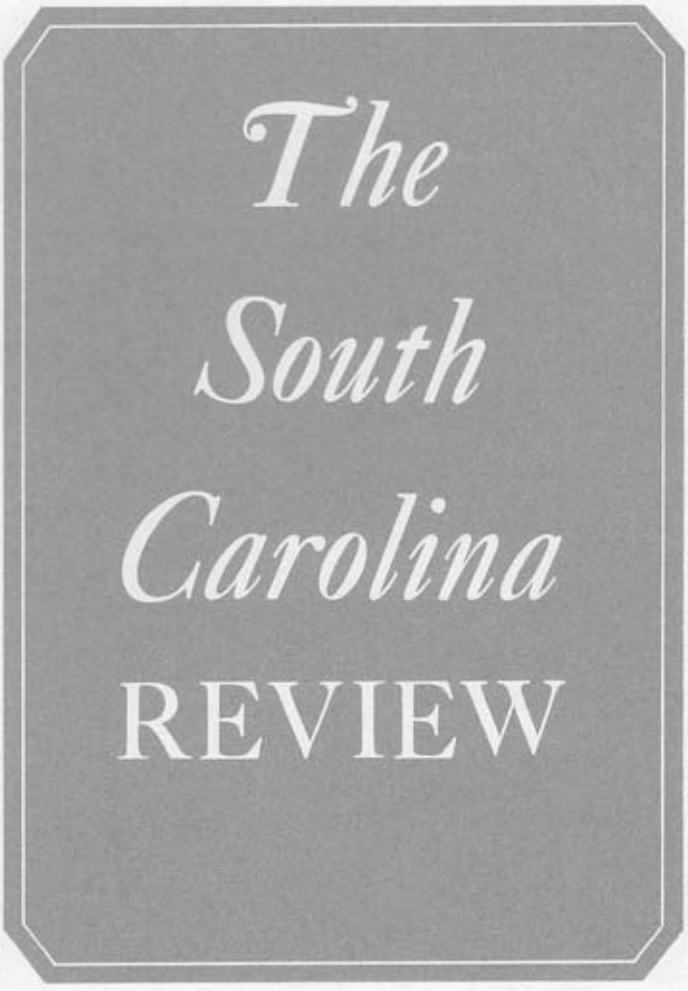

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CONTENTS

SCIENCE, CRITICISM, AND FRYE'S METAPHYSICAL UNIVERSE

Robert D. Denham

One of the well-known assumptions of Northrop Frye's criticism rests on his proposal that literature should be examined "in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field"; a corollary to this postulate is his claim that such an examination can and should be scientific.[1] The issues implicit in these claims, however, are broad and ambiguous, chiefly because of the general language in which they are framed. Yet even when the language is clarified, Frye's position remains problematic. What does it mean to say that criticism is scientific and that the conceptual framework for critical study can be derived inductively? And what are the implications of such views? These questions are worth investigating for two reasons: they shed light on Frye's own critical theory and they raise important issues for anyone who conceives criticism to be reasoned discourse about literature.

The view of criticism as science has been a troublesome point for many of Frye's readers,[2] and yet not all of them have been aware of the two distinct senses in which he uses the word "scientific." The first derives from his claim, simply, that critical inquiry should be systematic, inductive, and causal as opposed to random and intuitive; that it should be self-contained rather than dependent on the principles of other disciplines; and that it should attempt a coherent and progressive consolidation of its materials (AC, 7-8). Because there is a kind of critical study based on rigorous, rational, and systematic analysis, that is, a criticism distinguishable from what R. S. Crane calls, on the one hand, "cultivated *causerie*," and on the other, the application to literature of general systems of ideas,[3] then Frye's use of the word "scientific" can be said to describe such an approach.

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[1] *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 7. Hereafter cited as AC.

[2] See, for example, Richard Kuhns, "Professor Frye's Criticism," *Journal of Philosophy*, 56 (1959), 745-55; and John Casey, "A 'Science' of Criticism: Northrop Frye," in *The Language of Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 140-51. For a fairly exhaustive account of writings about Frye's criticism, see the annotated list in Part III of my *Northrop Frye: An Enumerative Bibliography* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974).

[3] *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. x.

But the second sense of the word arises from Frye's claim that criticism, considered historically, still exists in a state of naive induction, whereas other disciplines, such as physics, history, biology, and astronomy, have moved beyond primitivism to a state of pure science. The transition from naive induction is accomplished when a discipline rather than taking the data of immediate experience as its explanatory and structural principles, conceives of the data themselves as the phenomena to be explained. Physics, for example, "began by taking the immediate sensations of experience, classified as hot, cold, moist, and dry, as fundamental principles. Eventually physics turned inside out, and discovered that its real function was rather to explain what heat and moisture were" (AC, 15). The study of history, Frye argues, has passed through a similar revolution. In the chronicles of the naive historian there is no distinction between the recorded events and the structure of the chronicle; whereas the scientific historian, rather than merely cataloguing events chronologically, sees them as data to be explained and is thus forced to view them from the perspective of a larger interpretative framework.

Frye argues by analogy that criticism, currently in a state of naive induction because its practitioners insist on treating every literary work as a datum, needs to pass beyond the primitive state to a scientific one. And this can be accomplished only when criticism seeks to explain literary works in terms of conceptual framework independent from the datum itself. Just as physics, for example, has discovered the theoretical framework of relativity, so criticism needs "to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems to be badly in need of a co-ordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole" (AC, 16).

Frye's boldly stated purpose in *Anatomy of Criticism* is to develop such a synoptic hypothesis, and his first step in doing so is to assume that there is a total coherence among literary works.

> We have to adopt the hypothesis, then, that just as there is an order of nature behind the natural sciences, so literature is not a piled aggregate of "works," but an order of words. A belief in an order of nature, however, is an inference from the intelligibility of the natural sciences; and if the natural sciences ever completely demonstrated the order of nature they would presumably exhaust their subject. Similarly, criticism, if a science, must be totally intelligible, but literature, as the order of words which makes the science

> possible, is so far as we know, an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries, and would be even if new works of literature ceased to be written. (AC, 17)

Now it is clear that when Frye speaks of criticism in this sense he means something much different from the rational and systematic formulation of a theory: one could develop an internally rational and systematic theory which would be, to borrow Yvor Winters' phrase, "an anatomy of nonsense." But to claim that the hypothetical structures of criticism and science are, or at least should be, the same invites inquiry into an important, yet problematic area. It raises the issue of the nature of hypotheses, as well as the procedures for testing them.

To begin with, it is not at all clear that the similarity between critical and scientific hypotheses exists, or even if it does, that Frye's understanding of the relationship among hypotheses, theory, and observation is meaningful or useful. Is he right, for example, about the role which theories play in the development of a science?

Frye's claim that revolutions in conceptual thought fundamentally alter the method of investigation within a discipline is unobjectionable: it goes without saying that such ideas as Newton's "forces" and "attractions" or Darwin's theory of evolution effected major changes within their respective scientific traditions. But it is not universally agreed that such revolutions are always as progessive, empirically cumulative, and revitalizing as Frye implies. He says, for example, that "the development of [a scientifically organized criticism] would fulfill the systematic and *progressive* element in research by assimilating its work into a unified structure of knowledge, as other sciences do." He speaks of a "central *expanding pattern* of systematic comprehension" in criticism and talks of how revolutions in theory *revitalize* conceptual thought (AC, 11, 12, 15. Emphasis mine).

Thomas Kuhn's study of scientific revolutions reminds us, however, that there is more than one kind of scientific discovery. On the one hand, there are revolutionary discoveries by the great innovators. On the other, there are discoveries which take place within a particular scientific tradition, discoveries which are not revolutionary in themselves but which develop from a framework of concepts and principles established by some great originator, like Aristotle, Newton, or Einstein. Kuhn uses the term "paradigm"—borrowed from Wittgenstein—to refer to these nonrevolutionary theories. Paradigms, he says, are "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems

and solutions to a community of practitioners."[4] His study of the history of science leads him to believe that most scientific study is paradigm-governed; that is, within a given discipline most problem-solving is largely controlled by the dominant conceptual structure which is accepted as true. Kuhn refers to this activity as "normal science." Its concern is not to test the paradigm, but to fit its experimental findings into the dominant conceptual model. And when discrepancies are discovered—anomalies which do not quite fit the accepted structure—normal science simply adjusts the data so as to leave the paradigm intact.

Now it is clear that Frye thinks of science as a cumulative enterprise, progressively building upon the laws and theories established by previous scientists. He conceives of all scientific activity to be like Kuhn's "normal science." But according to Kuhn, "Cumulative acquisition of unanticipated novelties proves to be an almost nonexistent exception to the rule of scientific development. The man who takes historic fact seriously must suspect that science does not tend toward the ideal that our [empirical] image of its cumulativeness has suggested."[5] This means that most scientific activity (or all of normal science), the aim of which is to solve the remaining problems in the field by using the paradigm theory which is current, tends toward a kind of dogmatism. The reason for this, according to Kuhn, is that most scientists are concerned not with testing the paradigm but with interpreting new data and new problems according to its principles. The paradigm, in other words, becomes entrenched. On the other hand, non-paradigmatic changes in the scientific tradition are the revolutions themselves, those periods when the dominant theory breaks apart.

There *is* an analogy between what Frye calls the period of naive induction and what Kuhn sees as the preparadigmatic period before a given science has fully articulated its theory. Frye says that "a new scientific discovery manifests something that was already latent in the order of nature, and at the same time logically related to the total structure of the existing science" (AC, 97). Kuhn would agree that this is certainly true of normal scientific discoveries, that is, those within an accepted paradigm. Yet discoveries which are revolutionary, which upset the traditional paradigm, cannot be considered as "logically related to the total structure of the existing science."

But beyond the resemblance between Frye's period of naive induction and Kuhn's preparadigmatic period, their understanding of the

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[4] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. viii.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

structure of scientific revolutions is not at all similar. Especially obvious is the absence in Frye of an awareness of the restrictive disadvantages implicit in paradigm theories, like the resistance to innovation which a particular style of thinking imposes. In fact, it is precisely the exclusiveness of paradigm theories, according to Kuhn, which sets certain scientific classics, like Aristotle's *Physica* and Newton's *Principia*, apart from the classics in other creative fields. Such classics determine not only the kinds of problems scientists are interested in but also their norms for solving those problems and their standards about the kind of fact with which their science deals. Therefore, a myopic commitment to a given paradigm, according to Kuhn, can lead simply to a "striving both for neater formulations of that paradigm and for an articulation that would bring it into closer agreement with observations of nature."[6] The necessary result is that scientists then move farther and farther away from any concern to test the principles of the paradigm. This being the case, Frye's effort to establish a structure of critical thought upon a central hypothesis analogous to that of a pure science might well be an enterprise fraught with the dangers of dogmatic exclusivism. Without showing any concern to test the paradigm, he and his disciples may be inclined simply to further articulate the theory and bring it into closer and closer agreement with observations from literature.

If Kuhn is right,[7] then the relationship between hypothesis and evidence in revolutionary science could be quite different from their relationship in normal science; even normal sciences operating within separate paradigms may not view theory and observation in the same terms. This raises the large question about the nature and function of theories, a question by no means settled by philosophers of science. Let us assume, however, as a tentative definition that a theory is a set of hypotheses consistent with the facts of any given subject matter.

What procedures are involved in relating hypothesis to fact in order to arrive at a theory? For Frye, it is both an inductive and a deductive process. "If criticism exists, it must be," he says, "an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field" (AC, 7). There are two important claims

[6] "The Function of Dogma in Scientific Research," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. B. A. Brody (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 360-61. This essay, first published in 1963, represents a condensed form of the first third of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

[7] For an evaluation of Kuhn's ideas, see *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), a symposium devoted to his work.

here. One is that a thorough study of literary works is the critic's first duty. The "first thing" he must do, Frye says, "is to read literature, to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field" (AC, 6-7). The second important claim is that theory is derived by inference *from* observations about literature. "The word 'inductive'," Frye adds, "suggests some sort of scientific procedure" (AC, 7).

Frye does not specify what sort of procedure is involved, but the assertion that theory is derivable by inductive inference is clearly problematic. It flies in the face of the so-called hypothetico-deductive view defended vigorously by philosophers of science like Karl Popper and C. G. Hempel. Popper argues that theories are *"free* creations of our own minds, the result of an almost poetic intuition."[8] Similarly, Hempel maintains that "the transition from data to theory requires creative imagination. Scientific hypotheses are not *derived* from observed facts, but *invented* in order to account for them. They constitute guesses at the connection that might obtain between the phenomena under study, at uniformities and patterns that might underlie their occurrence."[9] These are philosophers of natural science speaking, and criticism, as Frye of course recognizes (AC, 7), is not a "pure" or "exact" science. The point is, however, that Frye's claim about the theoretical framework of criticism being "derivable" by inference from literature itself is not a universally accepted solution to how theories originate. While the hypothetico-deductive view has itself been questioned, a philosopher like Popper would certainly respond to Frye's position by saying, that although there might be some causal explanation of how a critic derived his ideas, the kind of inference involved in scientific theory is always *from* the theory rather than *to* it. Observations from literature, that is, provide the basis for testing hypotheses rather than deriving them. We shall turn to the issue of confirmation shortly. For the moment we need only to observe that Frye's proposal about the origin of critical theory is questionable.

As indicated above Frye also conceives of critical theory as deductive. In "The Archetypes of Literature" he says that the inductive and deductive methods work to "correct" each other: "We may . . . proceed inductively from structural analysis, associating the data we collect and trying to see larger patterns in them. Or we may proceed

[8] *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 192; see also p. 128.

[9] *Philosophy of Natural Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 15.

deductively, with the consequences that follow from postulating the unity of criticism. It is clear, of course, that neither position will work indefinitely without correction from the other. Pure induction will get us lost in hapazard guessing; pure deduction will lead to inflexible and oversimplified pigeon-holing." [10]

In *Anatomy of Criticism* Frye announces forthrightly which of these paths he has followed. "I have proceeded deductively and been rigorously selective in examples and illustrations," he says. "The deductiveness does not extend further than tactical method, and so far as I know there is no principle in the book which is claimed as a perfect major premise, without exceptions or negations. Such expressions as 'normally,' 'usually,' 'regularly,' or 'as a rule' are thickly strewn throughout" (AC, 29). This confession clearly indicates that critical hypotheses cannot be like the laws and principles of the natural sciences; which might seem an unnecessary point to make, except that Frye invites the equation by comparing criticism to such disciplines as physics, astronomy, and biology. Does this mean that critical theory, lacking the strict requirements of a pure science because it can admit occasional exceptions to its fundamental laws, is more like the theory of a social science? The idea that criticism is a body of inductive knowledge presented deductively from premises which are generally but not universally true suggests that it might be. In fact, Frye says explicitly at one point that it is (AC, 16).

