The Phoenix and the Urn: the Literary Theory and Criticism of Cleanth Brooks.

Anthony G. Tassin

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1174

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received 66-10,924

TASSIN, O.S.B., Rev. Anthony G., 1925–
THE PHOENIX AND THE URN: THE LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM OF CLEANTH BROOKS.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1966
Language and Literature, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE PHOENIX AND THE URN: THE LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM OF CLEANTH BROOKS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English

by

Reverend Anthony Tassin, O.S.B.
B.A., St. Joseph Seminary, 1947
B.S., Loyola University of the South, 1952
M.A., Catholic University, 1956
May, 1966
THE PHOENIX AND THE URN: THE LITERARY THEORY
AND CRITICISM OF CLEANTH BROOKS

THE URN is the repository of the literary theory and
criticism of Cleanth Brooks in all his writings:
books and essays. As he said of John Donne's
"well wrought urne," the poem itself is the urn.
So is the body of Brooks's writings his urn. A
complete checklist of his works is included in
this study.

THE PHOENIX is the resurgence of traditional concepts of
English poetry in the twentieth century. Brooks
and some other New Critics regard the more repre-
sentative forms of modern poetry (and of the
criticism which explains it) as a third revolu-
tion in theory, following those of neo-classicism
and romanticism, and restoring the metaphysical
tradition.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In order to keep the number of footnotes to a minimum, I have included all references to the works of Cleanth Brooks within the text. The various periodical essays are cited according to their serial number in the Checklist, followed by pagination, thus: E-54-407f., which means Essay No. 54, "Homage to John Crowe Ranson: Doric Delicacy," Sewanee Review, LVI (Summer 1948), 407f. For the books, I have used abbreviated titles, followed by page number, according to the following code:

AL - An approach to Literature
UP - Understanding Poetry
MPT - Modern Poetry and the Tradition
UF - Understanding Fiction
UD - Understanding Drama
WWU - The Well Wrought Urn
MR - Modern Rhetoric
ASSR - An Anthology of Stories from the Southern Review
LCSH - Literary Criticism: A Short History
HG - The Hidden God
WFYC - William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country

Where more than one edition of the same work occurs, this is indicated thus: UP/2, UP/3.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My indebtedness for help in my dissertation extends to more people than I can mention by name here. But for their special assistance, I do want to thank the following:

Dr. Donald Stanford, my major professor, for his encouraging guidance and availability. Abbot David Melancon, O.S.B., my religious superior, and the Very Reverend Marian Larmann, O.S.B., rector of our seminary, as well as all my Benedictine confreres, whose planning and cooperation made my graduate studies possible. Dr. Thomas Kirby, Head of the English Department, and Professors Fabian Gudas, John Olive, and John Wildman, also of the Department, for their information on Cleanth Brooks's pedagogical and critical ideas. Mrs. Betty Lou Stokes, for typing and re-typing the original manuscript, a gratuitous service on her part. My colleagues in the graduating class of 1966 whose esprit de corps provided a fraternal boost that I often needed in order to keep on going. Finally, I want to make special mention of my confrere, Brother Luke Johnson, O.S.B., who carefully read my manuscript and made recommendations which substantially improved its quality.

Mr. Brooks himself was most helpful in his gracious response to my questions and in submitting a checklist of his writings.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE NEW CRITICISM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ORIGINS OF BROOKS'S THEORY</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE PRINCIPAL TENETS OF CLEANTH BROOKS'S THEORY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CRITICISMS OF BROOKS'S THEORY AND PRACTICE</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE OF BROOKS: EVALUATION</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. A Checklist of Writings by Cleanth Brooks.</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Books and Articles on Brooks</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Other Materials Consulted</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX &quot;The New Criticism&quot; of Joel Spingarn.</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This is an historical, analytical, and critical study of the writings of Cleanth Brooks as seen in the context of the New Criticism. Included is a complete checklist of his writings to date and an annotated bibliography of books and articles about Brooks.

The New Criticism is a literary movement of our century, having its roots in England but coming to maturity in America. It is not so much a distinct school as a congeries of schools and individual critics. In England, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and William Empson are its chief proponents. The name "New Criticism" first appears in America as the title of a lecture (1910) by Professor Joel E. Spingarn. But it was not until the thirties that the new trends came into vogue, propounded by the Fugitive group at Nashville, the Neo-Aristotelians of Chicago, and individuals such as Yvor Winters, Kenneth Burke and R. P. Blackmur.

The movement is basically more a reaction against existing critical norms than the expression of a positive aesthetic. The New Critics wrote as much against certain trends as they strove toward certain ideals. They were against the sentimentalism and didacticism of the Romantics and the Victorians. They sought a "pure" poetry of ordinary diction, rich in paradox or irony, tightly structured. The
New Critics pointed to the seventeenth-century metaphysicals as the prototype of twentieth-century poetry and criticism, which, as Eliot and Brooks (especially) contended, was more a return to English tradition than an innovation. In the past decade the increased inclusion of moral, philosophical, and even Christian values has caused the whole movement to assume a new character aptly dubbed the "Newer Criticism."

Cleanth Brooks's entrance into the New Criticism began with his days at Vanderbilt (1924-28) when he first met Robert Penn Warren and the other Fugitives. His Oxford experience (1929-32) and teaching days at Louisiana State University were further formative influences. Brooks acknowledged a debt to Eliot, Richards, Ransom, Tate, and Warren, but modified them according to his own position.

Brooks is a formalist or contextualist critic, one whose method relies heavily upon close reading and a regard for metaphor. He views the poem as an organism whose concrete imagery forms metaphor; the component elements are grasped in an act of ironic contemplation by the imagination.

Brooks's theory is not systematically presented but rather has evolved in his essays and books, written in analysis of particular poems. Included in these is a discussion of the nature of poetry, and the functions of the poet, the critic, and the teacher of literature. All his work testifies to the prime position he assigns to paradox and irony as the language of poetry.
Brooks's theory has been criticized for its monistic character (i.e., exclusive interpretation in terms of a single element), his deficient adaptation of Coleridge's critical system, his rejection of literary scholarship and biographical data relative to the poet, and his creation of a self-validating, poetical "truth," distinct from either logical or ontological truth. As with all New Critics, his vocabulary and concepts have been suspect of being esoteric and needlessly difficult.

Professor Brooks served as cultural attaché to the U. S. Embassy in London, 1964-1966. Notable today is the widespread use of his textbooks produced in collaboration with Robert Penn Warren; these have revolutionized the teaching of college English and poetry throughout America.
INTRODUCTION

The task of the literary critic involves a twofold need, reminiscent of Archimides's famous boast that he could move the world, were he to find a lever long enough and a place whereon to stand. For the critic's work calls for a long range of vision and for suitable criteria upon which to base his judgment. Objectivity and a detached point of view demand some removal in time from the literary production under scrutiny, lest one's perspective be myopic. Reason and consistency call for an apt standard of norms. When the material being judged is itself literary criticism, the quest for ample range and suitable norms is all the more necessary.

The decade of the sixties affords a critical observer a good point from which to judge that literary trend which John Crowe Ransom christened the New Criticism. Begun in this century, the movement has developed into a true school in American literature, recognized as such at home and abroad. As a matter of fact, it is hard to conceive of any other literary group in our day as distinctive, prolific, and influential. Ours, then, is the advantage of beholding the New Criticism not as a literary endeavor still in formation, still in the process of thinking out its way into existence, but as a rather well formed school of
The poetry and essays of the New Critics, the many critical essays and books written about their ideas, form a substantial testament already entrusted to the history of literature.

The focus of the present study is upon one man within that movement: Cleanth Brooks. While not himself a "charter member" of the New Criticism in America, Brooks has been associated with the movement so near its beginnings that he is ranked among its early promoters and in time came to be one of its outstanding proponents. Cleanth Brooks for well

1 The maturity of the New Criticism can be deduced from statements such as John Henry Raleigh's in his article "The New Criticism as an Historical Phenomenon" (CL, XI (Winter, '59), 21): "The era of the New Criticism, everyone agrees, is over." That the ferment and reaction has leveled off, true enough. But the New Criticism is still very much with us, in the classroom, in the salon, in the scholarly journals. Its norms and tenets are showing their effect, even if literary focus has changed and, as John A. M. Rillie contends, criticism "is heading for a recession." ("Orange or Grid? A New Model for Critics," Twentieth Century, CLXV (March, 1959), 246.

2 I base my statement on several facts: one, that the writings of T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards (who has been called the Father of the New Criticism) as well as those of William Empson, John Crowe Ransom, and Allen Tate were already published and exerting their influence before Brooks began to write (in the early thirties); two, Brooks himself acknowledges these and other critics as having preceded him; his indebtedness is expressed in Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill, 1939), p. x; three, Brooks was a late-comer to the Fugitive Group at Vanderbilt, Nashville, being invited into this coterie which formed the nucleus of the American brand of New Criticism only after their organ, The Fugitive, had been discontinued (spring, 1925; Brooks came to Vanderbilt that fall).
over a decade now "has been regarded as the American exemplar of the 'New Criticism.'"\textsuperscript{3} He is perhaps the one who has been the most prolific in formulating and disseminating its critical theory and has reached the largest number of readers with telling force. Brooks's several textbooks as well as his other critical writings have affected students and teachers and the teaching of poetry all over the country. Of all the critics who have written under the aegis of the New Criticism, he is regarded as the only remaining one true to the name.\textsuperscript{4} All the others have gone into specialized fields of writing other than criticism (fiction, poetry) or into business or government. In Cleanth Brooks, then, we have not only a typical New Critic but one whose constant association with the movement qualifies him to make statements in its behalf.\textsuperscript{5} He has contributed to the literary heritage of our century some twenty-three books, one hundred


\textsuperscript{4}"It has been said that Cleanth Brooks is the only remaining new critic, the only one tenaciously attached to the text. The others have adopted a variety of methods: they have specialized in aesthetic structure, sociological background, morals, psychology, and myths—each however, a champion of his own special method." Oscar Cargill, Toward a Pluralistic Criticism, preface by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, 1965), p. 6.

\textsuperscript{5}Mr. Brooks was chosen to submit the article on "The New Criticism," in the Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, 1965), pp. 567-568.
and fifty-two essays, and, in his early career, a few modest ventures in verse. His writings present a substantial field for study.
CHAPTER I

THE NEW CRITICISM

As a preface to the exposition of Cleanth Brooks's literary theory, it may be well to give a brief survey of the movement of our century known as the New Criticism. This summary will serve as a framework upon which to view Brooks in relation to his fellow critics and in perspective to his times. While this survey will be necessarily brief and schematic, a fuller treatment and different approaches can be found in the basic bibliography of the New Criticism given by Brooks (E-135-568) and in Robert W. Stallman's Critiques and Essays in Criticism (New York, 1949), pp. 519-571. Walter Sutton has an excellent treatment of the New Criticism and other critical trends of the century in his Modern American Criticism (1963).

The New Criticism represents a literary trend which is as elusive of definition as it is renowned and influential. Although some writers would disclaim altogether

---

1Walter Sutton says, "There has been considerable disagreement about the name and nature of the movement. 'What is the New Criticism?' is a question that has been more frequently than fruitfully discussed." Modern American Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, 1963), p. 98.
its existence as a real movement to contend with, the New
Criticism is everywhere. A passing acquaintance with the
learned English journals in this country and in England since
1930 and with trends in college courses of criticism since
the forties will readily dismiss any doubt as to its exis-
tence. Our problem is not whether there is a New Criticism,
but rather, what it is. For all its notoriety, the term
seems to be more a suggestive label than a well defined
category.

Credit for naming the movement goes to John Crowe
Ransom, who in his book The New Criticism (1941) analyzed
the method of four modern critics: I. A. Richards, his dis-
ciple William Empson, T. S. Eliot, and Yvor Winters. But it
is possible, as Brooks observes, that Ransom may or may not
have adverted to a lecture and a book by Joel Elias Spingarn,
dating back to 1910 and 1911, respectively, bearing the
same title. Perhaps more attention should be given to

2See E-135-568. Also, Richard Chase, as late as 1957,
said of the writings of the New Critics: "These views, it
must be stressed, do not constitute any sort of movement:
Rather they amount to a new pedantry, no better or worse
than other pedantries." (In the symposium: "Careful Young
Men: Tomorrow's Leaders Analyzed by Today's Teachers,"
Nation, CLXXXIV (March 9, 1957), 205.)

3Brooks is of the opinion that Ransom's book is what
made the name stick. This view is shared by Sutton, p. 99;
by Kenneth Allott, "The Course of the Critic," LTLS, April
11, 1958, p. 194; and by Frederick A. Pottle, "The New
Critics and the Historical Method," Yale Review, XLIII
(1953), 14.
this significant essay by Professor Spingarn than Brooks's casual reference. Recent recognition has brought it to the fore as an early but abortive manifesto of the New Criticism. An analysis of the Spingarn lecture will be found in an appendix, "A Note on Spingarn," at the end of this study.

