REVIEW ARTICLE

Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye—Two Canadian Culture Heroes
（マーシャル・マックルーハンとノースロップ・フライ――カナダの二大文化英雄）

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BOOK REVIEWED: B[ruce] W[illiam] Powe. *Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye: Apocalypse and Alchemy.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

> The culture hero undertakes to relate his world to reality by Herculean labors of probe and retrieval and purgation. (McLuhan, *From Cliché to Archetype*, 91)

> Is not the artist one who lives perpetually on the borderland between the code and language worlds, between technology and experience, between mechanical and organic form? (To Wilfred Watson, Oct. 8, 1959, *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, 257)

> The development of the imagination is a continuous process of synthesis. (Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 56)

> The sense of probing into the distance, of fixing the eyes on the skyline, is something that Canadian sensibility has inherited from the voyageurs . . . . (Frye, *Bush Garden*, 224)

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1. Introduction—Three Terms and Two Contemporary Scholars

Let me start with Marshall McLuhan's remark in *The Mechanical Bride*: "The artist is in modern times transformed from bohemian 'victim' to culture 'hero'" (75). In cultural anthropology, the "culture hero" is a mythic figure, who brought a new means of life, and changed the life of his people. I take this in a wider sense of one who changed the cultural vision of a nation, and brought them to an awareness of its cultural identity. I shall make use of the following three terms to elaborate my ideas. "Apocalypse" is the revelation of what will come at the world's end, not necessarily destruction but also the realization of the ideal city and nature. The best succinct account will be found in M.H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), 41-46. "Alchemy" is a Medieval/Renaissance esoteric art supposedly to turn a base metal into gold or other precious metals. "Synergy" or "synergistics" is a cooperative undertaking of different levels for a common project. "Apocalypse" is more characteristic of Frye's criticism, whereas McLuhan's communication theory may be characterized metaphorically more as "alchemy." Powe attempts in this book somehow to bring together McLuhan's communication theory and Frye's literary criticism.

Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) and Northrop Frye (1912-1991) were contemporaries and well-known popular professors simultaneously at the Department of English at the University of Toronto. They were at the height of their fame from 1946 to the 1960s/1970s. Frye's authoritative position has never been substantially shaken even in the days when postmodern critical theories came to be dominant. But McLuhan's reputation declined considerably in the last decade of the twentieth century, although his media theory appears to me to have prophesied the phenomenally rapid present-day advance of communication media and the shaping of a new sense of information reality (e.g. *The Global Village*, 86-91).

However, it seems that each has his own followers. Those who write on McLuhan are generally not interested in Frye, and the same seems to be true of Frye enthusiasts, who rarely even allude to and simply ignore McLuhan. But Powe's book is an exception. There have been several books on one or other of them, but this book is for readers with an interest in Canada's possibly unique contribution to a wider international community of intellectual formation, as it highlights both men's simultaneous impact on

Canada's intellectual life and tries to bring their contributions into a unified perspective.

2. "A Climate Charged"—1946-1980

Powe, born in Ontario in 1955, teaches Creative Writing at York University in West Ontario, and, although not very well-known outside Canada, is a prolific novelist, poet, and critic on Canadian themes. In 1984 he brought out his first book, a small collection of critical essays on contemporary Canadian writers titled *A Climate Charged*, which brought together essays published in small literary/critical journals between 1981 and 1983. It starts with his reminiscence of how he came to register at the University of Toronto as a graduate student in 1978 seeking McLuhan's direction in the latter's last days at the university, unaware of his declining reputation and the impending termination of McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology.

Nevertheless, Powe, then a young graduate student, continued to adhere to this media guru, and became one of McLuhan's last disciples and witnesses of the closing of his teacher's institute. Meanwhile, Frye's international reputation as a scholar-critic had been advancing to a level of considerable authority since the publication of *The Anatomy of Criticism* in 1957. Powe nostalgically recounts his teacher-student relationship with McLuhan in his first book, but a rather formal stance vis-à-vis Frye emerges, when he comes to tell us about Frye's impact on him. Powe's analysis of Frye's attempt to construct an objective world of imagination appears rather cool.