But what does it mean for him to say that he has proceeded deductively? Deductive reasoning raises the whole issue of confirmation, and a second question we must therefore ask is whether or not Frye's conclusions can be tested as true. Let us consider these two issues in turn. We can assume, first of all, that Frye accepts the ordinary definition of deduction: a process of reasoning by which an unobjectionable conclusion is drawn from a universally accepted premise. We do not move far into *Anatomy of Criticism*, however, before realizing that Frye's method of inference is not deductive at all—or at least that it is not deductive in any rigorous way.

To illustrate: on the first page of the First Essay of the *Anatomy*, Frye asserts four ways a fictional hero may be classified. The taxonomy, which forms the foundation for his theory of modes, is based on the observation that a hero may be either superior to other men or superior to his environment, and this may involve either a difference of degree or of kind. Together, these statements constitute Frye's premises. And there seems to be no reason for finding them objectionable, since an inductive

[10] *Fables of Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 10.

study of literature shows that such distinctions can be made. But whereas Frye's conclusion from these premises is that there are *five* basic modes of fiction, a truly deductive argument would necessarily infer that there are more. John Holloway says that the principles of Frye's theory of modes "ought to yield several hundreds of perfectly sensible and consistent combinations." Robert Scholes, less given to overstatement, remarks that Frye's system provides "a minimum of nine modal categories and a maximum a good deal higher." And Tzvetan Todorov believes there are thirteen theoretical possibilities.[11] There are actually twenty-five possible modes: the superior and inferior relationships, with differences for degree and kind for each, yield sixteen combinations; the relationships of equality will yield nine more.

Frye would perhaps consider all this a bit of pedantry. But what we are trying to establish is whether or not his theory—in this case his theory of modes—is a deductive inference from the principles he establishes. And our conclusion must be that his process of reasoning is only selectively deductive. He provides no reasons why there cannot be a mode (say) in which the hero is superior in degree to other men and in kind to his environment. But such a mode would surely follow from Frye's principles. We are left then with the question as to why he arrives at only five modes, when there are other combinations which should result from his perfectly sensible premises.

John Holloway, who has specifically challenged Frye on this point, asks why it is that Frye can discover five modes, five parallel levels of meaning, four basic myths, six phases, eighteen lyric conventions, and so forth. "If we were to ask," Holloway says,

> *why* these numbers, *why* these correspondences, an inductive answer would show that these and no others are what turn up if we marshal all the items of evidence and look them over. Arguing deductively would show that these and no others followed from first principles. . . . In fact, the book is neither inductive nor deductive. it is a series of dogmatic assertions, with illustrations to show that the kind of thing in question turns up somewhere in the whole range of written works good or bad.[12]

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[11] Holloway, *The Colours of Clarity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 155; Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), p. 119; Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1973), p. 13.

[12] "The Critical Zodiac of Northrop Frye," in *The Colours of Clarity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 154-55.

Holloway overstates his case, for it is clear that Frye's principles could not have been formulated without an inductive study of literature. It is no less clear that his theory results from deducing consequences, even if incomplete ones, from his principles. However, the more important issue —and it is implicit in Holloway's remarks—is whether or not Frye's theory can be confirmed.

A theory is overthrown when it is shown to be inadequate by some process of testing. If we operate with a classical view of testing, it is not easy to see how Frye's theory can be refuted. Such a view requires us merely to locate instances of (say) Frye's Proserpine archetype. If we can find a sufficiently large number of these, then there is good reason for concluding that such an archetype may be structurally important in some literary works. Using this kind of confirmation theory makes Frye's position theoretically indomitable. But, as David Hume observed, no matter how many tests confirm a theory it may still be wrong.

A more recent solution to the problem of confirmation has been advanced by Karl Popper, who has sought to discover a "criterion of demarcation" to distinguish the genuine from the false. He concludes that only those theories offering conclusions which stand an honest chance of being refuted can be called scientific: in other words, falsifiability is the proper criterion for separating the scientific from the pseudo-scientific. Theories, Popper argues, are never confirmed or proven true; they are only disconfirmed or proven false.[13]

From this perspective, as John Casey has observed,[14] it is easy to see how Frye's theories can be continually confirmed but difficult to see how they can be decisively refuted. Meyer H. Abrams' review of *Anatomy of Criticism* makes the same point: "The odd thing about evidence for an archetype," he says, "is not that you cannot prove that it is present, but that you cannot help proving it, and that there is no way of disproving it. Any extended and complex literary work can, by the omission of unsuitable elements, be made to resemble almost any archetypal shape. Since there is no firm possibility of negative observations, archetypal statements are empirically incorrigible, and incorrigible statements are not good grounds for a science of criticism." [15] If we apply the falsifiability criterion to Frye's work our conclusion seems to be that scientific confirmation is impossible and that criticism is not a systematic body of knowledge in the way an empirical science is.

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[13] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 34, 41-42, 78-92.

[14] *The Language of Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 141-42.

[15] "Anatomy of Criticism," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 27 (1958), 194-95.

Perhaps Frye would respond by saying that criticism is not literally a science but only analogically so; that just as the scientist inquires into the order of nature, so the critic inquiries into the order of words. But even this analogy may be misleading. Here is what Frye actually says:

> It is clear that criticism cannot be a systematic study unless there is a quality in literature which enables it to be so. We have to adopt the hypothesis, then, that just as there is an order of nature behind the natural sciences, so literature is not a piled aggregate of "works," but an order of words. A belief in the order of nature, however, is an inference from the intelligibility of the natural sciences; and if the natural sciences ever completely demonstrated the order of nature they would presumably exhaust their subject. Similarly, criticism, if a science, must be totally intelligible, but literature, as the order of words which makes the science possible, is, so far as we know, an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries and would be even if new works of literature ceased to be written. (AC, 17)

The important point here is not the difference between science and criticism (science could conceivably exhaust its subject, criticism could not) but the similarity, for it is the analogy of "order" which may lead us astray. That all scientists possess some monolithic conception of an "order of nature" is dubious, and certainly it cannot be inferred from the fact, as Frye claims, that the natural sciences are intelligible. Perhaps a given science can, at one point in its history, be shown to possess a common body of assumptions about the physical world. But these assumptions are always changing as new discoveries are made, and as Thomas Kuhn has demonstrated, most sciences, especially in their early stages, are characterized by a continual competition among a variety of distinct views of nature.[16] An order of nature, in fact, is precisely what the sciences do not assume. What is revolutionary for one science is not necessarily revolutionary for another. "Though quantum mechanics (or Newtonian dynamics, or electromagnetic theory)," Kuhn says, "is a paradigm for many scientific groups, it is not the same paradigm for them all. Therefore, it can simultaneously determine several traditions of normal science that overlap without being coextensive. A revolution produced by one of these traditions will not necessarily extend to the others as well."[17] Frye is apparently influenced by the textbook tradition which represents scientists as having worked on the same set of problems with the same set of fixed canons and as contributing to a cumulative understanding of the order of

[16] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, especially Chapter II.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

nature. But this is a chimera, according to Kuhn. Competing paradigms, he says, are incommensurate; scientists practice their trades in different worlds,[18] the effect of which is a series of discontinuous orders of nature rather than a singular model of order, unity, and consistency. The sciences, in short, do not appear to rest on the assumption of implicit unity in some order of nature, as Frye seems to think. And in any event, the characteristics he ascribes to science—progressive cumulation, coherence, and inclusiveness—are, as Meyer H. Abrams points out, also characteristics of the pseudo-sciences: astrology, physiognomy, and the theory of humours.[19]

There are two problems, then, with Frye's saying that literature is an "order of words" analogous to an "order of nature." First, it derives from a questionable notion of the assumptions about the natural order which the sciences actually make. And second, even if the analogy were based on a proper understanding of scientific theory, it would suggest only in the vaguest kind of way that literature can be viewed as a whole. But we do not need the analogy between science and criticism to tell us this. The analogy, in short, is both misleading and unnecessary.

But let us return to the issue of confirmation by asking whether, if we abandon Frye's analogy between science and criticism, his theory and his conclusions can be confirmed in some other, "non-scientific" way. What archetypes, for example, are to be admitted as legitimate in an analysis of a literary work? The question is difficult to answer because Frye's approach is always to begin with structure in the largest sense.

> Whenever we read anything there are two mental operations we perform, which succeed one another in time. First we follow the narrative movement in the act of reading. . . . Afterwards, we can look at the work as a simultaneous unity and discover its structure. . . . It is more practicable to start with the second stage. This involves attaching the rhetorical analysis to a deductive framework derived from the study of the structure, and the context of that structure is what shows us where we should begin to look for our central images and ambiguities.[20]

The context of that structure, as we see time and again in Frye's work, is the complete body of a poet's writing and, finally, all other literature—

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 150. See Kuhn's "Postscript—1969," pp. 174 ff., where he clarifies his conception of the scientific community by indicating the various levels at which it exists.

[19] "Anatomy of Criticism," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 27 (1958), 194.

[20] *The Critical Path* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 25-26.

which means that the question of how an archetype might function in a particular literary work is not a question Frye's method permits us easily to ask.

One conceivable way to solve the problem of confirmation would be to reduce the scope of Frye's structuralism from the context of all literature, life, and natural cycles to a context in which the individual structure of a literary work can be examined. In other words, we can ask the question whether or not an archetypal pattern, a thematic mode, or a generic form serves an essential function in defining the formal nature of a particular work. This is to ask the question of intention. Archetypal themes may turn out to play an important role in such study; but they would be important not as they relate to other works of literature but only as they serve the final cause of a work or are themselves the final cause. By using the intended meaning of a literary work as the problem to be solved, we can develop a method for testing the genuineness or relevance of archetypes.

To speak of a poem's intention is to deal with its emotional and structural meaning, to analyze its rhetorical aspects, both intellectual and affective, which the writer uses to shape our response. Intentionalism does not necessarily have to refer to the motives or psychological history of the poet, which is what Wimsatt and Beardsley have in mind in their unmasking the "intentional fallacy." There are other meaningful ways of talking about artistic intention. Erwin Panofsky, for example, has said that an artistic work *demands* to be responded to in a particular way and that this demand is a function of the way in which a work solves an artistic problem. In this context, intention refers to rhetorical, stylistic, and structural patterns which we as readers can recognize, not as examples of archetypal categories, but as parts of a whole fitted together to achieve a certain effect—in Panofsky's words, "as specific solutions of generic 'artistic problems'." [21]

In a similar manner, R. S. Crane has argued that a work of literature possesses a synthesizing idea or cause which directs whatever a poet does with his materials. This cause determines what kind of work a poet will create and what its emotional quality will be. By reasoning back from the effect of the whole, Crane argues, we can discover the causes which produced it. These causes would include every rhetorical and stylistic choice the author made in the process of composition.[22] And the combination of all the choices results in what we can call the intended

[21] *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1955), p. 21.
[22] *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, especially section 5.

effect, the qualities which the work "demands" that we respond to. By careful analysis of the "causes" of individual poems, following the kind of inductive procedure Crane outlines, we can arrive at a position for making sound judgments about artistic intention. This means, of course, that we will have to abandon Frye's sharp disjunction between knowledge and experience. But it also means that we will have a method of talking about the meaning of dying-god myths and the meaning of *Lear;* and if we can show that the two intended meanings differ, we will have a falsifiability criterion which can be used to deny archetypal equations.

Meyer Abrams approaches the issue of confirmation by calling for an appeal to *facts*. How do we know, he asks, whether or not archetypal patterns are actually in a work of literature? What is the evidence for their existence? His answer is that a genuine science of criticism "sets out from and terminates in an appeal to facts which enforce agreement from all sane, knowledgeable, and disinterested witnesses, in independent observations. It is relevant to inquire whether Frye's literary data do enforce agreement from all qualified readers. Are they discoverable by independent observations? Could even an initiate predict, in advance of publication, that Frye would discover 'displaced' forms of the dragon-killing myth in the cave episode in *Tom Sawyer* and the hero's release from the labyrinth in Henry James's *The Sense of the Past?*" [23]

Abrams' answer is that Frye's archetypal statements are not "significant empirical propositions." [24] Wayne Booth displays a similar skepticism. "One good way to test my misgivings," he says, "would be to take five most respected readers of the *Anatomy* and give them a work not mentioned by Mr. Frye and ask them to decide whether it is comedy, romance, tragedy, or irony or some combination, and then to describe the archetypes they detect. The chaotic results can be predicted." "I'd like to have charge of a controlled experiment," he adds, to test the claim "that different readers working independently with Frye's categories produce identical results on a given work of art." [25] Both of these critics are appealing to literary fact. Abrams' appeal is specific; Booth's is in the context of a discussion about how critical theory relates, or should relate to literary fact. Both critics, furthermore, want to establish a means of confirmation by appealing to independent observers.

If we attend to Popper's view of confirmation, however, are not the questions raised by Abrams and Booth insufficient? On the one hand, the

[23] "Anatomy of Criticism," *University of Toronto Quarterly,* 28 (1958), 194.

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 195.

[25] "The Use of Criticism in the Teaching of Literature," *College English,* 27 (1965), 6.

ability of an independent observer to locate an archetype which Frye himself has located does not confirm the theory. Nor, on the other hand, would their failure to locate it disconfirm the theory. Just because an independent observer is unable to see the relation between Newton's falling apples and the movement of the stars is no reason to conclude that the theory of gravity is not—to use Abrams' phrase—a significant empirical proposition.[26] Abrams, especially, is trying to confront Frye on his own terms by calling into question Frye's idea of a scientific criticism. But at least part of his critique rests upon an unPopperian idea of confirmation and, thus, will not yield very satisfactory results, one way or the other. One might reply to Abrams that in science itself chaotic results could be predicted from independent observers who have not been *taught* to see the relation between falling apples and moving stars; but that once they are taught, they can understand the theory of gravity. Similarly, Frye might reply to his critics that an archetype can be recognized by independent observers once they have been taught what it is.

But even this point rests upon the assumption that scientific and critical theory are somehow the same. Would not a more fruitful approach to evaluation result from abandoning all talk of scientific and empirical confirmation? I have been trying to suggest that Frye's criticism is not "scientific" in Popper's sense of the term, but this conclusion does not in itself constitute a damaging blow to Frye's position. After all, as John Casey says, "his work could be 'unscientific' but, nevertheless of great value" [27]—which is implicit in Abrams' conclusion that Frye's theory is, in the final analysis, a metaphysical theory. And the important question about metaphysical theories is not whether they can be scientifically verified but whether they are meaningful.

There are several kinds of value Frye's criticism offers, but none of them will depend finally upon a truth which is literally corrigible in the way a philosopher like Popper would require. Frye's work, first of all, is *practically* valuable, a system of terms and doctrines and a method which can be used to good advantage in answering one kind of critical question. It is, in the second place, a creative and aesthetic achievement in itself—a grand schema with final as well as instrumental value. And thirdly, his writings taken together form what might be called a metacriticism, reaching far beyond literature itself to account for and defend all the products of human culture. I do not propose here to argue the first two of these claims, though I think good reasons can be given for both. Rather, I should like to explore briefly the third suggestion: that Frye's

[26] The example is John Casey's. See "A 'Science' of Criticism," pp. 17-18, 143-44.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

work is not unlike a metaphysical system. The parallel has broad and ambiguous connotations, but I think it indicates one aspect of Frye's value and of the nature of his achievement.