The genealogy of the New Criticism stems from T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards. William Elton and others have called I. A. Richards the Father of the New Criticism, mainly for performing two functions: (1) He showed the necessity for considering the semantic operation of poetry as a unique form of discourse, and (2) in Practical Criticism, demonstrated the need for training in the reading of a poetic text. The literary progeny of Eliot and Richards, as well as for all other critics under the aegis of the New Criticism,

4Sutton, p. 1: "The critical movement Spingarn prophesied failed to materialize (he has no direct connection with the later New Criticism)." Bernard S. Oldsey and Arthur A. Lewis, Jr., reprint the Spingarn essay in their Visions and Revisions in Modern American Literary Criticism (New York, 1962) and dedicate a good part of their introduction to Spingarn's ideas. But the most substantial treatment of Spingarn is an entire chapter in Hans-Joachim Lang, Studien zur Entstehung der neueren amerikanischen Literaturkritik (Hamburg, 1961), pp. 203-258, and in a doctoral dissertation by L. Marshall Van Deuse, "J. E. Spingarn and American Criticism," University of Pennsylvania, 1953; cf. DA, XIII, 2, 235.

make an impressive roster; and the grouping falls into interesting patterns. Strictly speaking, the New Criticism is not a school. Rather, it is a congeries of schools and independent critics, both in England and in America. Academically, the British group was based at Cambridge. In the Southern United States, the early New Critics were centered at Vanderbilt, while in later years another group—which set itself up in opposition to the Vanderbilt coterie and declined the title of New Critics—were situated at the University of Chicago; these were the Neo-Aristotelians. The rest of the New Critics functioned as isolated individuals.

6 Elton has an interesting list according to function: Richards, as noted above, is the Father; Kenneth Burke is the Name-giver, classifying techniques and forms of literature; Ransom is the Apostle, promoting the cause with additions of his own; Yvor Winters is the Prophet, so titled for his moral preoccupations and value judgments; Cleanth Brooks is the Proselytizer in the streets, effectively spreading with his former colleague, R. P. Warren, the gospel of close textual analysis. William Empson is the Dissector of Ambiguities, while Eliot is the Influence, whose general rather than specific effect is felt by all the critics. (Ibid., p. 153). Stanley Edgar Hyman in The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism (New York, 1947), includes individual essays on Constance Rourke, Maud Bodkin, and Caroline Spurgeon, in addition to some seven of the aforementioned critics. But Hyman was not treating of New Critics specifically but of modern critics.

7 René Wellek, "Literary Scholarship," in American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century, ed. Merle Curti (Cambridge, 1953), p. 120.

8 The New Humanists at Harvard (under Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More) are not a group of New Critics. On the contrary, they opposed any innovation which would alter the situation of literature. Van Wyck Brooks was an ardent member; his specialty was biographical criticism. But since the 1920's, the heyday of the New Humanism, he has shifted his position considerably; see Hyman, p. 93, on this. For the conflict between the New Humanism and the New Critics, see Sutton, pp. 41ff.
Literary groups are often known to publish an organ wherein they print their manifestos and creative writings. So was it with the New Critics. In England, there was the Scrutiny group (Middleton Murry, Herbert Read, G. Wilson Knight), and the promoters of Criterion (Eliot and company). In the United States, the early Vanderbilt group published The Fugitive (Nashville, 1922-25), and later, as the members dispersed, Ransom founded the Kenyon Review (1939), while Brooks and Warren, under the general editorship of Charles Pipkin, founded the Southern Review (1935-1942). Allen Tate was editor of the Sewanee Review (1944-45) and advisory editor of the Kenyon Review, a post also held by Cleanth Brooks. Donald Davidson was literary editor for the Nashville Tennessean (1924-30). Special mention should also be made of the poetry magazines and the little magazines which fostered the new poetry of the century. Notable in this connection are Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, founded 1912 by Harriet Monroe and which could boast of having first published many significant poems of the new era, and The Explicator, which specialized in articles employing the technique of explication de texte, many of them directed to new verse, rather than traditional.

The New Critics included among their number philosophers, psychologists, linguists, and poets in addition to critics proper. In fact, the early Fugitive meetings were

---

9Hyman, p. ix.
as much devoted to philosophical and sociological discussion as to the reading and criticizing of poetry. Apart from the Fugitive group in Nashville, the American New Critics were mostly isolated individuals. Only four Southern critics—John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks—have had close personal association and show close adherence of outlook. And even they are far from subscribing to an unchanging position. Apart from the Nashville camp, the range of types is broad and varied, as both Brooks (E-135-568) and Wellek (p. 120) have noted. Thus there is a Winters with his historical view of English and American poetry, emphasizing value judgments, and a Burke, who has evolved a theory of vast dimensions, virtually including a philosophy of culture, utilizing semantics, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and anthropology. Brooks notes that the diversity of methods and outlooks is so typical of the New Critics that some of them have "resisted acceptance of the term and would have great difficulty in recognizing themselves as the members of a guild." (E-135-358)

Despite acknowledged differences, there are certain principles which the New Critics hold in common. Among these are a concern with the structure of the work rather than with the mind and personality of the artist; an effort to set up an organic theory of literature; the rejection of

10See Bradbury, pp. 12ff., and Cowan, pp. 4ff.
the dualism of form-and-content analysis in favor of an integrated approach. The organic method and the viewpoint of the poem as an integral and virtually related whole are closely related to the technique of "contextualism" or the "formalist" approach. Obviously the term formalist has to do with the form of the poem. The method is one that examines the structural and organic unity. The focus is upon the poem as a poem. The aim is to see the organic unity of the poem and to achieve, by means of the imagination, a unified experience. Because the formalist position relates all parts of the poem into an harmonious whole, it is also referred to as "contextualism." The contextualist critic analyzes a poem by close textual reading, based upon the text of the poem itself with a minimum of excursions outside the poem. His process of analysis is not an isolated vocabulary exercise, a fragmentation of meanings, a search for etymologies, as critics have sometimes wrongly surmised.

12 See Brooks, E-135-568. Harry Levin in his "Criticism in Crisis," Comparative Literature, VII (Spring, 1955), 144-155, an excellent graduated survey of modern criticism from the late nineteenth century until the present, gives a careful study of all these features and, in fact, explains them as constituting an integrated system. It may shed further light on the nature of the New Criticism to note his heading, "The Revival of Rhetoric," under which he treats it. As the present study will show later, some opponents of the New Critics find them more rhetorical than rational. (See Chapter IV, pp. 226-227.)

13 The brief article in Joseph Shipley's Dictionary of World Literature (New York, revised edition of 1953; the 1943 edition did not carry an entry on the New Criticism) recalls the benighted efforts of some modern critics to
Whatever linguistic investigation may be involved in his *explication de texte*, the contextualist critic always seeks to re-establish the unity of the whole and this especially by means of the interrelation of the parts that make up that whole. His happy yield is not only a well-integrated whole, but a totality which is more than the sum of its parts. Briefly stated, then, the formalist critic is the contextualist critic, the critic whose emphasis and method are centered upon the poem as a poem. He achieves his poetic analysis mainly by close textual reading, primarily a linguistic reading.

If the formalist takes his name from his preoccupation with "form," it must be understood that this "form" is not an isolated thing, an abstraction apart from the poem. The old overuse scientific devices, such as graphs and statistics, tabulating frequency of phonetic symbols, parts of speech, thought patterns, etc. (pp. 84f.). This early phase (in vogue in the twenties) was followed by interest in semantics. In general, this article gives a poor coverage of its subject.

---

14 Israel Newman, contemporary psychologist, in an article "The Physiology of Consciousness and Its Relation to Poetry," *Poetry*, LXXIII (November, 1948), 96-102, 162-166 analyzes the psychological implications of poetic experience and concludes as follows: "(i) the configuration—the Whole—is more than the sum of its parts; (ii) the configuration depends upon the interrelation of its parts; (iii) the function of the parasensorium [which he explains elsewhere as the experience of relations (such as difference, likeness, aboveness) between the sensory and other elements] is that of sub-wholes into wholes," p. 98.

form-and-content dichotomy of the Old Criticism is out.16 Brooks was militant against this dualism of critical procedure which was in use in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. "Meaning is form," he wrote in his Credo of 1951 (E-70-72), a maxim that expressed the core of contextualist criticism, of which Brooks stands out as the best exemplar, "the real 'formalist' among the Americans. . . . He has grasped more clearly than any other American critic the organic point of view."17 His stand on the organic theory was so lucidly expressed in his 1940 essay, "The Poem as Organism," that this statement has become a classic. As recently as July 1964, Brooks stated: "I think I have been unjustly typed as wanting every detail magnified. I want details to be seen as playing their part in the total effect."18 At times, the meaningfulness Brooks sees embodied in form has expanded to include a human involvement.19 Thus:

16"It is no overstatement to say that there is wide agreement today that the old distinction between form and content is untenable. . . . This recognition of the inseparability and reciprocity of form and content is of course as old as Aristotle," etc. Wellek, Concepts of Criticism (New Haven, 1963), p. 54f.


"To create a form is to find a way to contemplate and perhaps to comprehend our human urgencies." (UP/3, xiii-xiv)

As Brooks goes on (E-135-568) to enumerate the elements of this whole which the New Critics fasten upon in their analyses, such as irony, paradox, ambiguity, complication of meanings, tone, and plurisignation, he brings up a typical trait of the New Critics, namely, that practically every one of them has his theme word which both serves as his point of reference and in time has become the hallmark of his system. Thus Richards is concerned with "meaning" and "levels of meanings"; Empson explores "ambiguity," while Winters is interested in "values." Ransom deals with "texture," which he distinguishes from "structure." "Irony" and "wit" are also favorite terms of his, but their popularity in the New Criticism nomenclature stems from Brooks and Warren. Burke is preoccupied with "form," but "form" as "an arousing and fulfillment of desires." Blackmur seems not to have a keyword, but much of his poetic analysis is in terms of individual words, recurring words. It should be noted, however, that each of these critics uses his terms after his own fashion, a poet's right which begets much

his validating norms for the system are: Coherence and Correspondence. That is to say that the poem is judged good and genuine if it is internally consistent and if its representations correspond to their counterparts in actual life.

20Wellek, Concepts, p. 61.
21Hyman, p. 198.
muddling. This is especially true of the word "form."22

Perhaps the most often cited trait of the New Critics is close reading.23 In fact, one observer suggests that "Close Reading" would be a better label for the movement than "New Criticism."24 In any case, the bearing which its critical methods have had upon reading and the teaching of reading is notable.25

With the evidence of the New Criticism all about us and after having considered some of its more outstanding traits, one naturally wants to know how and why this outlook

22Wellek, Concepts, pp. 54-68.


24Malcolm Cowley in the American Scholar Forum, "The New Criticism," American Scholar, XX (Winter 1950-51), 97. Dorothy Bethurum understands by the New Criticism approaches to literature "that proceed by a close analysis of imagery on the assumption that the poet reveals the inner meanings of his poem in a series of crucial images which form, taken together, an architectural structure." (In "The New Criticism in the Period Course," CE, XII (March 1951), 335.) Her view underscores three important traits of the New Criticism: (1) use of concrete imagery; (2) meaning conveyed by indirection rather than by straightforward statement; and (3) the structural or organic theory.

25See Oscar Cargill, Toward a Pluralistic Criticism (Carbondale, 1965), p. 5. Also Vivian Mercier, "An Irish School of Criticism?" Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review (Spring 1956), 85. Mercier states: "The New Criticism helped give the first of the three R's the status of a university subject," a necessary measure after the overflow of immigration in the late 1800's and early 1900's, and after "the near breakdown of traditional education under the theories of John Dewey," (p. 85).
came about. No doubt the increased use of the vernacular in literature, necessitating a more critical study of modern languages and the theory of language, accounts to a considerable extent for the prominence of linguistics and semantics in the new critical methods. Moreover, the emergence within our time of psychology, sociology, anthropology, comparative literature, and Scripture studies, will explain the presence of another major portion of the new frontiers of criticism. But these two factors (the linguistic and the other-than-linguistic developments) do not tell the whole story. One other important phase must be borne in mind: the New Criticism was born of reaction. The status of literature and of criticism and of teaching procedures in English courses, in the minds of the new literary thinkers, cried out for revision. The urge for emancipation from literary shackles is evident all through Joel Spingarn's lecture of March 9, 1910; the tone is totally reactionary: "We have done with the old rules, . . . We have done with. . . ." The tenor of the Fugitive meetings and their literary quarterly

26Walter Ong, The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays (New York, 1962), pp. 177, 186.

27"They were all dissatisfied with the impressionable, vaguely romantic, and sentimental 'appreciation' prevalent inside and outside the universities; and they disapproved of the purely journalistic criticism associated with Mencken and his praise of the American naturalistic novel; they felt uncomfortable with the New Humanist movement because of its hostility to contemporary writing and its rigidly journalistic view of literature." Wellek, Concepts, p. 61.
is pointedly a flight "from the high caste Brahmins of the Old South and from conventionalism whether old or new."\textsuperscript{28}

The New Criticism was born (in America, at least) outside the Academy and had many pitched battles with professors of the Old School.\textsuperscript{29} In part, it was a war against deep-seated ossification in methods of evaluating and teaching poetry which were not only shopworn but which never should have existed: the use of arbitrary impressions, vague platitudes, and mainly emotional terms in literary analysis. There was too much textual criticism and not enough criticism of the text, the pioneers said. The heavy emphasis upon impressionism, upon reader-reaction and emotive response, galled the clearer thinkers who sought to refocus attention upon the poem itself, upon the art object and not upon its maker or beholder. The New Critics were tired of reverencing the Romantic standard of Goethe which held the poet's expression

\textsuperscript{28}From the first issue of \textit{The Fugitive}, cited in Richmond Croom Beatty, \textit{et al.}, \textit{The Literature of the South} (Chicago, 1952), p. 614.

