴⁸ *The Shadow Man*, in Wallace, *The Gun’nor and Other Stories* (London: Collins, 1932).

⁴⁹ A 1942 film with screen-play by Ring Lardner, Jr., directed by George Stevens and starring, in addition to Hepburn, Spencer Tracy.

⁵⁰ A 1941 20th Century Fox film directed by Archie Mayo, starring Don Ameche, Joan Bennett, and Roddy McDowall.

⁵¹ The reference is to the last sec. of the final chap. of Logan Pearsall Smith’s *The English Language* (New York: Holt, 1912), 233–51.

⁵² John Evelyn, *Diary*, begun in 1631 but not published until 1818.

⁵³ The ed. NF is reading is *Love & Friendship: and Other Early Works, Now First Printed from the Original ms.* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1923).

⁵⁴ A Toronto bookstore at 765 Yonge Street just north of Bloor.

⁵⁵ The film, playing at the Eglinton Theatre, was *Through Different Eyes*, starring Frank Craven, Mary Howard, June Walker, Donald Woods, and Vivian Blake.

⁵⁶ “And I must be a country wife still too, I find, for I can’t, like a city one, be rid of my musty husband and do what I list” (William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* [1675], 5.4.389–90).

⁵⁷ The Braybrooke Pepys was first pub. in 1825 by Richard Neville, Lord Braybrooke. An annotated copy of the Everyman ed. (London: Dent, 1927) is in the NFL.

⁵⁸ The reference is to a quotation by Sebastian Evans about an earlier editor of *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, J.A. Giles, who had revised and corrected Aaron Thompson’s 1718 trans. of *Geoffrey*. Giles had written about his ed. that “the translation of Thompson has been followed, revised and corrected wherever the phraseology appeared to be unsuited to the more accurate ears of the present day.” Evans quotes these words and then remarks, “As I have been under no obligation to either edition, it is perhaps better not to speak further about them” (*Geoffrey of Monmouth* [London: Dent, 1912], 248).

⁵⁹ That is, Walter Bradford Cannon (1871–1945), the American physiologist. Carl Georg Lange (1834–1900), the Danish psychologist, advanced a theory of emotion that was developed independently by William James.

⁶⁰ NF’s braces. Riddell, who had been a senior tutor at VC during NF’s student days, had joined the Canadian Department of External Affairs.

⁶¹ The attack on Dieppe took place on 19 August 1942. Of the 6,100 troops involved roughly 5,000 were Canadians. In the ill-fated mission the Canadian forces suffered the heaviest toll of any Canadian battalion in a single day throughout the entire war.

⁶² The reference is apparently to Eleanor Godfrey; her husband Bill Graham worked for a while in advertising.

- ⁶³ “Reflections at a Movie,” which picks up some phrases from this diary entry, appeared in *Canadian Forum*, 22 (October 1942): 212–13; rpt. in *RW*, 287–91. There is space enough on the last line of this entry for NF later to have added the note about “Reflections at a Movie,” which is apparently what he did.
- ⁶⁴ A 1935 Paramount film adapted from Dashiell Hammet’s novel of that title and directed by Frank Tuttle.
- ⁶⁵ Diana Sweets was a coffee shop located at 188 Bloor St. West near Avenue Rd.
- ⁶⁶ James Holly Hanford, *A Milton Handbook* (New York: F.S. Crofts, 1926). This ed. of Hanford’s book is in the NFL.
- ⁶⁷ *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916) is a novel of *habitant* life by Louis Hémon.
- ⁶⁸ A reference to “Reflections at a Movie” (n. 91, above).
- ⁶⁹ The reference is to the Athenian statesman Aristides the Just (ca. 530–ca. 468 B.C.). An illiterate citizen voted to banish Aristides from Athens on the sole grounds that he was tired of hearing everyone refer to him as “the Just.” See Plutarch, *Lives*, chap. 7.
- ⁷⁰ A 1940 Paramount film written and directed by Preston Sturges and starring Brian Donlevy, Muriel Angelus, and William Demarest.
- ⁷¹ Apparently a reference to the controversial depiction of the Jews by Alfonso de Espina (15th century), the chief originator of the Spanish Inquisition.
- ⁷² An RKO film, with screen-play by Orson Welles, based on a novel by Booth Tarkington and starring Joseph Cotten and Anne Baxter.
- ⁷³ This is probably the essay on Byrd in NB 17 (NFF, 1991, box 24).
- ⁷⁴ Leo Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Makers, The Movie Colony* (1941). Under the pseudonym of Leonard Q. Ross, Rosten wrote *The Education of H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N*.
- ⁷⁵ In Vedantic philosophy, two of the three qualities of *prakṛiti* (nature or primal matter): *rajas* refers to activity, striving, or the force that can overcome indolence; *tamas*, to the dull, passive forces of nature manifest in darkness and ignorance.
- ⁷⁶ The article, “Music in the Movies,” was pub. in *Canadian Forum*, 22 (December 1942): 275–6; rpt. in *RW*, 24–8. NF used practically all of the notes in the present entry in writing his article.
- ⁷⁷ See par. 88, above.
- ⁷⁸ *A Smattering of Ignorance*, 142–3.
- ⁷⁹ Eric Havelock’s volumes on Socrates were never published. His *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) was based on lectures he gave in the 1950s.
- ⁸⁰ Probably a reference to HKF’s parents and her younger brother Harold.
- ⁸¹ A course in Restoration and eighteenth-century literature.
- ⁸² Marion and Helen Darte had become close friends with Eleanor and Ray Godfrey when all four were students (Ray began at U of T in 1930; Eleanor, in 1929). The Godfrey sisters had roomed with Marion Darte at St. Joseph’s High School. Ray Godfrey remembers the man from Winnipeg as a friend of her brother-in-law who had lost his leg in a horse-riding accident; he was passing through Toronto and stayed with Eleanor and Bill Graham (telephone conversation with Ray Godfrey, 8 March 1999).
- ⁸³ A restaurant at 772 Yonge St. This was one of the three Murray’s restaurants the Fries frequented.
- ⁸⁴ Leonard Wooley, *Ur Excavations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).
- ⁸⁵ *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time*, ed. Ernest Hemingway (New York: Crown, 1942), xxvii.
- ⁸⁶ Franklin P. Adams, ed., *Innocent Merriment: An Anthology of Light Verse* (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Pub. Co., 1942). W.H. Auden, ed., *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).
- ⁸⁷ Christopher Isherwood, “Take It or Leave It,” *New Yorker*, 18 (24 October 1942): 17–19.
- ⁸⁸ “Reflections at a Movie”; see par. 99, above.
- ⁸⁹ “Why, seeing things are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?”
- ⁹⁰ “The Anatomy in Prose Fiction,” *Manitoba Arts Review*, 3 (Spring 1942): 35–47.
- ⁹¹ J.S. Lawson and Edith Grace Coombs had been married on 7 May 1942.