If we define metaphysics as speculative (rather than empirical inquiry), which asks questions about first principles and the nature of reality, then Frye in some respects is not unlike a metaphysician. Two of Frye's more sensitive readers have, in fact, likened his work to metaphysics.[28] He is not, of course, actually constructing a metaphysical system, but what he does construct has its roots in the grandeur of conception and the subtlety of thought that distinguish metaphysics. He has his own solution to the problem of the one and the many and to the materialist-idealist dilemma. The most crucial points of his theory depend upon premises about the relation between mind and body, space and time, being and becoming. He has developed his own expansive conceptual universe in which all forms of thought, action, and passion are assigned their appropriate places. There is, in fact, a parallel between Frye's work and what Richard McKeon calls the transcendental form of metaphysics, with its transcendence of becoming, its dialectical systematizing, its opposition to partial views, its emphasis upon inclusiveness and dialogue, and its holoscopic and meroscopic ordering of reality.[29]

The great metaphysical systems, like Plato's or Spinoza's, have a range and variety of power which make them survive critique and refutation. The eminence of the mind behind them has something to do with this resiliency and vitality. Another reason, as John Holloway remarks, is "that metaphysical systems are often generated by some hitherto neglected great idea of which the writer has taken possession: some radically new point of view from which lines of force, as it were, may be seen running in new directions."[30] Although Frye is not doing metaphysics, he does invite us to consider a broad point of view, analogical in orientation, from which things take on a new appearance. With this in mind, we might say that Frye constructs a metacritical universe.

It is a universe in which art stands at the center, flanked by history, action, and event on one side and by philosophy, thought, and idea on the other. Art, for Frye, is the pre-eminent creation of man because it figures forth the imaginative world most fully and most obviously, and

[28] Meyer Abrams, "Anatomy of Criticism," p. 196; and John Holloway, "The Critical Zodiac of Northrop Frye," pp. 159-60.

[29] "The Future of Metaphysics," in *The Future of Metaphysics*, ed. Robert E. Wood (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 304-05.

[30] "The Critical Zodiac of Northrop Frye," p. 159.

the imaginative world is the locus to Frye's ultimate values. But criticism is not restricted merely to literature and the arts. "Is it true," Frye asks, "that the verbal structures of psychology, anthropology, theology, history, law and everything else built out of words have been informed or constructed by the same kind of myths and metaphors we find, in their original hypothetical form, in literature?" (AC, 352). And his answer is—indirectly in *Anatomy of Criticism* and directly in much of his later work—that it *is* true. This is the hypothesis upon which Frye builds his theory of culture and which permits him, because criticism is the unifying principle of culture, to practice his craft upon such a grand scale. One of Frye's ardent apologists over the years, E. W. Mandel, argues that the relationship of criticism to culture is the "informing principle" of Frye's work.[31] The more Frye writes, the more accurate Mandel's claim seems to be. Certainly a part of Frye's power as a critic derives from the catholicity of perspective which permits him to apply to the non-literary aspects of culture the principles he has learned from literature. Similarly, both fictional and non-fictional discourse are submitted to his centrifugal gaze, because they are both forms of imaginative projection. The keystone to Frye's metacriticism, we will continue to discover as we read his work, is his doctrine of the imagination.

The metacritic engages in a bold enterprise, and he cannot help but be haunted by the many fallen structures which lie along the road to the eternal city of man's dreams—that world of desire Frye speaks of so frequently. Much is risked because much is attempted. The ambition to write upon such a broad front, as Frye himself points out, makes a critic particularly vulnerable to objections.[32] In Frye's case the risk clearly has been worth taking. Yet the fruits of the risk are not to be judged finally, I think, against some standard of scientific truth or some ideal of an empirically confirmable critical theory.

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[31] "Toward a Theory of Cultural Revolution: The Criticism of Northrop Frye," *Canadian Literature*, No. 1 (Summer, 1959), p. 58.

[32] "Reflections in a Mirror," in *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 134.

THREE TRANSLATIONS BY ENID RHODES PESCHEL

THE SELF-TORTURER

TO J. G. F.

I shall strike you with no anger,
And no hatred, like a butcher,
Just as Moses struck the rock!
And from your eyelids I shall make

The waters of pain gush forth to slake
The burning thirst of my Sahara.
My swollen desire where hope inheres
Will swim upon your briny tears

Like a ship that's heading out to sea;
In my heart which they'll intoxicate
Your dear sobs will reverberate
Like a drum that sounds the call to arms!

Am I not a dissonant chord
In the heavenly symphony,
Thanks to the greedy Irony
That agitates and gnaws at me?

She's in my voice, the termagant!
All my blood is this black toxicant!
I am the sinister mirror too
In which the shrew observes herself!

I am at once the wound and the dagger!
I am the slap and the cheek itself!
I am the limbs and the wheel of torment,
Both the victim and the torturer!

I am the vampire of my own heart,
—One of those forsaken great men
Condemned to everlasting laughter,
And who can never smile again!

BAUDELAIRE, "L'Héautontimorouménos"

BUT NOT SATISFIED

Strange deity, as dusky as the nights,
With your perfume a blend of musk and Havana tobacco,
Work of some obi, the Faust of the savannah,
Sorceress, ebony-flanked, the child of black midnights,

I prefer to Constantia, to opium, to Burgundy,
The elixir of your lips on which love struts;
When the caravan of my desires sets out towards you,
Your eyes are the cistern in which my troubles drink.

From those two large dark eyes, the vents of your soul,
O pitiless demon! pour out less flame for me;
I am not the Styx to embrace you ninefold, alas!

And to shatter your spirit and drive you to acts
Of despair, I cannot, lascivious Megaera,
In the hell of your bed become Proserpina.

BAUDELAIRE, *"Sed non satiata"*

A PHANTOM III

THE FRAME

Just as a beautiful frame adds to a picture,
Though it may be the work of a much-praised brush,
An indefinable strangeness and enchantment
By isolating it from boundless nature,

So jewels, metals, gilded things, furniture,
Adapted themselves precisely to her rare beauty;
Nothing obscured her perfect radiancy,
And everything seemed to serve as a framework for her.

And one might even have said sometimes that she
Believed that everything wished to love her; she would
Submerge her nudity voluptuously

In the kisses of the satin or the linen,
And, slow or sudden, in every gesture she
Displayed the childlike grace of the simian.

BAUDELAIRE, "Un Fantôme III, Le Cadre"

A STORY

Arthur Haupt

When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between ten and eleven oclock and then I was in time again, not hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said, *Quentin, I give you the reductio ad absurdum of all futile folly not that you may tell time or even be on it, but so like your Grandfather you may mainly come to fathom time by its absence and to remember,* he said, *remember even a stopped watch is right exactly twice a day.*

It was propped up against the deodorant on the dresser, the slender mantis hands frozen in the full moon of dial, dead and not knowing any better. Through the wall I could hear Shriver creak out of bed. And they asking, What do you wear a watch that doesnt work for? And I, Youre not from the South, you cant know. Remembering Great-grandfather Jason's brigade under Longstreet's orders, marching toward Cemetery Ridge in the dustlong afternoon. And they, thinking I couldnt hear, Bleah, what kind of riffraff is Harvard admitting now why not a native American Choctaw, why not a Czech placekicker instead.

Shriver trailed in, wiping at his nose. "Got an exam today?"

"What's today?"

"Saturday."

I rubbed my eyes. "Don't think so."

"Well, I do. Let's get us some breakfast."

"No," I said, sitting up in the bunk, "I'll go later." Shriver's beady broker's eyes not remembering time nor capable of it, already glittering in the future changing money in the temple while his blunt fingers buttoned his shirt below on their own. *Grandfather was in New York,* Father said.

Shriver fastened his cufflinks with a snort. "You and that Confederate flag of yours."

"You're not from the South, you can't know."

"But sleeping in it—geez . . ." Shriver shook his head, knotting the bowtie primly under his chin as he turned at the door. "Well, right on, Quentin. I'm trucking down to the Square."

And the tessellated despair of your Grandfather, when the raincoated men disappeared around the corner of 52nd and Broadway with Grand-

father's 10 dollars, and the new 23-jewel precision Swiss watch in Grandfather's hand simultaneously yet not because nothing can be truly simultaneous stopped cold.

I got up and went to the dresser and took up the watch. I tapped the crystal on the corner of the dresser and held my hand under to catch the fragments. I tapped it again, harder. Then I turned it over to see, and saw the second hand moving now in mocking under the clear plastic. *Quentin, I send you to Harvard,* Father said, *not to learn, since there is no such thing as learning no such thing indeed as Harvard, but that you may anneal your manhood against the temptations of the North to make you Northern and so come to comprehend your Southernness there being no such thing as defeat either.*

The second hand ticked gracefully over the green numerals. The inviolate crystal winked at me. When the hand entered its fourth revolution I stopped trying, and found my last pair of bellbottoms in the dresser drawer. Everything else was packed. I went into the bathroom and shaved, and rinsed the razor carefully and put it in with the rest of my toilet. I shut the bag and stood it upright at the foot of the bunk. Then I finished dressing and sat down at the desk and wrote a new suicide note. There was an envelope left and I put the note in and addressed it to Pruitt, and under the bunk the telephone rang. The watch was still moving. I slipped it in my hip pocket and put on my Frye boots and found my wallet. The shadow of the sash drooped over the stoop now. The telephone rang.

I closed the door and locked it, and went down to the street, a portion of shadow tearing off and rippling down the stairs after me like a Newfoundland puppy. On the sidewalk I could feel the worn disk of watch against me through the denim, the diminutive wheels unclicking in an endless procession of time as it strained to catch up with the clockwork stars and planets invisible off in the sunny morning.

"Hey, taxi!" a fat salesman bellowed on the corner, standing there.

Taxi's eyes opened and she looked at me, wisteria in her hair. Incest, incest, she said, what a one-track mind. Let's talk about something else, huh?

A taxi broke from the pack and halted. I walked around its leering prow and stepped up onto the curb. Reflected in the plate-glass storefront I could see the engulfing, polished sky behind me, fleecy clouds scattering like sheep over Harvard and the North, and inside, among them like a wizened shepherd, the man with a metal tube in his eye. The tube looked up at me coming in.

"There's something the matter with my watch, sir," I said.

He jimmied open the back, picking carefully inside with a little brass jeweler's tool, like a man behind a North Shore raw bar. "Looks okay to me," he muttered. The bright escapement like a tiny beating heart in his hand.

"Yes, sir, that's the trouble. It started up this morning."

"Eh?"

"I want it to stop, sir," I said.

He lifted the metal piece from his eye and blinked at me. 'You want it to—stop."

"I want it to stop, sir," I said.

His etiolated brows knotted scowling. "A bit early in the day for you fellows to be hopped up, isn't it?" He snapped shut the back and handed the watch across the counter. "Well, it runs fine. Some people work for a living, you realize."

"Yes, sir." Not from the South. Cant know.

Father said, *The North is like a patient starfish hour after hour prizing open the mollusk underneath.* I went back along Brattle Street toward the Square. Greasy boys and girls in Army jackets panhandled along the sidewalk and I remembered I was hungry, so I stopped at Zum Zums and had a light breakfast. The chimes began to toll from the cupolas and spires over Cambridge, recapitulating one, two, three . . . *hour after hour.* On the twelfth chime I was halfway down the steps going into the subway. The departure bell echoed through the station and people shouldered their way ahead of me. *Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread,* Father said. I paid my quarter and got on. The doors shut and the train slid rumbling out of Harvard into the hollow night under Cambridge, a young mother and a nun across from me, a velour-clad negro who sat spraddled at the end of the seat, hat with a broken feather in it. The car lights flickered like candles in a blow.

Quentin, Quentin, she said. . . .

The negro's eyes went for the watch in my hand, then up to me. I glanced at him, feeling the primordial consanguinity cement between us, timeless and tolerant and serene, his black moon eyes an obverse reflection of my own and he a sort of stepchild and yet stepfather to me. Brake shoes squealing into Central station, and the negro stood up, too timorous to speak. *As though words meant anything,* Father said. I nodded, understanding as no Northerner could his destiny, to be an unimpatient conscience static in the land. Then he made a grab for the watch, a futile arcing swipe yet courageous in its daunting, in a quixotic way even honorable, and dashed emptyhanded onto the platform. The

doors slid shut. Hat with a broken feather in it arrowing through the crowd, and the train already moving again.

"Goodness—" gasped the nun. Not from the South. The mother didnt say anything.

And Dilsey, too old to cook, hobbling to the mailbox for her Social Security check each month. And Luster, gone to Detroit and nothing more, save a dogeared postcard that he was breaking into the music business and had changed his name to Haroun Al Rashid and—

I rode the steep escalator up and stepped out onto Washington Street, warm and glinting solid with salt-eaten bumpers and the numerals of Northern license plates. Overhead the harbor gulls hung on monofilament threads in the empty sky.

"Taxi!" bawled a matron, a Filene's bag grasped in one paw.

And Taxi's eyes like foxfire. Quentin, Quentin . . . which Quentin we talkin bout—I get em all mixed up.

The balloon man hawked his way toward me along the thronged sidewalk, his clutch of bulbous sausages snouting up in ripple-colored rubber distended over nothing inside. The 50-cent one was clumsy so I bought two 25-cent ones instead, bobbing behind me on strings as I crossed over to lose my shadow on the shadow side of Washington. My reflection walked alongside though, but after another block I cut into the ticket office of Parnassus Airways and stranded it.

"Nice day, sir," said the agent. He had a Smile button pinned in his lapel. "Where to?"

"I—"

"Going to Europe? Why not try our Ruritanian castle tour? Twelve days, 11 nights, hotels all on the American plan—only airline that flies there direct from Logan Airport, you know."

"I'm just going home for the summer, sir," I said.

"Ah. A student." The agent's cheeriness came down a peg, and he seemed now to notice the two balloons. "No, don't tell me, let me guess. One-way coach to Zenith?"

"No—"

"Too bad. Going to play the Lions' exhibition games there in August, I understand. Winesburg?"

"No I—"

"West Egg?"

"No, sir, I'm trying—"

"Aha! I can tell"—the agent beamed—"that you're a Southerner. The accent. Home to old Catawba, is it? One-way coach to Altamont, coming right up."

"No, sir," I said, "Jefferson."

"Jefferson, *Mississippi?*" He wanted to be sure. I nodded. "Why, my goodness, a whole New South down there, they tell me. All-American City in '68—well, you're in luck, young man. Dinner flight 666 leaves at five o'clock this afternoon. Choice of fried chicken or chitlins. Let me check a moment. . . . yes, we do seem to have a seat left. . . ."

"Fried chicken," I said. "If it's not any trouble, sir."

The teletype began to chatter. The balloons nuzzled like dolphins under the fluorescent tubes. "Non-stop to Jefferson," said the agent, writing out the reservation. "Check those balloons through for you? No?" He stamped it and handed the envelope to me. "Here's your ticket . . . and your Master Charge. Be at Gate 47 by four-thirty. And enjoy your flight, Mr. Compson!"