\textsuperscript{29}Spingarn clashed with Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia, where he was teaching, over the liberal critical ideas which he was advocating and lost his job. Douglas Bush, while president of the Modern Language Association, gave a strong polemic against the New Criticism, its disregard for historical method and its strange vocabulary. (MLA general meeting, December 29, 1948.) Murray Krieger speaks of the "basic antagonisms" toward the "self-indulgence of critical impressionism" and the "academicism of university English departments." (In \textit{New Apologists for Poetry} (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 4.) Richard Foster states that "the writings of Ransom, Richards, and Brooks, certainly, often enough exhibit these antagonisms." \textit{The New Romantics: A Reappraisal of the New Criticism} (Bloomington, 1962), pp. 14f.
in high esteem and made his mind and heart the mysterious
source of poetry, a deep dark well which the unfortunate
critic was obliged to explore. Again, literature courses
and textbooks had become cluttered with historical and socio-
logical backgrounds, especially under the sway of that
naturalism which sought to decipher man's behavior on a
deterministic and calculable basis. The student was obliged
to study all about the author's life and background, often to
the complete neglect of the man's writings. Let us return to
the text, said the New Critics. But with the return to the
text there must be a fidelity to the poet's creation as it
exists in the poem, not an analysis which dissects the poem
into form and content, or the metaphor into beauty of diction
and purpose of meaning. There must be no pretending that a
poem can be reduced to a neat prose statement which gives
the whole thing in another shape. Moreover, said the New
Critics, we must get away from the idea that literature is a
substitute or a propaganda-medium for religion, politics, or
philosophy. We must avoid looking for "the moral." These
were the main points of their reactionary approach.

But a convinced promoter does not sprout up overnight.
His determination is the product of some thinking, perhaps
some philosophical foundation. Quite naturally the question
arises: What were the philosophical backgrounds that gave
rise to this reactionary movement and which dictated its
aesthetic principles? Upon what bases does the New Criticism
rest? Obviously, the diversity of ideas among the critics
will lead us to diverse sources. While they are all called New Critics, their systems vary and hence we expect to find variety in their philosophical roots.

The philosophical bases have been variously accounted for by various authors, the range of sources extending from Plato to Sartre. The New Critics have been dubbed Platonic, Aristotelian, Kantian, and Benthamite. They are said

30 Hoyt Trowbridge, "Aristotle and the 'New Criticism,'" Sewanee Review, LII (Autumn 1944), 537. Norman Friedman, "What Good is Literary Criticism?" Antioch Review, XX (Fall 1960), 324. Friedman places Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, and related Southern critics in the Platonic group on the basis of their sophisticated restricting of the critic to the work of art in its idealist forms.

31 The Chicago critics figure most prominently here. Their position stems from their critical approach based upon Aristotle’s four causes: material, final, formal, efficient. This Aristotelian matrix was itself derivative from the influence of Robert Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago (1929-45), who with Mortimer Adler promoted liberal arts and especially philosophy based upon Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. The venture on the part of the literary critics was rather gauche, as might be expected of any effort which utilizes the matrix of one area of philosophy (in this case, metaphysics) to serve for another (here, aesthetics), for which it is inadequate and only remotely relevant. Obviously, as the fundament of all being, the four causes can be used in the analysis of any phase of reality, from "being" itself to "baseball." Had the Neo-Aristotelians stayed closer to the Poetics and left the Metaphysics to the metaphysicians, their criticism might have been closer to the mark. Nevertheless, credit where credit is due, they furthered the twentieth-century revival in criticism by reaffirming literature on a structural basis. Ronald S. Crane is the spokesman for the Chicago critics and editor of the monumental work, Critics and Criticism, Ancient and Modern (Chicago, 1952), an anthology of twenty significant essays, which might well be subtitled: A Manifesto of the Chicago School of Neo-Aristotelic Criticism. Crane himself has an essay which is probably the best known of the collection and the best known attack on Brooks’s theory: "The Critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks," pp. 83-107. This and the essay

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
to stand against Descartes for his isolation of "idea" from "being," thus creating a psychological divorce in man's most


32 William J. Handy sees Immanuel Kant's concept of the imagination underlying the formalist approach to criticism. He traces this influence from Kant through Coleridge, T. E. Hulme, Henri Bergson, Eliseo Vivas, and T. S. Eliot, down to the Southern critics. In his *Kant and the Southern New Critics* (Austin, 1963), he quotes from Ransom (p. 49), Tate (p. 50), and Brooks (p. 51) an illustration of his point.

33 René Wellek, "Literary Scholarship," in Merle Curti, ed., *American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1953), Richards was strongly affected by the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, a dependence which Richards himself admits. The entire chapter, "A Psychological Theory of Value" in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1928; first pub. 1925) is pure Benthamism in its combined distrust of abstractions and its reliance upon the satisfaction of appetites (both for pleasure and avoidance of pain) as the ultimate value of human existence. Richards's theory is Benthamite in five important respects: (1) It thought of itself as "scientific," "objective," and "concrete," in contrast to "vagueness," "impressionism," and "abstractness" in its predecessors; (2) it had a tendency to dismiss its predecessors as useless and to think of itself as the first literary criticism to "read" poetry; (3) its methodology was inductive, working from part to whole, rather than deductive; (4) it assured that the value inherent in poetry is not the "beautiful" in the conventional sense, nor the "sugar-coated message," but rather arises out of the fact that linguistic structure can alter and satisfy certain emotional "appetencies," affording pleasure and minimizing pain; (5) it accepted the two Benthamite assumptions about language: that abstractions are meaningless verbiage and that all language is inherently ambiguous—only, unlike Bentham, it made this quality the supreme glory rather than the inherent defect of language. (Raleigh, p. 27.)
intimate self. Some of the New Critics side with Hegel, whom they follow in his idealist dialectic, while others reject his threefold approach to aesthetics, Zeit, Volke, Umbegung, which like Taine's race, moment, milieu, brought in too much sociology for a detached, objective literary view. The Southern group of New Critics is unique in their strong personal involvement in their background. Their foundation seems to be a tripod of Christian orthodoxy, agrarian economy, and literary autonomy. The Marxian


35 Hyman, p. 267; Weimann, p. 116. 36 Hyman, p. 15.

37 Ransom and Brooks as Anglicans, Wimsatt and Tate as Catholics, bring a strong Christian orientation to their appreciation of literature. They were militant against Matthew Arnold's proposal to have poetry serve in place of religion. There was in these men a deep sense of the orthodoxy of Christian Faith coupled with a sense of man's intrinsic worth and dependence upon God. They contended with two persistent heresies: Pelagianism and Calvinism. Pelagianism holds that human nature can attain salvation without grace. Calvinism, at the other extreme, declares that man is totally dependent upon divine predestination for grace and salvation.

The religious orthodoxy and the agrarian philosophy of the Southern critics suggested to Robert Gorham Davis the mentality of two French political philosophers of similar bent: Count Joseph De Maistre (died 1821) and Charles Maurras, himself a Southern regionalist (born in Provence, 1868) who proposed the perpetuation of provincial culture to offset destruction by a powerful, commercial North. Du Maistre sought to dispel the progressive, rationalistic, and perfectionist illusions of Rousseau and Condorcet with a clear statement of the dogma of original sin. The Fugitives also opposed the progressivism and industrialism which sought to invade the South with a promise of perfection of man through material improvement. See the Agrarian manifesto, I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition (New York, 1930; reprinted 1958) by twelve Southern Writers.
trend in the New Criticism is visible in the writings of Granville Hicks and Kenneth Burke. Their whole effort was to study a work of art in terms of its social relations. Burke's "symbolic action" was a code phrase for whatever could spread the party line. Hicks was the personification of Marxist criticism in the thirties, a literary excitement as vibrant as it was shortlived. 

But the proximate philosophical grounding of the movement is to be found in its progenitors and their schooling: T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards. Both have a common parentage in Coleridge, principally in his ideas on the imagination. This is perhaps the clearest and strongest single dependence. It is clear because it is admitted and referred to by both Eliot and Richards. It is strong, because among all the fundamental notions underlying the New Criticism, the function of the imagination as a transcendent synthesizer is the most basic. The imagination underlies the organic theory of poetry; it functions also in the tensions and ironies so typical of several New Critics.

A summary look at the role of the various philosophical ideas pertaining to the New Criticism shows that they

---

38 Two good accounts of Hick's vast productiveness and his lead in Marxist criticism can be found in Sutton, pp. 67-70, and in Kazin, pp. 324-327. For the work and influence of Kenneth Burke, see Sutton, pp. 79-84, and Hyman, pp. 327-385.

have diverse relationships to the critics who espouse them. In some cases they constitute a philosophy of life (as with Christianity and agrarianism for the Southern critics, or Marxism for Burke and Hicks), while in other cases it is a matter of deriving a method or matrix for poetic analysis from some classic (thus, the use of Aristotle's four causes by the Chicago group, or Coleridge's ideas on the imagination by Richards and Brooks). In still other cases, the philosophy in question has a master-disciple relationship, as with Eliot's connection with Babbitt and Hulme.

But whatever may be the diversity of ideologies behind the New Critics, there is one philosophical label applicable to them all, one general way in which they are all alike: they are all pragmatic. They are all practical men. Their literary writings and critical norms are more the result of empirical investigation and elaboration than of ivory-tower theorizing. Among the New Critics there are no pure aestheticians. There is no one critic, much less one school, dedicated to the time-honored art for art's sake. We do not find among them a Boileau, a Taine, a Croce, or a Pater.

These men may be said to be practical in two respects: their involvement in life and their approach to criticism. They are all, in the first place, men of commitment, dedicated to a cause. Their causes may differ from Christian to Marxist, from conservative to liberal; but each and everyone has a strong personal conviction about a code of values.
Unlike Wordsworth who at first espoused democratic freedom with the French liberals and later withdrew, disillusioned, to his homeland and purely literary pursuits, the New Critics have all displayed a progressive involvement in life.  

Their approach to criticism also is on a empirical basis: they evolve their theories in the process of writing critiques. The practical character of their criticism is already evident in the fact that they were a reactionary group. They opposed an existing situation and were determined to do something about it. The formulation of their ideas was dictated as much by what they were working against as by what they were working toward. It was in the actual business of spinning out critical essays, explaining why a novel or poem was good or poor, that they formulated and clarified their ideas. They are not a priori philosophers; they are more like a posteriori victors of a contest well conducted. The end-product of their criticism was often co-terminal with their theory. They arrive at critical norms through the discursive process of literary analysis. From Richards and Eliot down to Brooks and Warren, the pattern is the same: essay after essay in illustration, in exploration, in manifestation of what they stand for and what they uphold  

Granville Hicks may seem to be an exception. He abandoned Marxism when the movement declined in the forties. But he also shifted his position as a critic; he was no longer the enthusiast for Moscow. He assumed a mild, humanistic tone. See Kazin, pp. 324f., on this point.
as literary ideals. Among the New Critics there are no pure aestheticians.

This pragmatic character of the New Critics is carried one step further in the work of Brooks himself whose over-all approach to criticism seems dictated by the utilitarian method of "using" poems to demonstrate certain aspects of poetry. Brooks himself admitted as much. "This," he says, "can happen in poetry--look, this poem proves it." (E-38-211). The whole tenor of The Well Wrought Urn and of most of his essays on particular poems seems to follow this approach. He seems more intent upon producing critiques in illustration than upon appreciating poems in themselves. Brooks, then, is the practical critic par excellence.

Such is the New Criticism (its traits, philosophies, trends) as it existed upon the literary scene for a twenty-year period (1935-55) until a decade ago. But the past ten years have brought a new critical phenomenon, what one author aptly calls the "Newer Criticism." The name is well conceived: it indicates a fresh trend but suggests the continuity of the old. What is this "Newer Criticism"? It consists specifically in the admission and presentation of philosophical, ethical, and Christian values in literary criticism. Whereas for some twenty years the New Critics stoutly maintained the principle of the autonomy of

literature, that is, the independence of literature from reality of life around it, critics of late have been taking more and more cognizance of moral and philosophical values. Formerly these were eschewed as being outside the critic's concern (though they were acknowledged as having validity and relevance in themselves). As with most literary trends, the growth has been gradual and amounts to a shift in emphasis rather than a reversal of movement. It is a matter of taking cognizance of further dimensions that deserve to be reckoned with, in order that the fullness of the literary object may not be slighted and that life-values may receive due attention.