Powe critiques Frye's critical stance as follows: "My *objections* (italics mine) to Frye's theories centre on his emphasis on theoretical systems, his refusal to incorporate the individual, his dismissal of value-judgments, and finally the relative passivity, the inertness, of his undertaking" (*A Climate Charged*, 48). Further on, he remarks: "My *charge* that Frye ignores individuality and personality pertains to his disregard for the specificity of voice in a poem or novel" (italics mine, 51). It is obvious in his essay "McLuhan and Frye" included in his first book that he chose McLuhan over Frye. Powe then concludes his essay:

> Northrop Frye makes an excellent target because he is always clear, connected, and static. The nobility of his efforts rests in his attempt to re-member (*sic*) the structures of imagination, to arrest the rushed modern pace and synthesize knowledge. His writings have had a greater influence in Canada than Marshall McLuhan's. . . . Their honourable and inevitable conflict was one of precisely opposite parts of the same dialectic. McLuhan is more mobile and ambiguous and difficult to catch. He was a man of paradox and analogy, a poet-philosopher who loved to confuse and to occasionally appearing to be in favour of that which he opposed. Nevertheless, McLuhan was a thinker who used concrete evidence, the word in the world; Frye begins with theory, the text in void. The choice between them is not just a matter of taste: it is the way through which attention to the world can be reached. (*A Climate Charged*, 58)

Now, thirty years later, Powe's choice is both, not "either-or." He tries to create in the present work a synthesis of what these two towering Canadian intellectuals have achieved individually under the rubric of "apocalypse" and "alchemy" mediated by the idea of "synergy in thinking."

3. McLuhan and Frye at Neighboring Colleges

These two Canadian culture heroes were both teaching at the University of Toronto from 1946 to the 1970s—McLuhan, a Roman Catholic convert, at St. Michael's College, an institution of higher Catholic education founded by the Congregation of St. Basil, and Frye, grandson of a Methodist missionary bishop and self-styled "plain-clothes" clergyman, at Victoria College, a United Church of Canada institution with its dependent Emmanuel College for the training of candidates for her clergy from colleges surround the Queen's Park. St. Michael's and Victoria are neighbors. Going down Avenue Road on the left side from fashionable Bloor Street looking at the Museum and the Opera House on the other side, one sees first Victoria College's buildings, and then, a bit behind, those of St. Michael's. One must place this landscape in an academic perspective to understand Powe's attempt to bring these two intellectual giants into a more malleably unified vision. The

coolness to Frye of Powe's younger days is gone, and he now comes out more clearly in declaring that both McLuhan and Frye were his teachers.

McLuhan and Frye came from similar social standings with Protestant family backgrounds but on opposite sides of Canada: West and East. After undergraduate education both went to England for further studies, the former to Trinity Hall, Cambridge and the latter to Merton College, Oxford. Frye's academic career started at Victoria College right after his return, and ended there, but McLuhan's included a number of years as a college teacher in the Western U.S. and Canada till he settled finally at St. Michael's in 1946 in a stable professional career. He returned between 1939 and 1940 to Cambridge to finish his Ph.D. dissertation "The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time," later published as *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time* in 2006. Meanwhile, upon his return to Toronto in 1939 Frye had directly started to teach, hired as a young teacher of English literature at Victoria College and as a regular member of the teaching staff.

They must have met in the fall of 1946, when McLuhan came up to Toronto having been hired by the university's Department of English fresh after teaching at Assumption College and St. Louis University. Frye was an associate professor already. It is certain that they met sporadically on more or less formal occasions such as regular faculty sessions, and recognized each other's talent, but seemingly Frye was more conscious of McLuhan's existence in the college located just above St. Michael's. This led soon to an academic agon between the two.

Already in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Frye seems to have borrowed McLuhan's idea on the consumer's role in literary reception: "It is the consumer, not the producer, who becomes humanized and liberally educated" (344). But in *The Critical Path* (1971) Frye came to keep his distance from McLuhan's theory:

> More recently, Marshall McLuhan has placed a formalist theory, expressed in the phrase "the medium is the message," within the context of a neo-Marxist determinism in which communication media play the same role that instruments of production do in more orthodox Marxism. Professor McLuhan drafted his new mosaic code under a strong influence from the conservative wing of the new critical movement,

> and many traces of an earlier Thomist determinism can be found in the *Gutenberg Galax*y. An example is the curiously exaggerated distinction between the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages and the book culture of the printed page that followed it. (21)