"I will, sir." And I went outside to where my reflection waited, baleful and trailing its balloons. They were all like that, the Northerners. And Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames with a clipboard coming over the garden paling to ask his list of impertinent questions with that matter-of-fact cheer they all had. And Father, Who in hell are you? And Dalton Ames very polite, Im canvassing on behalf of the state Republican Party and—

And Father, *The what?*

And Taxi came in.

The chimes were striking two when I came up from the subway into Harvard Square. The reverberating sky lay smooth like an unrippled blue inverted lake overhead, and the two balloons danced taut stretching to reach it but held in short by my hand. Father, I have committed—

Until on the Day when He says Rise only the balloons would come floating up.

"Quentin!"

Shriver waved from across the street, Squib beside him in his las Perlas vest. They crossed through the stalled cars. "Becky Cabot dropped by in her Porsche looking for you, Quentin," Shriver said, puffing up to me. "Where you been?"

"Downtown," I said.

"She tried to phone, wants you to come live in Paris with her this summer, if you're not doing anything."

The balloons danced above us. I shrugged. I could hear the plane ticket rustle in my hip pocket, feel the ringing escapement of the watch.

Squib gave me an affectionate slap. "Hey, Kinch, you fearful Jesuit, how'd you do on the American lit' exam?" I looked at him, his pudgy Bridgeport face. "The question on Southern gothic regionalism," he went

on, not knowing any better. "I'd have thought you'd clean up on that one. I used Baptist theology myself, proved—"

"I didn't take it," I said.

Shriver and Squib exchanged glances. Shriver shook his head. The balloons struggled, and Squib's grin faded away. "You're not still working on that suicide note of yours, are you?"

"Almost done."

"Well, don't be such a perfectionist. Professor Pruitt'll mark you down hard for turning it in late."

Thats whats so sad, Father said.

"Quentin," interrupted Shriver, "Becky told me—you listening, Quentin?—told me she left a message for you. Call her, will you? Chance of a lifetime."

"Fine with me," I said. I turned to walk away.

"What's with him today?" Squib's nasal voice behind me. "Quentin? Let's go to *Key Largo* tonight, Quentin. . . ."

I kept on walking. The burnished sky pulled at the balloons, bumping them together with puffs of insinuating Northern air. Two greasy, bearded boys scuttled up on the sidewalk at either hand. "Got any spare change, mister?"

I gave them the balloons instead.

"Big deal," the little one sneered. "Like who needs balloons."

"Hold tight," I said. "Feed them twice a day."

Father, I said—

Father's back to me, seated in the great wing chair in the midnight drawing room. A host of locusts whirred in the live oaks high outside the slatted blinds. The antimacassars white like snowflakes under his quiescent hands. Father, I said, I have committed. . . . His hoary head motionless, outlined in the pearly honeysuckle dimness, deaf out of rage at having heard, a silent wraith of honor in avizandum as the Scots call it, pretending in the void of his wrath as though it were the ghostly effulgence in the corner that had his attention, not me.

Father, I said, it was I not Dalton Ames—

And Father still motionless, *Ah Quentin, you think you have done something so dreadful, and yet no matter what your malfeasance or misfeasance or nonfeasance—I must tell you I entertain gloomy doubts concerning your abilities—it would not be your fault, and thus your vindication. Varium et mutabile semper femina, and fault is an illusion, and though it were not, and were you vindicated beyond all hope from Adam's fall, still sadly it would not give you leave to interrupt your Father while he is watching Johnny Carson in Hollywood. Later.*

I looked back. Across Harvard Square the two boys teased and sported with the balloons. Now they let one go and it leapt glistening and fishlike free, striking up above the rooftops to shrink into the blue spindrifting gulf. Now the other one, string trailing like a silent flagellum as it rose clear and gone.

Dalton Ames gone, who had married a Nixonette at gunpoint to save her honor. And Taxi gone, run away with Dr. Heinrich Herter of the NASA Mississippi Test Facility, and years later the snapshot the two of them leaning in sunglasses against their Toyota in Downey, California, waving, waving

and i said father i wasnt lying i did it to protect her safe from the starfish grasping north to send it away like you said and he *quentin you never could do anything right when your head was clear much less in the purblind fury of despairing concupiscence* and i to save ourselves and he *salvation is an illusion* and i i wanted to be courageous and he *thats an illusion too* and i i wanted to love taxi forever and he *who i dont remember my what a curious name* and i you can shirk anything cant you and he *oh i dont know hard to say* and i but if you could only accept the necessity of change and he *i am too necessitarian for that* and i at least become reconciled to appomattox and what came after forgetting your essentially tribal ethic look at the cleancut young southern governors here in newsweek and he *forget hell what kind of junk they teaching you up there boy* and i father why do you always talk in italics and he head bowed *quentin i have been to jackson doctors and speech therapists in new orleans and they say it is an impediment congenital of our starcrossed lineage ineffably*

The Cambridge sky lay drowning in light, sucking in swirls of dappled cloud, and I shaded my eyes, squinting to see yet not see the two balloon specks rising into it for a long while, seeing Father up there at the end of the clockwork parade, Father as he reconciled himself at last with the Cabots in the clouds, and the Cabots presenting him to the Lowells, and the Lowells bringing him into their circle as they conversed with the miasmatic nimbus of Honor and Time that towered now and always there brooding ineluctably in Its coils over the final Reconstruction.

The chimes struck three. A flowery note from Becky lay folded under the door. I washed up and then stooped and put it in my pocket along with the ticket, suicide note and watch. I reached for my packed bag. The shadow of the sash stretched across the room now. Then I remembered I hadnt finished my hair, but Shriver had left his electric styling dryer out, so I didnt have to open the bag any more.

WILLIAM STAFFORD AND THE SURPRISE CLICHE

ALBERTA T. TURNER

To say that a poet uses cliché is enough to warn off editors of little magazines, prevent readings on prestigious campuses, and turn foundation awards in the direction of more bold and risk-taking writers. William Stafford has suffered none of these reversals, yet a close reading of his poems shows that one of the most frequent devices which creates his special originality, or voice, is a skillful handling of cliché.

Stafford's method is to draw attention to the cliché *as* cliché—to make the reader recognize the familiar phrase by using exactly the expected words or enough of them so that the reader knows what specific substitution has been made. The surprise is created by using the familiar phrase (1) in an unusual context, (2) in an expected context but in such a way that the meaning becomes ironic, or (3) by changing the phrase just enough so that the expected words become even more applicable than they would have been before the change.

All three methods can be illustrated from the poem "Glimpse Between Buildings":

GLIMPSE BETWEEN BUILDINGS

Now that the moon is out of a job
it has an easy climb, these nights,
finds an empty farm where a family could live,
slides wide over the forest—all those
million still violins before they are
carved—and follows those paths only air
ever uses. I feel my breath follow
those aisles and stumble on the moon
deep in forest pools. . . .

Moon, you old unsinkable submarine,
leaf admirer, be partly mine,
guide me tonight along city streets.
Help me do right.[1]

[1] "Glimpse Between Buildings" from *Someday; Maybe* by William Stafford. Copyright © 1973 by William Stafford.

At least eight phrases in the poem are familiar enough to appear in a cliché dictionary:

1. out of a job
2. an easy climb
3. follow those paths
4. stumble on
5. you old [so and so]
6. be mine
7. guide me tonight
8. help me do right

All but two (nos. 5 and 6) are used in their expected forms. The first exception, *be mine,* contains the insertion *partly,* which alters but does not disguise the poetic lover's usual proposal to his lady. The second altered cliché, *you old so and so,* substitutes *unsinkable submarine* for *so and so,* a change which, again, does not disguise the fact that Stafford is using the familiar phrase in its familiar affectionate, slightly amused tone. Of the remainder, phrases nos. 3, 7, and 8 are clichés of the hymnal, and nos. 1, 2, and 4 are colloquial, everyday expressions. Their occurrence in a poem whose last four lines are an address to the moon and whose last line is a familiar address to God suggests that Stafford is being either tritely sentimental or ironic. The way that he mixes these clichés of the love and religious traditions with the colloquial and mundane ones leaves sentiment intact, but gives an ironic twist which prevents sentimentality. The moon *is not* Diana; it *is* an old man out of a job (the moon's job as inciter of love and poetic madness has been abolished, the moon-man thrown out, and his moonscape taken over by a research laboratory). The old man is not only unemployed but a vagrant and a dreamer: he uses his older mythic occupations just for fun. Instead of haunting empty houses, he examines them as possible family homes; instead of inspiring moonlight sonatas, he admires the forests as still, uncarved violins; instead of laying moon paths that bewitch and lead lovers astray, he follows paths that are nameless and to no mortal or lunar purpose; where once he lit pools for lovers and dryads, he now takes his own midnight dip and submerges for his own pleasure. But the speaker still prays to him in the clichés of the lover and the religious believer. "Be mine," "guide me tonight," "help me do right." By changing "be mine" to "be partly mine" and adding "along city streets" to "guide me tonight" Stafford alerts his reader to the fact that the clichés must not be taken in their usual senses. In this context the unchanged phrase from a hundred Chris-

tian prayers, "Help me do right," becomes "Help me realize that the so-called easy climb may be the hard one, that the traditional job may be easier than a discriminating and truly fulfilling vagrancy, and that the glimpse of the moon as vagrant, from between buildings, may be just the perspective on regimentation which makes human civilization bearable." Without the clichés, phrased as they are, there would be no tension between the expected and the unexpected. There would be only a flat prose statement.

Cliché as Stafford has used it in this poem acquires the strength of historical or literary allusion. We follow its expectedness just short of complacence, then by addition of a word, or by placing it in an unexpected context, he makes the old phrase tilt us in a new direction.

A second poem in which Stafford uses cliché in the same way is "Sophocles Says":

SOPHOCLES SAYS

History is a story God is telling,
by means of hidden meanings written closely
inside the skins of things. Far over the sun
lonesome curves are meeting, and in the clouds
birds bend the wind. Hunting a rendezvous,
soft as snowflakes ride through a storm their pattern down,
men hesitate a step, touched by home.

A man passes among strangers; he never smiles;
the way a flame goes begging among the trees
he goes, and he suffers, himself, the kind of dark
that anything sent from God experiences,
until he finds through trees the lights of a town—
a street, the houses blinded in the rain—
and he hesitates a step, shocked—at home.

For God will take a man, no matter where,
and make some scene a part of what goes on:
there will be a flame; there will be a snowflake form;
and riding with the birds, wherever they are,
bending the wind, finding a rendezvous
beyond the sun or under the earth—that man
will hesitate a step—and meet his home.[2]

[2] "Sophocles Says" from *The Rescued Year* by William Stafford. Copyright © 1966 by William E. Stafford.

In this poem few of the clichés are used in their usual forms, though modifications clearly imply those forms:

CLICHÉS	IN STAFFORD'S FORMS
Simon says	Sophocles says
The heavens are telling the glory of God	History is a story God is telling
lonesome people are meeting	lonesome curves are *meeting*
birds are blown by the wind	birds bend the wind
keeping a rendezvous	hunting a rendezvous
at home	touched by home
	meet his home
a man goes begging	a flame goes begging
suffers indignity, shame, injustice	suffers the kind of dark that anything sent from God experiences
eyes blinded by rain	houses blinded in the rain
hesitates a *moment*	hesitates a *step*

The especially heavy concentration of clichés in this poem can be attributed to the poem's central point—a modification of the popular understanding of what Sophocles said about fate: that it comes to men as a surprise, that they cannot forestall it, that it is grim and tragic, but that its very tragedy can leave a heroic man wiser and resigned. Stafford says the same thing, but changes the tone of Sophocles' statement. *Fate becomes home*. To the denotation of justice and inevitability and surprise, he adds the connotation of comfort, of personal completeness. A cliché situation is twisted just enough to make it a new situation. Each cliché strengthens this effect: "Simon says" is a child's game, and Stafford is about to take the threat out of Sophocles: Astronomical curves are humanized by being called lonesome; the wind becomes less threatening because birds bend it; a rendezvous with destiny is not imposed, but sought; flame does not scar or blind or beckon, it begs; man does not suffer a unique and impersonal cosmic punishment, but the kind of warm darkness that anything sent from God knows. Conversely, the clichés of absolute comfort have been made less comforting: the houses that offer welcome and security to travelers lost in the woods in the stock fairytale situation are blinded by rain. Most important, the word

home goes through a gradual change which makes the reader aware that it both *is* and *is more than* the cliché concept of stove, wife and security blanket: the seeker is *touched by home* (surprised); shocked to find he is already *at home*, and finally made (as Sophocles' heroes were) aware enough of the nature of home to meet it. Home is security only in the sense that it is fate. Sophocles says that fate will surprise, fit, determine, enlighten, and Stafford says he should have added that fate will also comfort us.

The two poems I have selected work the device of surprise cliché harder than many of Stafford's poems do. But the device occurs often enough in other poems to show that it is one of Stafford's most powerful tools for suggesting mystery in a mundane situation. For example, in "At the Fair" (*A Rescued Year*, p. 44) the lines "What more could anyone ask/We had our money's worth" come just after the list of usual sideshow attractions and just before an incident which is both less than and much more than any of these: "And then besides, outside the gate,/for nothing, we met one of those lithe women—/The whirling girl, laughing with a crooked old man." In "The Well Rising" (*West of Your City*, p. 50) the substitution of *brimming* for *cutting* in the expression "plowshare brimming through deep ground" occurs while Stafford is taking the usually unnoticed commonplaces of the field and interpreting them as actions of "thunderous" intent; he ends with the lines, ". . . I place my feet/with care in such a world." In "At the Bomb Testing Site" (*West of Your City*, p. 31.) he substitutes "at the flute end of consequences" for the usual "at the tail end," in order to say that a lizard waiting for an important change, its hands gripping the desert, is waiting for a beginning rather than merely for the final explosion which the rest of us have been taught to expect. In "Aunt Mable" (*A Rescued Year*, p. 17) he writes, "shaken by intermittent trust,/stricken with friendliness" where custom would lead us to expect "shaken by intermittent pain, stricken by fear." Again the modification is organically necessary to the thrust of the poem, which is saying that we are so accustomed to being shaken by mistrust and fear that we are numb to it, that the only thing which can really shake us is trust and friendliness. And I could cite dozens more.

To use this device entails great risk, for the poetic "decorum" of the 1970's forbids the too-familiar phrase in the expected context, whether that phrase be allusion, pathetic fallacy, or everyday colloquialism. Yet Stafford has found it a risk worth taking because it insures that the reader will go at least part way with the poet on the strength of his old awareness before he is jerked into or flooded with new awareness, that he will come close for a look and so give the poet a chance to surprise him. If

everything in a poem is entirely original, the reader may not get a firm enough grasp on it to permit it to take him anywhere. Stafford does invite a quick or cursory reader to see the familiar signs, think he's been there already, and turn back too soon. But more often than not he succeeds in surprising his reader into going farther than he thought he could go. When his method succeeds, the reader can agree with him that

> Walking along in this not quite prose way
> we both know it is not quite prose we speak.
> ("Near," *A Rescued Year*, p. 77)

OLD WOMAN IN PINK, SHOPPING

It must be three sizes too big.
There's not one place where it touches your body
(inviolate, chaste). Straight
as a bamboo screen, it hooks
on your shoulders and
plummets down
past used-up knees,
a large pink sack
(no need to double-bag).
Has your body shrunk, old carefully-choosing lady,
or does one buy to "grow into" things at eighty?