Indication of this shift in emphasis is to be found in numerous articles and books of the past decade. Not only is this type of literature present; it dominates the critical field of the past ten years. The recession of criticism with its diminished volume of articles and books finds the majority of items which do appear treating evaluations in a more philosophical, ethical, religious, and even

---


---

Rillie, p. 246; Foster, "Frankly," p. 273; West, p. 2.
Christian tone. The symbolism and myth criticism of G. Wilson Knight is yielding more and more to theological inquiries (Brooks's book on Faulkner, for example). The Freudian analyses of Burke are refined in the Jungian arche­typal queries of Bodkin and Joseph Campbell. These are a far cry from Matthew Arnold's "sweetness and light."

The New Criticism evidently has blossomed into something newer. It is in this context that the present study of Brooks's work is undertaken.
CHAPTER II

ORIGINS OF BROOKS'S THEORY

The productions of creative minds are best understood when seen in relation to the formative factors that served to shape their authors. Family and home background, schooling and intellectual contacts, reading and social milieu all play their role in the development of a thinker and writer. There is a note of irony, however, to include in this study biographical data concerning a man who, in his effort to concentrate analysis upon the literary work itself, sought to liberate criticism from the tendency (so strong in the early part of this century) to interpret literature in terms of the author's life and experience.

The first significant formative influence upon Brooks as a critic was his undergraduate experience at Vanderbilt University (1924-28) and particularly his contact with the Fugitive group in Nashville during that time. Arriving in the fall of 1925, Brooks met Robert Penn Warren, then a senior, with whom he was in time to form a close literary alliance. Their student life overlapped one year at Vanderbilt and again a year at Oxford (1929-30) where both studied as Rhodes Scholars. Later on they shared faculty membership at Louisiana State University, joint editorship of the Southern Review, and collaborated on several college textbooks.
Each of these endeavors will be treated more fully later on.

Warren was a charter member of the literary group known as the Fugitives, a gathering of talented young writers (teachers and students) from Vanderbilt and business men of the town, who in the early twenties met at the home of one of the members (usually that of James Marshall Frank, a local businessman) for literary séances at which original poems were read and criticized. The impressive list of membership includes: John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Merrill Moore, Robert Penn Warren, Walter Clyde Curry, Stanley Johnson, Alex Stevenson, James Frank, Sidney Hirsch and his younger half-brother Nathaniel Hirsch, William Yandell Elliott, William Frierson, and many others. They published The Fugitive, an organ whose avowed purpose heralded in the title was "to flee from nothing faster than from the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South" (so the first issue stated) and to avoid "the extremes of conventionalism, whether old or new." The journal lasted only four years (1922-25) and in fact had ceased publication by the time of

---

1I am speaking here of the period when the Fugitives flourished, when the group had reached its maturest development and was publishing its journal, The Fugitive. Actually, its roots go as far back as "1903 with John Crowe Ransom, who came to Vanderbilt an ingenuous freshman, looking even younger than his fifteen years." (Louise Cowan, The Fugitive Group: A Literary History (Baton Rouge, 1959), p. 5.) It had a rudimentary growth from 1903-1916, underwent disruption, reassembly, and a turn to poetry (1917-1921), and finally the creative and publication period of 1922-1925. For the years during which the various members were enrolled at Vanderbilt, see Cowan, pp. 12ff. They range from 1903 to 1925.
Brooks's arrival at Vanderbilt. The Fugitive group itself had also stopped holding meetings, but Brooks in his senior year "was invited to attend one or two of the occasional and rather reminiscent meetings that were still being held."

(Letter of 1-20-66) For all practical purposes, Brooks may be regarded as a member of the Fugitives;\(^2\) he knew most of the significant membership and was highly influenced by their critical ideas. It was from these men that the movement of the New Criticism took its rise in its American version, that New Criticism which Brooks was to champion, explain, write out, and publicize. Indeed, according to Cargill,\(^3\) he was to "survive" the group as the lone prophet. Any attempt to assign a role to the Fugitive group and studies at Vanderbilt as a formative influence upon Brooks must be at best suggestive. It is impossible to ascertain areas of dependence and degree of indebtedness other than in general terms. Moreover, even when one adopts ideas, even key concepts, from associates, he will naturally temper and modify them according to his judgment and purposes. Brooks himself admits as much:

\[
\text{Naturally the influence of Richards, Eliot, Ransom, Tate and others is to be found in my work, though in some instances I learned most from some of these people}^{2}\text{Bradbury so lists him, p. 14.}\]

\[
\text{See footnote 1, above. For interesting accounts of the Fugitive meetings, see Bradbury's descriptive treat-}^{3}\text{ment, pp. 12ff., and Cowan, pp. 4ff.}^{
by trying to find out how to state convincingly my disagreement with them. (Letter of 1-20-66)

The Vanderbilt-Fugitive influence can be summed up under several headings. There was a declaration of independence from the Victorian dichotomy "made up, on the one hand, of an intellectual attachment to progress and, on the other, of a sentimental attachment to old virtues and old times." This stand brought on a rejection of whatever was considered sub-standard in Southern culture and letters: a nostalgic attachment to the past and undue regard for social caste regardless of the philosophy or creed proposed by that caste. The Fugitives were thinkers—they had been philosophers first, poets and critics second—and they insisted upon genuineness and sincerity based upon solid thought. Brooks no doubt derived from the group their exploratory spirit, a willingness to examine new verse forms and to criticize these severely in the light of the best English tradition. On this basis, there was in the Nashville group a quest for the New South in literature, a proper treatment of the region (its people, history, and culture) according to sound literary principles. Criticism which favored objectivity (regard for the poem as a poem, an art object in itself), a close reading of the text—see Brooks's "Retrospective Introduction" to the paperback re-issue of MPT, p. xi—concentration upon metaphor and indirection, and finally high regard for irony and para-

---

4Cowan, p. 6.
dox—such was the doctrine which Brooks heard expounded and which deeply affected his own thinking in those years in Nashville (1924-28).

Upon completion of his Bachelor's degree at Vanderbilt in 1928, Brooks took his Master's at Tulane University, and then went on to Oxford, where from 1929 to 1932, he studied as a Rhodes Scholar from Louisiana (E-117-125; Letter of 1-18-65). Brooks recalls his decision concerning a choice of degree program when he went up in 1929. While he was tempted to enroll for the Bachelor of Letters and perhaps go on to take a doctorate, he was persuaded instead to read for the Final Honours School, "largely because the Honours B.A. was the degree upon which Oxford prided itself." (E-117-125) In the Honours B.A., emphasis was upon extensive reading. Brooks received his B.A. in 1930 and, in 1932, the B. Litt. In contrast to the typical graduate programs in American universities, it emphasized breadth of reading and assimilation of one's reading, whereas the usual Ph.D. program in America entails a divided effort between reading, mastering research techniques, and their application to a specific piece of research.

This Oxford experience was indeed rich, affording young Brooks—then twenty-three—many opportunities, among which he recalls as outstanding the freedom for reading, the benefits of conversation, and his self-imposed exercise in writing. Concerning the reading, he lays emphasis upon the precious commodity of time for an infinite amount of reading.
and the digestion of that reading (E-117-125). One can see here the expanded scope of literary vision which the young scholar developed. He was conscious of errors in judgment, in selection of materials, but found that despite some unprofitable turns, the freedom abundantly compensated for the disadvantages. No doubt this reign of freedom engendered that independence of mind and vigor of personal endeavor so conducive to good critical sense and so evident in the work of Brooks the critic.

The conversations which proved so meaningful for Brooks were, interestingly enough, not with colleagues in English literature but rather with students of other disciplines: languages, mathematics, anthropology. The dialog was not only mutually broadening in its revelation of new subject matter and contemporary theories; it also forced each member of the group to frame his discussion of his field in general, non-technical terms, in the language of the common man. This was an excellent linguistic discipline for Brooks. More than that, it taught him to present to persons of non-literary and scientific backgrounds the relevance of literature for mankind at large. The conversations forced him to discern and to translate into universal terms the values of poetry and prose.

It is interesting to note Brooks's own observation, made some thirty years later, that he had "to relate his own special interests to the general political and economic and cultural interest of the whole civilization." (E-117-125)
It may be remarked in passing that this is an observation of the maturer Brooks utilizing a certain degree of hindsight; his earlier writings do not show the same marked concern for values other than the strictly literary. The inclusion of more and more humanistic and moral elements is progressively discernible in his more recent work.

Prior to his final examinations at Oxford in June, 1932, Brooks spent six weeks on a Cornish farm, where he practiced writing examinations. This exercise trained him "to organize rapidly, around a particular focal point, the general information gained through some two or three years of study." (E-117-126) It also helped him to assimilate his extensive reading. Obviously, this was an excellent discipline for one whose later writing was to call for not only a perceptive and analytical mind, but a mind skilled in the synthesis of a wide range of reading and experience. A good critic must be able to condense his material without destroying the over-all structure or the grandeur of totality. He must be able to maintain simultaneously before his mind's eye specific data and concrete detail, even from vast areas of reading, whence he can draw relationships, analogies, and perspectives, in order to show dimension, structure, and values. For the cultivation of such a critical mind there is no substitute for wide, selective reading, combined with the skill of assimilating this reading and rendering it creatively.
Upon the completion of his work at Oxford, Brooks returned to America and in the fall of 1932 took up a teaching position in the Department of English at Louisiana State University. Here he was to experience further formative influences: the practical demands of teaching literature to undergraduate and graduate students, close contact and collaboration with Robert Penn Warren and, three years later, editorial experience with Warren in the newly founded *Southern Review*. Brooks was already on the faculty at Louisiana State University when Warren joined him there in the highly fruitful collaboration that produced the *Southern Review* and the volumes *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction*.  

Brooks's teaching experience was probably one of the strongest factors which prompted him to conceive, develop, and write out his literary theory. Faced with the pragmatic demands of the classroom, both subject matter and method were of deep concern to him. His innate literary sense, cultivated at Vanderbilt with the Fugitives, and at Tulane, had grown keener at Oxford. His acute literary sensitivity made him too conscientious to fall in line with the status of literature appreciation and literature teaching on the American scene.

It was not long after he assumed his teaching duties that Brooks saw clearly significant deficiencies in the usual approaches to the teaching of literature. By and large, the

---

*Bradbury, p. 231.*
average anthology was heavily weighted with biographical essays, historical backgrounds, and a plethora of bland emotive platitudes, presumably intended to suggest reader-reaction to certain literary pieces. Evaluations were often vague and general, and not directed to specific poems or sections thereof. It was quite a hit-and-miss affair of refined nebulosity. It was evident to Brooks that what was needed were objective norms and an analytical approach, with basis in the poem, to replace the currently accepted gratuitous and often arbitrary judgments. Brooks was dissatisfied with the historical approach utilized in many courses which spoke about literary works without ever affording the students actual readings. Interpretations of poems in terms of the poet's life and loves, his philosophy and addictions, Brooks found as repulsive as they were misdirected. With other young teachers of the thirties he strongly felt the time was at hand to wean the American public from a taste dictated mainly by Victorian, Romantic, and sentimental norms. By and large, the average U. S. citizen of the twenties and thirties had a poetic taste only slightly advanced beyond the calibre of the scented greeting-card variety. The American readers regarded Joyce Kilmer and Edgar A. Guest as poet-laureates of the American heart. A poll at that period would have revealed that for Mr. and Mrs. America the good poem was the pretty poem or the one framed in sonorous words; the poem that made one feel good; or the poem that taught a moral lesson.
In collaboration with Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks set out to produce a textbook designed to improve the teaching of poetry. The need was for new standards, new approaches, and a new selection of materials. With the assistance of J. T. Purser they worked out an approach which incorporated the principles for which they stood: concentration upon the poem itself, close reading of the text, and a minimal use of background material. From this mutual endeavor came forth the textbook *An Approach to Literature* (1936). Two years later, concentrating specifically on poetry and poetic analysis, giving special attention to metaphor and paradox, and to the poem as an integral, well-structured unit, Brooks and Warren came out with *Understanding Poetry* (New York, 1938). With these two volumes, the New Criticism was inaugurated into college and university classrooms throughout the country. More textbooks of comparable quality were to follow, at intervals of two or three years. Brooks wrote *Understanding Drama* (with Heilman, 1945), *Modern Rhetoric* (with Warren, 1950), *Fundamentals of Good Writing* (with Warren, 1951), and *The Scope of Fiction* (shortened and revised form of *Understanding Fiction*, written with Warren, 1960). Probably no set of textbooks have wielded such telling effect upon the reading habits and taste of college students and teachers in America. Their influence at the academic level is comparable to that of the McGuffey readers at the elementary level.
The Brooks and Warren relationship found further ground for development in the editorial offices of the Southern Review, the literary quarterly begun at Louisiana State University in 1935, at the request of University President James Monroe Smith. A contract was signed in February, 1935, and the first number appeared in July. Brooks and Warren were managing editor under the general editorship of Charles W. Pipkin, Dean of the Graduate School, whose academic field was political science. Albert Erskine was business manager. Despite staff duties listed in the masthead, Brooks and Warren actually functioned as full editors. With Erskine's departure to New York in November, 1940, to begin his career as a publisher, and with Pipkin's death in the summer of 1941, the editorial functions officially devolved upon the two men whose names have been most closely associated with the Southern Review. It is to Brooks and Warren that the remarkable literary quality of the Review, which has won such high praise, is generally attributed.\footnote{\textit{Time} magazine rated it "the solidiest and most accomplished of U. S. literary quarterlies." (Cited on dust jacket of the Anthology of Stories from the Southern Review, edited by Brooks and Warren and published 1952 by the L.S.U. Press.) Morton Zabel, in the \textit{English Journal}, described it as "the best critical journal in the country," and Allen Tate called it "the best critical magazine published in the English language." (Same source.)} As they took over full editorship, they shifted the tone of the magazine from a socio-political character to a literary trend. It was then that they exercised with remarkable success the discriminatory function of an editor and brought
to public notice such capable new writers as Caroline Gordon, Eudora Welty, and Katherine Anne Porter. They fulfilled in practice what Malcolm Cowley was to say, some ten years later, the New Criticism lacked in theory, namely, the functions of discovery and evaluation\(^7\) of new writers or literary works.