Frye defends "the print culture" against McLuhan's view on the comeback of oral culture in *The Critical Path*, a title taken, as Frye admits, from Kant's closing sentences in the *Critique of Pure Reason* indicating his turning point beyond dogmatism and skepticism: "the critical path is alone open" (13). He was certainly emulating Dante at the outset of *The Divine Comedy*, when he says: "About twenty-five years ago, when still in middle life, I lost my way in the dark wood of Blake's prophesies, and looked for some path that would get me out of there" (13). The book is a defense a literary criticism as a discipline. It is obvious that Frye was trying to counter the media culture propounded by McLuhan, which had become increasingly popular. Towards the end Frye comes to assume Milton's stance in *Areopagitica*, and declares:

> The domination of print in Western society, . . . has not simply made possible the technical and engineering efficiency of the society, as McLuhan emphasizes; it has also created all the conditions of freedom within that society; democratic government, universal education, tolerance of dissent, and (because the book individualizes its audience) the sense of the importance of privacy, leisure, and freedom of movement. Democracy and book culture are interdependent, and the rise of oral and visual media represents, not a new order to adjust to, but a subordinate order to be contained. What the oral media have brought in is, by itself, anarchist in its social affinities. They suggest the primitive and tribal conditions of a preliterate culture, and to regard them as a new and autonomous order would lead, once again, to adopting a cyclical view of history, resigning ourselves to going around the cycle again, back to conditions that we have long ago outgrown. . . . [T]he circle is the symbol of lost direction, and, because the future *qua* future is only the analogy of the past, it is also the only possible form of an untried direction. (151)

4. Agon—Rivalries

In "The Search for Acceptable Words," included in *Spiritus Mundi* (1976), Frye must have been conscious of McLuhan's idea of technological innovations as affecting the human grasp of knowledge, and, although he rejects the McLuhanian language, Frye rather coolly accepts the communication media's penetration of people's minds; he ultimately ascribes its theoretical comprehension to Harold Innis, from whom McLuhan derived his theory, and points out the three stages of communication in Canada's initial "garrison mentality" (24-25). Later, in one of the collections of his essays on the Canadian cultural situation, Frye chastises McLuhan for abandoning the traditional ground of the humanities and going over to the fashionable camp of communication theory:

> Marshall McLuhan, a literary critic interested originally in Elizabethan rhetoric and its expression in both oral and written forms, followed up other issues connected with the technology of communication, . . . [H]e was caught up in the manic-depressive roller coaster of the new media, so that he was hysterically celebrated in the sixties and unreasonably neglected thereafter. It is likely that the theory of communications will be the aspect of the great critical pot-pourri of our time which will particularly interest Canadians, and to which they will make their most distinctive contribution. So it is perhaps time for a sympathetic rereading of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* and a reabsorption of McLuhan's influence. (*Divisions on a Ground*, 36-37)

And Frye goes even to the extent of suggesting that McLuhan's freakish turn to communication theory originates in the influence of G.K. Chesterton. In David Cayley's *Northrop Frye in Conversation*, Frye speaks about the influence of his family's religious attitudes, and, probably thinking of McLuhan, obliquely alludes to the origin of Methodism in Canada (40). Frye seldom succumbs to a vicious sectarianism, but here we must say that this is a rare occasion of sectarian-tinged expression:

> McLuhan put a similar split rhetoric into an international context. On top was a breezy and self-assured butterslide theory of Western history,

> derived probably from Chestertonian religious orientation, according to which medieval culture has preserved a balanced way of life that employed all the senses, depended on personal contact, and lived within "tribal," or small community units. Since then we have skittered down a slope into increasing specialization (McLuhan defines the specialist as the man who never makes a minor mistake on his way to a major fallacy), self-hypnotism from concentrating on the visual stimuli of print and mathematics, a dividing and subdividing of life into separated "problems," and an obsession with linear advances also fostered by print and numbers. The electronic media, properly understood and manipulated, could reverse the direction of all this. Below was a horrifying vision of a global village, at once completely centralized and completely decentralized, with all its sense assailed at once, in a state of terror and anxiety at once stagnant and chaotic, equally a tyranny and an anarchy. His phrase "defence against media fallout" indicated this direction in his thought. (*Divisions on a Ground*, 37)

McLuhan on his side sharply criticized Frye's stubborn adherence to the idea of archetypes in *The Global Village* quoting William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, two prominent authoritative literary critics, as his authorities (78-79), although he previously used Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) to back up his argument in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (193). Otherwise he did not refer to Frye.