And I wonder now, as your dress moves
inscrutably,
What does it cover?
Buttocks and breasts?
Or have the ribs taken over,
slicing their sharp route
through any softness that remained?
Is old age
only
a bed of
brittle
angles?

—LINDA W. WAGNER

COUSIN TESSIE

While working as
A secretary she
Studied Creative
Writing at night
In a university
Adult Education
Program,but after
Two stories and two
Poems she dropped out.

Then she took up
"Plastic Arts" and
Did a few heads
In class, but she
Didn't like them,
So she gave that
Up, too.

The same with
Dancing, which she
Gave up when she
Discovered she had
Rheumatism in
A hip joint.

Then she tried
Acting, but
It bored her.

Now she's
Studying Guidance.
She says, "I think
I have real
Talent in this.
I understand
People."

—Charles Angoff

AUNT FAIGGE

She was a
Dentist. "Plain
Men" shunned her:
"Imagine sleeping
With a dentist."

She did marry
Another dentist,
But he left her.
Then she married
A veterinarian,
Who also left her.

She gave up
Dentistry, and
Went into
Real estate.
She died at forty.

"She looked so
Healthy," people said.

—CHARLES ANGOFF

ACCIDENT

My stranded auto balanced
On the freeway's shoulder,
I sit and watch
The fine young beagle hound,
Almost gone with pups,
Sense her way
Across the safety of the median.
How good god
Did this gentle mother of the fields
Find her way here?

Her muzzle up in search of the scent,
She hesitates near the edge of the hardtop
In grass still soft
Beneath the stunning forenoon sun,
Then wanders in front of an oncoming Semi
Bearing down
Passing
Receding now already
Into the distance of the driver's face.
Her fertile belly splits
Like a sack of garbage,
Strewing entrails, afterbirth, chunks of bright meat
Across the fresh white crest of the morning.

Cars are swerving
To miss what's left of the carcass,
But I must stare
Long in disbelief
At the torn flesh
While my speeding brain
Idles down
To the hum of tires
Along the detours
Between now and then,
Here and there.
Then the spell breaks.

A taste thick as death
Blackens my throat
As deep inside
The tired old Adam,
Struggling toward conclusion,
Heaves up the undigestible thought:

In this pathetic allegory of life,
If innocent man is a bitch
Sniffing the beautiful brief morning,
What cruel or childish or impotent driver
Slumps down behind the wheel of the implacable world?

—Rodney O. Rogers

GETTING STARTED

Scarcely straightened from the crib's crouch,
already entering that long decline
that is the ending coming, and already
knowing that the thing that eats us eats

us now, not finally; and thinking
It's my timing that is off, caught out
between a holding to the starting out and ends
that take shape vaguely, teasing us;
and wishing lastly to be fumbling my way
out, a leaving unimportant as an old

man's dropping off. And a prevision
of that final minute, of this spoiled
finishing: the gnarled brain whorlings
twisting tightly at the end, and planning . . .

—John Ditsky

NOW SHE KNOWS WHAT WILL

it's been a duel of
quiet the 2 of them
in stiff chairs while
she wondered what

would happen she
was afraid to move
kept writing mad
girl letters she
thought he wanted

to pull her into
his dead leaf bed
was she mistaken
why did he stay

near the first that
wasn't burning
reading magazines
he had
why
did he watch her
twisting in blue

velvet and then
just say isn't
it the night to
change the clocks

—Lyn Lifshin

NANTUCKET

twisted leaning
graves blown like
hair in different
winds grass white as
old women's hair a
white sea, bayberry
milkweed those women
waiting to walked
on their houses for
men who'd eat salt
from their lips who'd
bring bracelets of
salmon or wouldn't,
their bones like trees
in some city underwater

—Lyn Lifshin

LOVE SONG FROM THE LAB

Come be my love and slip into my cage
And I will keep you watered, warm and fed;
Safe from microbes, being rudely bred,
Quite sterilized from suffering and age.

One evening you will drift from life as well
Lulled by my anesthetizer's kiss;
And in your ether-scented sleep of bliss
Have probes inserted in your pleasure cells.

My contacts planted firm in your fair locks
I'll read your least desire on my bright screens
And, feeding passion through my pulse-machines,
Rouse you into brainstorms with my shocks.

—John Ower

DIONYSIAN ICE

(From "Paula")

The haze of ice-blue
flowers among the poppies
    is like Paula
among the silence
    of her own blood.
It is like
Paula in a garden
    of her own sensations.
Where she wakens
to the mirror
        of the actual.
Where she wakens to the miracle
which is actually herself.
The garden where the mountains
are only daisies
and she bends above them
        like the sun.

—P. B. Newman

WAVES

Here, on the verge of land and water
All crises meet—all I have known:
My dreams, my foundations
What I have seen with my fractured eye.

The sea surrounds me
With hot tides that send through me
The chords of an unsettled key.

It is as though hell unloosed
These waves hoping
To recapture falling legions
For they come chaotically
With sporadic beat.

My fears run wildly now
Night crimes charging
On the crests
Of all that I feel.

No count. No sun. The senses incomplete.
Hydras scream on the spray of these waves.

—James K. Bowen

ALTAMIRA

every old cellar
over which
the house stands still

is a cave,
the cellar, whole,
walls, floor and overhead,

(the house, over which
a wind, a
cloud . . .)

in the cellar hole,
on the walls,
in the cave:

paintings of bulls,
bellowing, lowing,
in loud color tones

—Paul Metcalf

JANUARY, 1973

The snow is melting in our yard.
The temperature reads thirty-two.
My neighbor's roof is almost dry.

At seven, my wife had left for school,
Driving early to take a friend.
It was zero then, too cold for thought.

Yesterday was good. Sleds and cats
And dogs and boys stirred up the street.
Even a delivery man, in his skier's mask,
Looked pleased.

We ate late, like soldiers,
And heard the news: snipers in New Orleans,
And Nixon turning sixty.

My wife will cover forty miles tonight.
I'll worry, clean the house, and lay a fire.

Perhaps my son and I can start
A balsa glider, holding the ribs
Carefully, with pins, sanding the keel,
And painting the wing fillets green.

—JOSEPH GARRISON

I GOT UP

I got up and drank a beer and hiked to town
and got a cup of coffee, read
the news: some guy had flipped
his car, gone sailing out head first
across the highway where a truck
had crushed him good but failed
to finish the job, and on the way
to the hospital the ambulance
got totalled by a bus. it finally killed
him, leaving everybody else
unscratched and puzzled.

I hiked to get some stuff to kill
the worms that settled in the cabbage.
I'm living in the country now
alone and drunk with lots of room,
a bug infested garden, not even
a pet to break the boredom.
no job as yet,
the rent paid up another month,
and no car to get on the highway.

—Gary E. Ligi

MY MUSE IS A WAYWARD BITCH, UNWELL

Like a swarthy grass-skirted waitress
in a Polynesian restaurant,
my muse glides behind my table
where I'm eating hibachi steak and water chestnuts
and softly drapes a lei around my neck
and softly kisses me on the cheek.
For only a moment I see her bare flesh
as she disappears through bamboo.
Blinking at the candle light of her belly button,
I draw my fortune anxiously
out of the pulley bone of cake
she flagged my ice cream with:
"Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers."

Or like some dusky-throated contralto,
my muse rises from her sick bed
after vomiting all night
in the hotel room over mine in a distant city
and lustily sings in her morning shower
the song she performs in convocation later that day.
At lunch her still uncertain heaving
describes a fickle fate:
"You are surrounded by fortune hunters."

And so when a friend
asks me in a hotel lobby
whether the muse is speaking to me these days,
I say, grudingly, no,
she's a wayward bitch, unwell,
sometimes playing the tease,
sometimes nauseated,
so vexatiously little she has to say to me.

—Alfred Reid

A TRIP TO OAK FOREST

Guy Owen

As I started driving back to Raleigh, passing grey-weathered tobacco barns and new government-subsidized fish ponds, I realized that the annual family visit with my mother had been another failure. My wife Melanie and long-haired teenage son hated the old uncomfortable farm house with its missing bannisters and its single bathroom with the unpredictable toilet. In the late 1960's there had been a back-to-the-earth movement, but it had passed them by. They had ridden the one hundred and twenty miles down from Raleigh, through the falling red clay Piedmont, to Cape Fear County as if the trip were a painful odyssey, one only to be endured.

I admitted to myself that Mother did not make things easy for them. She was really old now, nearing seventy and hard of hearing, getting feebler each visit, but no less talkative and querulous. When her tiresome monologues were not about her precarious health, she tended to repeat stories of the old days when Father was alive, coloring even the Depression with the soft tones of nostalgia. When she widened the circle of conversation to include my bored wife and son, it was to make disparaging remarks about today's long-haired youth and wives who worked, abandoning their children to drugs and devil-spawned communes.

As usual, before we escaped the next afternoon, she managed to say, "You must come more often, son. You know I won't always be here."

I noticed that her hair was completely white now; her sharp face had lost color and her liver-splotched skin seemed paper-thin.

At the last moment she had summoned me into her cluttered bedroom and thrust a book in my hand. "I want you to take this now. Lately I've been going through my things, old keepsakes. . . ."

I saw that it was a copy of *Tom Sawyer Abroad* in a cheap edition, the spine broken. I had completely forgotten it, but it was the first book I had ever bought with my own money, earned by taking tobacco off the sticks when we were tenants on the McDougal farm. (Father had lost the farm he inherited early in the Depression.) Inside the brittle pages was a yellowed party napkin with a tiny red hatchet cut from drawing paper.

"From your first birthday party," she reminded me, "when you were six," her weak eyes filming over. I had been born on George Washington's birthday. Last year she had forced me to take my old baby shoes,

which she had had gilded and made into sentimental bookends—and which Melanie took directly to the attic.

I did not want to take the book, protesting that she would be around a long time to come. "Why, Mama, the doctor told me your heart is sound as a dollar."

"No such a thing," she said brusquely, her forehead etched with irritation. She slid the novel and party favors into one of the paper sacks she kept folded on the ugly broken Victrola. "It's for you to pass on to little Jim. You know he'll want something of yours. Why, I just know he'll treasure it and pass it on to his own son someday. When you give it to him, you be sure to tell him you played Tom Sawyer in the high school play."

When we walked down the steps together, my wife and son were waiting sullenly in the car. I shoved the package under the front seat, thinking, Why did it have to be one of Mark Twain's worst novels, one written against the grain and only for money? Driving off, I tried not to make something symbolic of it.

When I stopped for gas at the little tobacco market town where I had ridden the bus to school during the Depression, the package slid against my heel and I pushed it back with my foot.

James said with exaggerated irony, "Clayton may be a nice place to visit but I sure don't see why anyone would want to live here."

I knew that my surge of resentment was unjustified. My own feelings about my hometown were ambiguous; it was really only a blistered tobacco market town divided by railroad tracks and the Cape Fear River. And the narrow river was polluted and unromantic, nothing like Mark Twain's Mississippi. Even so, I had gone to school here, had joined the Presbyterian church down the street from the Gulf station. I had clerked in Kessler's Grocery Store by the Seaboard tracks during high school summers. And there were other ties: my spinster cousin still ran the beauty parlor across the street and my uncle-by-marriage managed the Waccamaw bank.

As we drove by the New Deal Warehouse, I nodded. "I worked many a night in that warehouse as a kid before the war." The warehouse was new then; now the doors were padlocked and the front ramp sagging from rot. Like the abandoned cotton gin behind it, the tin warehouse seemed to slide visibly toward the muddy river.

In the rearview mirror, I caught my son grinning and playing an invisible violin. He was seventeen and had never had a job of any kind except for occasionally playing rhythm guitar in a local rock band.

"What did you do at the warehouse, Dad?"

"I unloaded the tobacco from the trucks and wagons and stacked it on those laticed crates." Now they use tow sheets and the crates have disappeared.

"Think of all the cancer you helped put on the auction," he said. He turned up his transistor radio on which the Grateful Dead were screaming a John Lennon song.

"Turn that damn thing down," I snapped.

"Joel, you don't have to swear at him."

I did not comment on my school. The main building that I had attended stood on the left like a grimy, squat prison. The newer buildings ran out, well lighted and cheerful, across our old baseball diamond. There was even a greenhouse now where Mr. Townsend's horse stables used to be.

My son said, "Tell us how you used to walk seven miles to school, Dad, with only a hot sweet potato in your pocket to keep you warm and to eat for lunch."

"That's not funny any more, James," Melanie said. "Besides, that was one of Grandfather Jarman's stories."

Just before the little cemetery at the edge of town, I saw the familiar marker that indicated Whistler's mother's home was only a short distance away. I did not remember when Oak Forest burned in the early thirties, but I did recall when the D.A.R. put up the marker in 1939. There had been speeches and a prominent member of the McNeill family was lured over from Scotland. I stopped the car and read the sign: ANNA MATHILDA McNEILL WHISTLER, MOTHER OF THE NOTED PAINTER, JAMES ABBOT McNEILL WHISTLER, LIVED IN A HOUSE WHICH STOOD THIRTEEN HUNDERD YARDS EAST OF THIS SPOT. In the back seat my son read it out loud, then added, "Dear old Clayton's single claim to fame."

"Now James," Melanie warned.

I could have explained that even that fame was dubious. Mrs. McNeill had not actually lived there permanently; she had only visited her uncle in the summers for a few years when she was young. Although Wilmington was really her home, the story was, however doubtful, that she had met her husband in Cape Fear County.

Perhaps it was the nostalgia triggered by the Tom Sawyer novel, but suddenly I wanted very much to see the ruins of Oak Forest again. Though I had not thought of the old McNeill place in years, a wash of memories rushed back now. Our class used to walk there on picnics every year, hiding Easter eggs in the yard and the field of lion-colored broomsedge. More than once Darryl Clay, Forrest Wilson and I had

played hookey in August and sneaked there to eat the scuppernong grapes on the tangled, fallen arbor. On Senior Day in 1943 I had borrowed a bicycle and ridden there with Beatrice Ramsey. We had kissed under the giant sycamore tree and I had scratched our initials on one of the chimney bricks.

"Look, if you don't mind I'd like to take a quick look at the old place. Mother told me the land has been sold and there are plans for a housing development." She did not know what was in store for what was left of the McNeill home.

"Joel," Melanie protested, "it'll be dark before we get back to Raleigh as it is."

But I turned off anyway, driving quickly to where the dirt road led to the remnants of Oak Forest.

I parked the car in the shade and got out. I picked up my camera, slipping the strap over my shoulder.