Brooks and Warren record that their editorial independence at times moved them to reject the contributions of Nobel prize winners and accept the work of college sophomores (ASSR, 5). Though Brooks and Warren each possessed his own individual talent and style, there is no doubt that their constant, close contact contributed much toward a mutual enrichment of their literary skills. That their overall approach to literature was harmonious is evidenced both by their collaboration on such a large number of college textbooks as well as the *Southern Review* editorship.

In addition to the academic influences already noted, Brooks's theory stems in part from Richards, Eliot, Ransom, Tate, and others (see Letter of 1-20-66). But it is often impossible in such cases to distinguish dependence of some sort from merely related thinking. In any given age, productive minds are dealing with the same or similar materials, ideas and experiments. It is only natural that the results are related. In some cases, indeed, independent efforts have

been known to achieve identical results. The following presentation of literary relationships with other critics is to be understood in this sense.

Brooks reveals in his early writings that much is from I. A. Richards, a man who in turn derived much from Coleridge. Brooks had read his Richards well and emerged a disciple. In discussing Empson's criticism, Brooks says: "I came to my reading of him with a head full of Richards—I must have read the Principles of Literary Criticism through fifteen times in the early thirties." (E-38-208) In fact, just as Brooks claimed that Richards derived the most important part of his critical theory from Coleridge's conception of the synthetic function of the imagination (MPT, 40), it can be stated that Brooks found in Richards the seeds of that theory of irony and paradox which was to become the hallmark of Brooks's creed. We find Brooks referring to Richards's important chapter, "The Imagination," in which he makes his famous distinction between poetry of exclusion and poetry of inclusion, that is, poetry which leaves out opposite and discordant elements of an experience and poetry which includes and reconciles them, by means of the imagination. In his Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Brooks quotes at length from Richards to establish the concept of human experience involving several impulses of a heterogenous nature, all of which nature assimilates and allows to run on parallel lines, providing at once a structure and a tension. In this section of Modern Poetry and the Tradition is the substratum
of Brooksian irony or paradox. Here too Brooks derives from Richards the concept of "ironic contemplation" which Brooks was to use frequently in his poetic analyses. It is not merely the word irony but the fundamental psychological reality of diverse elements simultaneously sustained in contemplation by the imagination, that Brooks derived from Richards. Not only in this sense of irony but also in the synthetic approach, partner to the ironic, does Brooks follow Richards. This concept of ironic contemplation gave rise to another fundamental approach to poetry on the part of Brooks, namely, of the poem as organism. An early lecture at the English Institute at Columbia (1942) is devoted entirely to this idea. Like irony and paradox, the organic concept came to be associated with Brooks (E-58-370ff). In fact, Murray Krieger considers this the greatest contribution of the New Critics to literary criticism (E-90-484). The organic conception of poetry, which will be discussed more fully later, regards the poem as a structured unity wherein all parts are necessarily interrelated to form a tight, living, and integral being. That Brooks linked his understanding of this idea with Richards's teaching on the point and that he regarded it as basic to his own system can be seen in references to Richards in his early writings, especially Understanding Poetry (pp. 16-20), Modern Poetry and the Tradition (pp. 41-42; 47-50), and the lecture, "The Poem as Organism."

Closely related to the influence of I. A. Richards upon Brooks is that of T. S. Eliot; both his poetry and his
criticism affected Brooks's theory. His poetry was regarded by Brooks as a living model of the highest standards of English verse, especially that of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets. Eliot's criticism gave expression to critical norms which Brooks accepted and defended: the revival of the metaphysical tradition in the twentieth century, the role of individual talent in the context of a poetic tradition, and the problem of truth and belief in poetry. Following the theory and practice of Eliot, Brooks became firmly convinced that English poetry was never closer to its true nature than in the poetry of John Donne and his school. Their poetry was in principle a poetry of metaphor, of indirection (rather than outright statement), of organic structure (which required the whole poem for a rounding off of its essence), of irony (by reason of those "heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together," as Johnson had noted). Here, said Brooks, is the purest poetry, in which an integrated psychological experience was preserved. To the point, Eliot supplied Brooks and the literary world at large with the phrase "dissociation of sensibility" as the diagnosis of a malady which had set in by the end of the seventeenth century and continued into the twentieth. Following a pattern of psychological dissociation of sentiment and emotion from his intellectual processes, modern man had introduced an unfortunate dichotomy. In his literary creations as reflecting his daily living, he no longer enjoyed an integrated human experience of body-and-soul, of mind-and-feeling.
Rather, thought processes were divorced from the sense perceptions whence they originated; they were then relegated to a rarefied chamber of abstraction or so-called pure intellection. Meanwhile, man's passions, emotions, and all his sensual pleasures took on a rioted, disorganized existence. Modern man, a compartmentalized being—now thinking, now feeling—had taken the place of the well-integrated man. No longer did man experience simultaneously and in integrated order the full scope of his being. He lived a divided life and lacked the peaceful pleasure of self-possession. Eliot's analysis Brooks accepted and made the basis of much of his critical evaluation. With Eliot, Brooks saw the psychological cleavage which had come upon modern man. With Eliot too he discerned in certain forms of modern poetry a complete revolution of the literary wheel to the point where once again the poet was presenting in his creations a unique, integrated, and wholesome human experience, one wherein human experience was depicted in simultaneous, wedded harmony: thought, emotion, feeling.

Eliot's discussion of what he called "the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" is to be found in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). From it Brooks had accepted Eliot's rejection of the Wordsworthian formula of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity." "For," Eliot said, "it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning,
Brooks strongly agreed: poetry embraced more than man's emotions; it was intellectual, and mainly intellectual. It was not "recollected," since it was an actual, present experience. Finally, it was not tranquil; it was rather dynamic and dramatic. All these notions recur emphatically in Brooks's criticism. In the same essay (p. 7) is Eliot's insistence that "honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry." We have noted above and will see later in some detail how Brooks firmly rejected the biographical approach in poetic analysis, what is sometimes referred to as "the intentional fallacy."

The Brooksian awareness of a dichotomy in modern man is traceable not only to Eliot but also to Allen Tate, another influence upon Brooks. In his "Three Types of Poetry" Tate proposed that after the seventeenth century the pragmatic motive so seized upon man that it assumed an ascendancy which wrought a woeful separation of what was once accepted as a single principle of thought and action. In a world where science and materialism gained prominence, Romanticism revolted against the domination of the intellect and allowed the heart to take over the rule of the mind, while feelings went unhampered. Thus both mind and art were


deprived of that wholeness requisite to both.\textsuperscript{10} Tate assigns this modern illness to the work of Descartes, who isolated "thought" from the rest of man's nature.\textsuperscript{11}

Brooks, like Tate and the other New Critics, has from the beginning opposed the spirit of Romanticism.\textsuperscript{12} Tate's analysis of the origin of the Romantic tradition was accepted by Brooks.\textsuperscript{13}

Brooks's affinity to Tate is further to be seen in his using Coleridge's concept of imagination, discussed by Tate in "The Symbolic Imagination,"\textsuperscript{14} and by Brooks in Modern Poetry and the Tradition (pp. 6ff). Again, Tate's approach to metaphor as growing out of experience rather than as a


\textsuperscript{12}Foster, p. 112; Brooks, passim.

\textsuperscript{13}See MPT, 507, 53f. In his early work, Brooks was strongly anti-Romantic; in time, however, he tempered his polemic spirit even to the point of using examples from the Romantic poets as illustrations of his theory. Witness by and large the poems discussed in The Well Wrought Urn: works of Gray, Wordsworth, Keats, and others. This selection, however, was by no means a canonization of the Romantics but was meant to refute charges of some of Brooks's early critics (Donald Stauffer, Herbert Muller, Ronald Crane, among others) who insisted that his standards of poetic theory and criticism (especially his insistence upon "poetry of inclusion," irony, and paradox) were not valid for all types of verse but only limited ones.

\textsuperscript{14}In The Man of Letters in the Modern World, p. 96.
symbol imposed by the poet is another concept in which Brooks acknowledges his indebtedness (E-92-67). He honored Tate's observation that the imagination is not whimsical and arbitrary, but rather follows laws implicit in the human psyche. Brooks went so far as to accept Tate's assertion that poetry gives "complete knowledge," which means "that unique and formed intelligence of the world, of which man alone is capable." (Cited in WWU, 264)

A stronger and more definite influence upon Brooks than Tate is the latter's mentor, John Crowe Ransom. Brooks and Warren were students of Ransom at Vanderbilt. Ransom was the principal moving power behind the founding of The Fugitive. Upon his transfer from Vanderbilt to Kenyon College, Ohio, in 1937, Ransom founded the Kenyon Review, a literary journal which, together with the Sewanee Review, was to herald the gospel of the New Criticism to the American public. In 1941 he gave to the world The New Criticism, an analytical examination of the critical theories of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, and William Empson.

Brooks had high regard for Ransom's poetry, not merely ranking it in dramatic quality with that of Yeats and Eliot (MPT, 213), but as being in the metaphysical tradition (MPT, 35, WWU, 225; elsewhere Brooks compares Ransom's poetic techniques to those of John Donne and George Herbert). In Modern Poetry and the Tradition Brooks devoted some eight pages to a discussion of Ransom's poetry (pp. 88-95), in addition to many references elsewhere. This is highly
indicative of the esteem in which he held Ransom, who at that
time—in the thirties—was not the well known and generally
accepted poet he is today. Brooks's principal interest in
Ransom's poetry was its poetic irony, but an irony which
"remains always an instrument—it never becomes a mere atti-
dtude adopted by the poet for its own sake." (MPT, 88) In
Ransom, Brooks finds the notions of self-irony, the fable,
and the rejection of Romantic irony. He also subscribes to
Ransom's treatment of the relation of science to poetry (in
God Without Thunder, 1930), and acknowledges his ability to
write poetry "of inclusion rather than of exclusion," and his
"method of indirectness." (MPT, 91-94) He sums up Ransom's
ability to handle irony: it "never becomes a stereotype. It
is a function of the entire poem and consequently varies from
poem to poem." (MPT, 95)

Brooks utilized Ransom in his poetic theory not only
as a model practitioner but also as a model critic. Together
with Eliot, Ransom is Brooks's source for handling the prob-
lem of truth in poetry (MPT, 45-50). Brooks institutes a
comparison between Ransom's "Three Types of Poetry" and Tate's
"Three Types of Poetry," contrasting the interpretations of
the term "Platonic poetry" as understood by the two critics.
The point in question is the independence of poetic truth
from scientific truth, with references freely made to the
ideas of T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, Tate, and Ransom.
While not attempting to force a resemblance among their
theories, and least of all not meaning to imply that any one
is derived from the others, he underlines the fact that, despite diverse terminologies and approaches, these critics corroborate each other so emphatically. He notes their common influence upon the genesis of the critical revolution then (1935) in progress. The acceptance of a certain "neutrality" of truth in poetry is the stand of the early Brooks. It is obvious from his later writings that the moral value of literature came to the fore more and more as time went on.\textsuperscript{15} But for the present, he was committed to liberating literary analysis from Victorian moralizing and "message hunting"; he went all out to insist that "poetic symbols are not true," and resisted the didactic view of poetry, "with its emphasis on the illustrative function of metaphor, etc." \cite{MPT,45}

Again, Brooks follows Ransom's lead in the idea of the poem as an organism. This is the proposition that the individual poem is a neat, well structured unit, self-enclosed and self-subsistent, composed of closely interrelated parts. In two essays, "The Organic Theory of Poetry" and "The Poem as Organism" \cite{OTP,57,60}, Brooks had recourse to Ransom for his three types of poetry: physical (of things), Platonic (of ideas), and metaphysical (of relation of ideas to things) \cite{OTP,57,60}. In contrasting the criticism of Yvor Winters and that of Ransom, Brooks notes that Ransom's theory is "a

\textsuperscript{15}See, for example, his essays in \textit{The Hidden God} \cite{hiddengod} and his analyses of Faulkner in \textit{The Yoknapatawpha Country} \cite{Yoknapatawpha}.
rather tight and systematic structure of images" while Winters's method is a "rather vigorous and rational structure." In this context, Brooks goes on to develop the idea of imagery as functional, not merely decorative, and cites the triumphs of John Donne. (See WWU, 243.)