Frye appears to have shared McLuhan's theory of the consumer's role in culture towards the end of *Anatomy of Criticism*: "It is the consumer, not the producer, who benefits by culture, the consumer who becomes humanized and liberally educated. There is no reason why a great poet should be a wise and good man, or even a tolerable human being, but there is every reason why his reader should be improved in his humanity as a result of reading him" (344).

Frye actually had a different estimate privately, for he wrote in a letter to an admirer-painter: "Please don't make me an enemy of Marshall McLuhan: I am personally very fond of him, and think the campus would be a much duller place without him. I don't always agree with him, but he doesn't always agree with himself" (To Richard Kostelanetz, January 7, 1976 in *Northrop Frye Selected Letters*, 182). And almost eight years after

McLuhan's death he came to be able to rather objectively characterize the extent of the media genius:

> . . . Marshall was an extraordinary improviser in conversation, that he could take fire instantly from a chance remark, and that I have never known anyone to equal him on that score. I also feel . . . he was celebrated for the wrong reasons in the sixties, and neglected for the wrong reasons later, so that a reassessment of his work and its value is badly needed. I think what I chiefly learned from him, as an influence on me, was the role of discontinuity in communication, which he was one of the first people to understand the significance of. (To Barrington Nevitt, September 20, 1988, *Selected Letters*, 288-89)

5. Anagogy and Analogy

Frye discovered Blake's *Minor Prophecies* at Oxford while reading Denis Saurat's *Blake and Modern Thought* (1924). This led him eventually to writing a thesis on Blake at Oxford and then upon returning to Canada producing *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), which rehabilitated the Romantics in the English literary canon in a sense ten years before *Anatomy of Criticism*. The last solidified his position as an authoritative academic critic. He read in his undergraduate days Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, and acquainted with the works of Vico, Jung and British cultural anthropologists, he established the vast structure of the literary cosmos with its circularly rhythmic movement of forward and return as myth. He integrated into his myth theory the typological hermeneutics of biblical interpretation, which was to be fully deployed in the last stage of his career in dealing with the theme of the Bible as/and literature. Throughout it was anagogy that crowns Frye's apocalyptic vision of cosmos and history.

Frye's anagogic vision is set forth clearly in his *Great Code* and *Words with Power*, whereas McLuhan's vision, always expressed in clipped, short, aphoristic sentences, may be called an analogical one. On November 18, 1961, he told Walter J. Ong, S.J., of a hunch that the Thomist idea of analogy of proportion could become the basis of his communication theory; with the rise of print culture the analogical consciousness is lost (*Letters of Marshall*

McLuhan, 280-81). He gives expression to the analogical understanding of created existence in his essay "The Analogical Mirrors" on Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> Hopkins is not a nature mystic at all, nor a religious mystic, but an analogist. By stress and instress, by intensity of perception, by analogical analysis and mediation he achieves all his effects. His is literally a sacramental view of the world since what of God is there he does not perceive nor experience but takes on faith. It may sound at first strange to hear that Hopkins is not a mystic but an analogist. (*The Interior Landscape*, 65)

McLuhan was converted to Catholicism at Cambridge after reading G.K. Chesterton. His first published essay was "G.K. Chesterton: A Practical Mystic" (*Dalhousie Review*, January, 1936). In his "Forward" to *The Interior Landscape*, a collection of his literary criticism of 1943-1962 edited by Eugene McNamara, he reminisces about the cultural shock he received at Cambridge and its enduring effects on his thinking afterwards: "Cambridge was a shock. Richards, Leavis, Eliot and Pound and Joyce in a few weeks opened the doors of perception on the poetic process, and its role in adjusting the reader to the contemporary world. . . . [T]he effects of new media on our sensory life are similar to the effects of new poetry. They change not our thoughts but the structure of our world" (xiv).