"I'll stay here, if you don't mind," Melanie said. "It's too hot for walking."

"It's not more than two blocks away." But I did not expect her to come. My wife is partially color blind and she does not share my interest in the few books and Whistler prints I have collected over the years.

"Daddy, I don't want to go—"

"Get out," I said firmly. "This should be educational."

"James, go on with your father," Melanie said in her humor-your-father voice.

He started to bring the radio, but I said, "Leave that damn thing here."

As we walked up the weedy lane, I sketched in what I knew of the painter's career, mentioning our annual class visits to Oak Forest. I also pointed out to my city-bred son the weeds and wild flowers along the way: yarrow and Queen Anne's lace, fennel and the golden rod just beginning to bloom. A redwinged blackbird flew up before us.

At the end of the lane I paused. "There used to be an old clay-daubed curing barn over there," I said. I remembered it clearly; it sat as comfortably and friendly as an old dominecker hen. It had been replaced by a steel bulk curer that was starkly utilitarian.

Then I saw that the wooden gate was closed and there was a new hand-painted sign: Keep Out. I stared at the sign as if there were some mistake.

James said, "What about that? The only thing this jerkwater town's known for, then when you get here they say keep out." He turned to me "I'll take them at their word. What say we call it quits, Dad?"

I firmed my jaw and did not reply. Cautiously I climbed over the rickety fence, followed hesitantly by my son, skirted a patch of poison oak and walked into the cool pine woods. Almost immediately the roads forked and I became confused, as if walking in a dream. I could recall only one road from our class outings; I was postive that no forks were involved.

"Which way now?" James asked.

I was certain that the field of broomsedge would not be off to the left, so I plunged stubbornly to the right, searching for something that would give me my bearings. After ten minutes of floundering in circles I knew that I was hopelessly lost. Without a word my son had veered off to the left, searching on his own.

In the end, it was he who located the vine-covered ruins. I had overshot the site, looking for the field of sedge.

"Back here, Dad," he called.

Looking around me, I realized suddenly that I was standing in what had been the field where we had hunted for Easter eggs and the boys had held their egg-pecking contests. There were tall scaly-barked pines all around me.

James pointed, "There's a dead sycamore tree. That's what led me to it."

Now through the mass of convoluted vines and ancient trees I could see the front wall dappled in the August sunlight. The other yellowish brick walls, except for the corners and truncated chimney, had fallen inward.

"We found it all right," James said, "but the mosquitoes got here first. They'll eat us alive."

Together we walked toward Whistler's mother's home, ducking under limbs and threading bushes. "Let's make it snappy, huh, Dad?" We were both swatting mosquitoes and James had caught his long blond hair in a low-hanging limb.

"There was a spring," I began. I could not place it precisely, but I remembered that we never had to bring water on the class visits to the McNeill home.

"Over there."

I stopped, appalled. Someone had camped beside the tumbled walls. Trash was strewn about on the cross-hatched pine needles: paper cups, candy wrappers, even a torn sweatshirt. I saw an old car seat with the rotten stuffing half gone.

"They shouldn't have done that," I said, as if it had been a desecration, as if someone had slashed a Whistler canvas with a knife. Wiping the sweat out of my eyes, I knelt by the shrunken spring.

"Indian pipes," I said, pointing them out to my son, who was looking at me intently. An insect bite was swelling on his pale forehead and over his head a mockingbird began to sing.

As I pushed back an island of dead leaves and bent forward to drink, James said, "I wouldn't, if I were you."

I was thirsty from the hot walk and drew back, irritated. "It looks clean enough to me."

"Look again."

Then I glimpsed it: a white condom was anchored to a hairy root, curling upward toward the surface like a leprous bloom. My son's blue eyes seemed to smile at me ironically, but I did not hurry. Instead of drinking, I wet my handkerchief and bathed my stinging neck. Then the two of us stood before the crumbling front wall.

As I looked around to see if this were all, I became aware that my son was staring at me covertly. The sun was lost now behind some darkening clouds, which threatened rain, and I did not take the camera out of its case.

"So the old horse-faced gal in the picture, she actually lived here? I never cared much for 'Whistler's Mother.'"

"An Arrangement in Black and Gray," I corrected, aware of my pedantry. Actually, I preferred the Carlyle portrait myself and some of the later paintings influenced by the Japanese. But perhaps I had merely grown tired of the portrait of the old woman from over-exposure, and because she reminded me, somehow, of my own mother. At Clayton High School it was the only picture in the principal's office.

Even so, when I made the effort, I seemed to feel her presence here. During her childhood summers she must have learned something of a country woman's independence and courage on this isolated farm. That would have stood her in good stead in Russia.

"My God," I said, "St. Petersburg must have been bewildering after living here as a girl."

"Did she really live in Russia?" James asked with forced interest.

"Her husband was an engineer. He helped build one of the first Russian railroads for Czar Nicholas, from Moscow to St. Petersburg." I

had read some of her letters and I recalled how she hated the cold winters and the drunken servants. I added, "She lost her youngest son on the way to Russia."

"No wonder her face in the picture looks so sad."

I had always imagined that I detected the signs of her grief in the severe Scottish face.

As we walked over a pile of moldy bricks to the southern corner, I stumbled, reaching for the uncertain wall. I dabbed at my face with the wet handkerchief. "It seems . . . it's much smaller than I remember."

My son had glimpsed something in my shadowed face and he began to talk animatedly. "It's not too bad, really, I guess this was a good example of Georgian architecture in its day."

"There's a story that the bricks were imported from England."

"Well, at least they're handmade." He pointed to where some of the odd-sized bricks had been hollowed out by the rain. Above them someone had scratched: Kilroy was here.

Around by the large chimney, I searched for the bricks with the Class of '43 initials. As I looked in the waning light, I realized that my eyes were weakening; I would need new glasses soon.

"There's Forrest Wilson's brick," I said, thinking out loud. F. W. and M. Clay. I showed it to my son. "The only one in our class to be killed in the war." When peace came and his body was returned from the Pacific, I had been a pallbearer. I stepped closer, frowning at names I could no longer connect with faces.

"Hey, is this you, Dad?"

I was hoping that brick would be missing. The few tourists who came customarily took a brick as a souvenier. But there it was: JJ loves Beatrice R., enclosed in an asymetrical heart. It was sad that I felt no more than I did.

"Gosh, I'm afraid so."

"What was she like?"

I recalled her now, with her peroxided bouffant hairdo and second husband at the twenty-fifth class reunion, the only one I had attended—and that one alone. Although she had played Becky Thatcher to my Tom Sawyer, she had not recognized me, even after I spoke to her.

I shook my head as if to break a spell. "To tell the truth, I can't think of much to say about her. She was just a girl. . . ."

Once again I stared at the yellowish brick, recalling the innocent freedom of the picnics, the peculiar tang of the scuppernongs. I let my hand run down the initialed bricks to the charred sill.

From the road came the sound of the car horn, imperious and plangent as a bell.

Let her wait," James said, looking at me.

But I took his arm. "No, we mustn't keep your mother waiting, son." It was time to leave.

"But we didn't even go around back," James gestured. "There seems to be an old grape arbor back there. Don't you want to take a picture?"

I nodded, no. "Let's get out of here before the rain catches us."

As we started threading our way back through the undergrowth, the mockingbird flew away.

Melanie sat petulantly in the car, fanning with a newspaper. "I thought you'd never come. Did you get lost or something? I'd be willing to bet you got lost."

I started the motor. "I'm sorry," I said.

"It wasn't half bad, Mother, except for the darn mosquitoes."

I studied my son's face in the rearview mirror.

"Actually, that old Whistler place is a pretty interesting historic site."

"I'll just bet it is."

As the motor idled I felt my mother's package nudging my left heel. For a moment I was tempted to sneak the book out and throw it in the drainage ditch. But then I shoved it back, pulling out on the highway to Raleigh. In any case, I would not burden my son with it. It was something more for the dusty attic.

FOR CREIGHTON ABRAMS, WHO LIKES MOZART

There is no imp crueller
Than Mozart's sprite when free,
No sadder when imprisoned in a bottle.

He makes mock of body counts, promotions,
A dancing ball of fire,
He skips across the swamp
Like victory.

—JOHN OWER

CURDS AND WHEY

Charles Henley

In the growing light of dawn Father Jacoba followed a descending cinder path through an abandoned railyard. The young priest had a face narrow as praying hands and white as wax. He wore a black, neatly trimmed beard. As he skirted a pile of discarded tools, a voice cried out.

He started back, glancing about the yard. For a moment he saw nothing. Then a nun clashed through a half-circle of metal slats hanging in a doorway. "You're late," she cried.

"Beg pardon?" He lowered his hands, examining the other. The nun's cheeks looked hard as withered stone. "You startled me," he said.

"You're late," she said. "You promised to help me."

"There's been some mistake, Sister." He couldn't recall having ever seen the nun before. He had only recently come to the area, and his acquaintances were largely students and colleagues at the university where he taught. "I don't believe we've met." He extended a hand. "My name's—"

"Liar." She flung herself at him. "You lie," she cried, "you know I hate spiders."

He went limp in her grip, recalling he'd heard something, or at least it seemed he had. He couldn't be sure. Something about a nun: terrified, fascinated by spiders. "Sister," he whispered. "This is ridiculous."

She shook him roughly. "Why're you lying? Admit the truth, Priest. You know me."

He nodded dumbly, unable to draw a deep breath. Her face floated above his like the carcass of a dead moon. "Yes, I remember," he said, appalled at the sound of his own voice.

Her face rose in a drifting arc. She released him, leaving him to regain his balance. "Now wait a minute. We've—"

"You promised to help," she said.

"Yes," he said foolishly. He fumbled in his pockets, then wiped his palms upon his trousers. He remembered that spiders frightened the nun and for some perverse reason she'd begun hunting the source of her terror. He wasn't sure. On second thought, maybe the whole spider thing was a case history he'd encountered in his reading. He absently touched his beard. The nun he'd read about hated spiders and body hair, but he couldn't remember. "Let me think," he said. "I've got to think."

"You promised to help, Father."

"Yes, of course." He could feel the woman watching him. She had crossed her forearms over her chest. She possessed the irrational thrust of a shaft of black stone. To one side on the cinders, he saw a neatly folded handkerchief. He decided she'd dropped it during her outburst.

"You promised," she said.

"I'll help you." All sorts of foolish and ridiculous notions raced through his mind. The folded napkin seemed to have a frightening familiarity. He decided he couldn't retrieve the handkerchief without her knowledge. He stooped. "You drop this?" he asked, looking up at the woman.

She stepped back "It's not mine," she said. "What would I do with it."

He turned the cloth, recognizing the insignia of a hospital. He rose, extending it. "You sure? Maybe you better check."

"No," the nun cried. "The nurses planted it."

He decided not to push the point. The hospital insignia had given him confidence and direction. "We'd best start for the hospital, Sister. We've a long walk."

The nun appeared not to hear.

He withdrew the napkin. "It's all right. I'll keep it," he said.

"No." She snatched it from him. "It's mine. Me. I made it."

"As you wish," he said. He watched her unfold the linen.

She held up two corners of the square. A small circle of scarlet, the color of fresh blood, marked the center. Filagree beams radiated toward the edges.

"Put it up," he said abruptly. "It's not a flag."

"You promised to help, Father.

He cleared his throat. "We've a long walk, Sister." He took her arm. It felt like a stone column. "I'll help you back at the hospital. There's nothing I can do here."

She pulled free. "They lied about me."

"Sister." His voice rose as though warning a child. "You've slipped away without permission. Let's start back."

"They lied about me." She pushed his hand away. "Made me do horrible things. You promised you'd help."

"I shall." He seized her arm. "Don't argue, Sister. You'll see. When we get to the hospital the nurses will help you."

"Nurses," she shrieked. "Hair and spiders. They made me—"

"It's you who do bad things." He tried to move her. "Not the nurses."

She abruptly turned on him, striking the center of his chest with her fist. "No," she cried. "You promised to help."

He heard the nun's voice but not her words. Then she turned and stalked away, her shadow fluttering behind her as she crossed the rails.

He caught his breath. "Please, Sister," he gasped. "Wait."

He watched her move on, walking rapidly, hands pressed flat and close to her sides. At the main track the nun made an abrupt, mechanical turn and began following the rails, bobbing slightly as she stepped from tie to tie.

The nun stood to one side of the rails beneath an oddly shaped oak. As the priest ran, he kept glancing toward the tree as though he expected it and the nun to vanish. Immediately beyond her, the rails passed over a rickety timber trestle. Near the oak he stumbled to a clumsy walk, his feet crunching through a tangle of dead weeds and twigs. "Wait, I'll help you."

She watched him approach without moving. She looked as though she had waited beside the tracks since puberty. As he came up he had the uncanny feeling that he watched the nun and himself from some point outside himself. He saw the points of light in the woman's eyes constrict and retreat like the headlights of an automobile in reverse.

"I never asked you to follow me," she said.

"Sister," he said, catching a whiff of the dust that his feet had cast up, "I'll help you."

He went past her and collapsed, heaving for breath, upon the oak. "I'll help you."

"Heal yourself, Priest."

He turned to regard her. Her lips were thin and white as paper. "Heal myself, eh?" He wiped his face upon the shoulder of his coat. "You'll have to cooperate, Sister."

"The nurses sent you."

"No." He lifted his hands, pressing together the tips of his fingers. "We've a lot to talk about."

"Talk to yourself," she spat. Then abruptly she moved off, watching him over her shoulder.

"Wait," he called, following.

At the trestle she darted to one side, then went down the bramble choked embankment.

He emerged into the clearing beneath the trestle. Ahead the nun lifted her skirts and leaped a small stream of water. Then she went on into the underbrush.

"Sister," he called, hurrying after.

He followed so close, he stepped on her heels. "Sorry," he said, then in a high bright voice that almost became a shout, "How'd you know of this?"

The nun ignored him, ripping the serge of her habit free of the enveloping brush and pressing deeper. They followed a stone path that ran parallel to the branch. On either side of the stream, water oaks rose to form a canopy of vegetation. He stepped over a vine-covered column that had fallen across the path. "This ever a park?"

He shielded his face from the branches she released.

"Shall we stop and talk? This is pleasant, Sister."

Less and less sunlight filtered through to them. Father Jacoba began chilling. "This'll be fine, Sister. Pleasant."

He dodged a released limb. Sister, I didn't catch your name."

He smiled weakly as she turned. "You don't fool me," she said.

"Maybe later, Sister." He laughed. "No matter."

They went on. The trickle of flowing water subsided as the stream slowed, spreading in shallow pools, moving among the fallen logs and cypress knees. "Sister," he began. "Where are you leading me?"

The path grew spongy with moss and mud. He dropped back, squinting in the gloom. A mosquito sang in his ear.

"Sister," he said, pushing a limb aside.

Ahead the nun paused allowing him to catch up.

"You'll have to cooperate, Sister. You can't lose me."

The woman lifted an arm and silently pointed to the water. He fought down an urge to giggle. The stench of swamp mud and rotting vegetation rose to him as he squinted. "What?" he said. "What?"