Brooks openly admitted himself "an admirer of his [i.e., Ransom's] poetry and as one deeply indebted to his criticism." (E-37-287) He followed Ransom in his approach to metaphor, which was to regard it both as a function of structure and of texture in a poem. This concept reinforced Brooks's own position in regarding metaphor as a true functional element of poetry and not merely a decorative elaboration. Again, Brooks follows Ransom's lead in the polemics that went on between Ransom and Winters—which appeared in the latter's The Anatomy of Nonsense (1943)—concerning the nature of poetic unity. According to Ransom, Winters found this principle of unity in the act of moral judgment, believing that ethical interest is the only poetic interest.

Winters replied to Ransom's charge, complaining, says Brooks, that his understanding of the terms "ethical" and "moral" had been misconstrued in an overly narrow sense to mean "didactic" and "moral-bearing," whereas Winters meant them to mean "dealing with one kind or another of human experience and valuable in proportion to the justice with which it [poetry] evaluates that experience." (E-37-287) While Brooks readily accepted the distinction advanced by Winters, there is strong indication that his preferences at that time were
weighted on Ransom's side. This is borne out by his reaction, in the same article, to Winters's regard for "the expressive functions of meter and metaphor," an approach kindred to that of Richards and Empson, differing from them in the special emphasis which Winters gives to the matter of "rational content." The phrase "rational content" triggered Brooks and provoked the conclusion that "the relationship, in the poem, between rational statement and feeling" which Winters saw as that of "motive to emotion" was not the true relationship of poetry and could only be one thing: a loose paraphrase. Brooks was quick to reject both the "intentional fallacy" implied in the term "motive" and the heresy of paraphrase (see WWU, 200-201, 239-243).

It would be wrong, however, to conclude from the foregoing statements that Brooks either had little regard for Winters's criticism or that he was little influenced by him. Quite the contrary. While differing with him in principle, Brooks considered Winters among the best American critics of the forties, ranking him with men of such calibre as Richards and R. P. Blackmur (E-97-283). In a sense one might say that Yvor Winters served as a foil to Brooks, assisting to bring his own critical ideas into sharper focus. It was with Winters that Brooks parried on several points: the heresy of paraphrase, the moral content of poetry, the problem of truth and belief, and the error of the dualism of denotation and connotation. The first three concepts have already been discussed; it remains but to clarify the last
one: the dualism of denotation and connotation. Brooks treats it in *The Well Wrought Urn*, pp. 240-242, where he is analyzing a passage from Winters's *Anatomy of Nonsense*. He observes in this passage Winters's distinctions between the literal meanings of words employed in a metaphor and the manifold overtones and subtones that go with the words. This dissecting process, maintains Brooks, is poor analysis. It destroys the unity of the poem by introducing an unwarranted dualism. Winters's fault is twofold: (1) he is proposing a dualism of denotation and connotation, and (2) he is assigning priority to the denotation (*WWU*, 241). Brooks does not stop to say why this is bad; he assumes that by this time the reader is sufficiently acquainted with his theory to know the pre-eminence he assigns to organic unity, both in the poem and in its evaluation.

Another contemporary critic who exerted a formative influence upon Cleanth Brooks is William Empson, a disciple of I. A. Richards. The fact of this influence is beyond doubt: Brooks himself has given it expression, even citing specific items in a lengthy article on Empson's criticism (*E*-21-208-216). His praise for Empson as a critic employs superlatives:

If the implications of Empson's criticism are profound for the aesthetic of poetry, they are quite as profound for literary history . . . it is impossible to overestimate the significance of the kind of criticism of which Empson remains the most brilliant exponent. . . . He is one of our ablest critics and one of our soundest, and his work is fraught with revolutionary consequences for the teaching of all
literature and for the future of literary history (E-38-214, 216).

Brooks's first contact with Empson was in 1938 when he read *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) for the first time. The following year he read his *English Pastoral Poetry* (1938) and, in 1952, *The Structure of Complex Words*, a review of which he published in the autumn issue of *Kenyon Review*.

What Brooks derived from Empson was a corroboration of the following principles of his theory: the role of linguistic analysis in criticism; English pastoral poetry as a type of irony; the function of criticism as dealing with the meaning of a poem as a poem; the relationship of verbal ambiguity to poetic irony; the functional character of metaphor based upon the manifold meanings of words; the complexity of meaning(s) in a poem; and the necessity of the unifying role of judgment and imagination in order to see the poem in its totality. To anyone familiar with the writings of both critics, the common ground of each feature listed here is immediately evident. Empson's analysis of the varieties of ambiguity made use of modern semantics and applied its findings to readings of poems. Brooks followed suit with close textual readings based upon word analysis. The very plurality of meanings presented in the study on ambiguity naturally prompted Brooks to recognize the irony inherent in diction and thought patterns. The differentiation between literal and transferred meanings in Empson was nothing other than Brooks's "metaphor" under a different
name. The synthesis of verbal and conceptual analyses likewise was nothing else than the famous "organic concept" of the poem. In all these aspects it is understandable why Brooks found his early reading of Empson such a corroboration of his own ideas. Brooks even notes his surprise and delight in finding that he and Empson shared views on the difficulties of Keats's "Ode to Melancholy," and that both had come to regard Herbert's "The Sacrifice" as his masterpiece (E-38-208).

Brooks's later observations on Empson (1947, 1952), however, do not show the same undivided allegiance. As in the case of Winters, Brooks parted company with Empson on the problem of belief and the nature of truth in poetry (E-28). He also disagreed on the business of the critic's search for the poet's intention in his poem (E-29). These points of divergence in no way minimize the more fundamental and broader areas of agreement.

One final category of influence deserves special mention: that of certain Southern poets, notably members of the Fugitive group—Ransom, Tate, Warren, and Donald Davidson—and the outstanding modern novelist of the South, William Faulkner. The credit that can be assigned to them individually and as a group as a formative influence upon Brooks is this: these men provided a regional literature, specifically Southern literature, of excellent quality which at once stimulated and shaped his concepts of provincial letters. From their works—poems, novels, short stories, and essays—
Brooks was able to distill the essence of modern regional literature and to categorize for the literary world the constitutive elements of that unique genre called Southern literature. Brooks was able to discern the genius of this genre precisely because the literary works at his disposal were so true to type, so artfully created, so genuine and valid. Thus it was that Cleanth Brooks, himself a Southerner and a critic making his literary debut in the Deep South, was able to produce some 32 articles and at least three books bearing upon Southern language and literature. Several of these are specifically on regional literature and Southern letters as such (e.g., E-11, E-12, E-18, E-31, E-105, E-124, etc.). Brooks notes the following cultural elements as bearing upon Southern literature: (1) the concreteness of human relationships, including the concreteness of moral problems; (2) the polarities which everywhere confront one in the Southern scene; and (3) the pervading sense of community (E-105-40). Elsewhere, in his treatment of moral problems he includes the definition of innocence (E-68) and of original sin (E-59). The polarities to which he refers include the ironies of social structure and aims: a society with a long tradition from the past alive in a modern world; a reaction against "the utopian illusion that man may build here and now the city of God in concrete and aluminum plastics." (E-105-39) The distinctiveness of the Southern region stands out in the various ways in which the pattern of life differs from that of the rest of the nation.
(Along with the pervading sense of community comes the vitality of the common folk and the poet's closeness to them (E-31-9).) And yet, the stronger poet does not exploit his materials as do some weaker writers who sentimentalize upon rural life, the poverty of the share-cropper, the Negro as an exile, or the nostalgic past. Rather, the careful artist presents vital human interest in terms of fundamental human psychology, not as coming from the peculiar or the deviate. He realizes by accurate, concrete description his local scene. These concepts of the regional poet and his art we find in some of Brooks's earliest writing (e.g., E-12 and MPT, 75-78). The virtue that Brooks extols above all is sincerity or integrity. While the sentimentalist would romanticize the past, the genuine poet concentrates upon the present. The poet mediates a sense of the past through a consciousness of the present. He includes both positive and negative elements to bring the two into some sort of unity. In Ransom, Tate, and Warren (Brooks notes) a description of the Southern scene never becomes the raison d'être of the poem. Rather, the concrete imagery is the metaphor and vehicle upon which the poem rides (MPT, 75f).

Thus the poets of the Fugitive and Agrarian tradition, by being true to their creative function, were one more influence upon the development of Brooks the critic.
CHAPTER III

THE PRINCIPAL TENETS OF CLEANTH BROOKS'S THEORY

1. Modern Poetry and the Tradition: Twentieth-Century
Poetry and Criticism as a Third Revolution
in English Literature

It was early in his work with the *Southern Review* that
Brooks first gave public expression to his ideas of literary
criticism. This was in the form of a series of three
articles under the general title, "Three Revolutions in
Poetry," appearing in the first volume of the *Southern Review.*
Under the titles "I. Metaphor and the Tradition," "II. Wit
and High Seriousness," and "III. Metaphysical Poetry and
the Ivory Tower," the thesis advanced was that certain forms
of twentieth century poetry--principally of the Yeats-Eliot
school--was in effect a revival of the poetry of the seven-
teenth-century metaphysicals: a verse that was hard,
succinct, intellectual, highly structured, and in essence an
expanded metaphor. In these articles Brooks pointed out the
trends which had led English poetry away from the meta-
physical tradition: the criticism of Johnson and Addison on
the one hand (shifting emphasis from intellect to fancy), and
the nineteenth-century Romantics on the other (canonizing
free imagination and poetry of feeling and sentiment). Brooks

52
showed that modern poetry, vindicating the cause of intellect, metaphor, and the earlier tradition, brought the wheel to a complete revolution in the productions of contemporary poets. This thesis, which today is generally known and almost equally accepted, represents nonetheless a keen and early insight for a young critic of the thirties. The germ of the idea was already present in Eliot's essays on the metaphysical poets; Brooks gave the concept extended treatment and its full development (E-12 and the opening chapters of MPT). This firm declaration on the metaphysical tradition in its phoenix-like appearance in our day, together with Brooks's famous analysis of The Waste Land and his "Vision of William Butler Yeats" (E-16, E-19) provided the substance of at least half the chapters in his first book in literary criticism, Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939). At this point, the young critic was well launched upon his literary career.

This concept of the third revolution so-called is important for two reasons: it indicates Brooks's relationship with T. S. Eliot and his acceptance after Eliot of the metaphysical tradition as a standard for English poetry and criticism; and it establishes a point of departure for Brooks's whole critical system inasmuch as he explains, analyzes, and defends modern poetry as a traditional, not a new, verse form.
2. The Poem as Organism

An analysis of Cleanth Brooks's theory may best begin with those aspects of his criticism which stress the unity of the poem. This is not only a logical starting point; it expresses one of Brooks's fundamental tenets. Like Poe, Brooks regarded essential poetry as residing in the short poem, the poem brief enough that the mind might intuitively behold the component elements in their organic structure in one moment of contemplation. It was on this basis that he looked upon the poem as an organism. He considered "the elements of a poem as related to each other not as blossoms juxtaposed in a bouquet, but as blossoms are related to the other parts of a growing plant." (E-51-729) This approach maintains not only that the components of a poem are vitally interrelated but that they must be viewed as a whole, just as "the beauty of the poem is the flowering of the whole plant." (E-51-729)

Brooks admitted that the metaphor of organism is a borrowing from the biological sciences, but he stressed the fact that the organic concept of poetry is one of the oldest approaches to the poem, quite in contrast to modern trends which conceive poetry as statement or as an expression of the poet's ecstatic moment. The viewpoint of poetry as statement makes of the poem essentially a variety of prose, while the "expression of the poet's ecstatic moment" involves a high degree of subjectivity in which the actual poem is
subordinate to the poet's feeling. In the latter case, the fault is one of arbitrary indefiniteness and incompleteness, while in the former, the poem is placed in the sphere of logic and must be framed in accurate, precise, and definite statements. Not so the poem as conceived by Brooks. Brooks maintains that "the formal relations in a work of literature may include, but certainly exceed, those of logic." (E-70-72) The term "organic" expresses "relations so intimate, so fluid, and so complex" that they resemble the vital functions of living tissue in plant or animal (E-25-23). Dissection would be a mortal blow for the living poem which exists upon the essential interrelations of its component members.

Brooks traces the tendency to regard poetry as statement as far back as Pope and Johnson (E-25-21), noting that subsequent critics progressively stressed the mechanical and logical elements of a poem. In this approach there was a lack of balance. Poetic license and spontaneity, which the neoclassicals had possessed and employed in their poetry, thus insuring poetic vitality, gradually fell into disuse or disregard on the part of the critics. Romantic critics, on the other hand, gave free indulgence to poetic license, spontaneity, the unregulated mood—only to be followed in turn by a different trend which involved a prose statement of paraphrasable content.