This shock was a revelation. It contained insights which developed into a new understanding of future realities, and McLuhan's grasp of what is an approaching apocalypse, electronic or otherwise. But the combination of Chesterton and these Modernists is rather remarkable. One of McLuhan's books, *Understanding Media* (1964), is subtitled "The Extension of Man" which indicates the widening of humankind's interior landscape through electronics. A human being is a product of his/her own cultural mediation by mass media. At any rate, this combination forms the cornerstones of the interior landscape of the thinker as an intellectual alchemist. The human brain is an alchemist. If McLuhan spreads before us the widening interior world of humankind, which is apocalyptic in the sense of a future vision of world transfiguration through electronic media, he is foretelling the things soon to come.

6. Canada—Culture as Counter-Environment

McLuhan seldom alludes to the geographical position of his own country, Canada, but in his conclusion of *The Global Village*, he returns to his own native country and culture. Oddly enough, this "Epilogue" is characteristically entitled "Canada as Counter-Environment":

> The low profile Canadian, having learned to live without such strongly marked characteristics, begins to experience a security and self-confidence that are absent from big-power situation. In the electronic age centralism becomes impossible when all services are available everywhere. Canada has never been able to centralize because of its size and small population.
>
> The national unity which Canadians sought by the railway "hardware" now proves to be irrelevant under electronic conditions which yet create an inclusive consciousness. For Canada a federal or inclusive consciousness is an inevitable condition of size and speed of intercommunication. This inclusiveness, however, is not the same as the nineteenth-century idea of national unity; rather as the result of multiple borderlines. (166)

McLuhan goes out from this vast continent to the still vaster media land, an invisible world to be mediated by media only. For Frye, Canada is a "new world without revolution" unlike the U.S. (*Divisions on a Ground, Essays on Canadian Culture*, 1982):

> The United States is a relatively symmetrical country, and has grown from the Atlantic seaboard westward, pushing a frontier ahead of it until it reached the other coast. The Revolutionary War was carried through by a group of states extending from north to south. Canada, as a glance at the map will show, has no north-south coastline: the axis of its development has been a tremendous east-west thrust into its interior, down the St. Lawrence, through the Great Lakes, across the prairies, and down to the Pacific coast. . . . This thrust into the interior modulated from canoe to rail, and its economic motives from furs to

> timber and minerals. The imaginative movement that followed it forms the bulk of what is shown here. (*Reading the World*, 58-59)

The "Epilogue" to *The Global Village* is McLuhan's paean to Canada, "a land of multiple borderlines, psychic, social, and geographic" (163), skillfully arranging T.S. Eliot's comment on Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Frederick J. Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." McLuhan declares: "A frontier, or borderline, is the space between the two worlds, constituting a kind of double plot or action that the poet W.B. Yeats discovered to be the archetypal formula for producing 'the emotion of multitude' or the sense of universality" (164). Such is "the borderline of interface," and "the borderlines, as such, are a form of political 'ecumenism,'" says McLuhan. And he continues:

> Yes, Canada is a land of multiple borderlines, of which Canadians have probed very few. These multiple borderlines constitute a low-profile identity, since, like the territory, they have covered a lot of ground. The positive advantage of a low profile in the electronic age would be difficult to exaggerate. Electronic information now encompasses the entire planet, forming another hidden borderline or frontier whose action has been to rob many countries of their former identities. . . . The borderline is an area of spiraling repetition and replay, both inputs and feedback, both of interlace and interface, an area of "double ends joined," of rebirth and metamorphosis.
>
> Canada's 5000-mile borderline is unfortified and has the effect of keeping Canadians in a perpetual philosophic mood which nourishes flexibility in the absence of strong commitments or definite goals. (165)

McLuhan takes the stance of a Moses-like prophet who tells the future culture and leads the way for the emerging new electric age, which is already showing itself by premonition in an expansion of human potentialities, but for Frye the future must be built on the land by rooting culture of its own in depth. McLuhan made such an optimistic prophecy:

> The United States by 2020 will achieve a distinct psychological shift from a dependence on visual, homogeneous thinking, of a left-

> hemisphere variety, a multi-faceted configurational mentality which we have attempted to define as audile-tactile, right-hemisphere thinking. In other words, instead of being captured by point-to-point linear attitudes, so helpful to the mathematician and accountant, most Americans will be able to tolerate many different thought systems at once, . . . (*The Global Village*, 86)

7. Synergy and Communion

In their families' religious backgrounds McLuhan and Frye share a common Protestant heritage, but with McLuhan's conversion to Catholicism, the contrast in their religious views appears. This is usually oblique but occasionally breaks through in their thinking. In addition to the rivalries that are common enough in outstanding contemporary academic figures, these stances derived from different premises based on their different religious sensibilities. In day-to-day academic life these may not float to the surface in teaching, research and critical/creative writing.