He saw nothing in the gloom. Other than their own ragged breathing, nothing broke the silence.

"The spider devours the serpent," she said.

He started back, "What?" he said. For a moment water moccasins seemed to writhe silently before him. Then he wasn't sure. "Speak plainly, Sister," he said. "What did you say?"

"I didn't ask you to come," the nun said, her words flat, certain. She watched him, blocking the path.

"Sister," he said.

She took his hand and led him on. "You're safe," she said.

"I have an idea." He hurried after, ducking a released branch. "I have an idea, but you'll have to cooperate, Sister."

"Keep away from the edge," the nun said. They had reached a landing which stretched to the upper bank through a steep flight of stairs.

He nodded, dropping back on the vine-snarled steps to place his feet carefully. She ascended before him.

"I played here as a child," she said. Her face appeared over her shoulder.

He regarded her blankly.

"My Father built all this," she said, turning away and climbing. Above them an exposed root system had burst from the lip of the upper bank like exploding nerve-ends. A faraway tapping sound, muffled by distance and intervening vegetation, filtered to them. "What's that?" he asked.

At the top the nun led him through a hanging wall of creepers and brush into a clay floored arbor. The tapping entered the clearing more distinctly now. The nun stepped away. "They're repairing the roof," she said.

The arbor was a child's playhouse. Sunlight filtered through the overhead shelf of leaves and vines in hazy shifting patterns as though the clearing were under water.

"You like it, Father"

He avoided her eyes and stepped farther into the arbor. Several logs stripped of bark were arranged to suggest sofas or perhaps tables. At the end of one log, an upturned apple crate held a miscellaneous collection of tiny bottles, jars and cans, some filled, he thought, with dirt, others with less easily identified substances. In the space between the two logs, the nun had pressed bits of bright glass and metal, fragments of rock into the packed clay to form a mosaic. He studied the pattern and said, "I don't feel so good."

"You like it, don't you, Father? Don't you?"

"I'll vomit," he said, slumping to a log. "I'll vomit, then I'll feel better."

"I love to come here," the nun said. She joined him on the log. "It's so clean and safe."

"I'll be all right when I vomit." He stared blankly at the mosaic. "You needn't worry about me."

"Let me show you the rest," the nun said.

He shot a quick glance in her direction. "I'll help you, Sister," he asserted too loudly, "I'll do my best."

She lifted her hands, smiling. "I'm safe here," she said. "They daren't follow me here."

"You mean spiders? Listen, tell me about your spiders. I had an idea."

"It's nothing," she said. "Nothing a man would understand."

"Will you make up your mind?" he cried, leaping to his feet. "First you beg my help then you spurn it."

The nun ducked her head. "I'm sorry," she said. "What would a priest know about it." Abruptly she looked up at him. "Let's not talk about spiders. Let's talk about the time we were children."

"No," he shouted.

The nun continued to watch him. "When you jumped up a moment ago, you looked like brother. He and I often played here. He liked to play store."

He nodded, then sat to avoid reminding her of someone else.

"We were awfully close," she said. "One day brother dropped a spider down my collar."

He clucked sympathetically.

The nun smiled, shaking her head. "Brother tried to help. He wanted me to get over fearing spiders. That summer spiders frightened me so badly I hunted them out and crushed them with a stone. Brother said I hunted them so much I looked like a spider." Her words ended in a shiver of nervous laughter.

The priest dampened his lips.

"Wasn't nice of brother to say that," she said. "It wasn't so, but he loved to tease me."

Father Jacoba looked away. The nun's new-found calm reassured him. "You see him often?" he asked.

"No, Father, he moved away, maybe to California. He owns a store there, I think."

They waited. The arbor smelled of damp clay and crushed vegetation.

"Listen," he said, leaning toward her. "Let's try my idea. Knowledge cures almost everything, right? You're afraid of spiders because you're ignorant of them."

"I don't want to talk about it." She rose suddenly and stood behind him. "You leave me alone."

He twisted around. "At least try it."

The woman stared down at him, then suddenly she stooped and brought up a white porcelain basin from beneath the log.

"Sister," he said.

She shoved the bowl at him. It contained bloody water. "Sister," he cried.

The stunned priest gazed down at the reddened image of his own face. The refracted blade of a straight razor slanted from the water, dividing his face against itself. Small tight curls of obscene hair ringed

the bowl at the water line. For a moment the clots of hair seemed tiny black spiders.

"No," he whispered.

"Take it."

"Take what?"

He stared at the blade. It glittered through a patina of drying blood. So he hadn't read about a nun hating body hair. A sweet-sickish odor flowed upwards, bathing his face. "Take what?" he said foolishly.

"The blade," she said. "Take the blade."

"I don't understand." He caught his breath. "At least try my idea."

The basin tilted slightly. He was vaguely aware of her stooping, then he heard the soft burr of an opening zipper.

"Knowledge," he croaked.

"I already tried it."

Picture after brilliant picture of spiders slipped to the surface of the water. He watched the images curl, then sink to the bottom of the basin. He struggled to his feet. "I'll call those workmen," he said backing away.

"What workmen?"

"Give it another try." He could feel the woman's silent gaze. Groping for an authoritative gesture, he struck his hands together. "This is childish, Sister. I can't help you in this jungle. Let's return to the hospital."

"No." She jerked her head once.

"Shameful." He turned away, starting for the entrance to the arbor.

"Stop," the nun cried. "Father, you promised."

"No, I . . ." He turned and saw she had hoisted the basin, holding it on her upturned fingers the way a waiter will carry a tray. "Don't wet me, Sister," he said. "Don't you dare."

"I won't," the nun said. She removed her spectacles and dropped them to the clay. "I wouldn't hurt a fly."

"Don't. Please. I'll tell."

He started to run, was running he thought, then checked himself. He saw everything. He saw the bowl leave the nun's hand and float in an outrageously slow arc, and something black and scarlet exploded in his throat, but still the basin hung, suspended beyond the woman's hand, and he saw the nun as though seeing her for the first time without her mask, saw the discarded spectacles lying amidst the patterned bits of glass and rock and metal. "Help," he bellowed. Then the explosion in his throat ballooned upward, scraping his skull clean.

When he opened his eyes, he met the nun's gaze. For a moment he tried to make sense of what he saw, then he turned his face to one

side. He saw he had been dragged clear of the log and that he lay flat upon the earth. Drying blood tightened the skin of his face like varnish. His mouth and throat made sounds, but he heard nothing. Then a hand straightened his face.

"Go away," he gasped. He submitted to her scrutiny. He saw her lean over him, watchful, reserved as a mourner examining an open casket. Brass pins held a scrap of scarlet fabric against the black of her habit. One of the pins glinted gold in the filtered sunlight. The priest couldn't recall what the bit of red cloth reminded him of.

"Sister," he said.

A pink spear appeared between her lips. Other than the whisper of the nun's habit, the clearing was silent.

"No," he cried.

She lifted her voluminous skirts. Her thighs were dead white, like worn columns supporting dark webbings. She knelt, pushing his hand aside.

His flesh offered her no resistance. She opened his trousers with the razor. The sound of cutting flowed to him like the faraway hiss of ripping silk. Then black serge fell across his face like a net and he surrendered his flesh to the enveloping pull of hers.

When she arose, he lay as before his shoulders pressed into the inert clay. His breath came in short, frantic gulps, filling and emptying his lungs without effect. He watched the woman, seeing her but not seeing her in the soft, fluid light of the arbor. She straightened the folds of her skirt, then arranged the scrap of cloth on her chest. Other than the faraway rhythm of the tapping nothing disturbed the earth's silent pull.

Abruptly she knelt at his side. He sat up crying: "I've got to cover myself."

"It doesn't matter," she said. She sat quietly. She held the razor in her fist, its blade turned back across her knuckles.

"Of course it matters." His words came in a breathless, skittering rush. "Of course it matters. I can't stand pain. I could never stand pain."

She watched him. A slight flush colored her cheeks. "It doesn't matter," she said.

"How can you say that," he cried, scrambling to his feet. "I'm a human being." He panicked for words. "I'm no spider. Human. Put that up."

She rose on her knees, hobbling toward him.

"Your brother," he shrieked. "He . . ."

"Brother liked to play store," she said. "But I like to play house."

JEAN TOOMER: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

JOHN C. GRIFFIN

Section One of this bibliography presents not only a complete list of Jean Toomer's published fiction, but also (and this is of equal importance perhaps) the titles of those once-magnificient "little magazines" that published his fiction during the twenties and thirties. In particular, note that Section One provides bibliographical data on both those works that Toomer would publish collectively as *Cane* in 1923, as well as on his uncollected works—most only recently discovered. Section Two catalogues Toomer's nonfiction and essays; his literary criticisms and "dialogues" follow in Sections Three and Four respectively. Section Five consists of early reviews of *Cane* (1923-24), while Section Six presents a selected cross-section of critical opinion, from John Armstrong (1923) to Darwin T. Turner (1971).

For obvious reasons, the entries in Sections Five and Six of this bibliography are listed in alphabetical order. All other entries are given a chronological arrangement.

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HEAVENLY NAME TAGGERS

On those warm Sundays
she is ready for them.

One eye at the curtain crack,
she flings wide the door
almost before a white-gloved knuckle
has been laid upon it.

"Come in . Come in!" she grins,
waves a friendly beer can,
cocks her head to make sure they notice
she wears both earrings
on the same lobe. Then

when, pencil-ready, they have droned
each dreary choice,
she ends it:

"Put me down as 'Other,' Dearie!"

—Grace Beacham Freeman

REVIEWS

Doris Betts. *Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories.* New York: Harper and Row, 1973, 192 pp. $6.95.

In each of these stories Betts pursues the source of human passion, for she seems to think that man escapes from, or at least comes to understand his animal nature not by rising to a transcendent vision, but by submerging himself in a primitive reality. Thus Violet in "The Ugliest Pilgrim" goes to Oklahoma in search of the healing power of God only to be healed by Monty in a way quite different from what she expected; "The Spider Gardens of Madagascar" gives us a child's first awareness of life without love as survival of the fittest, fittest being determined by the power of the individual will. And Benson Watts finds life after death to be a plunging back into the gothic mind which produced the Medieval bestiary and into the lush isolation of a virgin wilderness. So relentless is Betts in her pursuit that she eagerly (perhaps too eagerly) forces the reader to face suffering of a most pathetic kind: a horribly scarred girl, a mother wired and plastered after an automobile accident, a chilling description of child birth. Hospitals, illness, disease, accidents, scars merge to form a subplot running through the stories: the modern world seen not as an insane asylum, nor as a kindergarten (as E. A. Robinson thought) but as the emergency room of a hospital.

Yet the final effect is neither grotesque nor violent, primarily because Betts only rarely distorts surface reality in order to turn it into an easy metaphor for ideas and emotions. Reading these stories, one feels suspended somewhere between sleep and waking in a world which is very real yet very transient, and he wonders whether he tries to sustain the dream he just waked from or the reality which was there before he went to sleep.

"The Spider Gardens of Madagascar" is a good example. The boy, the mother, the grandmother, the teacher are all perfectly realistic; the boy's interest in spiders is plausible; his reaction to his father's death and to the self-pitying bitch of a mother he is left with is believable. But the end of the story (Betts is a master of endings, refreshingly eschewing the fashionable and by now tedious throwaway) is strangely ambiguous. It is, granted what has gone before, melodramatic but terrifying; from a "literary" point of view, however, one might argue for simply an image—the boy staring at the black widow—rather than the overt question the boy asks himself. Indeed, to a generation raised on art as image and implication, the black widow with all its "thematic" implications—the black widow who is his mother, the literal black widow he has captured, the fact that the black widow kills its mate—is irresistible. Joyce, who could work wonders with a gold coin or corks popping out of bottles would surely have thought the spider enough.

But Betts drives beyond the image to the question. Read in the tradition of the short story, the story is weak; it "tells" us too much, and, here a more valid objection, it stretches our credulity concerning the intellect of the boy. Yet it is, I think, precisely our credulity that Betts wants to stretch. This is a story that lingers in the imagination of the reader; gradually he comes to understand that the center of it lies not in the relationship between the boy and the mother, for which the spider is a metaphor, but rather in the relationship between the boy and the spider, for which the mother is a metaphor. For Betts's characters live in a world

which is becoming "natural" in a terrifying way: it is a naturalness which occurs when the possibility for love is denied. In a world which sees love as natural, the descent into animalism (lust, violence, instinctual competition) is unnatural; but in a world in which love is denied or (the same thing) reduced to a pure emotion or passion, the descent into animalism is natural because it is necessary. Thus the reader is on one level (the melodramatic) terrified by the end of the story because of what the mother has turned the boy into; but this is preliminary to the real terror: we sympathize with the boy because, granted his world, he is right—he must kill himself or his mother.

It is just this concern with what is natural in our world that informs the best stories. In "Burning the Bed" lesbianism is used as a vehicle for the exploration. A daughter returns from the city to attend the sufferings of her dying father and whatever possibilities for love which may exist in her home are juxtaposed against the woman in the city for whom she yearns. As in "The Spider Gardens of Madagascar" what seems to be the center of the story, the lesbianism, emerges finally as a metaphor for the heroine's relationships with her father and dead brother. Betts is fond of this kind of doubling back—turning what is apparently the effect into the cause—and she works it brilliantly in "Benson Watts Is Dead and in Virginia."

So powerful, suggestive and complex a story is this last one, any brief criticism of it is bound to be fragmentary. What I would emphasize, however, is that its successful surrealism derives from a concrete literalness; for the surreal, like the absurd, in order to be effective must be firmly rooted in the real, the everyday. Thus the title story of this volume strikes me as ineffective, not only because it seems to be imitative and self-consciously literary, but also because the woman whose fantasy world is explored is never realized concretely: she seems little more than an excuse for the fantasy. But Benson Watts, who has died (perhaps) when the story opens, is developed ironically into a very mundane human being. And the juxtaposition of what he was—a high school teacher in Texas with an interest in Indians and Medieval history who died at the age of sixty-three—with what he has become—the same man moving through a wilderness like that of America before the white man came—creates a surreal world which is at once haunting and convincing. He gathers firewood, fishes, cooks, builds a boat while he ponders the past which he can and cannot remember. But he sees mysterious animals drinking from the misty lake and is pursued by a wolf which he either sees or knows is there.

Betts's hand in this story is light, deliberate, sure. Because her use of archetypes—river, journey, animals—is never forced, this becomes one of those stories which please and mystify at the same time; that is, the reader is moved by an awareness similar to that of Watts himself, something that is at last emotionally and not intellectually important. What is concrete and definite is that Watts is in a world in which things are moving backwards. That he is in Virginia indicates this, the early settlers having gone from Virginia to Texas; Olena, when he first meets her, is pregnant; after the passage of some time he makes love to her; then she seems to become less pregnant; and finally she "dies." The normal development is reversed. The use of archetypes, the reversals all point to the central mystery of the story: to what extent is external reality a projection of the mind or to what extent is the mind a projection of external reality? Surely the ultimate "external reality" comes after death. In this story the life after death becomes a struggle to discover a connection between the reality of life, which is in the past, and the reality of the

mind, which is the present. To what extent are Olena and Drum recreations in Watts's mind from the life he has just lived, creatures he must now rid himself of (Olena "dies" and Drum disappears)? But also, to what extent is Watts a creation in the minds of Olena and Drum, a question he himself puzzles over. For if he is a creation of their minds, he nevertheless has an independent existence; thus what he has created has an independent existence as well.