Cognizant of the various approaches toward poetry, one may ask where Brooks finds exemplified the concept of organic unity. He traces it back to the seventeenth-century
metaphysical poets. He observes in their poetry a high respect for the unified expression of a unified experience, wherein all the elements of human psychology interplay. The poet makes a happy combination "in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways." (Citing Eliot in E-24-28) The floating feelings captured in a poetic context do not "create new emotions, but the ordinary ones worked up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual experiences at all." (Again from Eliot, p. 29)

With its intimate relation to the unity of the poem, the organic concept prompted Brooks to reject any kind of dualism or dissecting process in literary analysis. That is to say, he was militant against such critical approaches which purported to explain a poem in terms of two complementary components, as though these two were mechanically engaged (like cogwheels) to make the poem. It is not a vague or relative dualism that Brooks speaks of. He is quite precise in his use of the term. A careful reading of his extensive writings shows that he pinpointed as many as four types of dualism to be rejected in critical theory: (a) form and content, as regards structure; (b) function and ornament, as regards imagery; (c) denotation and connotation, as regards meaning; and (d) intellect and emotion, as regards psychological involvement. This concern about dualism is found throughout his writing.¹ In fact, the further along Brooks

¹1935: E-13, and in later essays 1941: E-25, "Poem

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
comes in his theory, the stronger and more specific is his
attack upon such divisive techniques of poetic analysis.
Nevertheless, he obviously yields a bit of ground as he
accommodates himself to the nomenclature of other critics in
his recent statement: "I have preferred in this discussion
to talk about the form of modern poetry rather than its content
and its beliefs and that is also what Mr. Hall has on
the whole preferred to talk about." (E-136-499f. Italics
mine.)

Brooks concentrated upon the first type of dualism
cited above, namely, that of form and content. He relates
this approach to the problem of belief, assigning as a reason
for the distinction the efforts of some critics to give
credit to poetic technique while withholding approval of
creed or other ideas within a poem. In this way the critic
may laud the one while disclaiming acceptance of the other:
"His method is good, though I may not agree with the content."
At this point Brooks notes that attempts to avoid the old
bifurcation of form and content sometimes results in embar-
rassing circuitous solutions. I. A. Richards, for example,
who denied that poetry had anything to do with science or
philosophy, resorted to saying that poetry does not make

as Organism," and 1957: E-92, "Implications of an Organic
Theory of Poetry" as well as most recent ones 1963: E-131,
"New Methods, Old Methods, and Basic Methods for Teaching
Literature"; and 1965: E-136, "Poetry since The Waste
Land."
statements but pseudostatements (E-95-55). Brooks admits that this was the early Richards speaking; in his later work he refined and qualified his previous statement. A similar observation could be made regarding Brooks himself, who in his early days, following the lead of Richards and Eliot, made short shrift of equating truth and poetry as well as admitting moral values in poetry, while later on he tempered both views. (See B-22 and B-23, both published in 1963, and the "Retrospective Introduction" to the 1965 paperback edition of Modern Poetry and the Tradition.)

Working toward a solution of the problem of statement involved in Richards's approach, Brooks followed the lead of Ransom and framed the question this way: "What is the use of the critic's concerning himself with the form of the poem if there is no necessary connection between that form and its psychological effects upon the reader?" In other words, "the text of the poem can be inspected, but the alleged goings-on in the reader's neural system could not." (E-95-56) Ultimately the form-and-content dichotomy in no way relates to either the poem as poem--and hence is untrue to the object it purports to examine--or to the poetic experience of the poet or reader--and hence has neither interpretative nor descriptive relevance to either of those realities. The form-and-content approach literally fulfills Wordsworth's famous dictum: "We murder to dissect."

The form-and-content dichotomy, besides being involved in the problem of belief, is related also to what is called
"the heresy of paraphrase," the idea that a poem "contains" some truth which can be isolated and formulated in a prose statement (WWU, 196). Of this more will be said in the section on the function of the critic, when the critic's faults are treated. For the time being it suffices to note that the dualism in question tries unsuccessfully to find in the poem an isolatable something, a "meaning"—the content—which one is led to believe exists or can exist independently of the poem, although in the given case the poet has framed it in the "form" of the poem. Now for Brooks, this so-called content or meaning is inherent in the poem as woven into its texture and is never subject to distillation. The poem must be viewed in its integrity and thus alone does it yield its meaning.

Closely related to the form-and-content dualism is that which distinguishes function from ornament in imagery, labeling some images functional, others merely decorative.

Brooks insists that any such distinction not only lacks a basis in fact but also militates against the perfection of the metaphor, annihilating in analysis the unity or integrity of ironic contemplation. This is an important point. And it bears explanation because the concept of ironic contemplation is very fundamental and yet delicately simple (in the most refined and sophisticated use of the term) in Brooks's system.

The dichotomy of imagery can be found as far back as Dr. Johnson, who spoke of "illustration" and "decoration,"
and in modern critics such as Donald Stauffer and Herbert Muller. Stauffer distinguishes between aesthetic experience and commonplace statement, while Muller speaks in terms of the "eloquent" as distinct from the "simple" and "outright." (WWU, 220, 226) Brooks regards the separation of function and decoration as a misconception of metaphor, as though metaphor consisted of a comparison of term A with term B, embellished with a kind of rhetorical glossing (E-121-99). Brooks admits that he himself once thought the imagery in the second stanza of Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper" was meant to be merely decorative until he realized the multiple relations of the natural and spontaneous songs of the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the Highland girl (E-121-100). He concludes that "such comparisons cannot be dismissed as mere decoration: what the poem 'says' is said primarily through the imagery." (E-121-100) A truer concept of metaphor sees its essence as a relationship, contemplated by the imagination, between image(s) and the subject of reference. Presented with the verbal expression of an objective correlative, the imagination apprehends the elements (words, sounds, meanings, implications, etc.) and composes from the extremes (i.e., from the outer limits of the real object and the image, or the paradoxical components of a given image) an integral experience which is alive with tension, held in balance, but not negated or dispelled, by the imagination. The metaphor thus truly apprehended is neither term A nor term B, nor a linking of the two by juxtaposition, but a third something
which exists partly in the order of imagery but mainly in the order of the dramatic, actual experience on the part of the imagination. This, in effect, is the ironic contemplation as proposed by Cleanth Brooks. And this is the basis of his non-acceptance of the function and form dualism in imagery.

For Brooks, there is no metaphor which is not simultaneously decorative and in action; and it is in action because of its beauty, and it is beautiful because it is in action. The dynamic quality is of the essence of metaphor. In its most proper sense, metaphor is the poem as experienced, or if you prefer, as an experience. In metaphor, irony and imagery and drama are combined. The metaphor is not so much upon the page as in the imagination. The printed poem is only a relic of the poet. It is the poem as experienced that calls the metaphor into vitality. The composer's symphony as in manuscript form and as played furnishes a parallel.

The unity of poetic experience is likewise violated by a dualism related to the foregoing: denotation vs. connotation. Here it is chiefly the linguistically-oriented critics (Richards, Empson and company) with whom Brooks has his quarrel. Brooks takes Yvor Winters to task over certain passages in his *Anatomy of Nonsense*, where he speaks of meanings and sub-meanings and overtones of meaning, as though the sound of a word, or its emotional overtones, in a given context can alter its meaning from what is assumed to be its "rational" or literal meaning (WWU, 240f). For Brooks there
is no deviation of variant meanings from a standard meaning, for the simple reason that no word capable of variant meanings has a single standard meaning. The overtones of a word in a given context take their origin precisely from that context; hence the actual and unique "meaning" is the one to be reckoned with, not some isolated meaning. Any word, however narrow or specific its "denotation," has, in a poem, only the meaning it conveys there, in its setting. To divorce it from the poem or from the verse or phrase within which it occurs is to shatter the poem, to distort that area or part of the poem as seen or heard when the poem is intact. Hence, Brooks objects to Winters's statement that "any rational statement will govern the general possibilities of feeling derivable from it." (From The Anatomy of Nonsense, cited in WWU, 241)

Any of the three forms of dualism mentioned thus far—form and content, functional and decorative imagery, and denotation and connotation—can lead to the fourth type which Brooks identifies and labels "intellect and emotion." Preoccupation over a "rational meaning" as separable from "an overt moral" is the natural consequence when one conceives the poem as a rigorous and rational structure bearing appendages of ornament and morality (WWU, 243). According to this view, the part apprehended by the intellect can be neatly pigeon-holed apart from the data of sense perceptions. Logical truth will produce a simple statement or set of statements, while the five senses (aided by fantasy) will produce
colorful and sonorous images. Obviously such analysis wreaks havoc with the integrity which John Donne and company displayed so plainly in their poetry: a healthy, unified human experience, the decline of which Eliot called "dissociation of sensibility." In discussing the separability of the rational from the emotional or sense portion of a poem, much depends upon what one understands by the word "psychological." There are some—Winters among them—for whom the word means "intellectual" or "rational" as distinguished from "sensual" or "emotional." But for Brooks, Ransom, and others, poetry as a psychological experience means a total human experience, one that embraces all of man's psychic faculties. Thus understood, poetry is not divisible into rational and emotional aspects. The human psychological integrity is preserved and respected, and not exposed to dualism.

To return to the organic concept of poetry—which occasioned the foregoing discussion of the types of dualism in poetic analysis—it is obvious that the fluid elements within the organic poem leave room for ambiguity, for diversity of interpretation. Brooks recognized this fact but declared that a consensus of readers would generally coincide with the poet's reading of a poem. This view, however, Brooks insisted, should not lead to regarding the poem as a self-conscious statement of the poet. Even if the poem is his expression, it is not necessarily an extension of his personality.

The approach to the poem as organism is the only one
consonant with imaginative unity rightly understood. The imagination is the faculty which surveys and composes the images, the perceptions, the impressions, the relationships inherent in a poem. The business of assembling, or seeing assembled in harmonious context, the various structural members is the role of imagination. Consequently, it is only when dealing with such elements that permit of fluid interaction, of resilient treatment, that the imagination can function in its own right. The imagination does not deal rigidly with fixed concepts; it is not the intellect, simply.

Its subject matter, while not amorphous, is pliant. Any further specification, any rigid exactitude, makes for logical rather than imaginative unity. Its activity, consequently, is the unique operation of considering and organizing whatever data is available to it. When this process has been accomplished, the imagination exercises a contemplative function, beholding intuitively the whole it has grasped. It is precisely in this contemplation that the poetic experience consists.

Poetry as organism emphasizes interrelationships as well as the unique whole which the poem is. It establishes the individuality, hence the originality, of each poem worthy of the name. The organic concept is thus related not only to the integrity or wholeness of the poem but to its special character as "this" poem. In turn, the organic concept reinforces the classical idea of the poet as maker—which idea Brooks also held and which will be treated later, in the
discussion of the function of the poet.

At the same time, we must see the organic concept as related to the structure of the poem. Not that the organism is the structure, but that the two are intimately related. Without structural organization, the elements of the poem would remain amorphous and unresolved. Here is where metaphor assumes its role— but not as a post factum function, organizing previously existing materials (images, words, moods, etc.), but simultaneously with the organic elements, bringing the poem into being. The poet conceives his poem in one intuitive glance. The metaphor establishes and regulates the structure yet permits that organic vitality and fluidity, which in turn allows creative imagination full play. The metaphor, to resume the biological figure, provides skeletal structure within and about which the limpid and flaccid elements circulate and form their lines of polar tension. Through all of this process, it is imagination that performs the unifying function, both in the creative mind of the poet and in the appreciative mind of the reader.