McLuhan and Frye share an inclination toward Blake and Joyce, as well as a taste for a host of Modernist writers. But Frye would not rate Chesterton or Wyndham Lewis highly. Behind Frye's Blake were Edmund Spenser and John Milton, constituting the apocalyptic English literary/humanist tradition. Alexander Pope is an important poet in McLuhan's literary canon. More than that, McLuhan's perspective starts with the Renaissance rhetoric that developed from the medieval university curriculum of quadrivium and trivium against the intellectual backgrounds of Aristotle, Cicero, and above all Thomas Aquinas, all streaming down to Thomas Nashe, one of the "University Wits." Oratorical Agonistics is superseded with the coming of the print, but orality comes back more vigorously in the media world. Of course, this is an ambiguous situation for our "culture." To use the title of Frye's last work, it seems that there is offered to us now a double vision of an ever-expanding/ascending media culture and a high-level intellectual culture. One is orientated to the future realization of the cosmos, and the other to the inmost core of human creative intellect. But both are different types of counter-environment as culture. In a way, McLuhan and Frye represent to us

two visions of apocalypse. The question is: expansion or deepening? Powe's answer seems to be both, for Canadian as well as in universal culture.

8. Conclusion

Frye is conscious of his task as a literary critic; criticism is an independent discipline. His criticism involves religion and culture. Above all it is an experience of reading the world through reading the literary text. His critical theory definitely has Matthew Arnold behind it, and in this Arnoldian context John Henry Newman and T.S. Eliot are involved. Powe concludes his book:

> I know that for all the possibilities of synergy in their thought, there remains between them profound differences of sensibility and character, of intellectual preference and stylistic concern. . . . Rereading McLuhan and Frye replenishes a sense of wholeness in an understanding of the electronic saga and indispensable books. This whole vision is a Canadian dynamism. (*Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye*, 284)

McLuhan upheld traditional literary studies in the name of Catholic humanism just at the time he was shifting gears to communication theory. The goal he set for himself then was a synthesis of literary studies and communication theory:

> The role of the Catholic humanist is to cultivate a more than ordinary reverence for the past, for tradition, while exploring every present development for what it reveals about man which the past has not revealed. To be contemporary in this sense is no more snobbism, not a matter of faddishness. It is an arduous but rewarding business. . . . [S]peaking as a student of literature who has seen and experienced the undermining of formal literary study in our time by the new media of communication I think it is relevant to observe that it is especially the job of the Catholic humanist to build bridges between the arts and society today. (Quoted from "Catholic Humanism and Modern Letters"

> in *Christian Humanism and Letters, The McAuley Lectures*, 49-67, quoted in *A Climate Charged*, 25)

Although he often criticized McLuhan's too optimistic future vision, Frye had a similar view: "The act of reading as a continuous act of judgment is the key to equality, and the key to freedom. Its purpose is the maintaining of the consistent consciousness which is the basis of human freedom and of human dignity" ("Education and the Rejection of Reality," *On Education*, 100). And he was conscious of Newman's ideal of humanist education, though he distinguished it from his own Protestant version: "For Newman, the idea of the university is a Catholic idea, one that grew up during the vast synthesis of creative and temporal life achieved by the Church in the Middle Ages" (*Reading the World*, 211). We may perceive here McLuhan's Newmanian humanism through the filter of Arnoldian "criticism of life." The synergic communion of our two outstanding Canadian intellectuals is to bring humankind to where it should be. If both men's efforts are described as anatomy in different ways, cultural alchemy is needed now to bring them into a single vision, and that can be achieved by synergistics that would result in a communion of two different enterprises. As Powe writes in the present book:

> We need McLuhan and Frye both, and the recombination of "the medium is the message" with the Great Code makes them new. The new comes in the vibrant shifts between the cultivation of mental travelling and the recognition of electronic phenomena. (*Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye*, 248)

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