In this story, then, life after death becomes a metaphor for the vicious circle of philosophy, the circle in which illusion and reality, mind and matter chase each other endlessly. Here Betts explores the world which lies beneath the other stories, the world just beneath the surface of our day to day lives. But this story, unlike "Beasts of the Southern Wild," does it directly and boldly, and the life Benson Watts finds after death is the life which exists while we live—which, even as we explore it, we hide from ourselves. At the end Watts leaves the reader, as Olena and Drum have left Watts, to plunge alone into a primitive reality which cannot be "explained," either in art or in philosophy and certainly not in history or science. He will plunge deeper into the natural world with which he finds himself merging as he winds further and further "down"—a kind of spiritual and psychological rotting; for as the body returns to nature, so, too—in Betts's vision—do the spirit and the mind: into that source, not only of individual life, but of the archetypes of myth and legend (the shadowy no man's land between history and art) which are as close as we ever get, while living, to the truth. It is appropriate that the story and the whole volume end as they do, with Watts's saying about the diary he has kept and now pushes off with Olena's body into the sea, "Maybe somewhere they'll be someone to read the words, or someone who dreams he has read them." For by the end the distinction between dream and death, because it has become unimportant, has become all important.

While I think there are weaknesses in the stories (for instance, a stronger comic element would have helped many of them, but here taste is crucial; it is not that the stories contain no humor, but what there is strikes me generally not as funny but as a literary device) and an unevenness in the quality ("Benson Watts . . .", "Burning the Bed", "The Spider Gardens of Madagascar" I thought superb; "The Ugliest Pilgrim", "Beasts of the Southern Wild" weak); despite these weaknesses this is a very powerful collection, one of those rare books in which we see craft becoming art. And certainly Betts's way of handling the clichés of our time (violence, sex, isolation) is one to be reckoned with.

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Jerome Mitchell and William Provost, ed. *Chaucer the Love Poet.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1973, 117 pp. $5.50.

In April, 1971, Professors Norman Eliason, Edmund Reiss, Robert Kaske, and James Wimsatt, four scholars of international reputation, met at the University of Georgia to conduct a symposium entitled "Chaucer the Love Poet." The four papers they presented at that time, plus an introduction, a transcript of a taped panel discussion, an afterword by the panel moderator (Edgar H. Duncan), and an index comprise the present volume. The four papers will be genuinely interesting to a wide range of scholars and students of Chaucer and the Middle Ages; the peripheral paraphernalia necessary to make four disparate articles appear to be a book will be

less so. The Introduction, for example, claims too much: it promises a "broad and comprehensive examination of love in Chaucer" (p. 6) and attempts to show that this has never been done before. The "comprehensive treatment" (p. 5) *is limited* to four statements and would, no doubt, have been more broad had more scholars been invited to the symposium. In making virtue of necessity, the Introduction does summarize the more obvious statements on love in Chaucer (unfortunately omitting many articles on the topic) which should be of value to undergraduates.

Similarly, the transcript of the Panel Discussion does not contribute much to our understanding of Chaucer the love poet. The participants are polite to one another and occasionally officious; the questions from the floor differ from those *most readers would ask;* the answers are generally reiterative and, in the nature of the case, not very well thought through; the humor, wit, and toughness that characterize the written statements are absent or lost in transcript. The Index is only slightly better than no index at all since the principles of inclusion and omission are neither consistent nor clear. The book is remarkably free of typographical errors: on p. 84, l. 15, *byrd* should read *bryd*. The Afterword provides an accurate summary of the papers and *identifies* what in fact (and in spite of the claims made in the Introduction) has been the topic of the book: "the nice distinctions with which Chaucer manipulates the ideas and the language of love" (p. 111). It is this to which all the papers have actually been *pointing*.

Norman Eliason in fluid and occasionally witty prose (marred by a few moments of petulance) distinguishes between "ordinary love" (p. 10) which he takes to be Chaucer's primary concern (and the most rewarding for modern readers) and four other kinds of love (allegorical, courtly, philosophic, and Christian) of primary concern to scholars. Not everyone will agree with Eliason that the rigid conventions of love treated allegorically prohibited Chaucer from saying anything new about love, or that for Chaucer "the concept [of courtly love] remained unchallenged, serviceable for dealing with love elegantly and useless for dealing with it seriously" (p. 15). And many will be surprised to learn that only *Troilus* and the tales told by the Wife of Bath and the Franklin say something interesting about "ordinary love" (in its modern and normative sense) and say it well. But we do need to be reminded that Chaucer's approach to love of whatever brand is consistently thoughtful, sensible, honest, and sympathetic in ways the approach of more lyric poets is not. Eliason's essay reminds *us of this aspect of* Chaucer's concern for love.

Edmund Reiss' article on "Chaucer's Parodies of Love" is full of wonderful and convincing insights, but the basic concern for love and parody is less convincing. To insist that parody is "Chaucer's predominant way of looking at this world" (p. 29) is plain wrong even if we allow Reiss his rather narrow definition: "parody functions in the *Canterbury Tales* to call up another level of reality, that of the Christian ideal, which gives point and purpose to the surface level" (p. 29). *Reiss is* surely at his best in discussing the *Book of the Duchess*—defining love in the poem, the narrator's tension, and the view the audience must come to understand. In discussing the tales in Fragment I, however, Reiss weakens his claims by imposing foreign concerns upon a tale in the name of parody. It is not critically valid to *my* mind to find a poem weak for failing to consider a point it was never concerned with. Such I take to be his claim in discussing the conclusion to the Knight's Tale.

> Although Theseus' arrangement may appear to be a final solution, marriage presents far more problems than the naively optimistic Knight apparently real-

> izes. The question of sovereignty in marriage, for instance, does not come up yet; but when it does, we easily see the breakdown of the Knight's facile solution. (p. 40)

Since sovereignty in marriage is not at issue in the Knight's Tale, it may not be an issue after we have read the Wife of Bath's Prologue. Theseus' solution would be facile in Alice of Bath's Tale, but it is the appropriate end for Palamon and Emily. While one must read Reiss with care, it is important to read his article for an understanding of certin parodic elements heretofore unnoticed in Chaucer.

Robert Kaske's article on "Chaucer's Marriage Group" has been presented to audiences in many universities—and so has a kind of *sub rosa* notoriety—but is here printed for the first time. Kaske dispenses with criticism of the Marriage Group by suggesting the many parallels and contrasts among the four tales, but the main thrust of his paper is to prove the Marriage Group shares a thematic unity articulated as questions regarding who shall rule and the role of sex in marriage. Kaske is at his best—and those who know his work will be delighted indeed—in discovering to us how the Wife of Bath's Prologue introduces the two questions of importance for the subsequent tales in the Marriage Group. But the discussion of the remaining tales is less convincing. The problem of rule in the Clerk's Tale, perhaps because it is treated so well elsewhere, is skimped, and the problem of sex is discussed in terms of its absence. And to suggest that Chaucer is "deliberately highlighting the incongruity between the literal and allegorical meanings" (p. 54) of the Clerk's Tale is to insist that in this tale alone Chaucer is requiring his audience to be conversant with the allegorical implications of his source in Petrarch. The claims for the Merchant's Tale must surely be reexamined in the light of Martin Stevens' article published the year after the symposium in *The Chaucer Review* (7 [1972], 117-131) which insists upon the distinction between Merchant and January that Kaske unquestioningly accepts. Finally, one must assume that double standards apply when Dorigen's polite refusal of Aurelius is labeled " 'feminine flightiness' " (p. 61) and Arveragus' sending Dorigen off to sleep with Aurelius is said to be the action of "an extraordinarily wise and idealistic man" (p. 63).

Most of James Wimsatt's paper, "Chaucer and the Canticle of Canticles," reviews the exegetical and literary tradition of the biblical work and consequently is the least relevant to the topic of the symposium or the book. When he finally applies the Canticle of Canticles to the tales told by the Miller and Merchant, he concludes with the obvious and irrelevant: "These characters cannot make Canticles a comic discourse; they can only make themselves grotesque" (p. 89). Still, the review of tradition is of value to scholars whose primary concern lies elsewhere. In this essay, as in those of the other participants, there is much of value and plenty to build on.

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John Hammond Moore, ed. *The Juhl Letters to the Charleston Courier: A View of the South, 1865-1871.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974, 391 pp. $12.00.

During the early, darkest days of Reconstruction, some Southerners were already beginning the longer, but bloodless, war to win back the civil rights and restore the economy of their section. Among the first to enroll for this second conflict was Julius Fleming, Sumter correspondent for the Charleston *Courier* who, as "Juhl," reported

the situation and struggle in upper South Carolina. Fleming's dispatches bring a discouraging picture of the area. The Military were imposing the dictates of a Radical Republican Congress. Provost courts upheld the complaints of the Blacks agitated by the local Freedman's Bureau. And certain Whites were aggravating this worsening situation by violating their contracts with Black labor.

The first step towards restoration, Fleming insisted, was a better understanding between the two races. Southern agriculture could not be revived without Negro labor, and corrupt government could not be ended until Carpetbaggers and Scalawags were replaced in office by White Democrats. Northern capital was only waiting for peace and stability to be restored in the South to mine the mineral wealth in the section and establish much-needed factories.

For a decade the South made little progress towards a return to normalcy. Nor could Fleming see that his efforts accomplished much. He won some confidence among the Blacks, but not their votes in his unsuccessful race for a seat in the State Senate. Even in 1876 when Wade Hampton and his Red Shirts ended Radical rule in South Carolina, Fleming was not rewarded with a public office. Perhaps he was considered "too soft" on the Negro question. Ironically, Fleming's views on Reconstruction would become widely accepted within a few years when advanced by Henry Grady and his New South colleagues.

John Hammond Moore's edition of Fleming's letters will be welcomed by Southern historians, although the general reader may find them a bit repetitive.

JOHN TALMADGE
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Louis B. Wright. *Barefoot in Arcadia: Memories of a More Innocent Era.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974, 175 pp. $5.95.

In 1923 Louis Booker Wright gave up his post as city editor of the Greenwood (S. C.) *Index-Journal* to begin a distinguished career as historian and librarian. Now in his seventies, he has turned the clock back to the early 1900's in an autobiographical narrative of the pre-industrial South, a nostalgic reminiscence of life in his home town of Greenwood, South Carolina. It is an engaging collection of childhood memories of horse-and-buggy days, of folk humor and tall tales—he is an excellent raconteur—and of fascinating vignettes of small town life.

The Greenwood of Louis Wright's youth, a county seat of 10,000 inhabitants, had an opera house, a bookstore, a college for women, a livery stable, and Waller Avenue, center of the Negro business community where "the smell of frying mullet hung like incense." Citizens kept their own horses and cows, traveled by buggy or wagon—a few affluent ones had automobiles—and were content with a privy at the back of the garden. Benjamin Franklin's gospel of thrift and diligence fused readily with Presbyterian piety and self-assurance to make a hard-working, tough-minded citizenry who scorned the cavalier traditions of the Charleston area. Since the economy was based on cotton, ginning time was important for the bankers and merchants who had extended credit to farmers. Memories of the Civil War were still fresh, but there was no time for mourning a lost cause as people struggled to survive in the almost moneyless society.

For Louis Wright, growing up in Greenwood meant spending summers on his grandfather's plantation—hunting, fishing, listening to cotton hands' stories. Later it

meant milking the family cow and riding a scarecrow of a horse that brought jeers of "Goin' to the boneyard?" It also meant selling eggs and magazines, working in the best grocery store in town, attending Christian Endeavor parties, reading *The Youth's Companion*—and, rarely, feeling the sting of an apple switch when he shirked his duties. Educationally, it meant attending a strict public high school in which the rationale was that "Anybody doubting the value of Latin was . . . ill-informed and probably unsound in mind and morals." His English teacher had no patience with a sentence that "wandered over a page like a calf in a clover patch." Supplements to his formal education were the readings he did in his father's library, the thin cultural offerings of the Redpath Chautauqua series, and, most important, the full curriculum of local history and folklore provided by the men who hung around the livery stable.

After a brief tour of duty in the army and graduation from Wofford College, he came back to Greenwood as city editor of the *Index-Journal*, a position which thrust him into the midst of the town's problems. He endured threats from bootleggers and the Ku Klux Klan, saw into most of the political skullduggery—including the maneuverings of Cole L. Blease to gain the support of the wool hat boys and to intimidate the press—and had the rare opportunity of reporting on the most celebrated occasion in Greenwood's history: the visit of Marshal Foch.

Although *Barefoot in Arcadia* does provide many authentic glimpses of the small town life which Wright so much admires, it is likely to be read for its humor rather than its realism. Its humor ranges from the wry, often ironical, commentary of the common folk to the mock heroics and gross exaggeration popular on the after-dinner circuit and once the hallmark of Southern frontier writing. Wright's talent as a raconteur gives his book much charm. Milking a cow whose upper portion "had no communication with the nether end" becomes an epic event. The accounts of the trial of a lemon extract addict, of the public humiliation of a henpecked husband who had boasted that he was Caesar in his own house, of the almost miraculous feats of the community's physician hero who, in folk legend, could remove an appendix with a barlow knife, are examples of his anecdotal skill. Perhaps surpassing these is the longer episode of his military misadventures in training camp, ending with a night in the brig, a classic in the raw recruit genre. He relishes the wit of the common folk. A Negro minister says of a deceased friend: "He was not what you would call a good man, because he never joined the church, but he was a mighty respectable sinner."

Unlike the anecdotal autobiographical narrative of the first 150 pages, the last chapter of the book is a mild polemic in defense of rural life and Southern values and institutions, written perhaps to emphasize Wright's secondary purpose: "to correct misconceptions before they become crystallized as facts in the histories our children read." He maintains that "the South has become the victim of *Tobacco Road* and similar works." Many critics would agree that Southern novelists have held an imperfect mirror up to life, as Jay B. Hubbell has said, and that the liberal press has exploited the distorted image. But a new crop of writers—for example, James Dickey—and the opening up of the South as a result of industrialization have done much to change the old stereotypes. Furthermore, problems that were once considered regional, and exploited as such, are now seen to be national. The defensive position taken in the last chapter seems dated.

Polemics aside, Wright's entertaining little volume—his own myth of the South—will bring the pleasure of recognition to readers born before World War I and the pleasure of discovery to their descendants. Like Ben Robertson's much earlier chronicle of life in Piedmont South Carolina, *Red Hills and Cotton* (1942), it portrays the decency, forbearance, sense of humor, and humanity of an earlier generation of South Carolinians, both white and black. The fact that Louis Wright does this with professorial wit and urbane nostalgia is an added fillip.

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