Frye Bibliography

Since the last bibliographical supplement (*Newsletter*, 6:1) several items of note have been appeared. A Hungarian edition of *The Great Code*, trans. by Péter Pásztor, was published as *Kettős tükör: A Biblia es az irodalom*. Budapest: Europa Könyvkiadó, 1996 (432 pp.). Another Hungarian book, *Northrop Frye: A Biblia igezeteben*, a collection of Frye’s sermons, essays, and interviews, ed. Tibor Fabiny, was published in Budapest by the Hermeneutikai kutatfokozpont in 1995 (120 pp.).

The Legacy of Northrop Frye, edited by Alvin A. Lee and Robert D. Denham (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 353 pp.) appeared in hardcover and paperback editions in late 1994. This is a collection of thirty essays that examine the diversity and significance of Frye’s contributions as a literary and cultural critic. Also includes a masque by James

Reaney and John Beckwith, a poem by Margaret Atwood, an introduction by Alvin Lee, and a bibliography of Frye's books in their various editions and translations. The essayists are A. C. Hamilton, Thomas Willard, Hayden White, Craig Stewart Walker, Margaret Burgess, Imre Salusinszky, Deanne Bogdan, Michael Dol-zani, Linda Hutcheon, James Reaney, Sandra Djwa, Milton Wilson, David Staines, Clara Thomas, G.E. Bentley, Jr., Monika Lee, Helen Vendler, Joseph Adamson, Michael Fischer, J. Edward Chamberlain, Paul Cornea, Wladimir Krynski, Angus Fletcher, Nella Cotrupi, Eva Kushner, Jan Gorak, Ross Woodman, Eleanor Cook, Julia Kristeva, and Robert D. Denham. The book was reviewed by Angela Esterhammer in *English Studies in Canada* 22 (June 1996): 238-40.

Several articles of note:

Adams, Hazard. "The Achievements of Northrop Frye (1912-1991)." *Comparative Criticism* 15 (1993): 225-42.

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Hart, Jonathan. "Anatomizing History and Historicizing 'Anatomy': Northrop Frye and Historiography." *Dalhousie Review* 74 (Spring 1994): 65-100.

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Takayanagi, Shunichi. "Northrop Frye's Literary Theory in a Canadian Context." *Journal of American and Canadian Studies* 13 (1995): 123-47.

Woodhouse, Howard. "Northrop Frye on Academic Freedom: A Critique." *Interchange* 23. nos. 1-2 (1992): 71-89.

The Collected Works of Northrop Frye

The Collected Works of Northrop Frye, a project undertaken by the Frye Centre at Victoria University and the University of Toronto Press, is underway, the first two volumes in the series having appeared (see ad in this issue and the enclosed flyer). The next volume, now in press, will be *Northrop Frye's Early Papers, 1932-1938*.

Alvin Lee of McMaster University, general editor of the series, plans to have three volumes published each year over the course of the next decade. Editorial work has begun on Frye's writings on the Bible and religion (edited by Lee himself and Jean O'Grady, the assistant editor of the project), on critical theory and mythology (edited by Joseph Adamson), on Canada (edited by David Staines), on education (edited by Goldwin French and Jean O'Grady), Frye's notebooks (edited by Robert Denham and Michael Dolzani), and diaries (edited by Robert Denham).

The Northrop Frye Newsletter publishes material by and about Frye. The editor welcomes essays, reviews, or comments related to this aim. The Newsletter is published occasionally and is distributed without charge to those who request it. Publication is supported by the English Department at Roanoke College. Address all correspondence to the editor, Robert Denham, English Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24153. Copyright (c) 1996 by Robert D. Denham ISSN: 1058-062X.