3. The Scope and Function of Irony

Perhaps the most significant single concept employed by Brooks and the one which above all characterizes and vitalizes his poetic theory is that of paradox or irony. The preponderance of irony in Brooksian theory stems, not from the frequency of its use nor from its many varieties, but from its central position. In this single term can be seen
implications of practically all the tenets of Brooks's creed. If the poem is to be regarded as organism, it is irony that gives tensile strength to structural unity. If metaphor has prime relevance, it is irony that gives metaphor its cogency and ambivalent character. If the poem is a dramatic experience, it is because irony provides the kinetic part which animates its members. Theme also has its actualization by means of irony which renders it symbolically significant: the alignment of symbols in contrast, says Brooks, is irony; in parallels is the obverse of irony (MPT, 167). Even the negative features of Brooks's doctrine, those elements he considers undesirable in poetry or criticism, assume their position under the criterion of irony. If Romantic standards and sentimentalism are undesirable, it is because irony is lacking. If dualism in all its forms is outlawed in critical theory, it is because irony argues for a living, vibrant, unified entity wherein the imagination establishes unity, thus ruling out dissection into isolated and dead components of form and content (as regards thought), or of function and ornament (in the case of imagery), or of denotation and connotation (as regards meanings), or of intellect and emotion (as regards psychological activity). In short, irony more than any other feature is the hallmark of Brooks's system. The centrality of irony explains in part why this one item has been the target of some of Brooks's critics, notably Ronald Crane, in his now famous essay, "The Critical Monism
What then is irony as understood by Brooks? The answer is not easy to come by—not because the usage is too broad or too obscure or because there are too many types of irony (though Brooks does list as many as seventeen through all his writings). The problem lies rather in the fact that irony rides upon several kindred ideas, each of which must be apprehended in its own right and all of which must be seen in their interrelated roles before the total concept of irony may emerge. The related concepts thus involved are those of paradox, wit, and tension. It would be wrong to think that a pat definition of each term would supply the requisite understanding. It is helpful, however, to note how Brooks himself conceives some of these terms:

(1) wit, as an awareness of the multiplicity of possible attitudes to be taken toward a given situation; (2) paradox, as a device for contrasting the conventional views of a situation . . . with a more inclusive view; and (3) irony, as a device for definition of attitudes by qualification. (WWU, 257)

Of the three terms cited here, paradox and irony are the most closely related. They share an element of contrast or opposition in their make-up. They deal with a polarity of

---

2MP, XLV (May 1948); reprinted with minor alterations in the original edition of Critics and Criticism, an anthology by Crane and others of the Chicago school of neo-Aristotelians (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 82-107 and Donald Stauffer, in The Language of Poetry. Herbert Muller also was one who questioned the validity of "ironic contemplation" as a trait of all genuine poetry. Both Stauffer and Muller received their replies in The Well Wrought Urn, pp. 219-221.
terms and ideas, of one notion played off against another.
But wherein lies the difference between paradox and irony?
It seems to consist in this: that paradox deals with complete
statements while irony is concerned with items not neces­sarily in statement form. The contrasting elements of irony
may be simply images, words, isolated concepts, concerning
which nothing is predicated. In a paradox, on the other
hand, there seems to be a definite predication, a parallel
structure of statement against statement, involving a sharp
contrast, an apparent contradiction. Again, looking over
the many varieties of irony that Brooks discovers in litera­
ture, it would seem that there are degrees of contrast and a
relativity of opposition: not all ironical partners are
contrary to each other; they may be simply in contrast, some
greater, some lesser. The contrast of paradox, on the other
hand, seems to be more defined, more explicit, and more of a
polar-contradictory nature. Yet it is not the out-and-out
contradiction of yes-and-no or of either-or: "Paradox is
the language of sophistry, hard, bright, witty." (WWU, 3)

Paradox is indeed a key concept in Brooks's poetics.
The very opening line of The Well Wrought Urn maintains that
"the language of poetry is the language of paradox." This
is all but the theme of that volume; it is the main point he
is out to defend therein. Brooks had previously enunciated
his stand on irony and paradox in Modern Poetry and the
Tradition, a manifesto that brought critics swooping down.
Hence, although he strongly believes "that the language of
poetry is the language of paradox," he introduces the idea by saying: "Few of us are prepared to accept the statement." (WWU, 3) The entire first chapter, "The Language of Paradox," already by its initial position indicates the capital rank that Brooks assigns to it and declares paradox to be "the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry." (WWU, 3) A poem derives its power "from the paradoxical situation out of which the poem arises." (WWU, 5) Even for a poet like William Wordsworth, "who insists on simplicity, the underlying paradox is nevertheless thoroughly necessary." (WWU, 4) And why is this so? Brooks replies: "The method of art can, I believe, never be direct--is always indirect." (WWU, 11) Even the apparently simple and straightforward poet is "forced into paradoxes by the nature of his instrument." (WWU, 11; italics mine) Thus also when John Donne, in his poem "Canonization," plays with the concepts of religion and love as two lovers become anchorites in each other's body, Brooks comments: "Paradox is here his inevitable instrument." (WWU, 11) The teasing riddle spoken finally by Keats's Grecian urn is but the expression of the element of paradox latent in the entire poem (WWU, 155). Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears" begins with a paradox already in its title. One senses these tears cannot be idle if they deserve a poem about them (WWU, 168). Shakespeare also is an exemplar of paradox in his "Phoenix and the Turtle," where a double name for a single Nature forces the poet into paradox as the only solution (WWU, 20).
To return to the relationship of irony to paradox: it seems that Brooks sometimes uses the two interchangeably, as in the frequently recurring phrases: "underlying irony," "underlying paradox." A general similarity is intended. But on the whole, he calls upon the term irony when he wishes to single out individual words or objects. Thus in Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," the single names of Misery and Heaven are labeled ironical opposites, whereas the epitaphs of the poor man and the rich man are contrasted as paradox \(^{1}\). Likewise, Coleridge's statements on the function of imagination are "a series of paradoxes." (WWU, 19) Thus paradox concerns itself with one type of contrast, that in statement form, while irony extends itself to many types. In fact, careful reading of Brooks reveals that he identifies and labels as many as seventeen types of irony.\(^{3}\) The number is indeed large, and perhaps to some readers may seem a sophistication without basis in fact. Yet in each case Brooks supports his analysis with examples as well as description.

But before exploring the range of Brooksian irony, it may be well first to clarify the concept of tension, so frequently mentioned in connection with irony and metaphor. What is tension, in this sense? Tension is a psychological

\(^{3}\)The article on "Irony" in the Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, by William Van O'Connor, p. 407, also lists seventeen types, including the old classical ones from Aristotle and Quintilian.
function of irony. It is the mind alerted to opposition of concepts and alive to the implications. It is irony in action. It is the unrest provoked by emotions and senses reacting to diverse stimuli, or by reason grappling with the famous twin horns of a dilemma. It is the imagination's effort to balance or reconcile the diversity of polar opposites.

Brooks's references to tension are frequent. In MacLeish's play Panic, the hero McGafferty's hubris is insufficient to make the play a tragedy because tension is lacking (MPT, 121). Restoration tragedy is relatively more complex than the comedy of the period because of the tension generated between unsympathetic laughter and sympathetic pity (MPT, 214). Hardy's poem on the Titanic, "The Convergence of the Twain," displays a structure of ironical contrasts which corroborate the dramatic tension set forth in the poem (MPT, 243). In MacLeish's poem "Memorial Rain" the tension is built up, "to be suddenly released when the rain descends and breaks up the memorial service." (MPT, 123) Again, Milton's twin poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" present a choice between mirth and melancholy which is nothing but a tension (WWU, 53).

Tension, then, is the dynamic quality of irony. It is the actualization of opposites in confrontation, the animation of diverse components, the vibrant current between polar charges. In a lengthy passage describing W. H. Auden's poetic technique, Brooks likens the tensions of a poem to
those of human society. He cites Auden's observation that "every feeling competes with every other demanding inclusion and a dominant position to which they are not necessarily entitled. . . . " (E-133-186) Brooks goes on to remark that since this is the way in which a poem is organized, it may fail in either of two ways: it may exclude too much and thus fall into banality, or it may "attempt to embody more than one community at once and thus fall into disorder." (E-133-186) Concerning Lionel Trilling's analysis of the fiction of Faulkner and others, Brooks observes approvingly that it is conducted "not in terms of the effort of the artist, but in terms of the structure of the work itself," that is, "in terms of 'tensions,' of symbolic development, of ironies and their resolution." (E-70-80) The nature of tension is further clarified as Brooks sees it underlie the structure of ambiguity, that literary phenomenon made famous by Empson's study, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Ambiguity "even in its present worn and battered state, still retains some sense of tension between meanings." (E-90-490) Again, when analyzing the literature of the South, Brooks detects tension between "the polarities which everywhere confront one in the Southern scene." (E-105-40)

To sum up: the relationship between tension and irony is one between a dynamic energy and its controlling factor. Irony is the governor or regulating element which tempers and balances tension. Through the unifying function of the imagination, that intuitive regard which simultaneously
beholds and reconciles opposite elements, irony vibrates with tension while the imagination performs its "ironic contemplation." Thus Brooks speaks of "irony which maintains an equilibrium between opposed attitudes, irony which acts as a stabilizing force." (MPT, 121) "It is, finally, the delicate balance and reconciliation of a host of partial interpretations and attitudes." (WWU, 102)

With these concepts of irony and paradox, wit and tension, in mind, we can proceed to examine the varieties of irony. As previously stated, there are at least seventeen types cited by name in Brooks's writings. Sometimes, of course, he speaks of irony in a generic sense without qualifying it. But at other times he refines the concept and assigns a specific name to suit the case. The basis of his distinctions is the mode and the nuances of contrast, as well as the subject matter involved. "The tone of irony can be effected by the skillful disposition of the context." (E-51-730)

1. There is, first of all, the irony or "paradox of the imagination itself." (WWU, 21) What does Brooks mean by this? Sister Jerome Hart suggests that it refers "to man's enduring effort to reach the transcendent through the material, the particular, the here and now." My interpretation,

---

however, is that Brooks means to contrast the abstract and the concrete in the operations of the imagination. I base this view on the fact that the context deals with the abstract concepts of beauty and truth and their several symbolic representations as found in Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle," Donne's "Canonization," and Keats's "Grecian Urn." Brooks is discussing here the same type of relationship that he later describes when analyzing Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode":

I think we shall have to agree that there is method in Wordsworth's paradoxes: he is trying to state with some sensitiveness the relation between the two modes of perception, that of the synthesizing imagination. They do have relationships: they are both ways of seeing. The ambiguities which light and darkness take on in this poem are, therefore, not confusions, as it seems to me, but necessary paradoxes.

(WWU, 133; italics mine)

Thus the imagination, which for Brooks is the seat of most ironies, has an irony of its own: in the combined power of body and soul at work, dealing with sense percepts and abstract ideas, creatively compounding them and opposing them.

The next three kinds of irony are somewhat related; they center upon man—as individual, as person, as race. They are, in turn, the irony of the individual, which is man at variance with himself; Brooks sometimes calls this "self-irony." (MPT, 88) The second is the irony of personification or of the assumed self, which is the mask or persona. The third is the irony of universal man or the human race at
large, and this is the fable. Examples may help to clarify these concepts.

2. **Irony of the individual.** Commenting on Ransom's poem "Amphibious Crocodile," Brooks speaks of a "good natured self-deprecation" which is only a step from the quality of self-irony to be found in 'Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son.'" (MPT, 88) Later he notes that an irony more typical of Ransom "is to be found in his commentaries on the human predicament, commentaries which he usually finds occasion for by throwing aspects of that predicament into the form of a little fable." (MPT, 88) The distinction between the two types of irony is obvious: one deals with the individual, the other with the race. Brooks furnishes further examples of self-irony: Ralph in the poem "Morning," and the "poor bookish hind" of the poem "Miller's Daughter."

3. **Irony of the fable.** As instances of irony in the form of fable, he recalls the characters in "Eclogue" and "Persistent Explorer," whose fable is that "of the poet himself thrown up upon the neutralized world of modern science." (MPT, 89, 90) Again, Thomas Hardy's poetry is cited for its "ironical contemplation" and "dramatic tension" which produces "a fable which is in itself a parable of fusion."

4. **Irony of personification.** When the poet speaks in an assumed person, and especially in such poems where the character of this person is of the essence, as in the dramatic monologue, a different kind of irony is in evidence: that of
the persona or mask. This is not the ambivalent individual nor the universal man engaged in parable or fable. This is a dialogue between real-self and assumed-self, between the ego and its mask. The influence of Yeats and Pound upon Brooks is evident here. The irony of the mask occurs in Brooks's treatment of Macbeth, specifically in his discussion of the clothes imagery. There Macbeth speaks of donning garments which will clothe "naked frailties" with "manly readiness." The irony resides in the hypocrisy involved: he can only feign the loyalty implied by his own vesture once Duncan has been murdered. The revelations of the Weird Sisters provide another example of the mask: future rank represented by means of images of those who shall bear such rank (WWU, 37). The conflict of roles assumed and pretended by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are rich in the irony of mask.

5. A fifth type of irony is that which Brooks calls irony of whimsy. Examples are to be found in such pieces as Pope's Rape of the Lock and the heavenly battle in Paradise Lost. Belinda's plight is too light and gay to be adequately classified as "social satire" or even "mock heroic"; it wants a naming of its own. Brooks dubs it irony of whimsy. His point is not to lessen or weaken the irony but to make sure one does not conceive it as "more brittle and thin than it actually is." (WWU, 84f) Following the lead of Arnold Stein's commentary on Milton, Brooks sees the warfare of the angels in Paradise Lost as a hilarious piece of deft pleasantry, the type of thing that may well exemplify irony of whimsy (E-81-.
342). He endorses Stein's calling this "epic comedy."

Among contemporary poets, Robert Frost provides another example of irony of whimsy: "The whimsy is licensed by being made a mannerism of the New England character." Describing that character, Brooks finds its sensitivity possessed of a natural wisdom: "dry and laconic when serious; genial and whimsical when not." (MPT, 111) Particular Frost poems which Brooks cites are "Canis Major," which he calls "a sally of self-ironic whimsy" with its audacity of metaphor in inverse proportion to the seriousness of the experience, and "After Apple-Picking," with the whimsy entailed in the speaker's drowsiness after completion of the task, likened to the hibernation of the woodchuck (MPT, 115f).

6. The pun is another type of irony. It too is sometimes whimsical, but not always. In Shakespeare a playful mood often begets punning, but at other times his use of the pun can be a highly serious thing. In the fatal stabbing in Romeo and Juliet--Brooks recalls F. C. Prescott's observation--Juliet uses the verb "to die" in the manner it is often used in the seventeenth-century: to mean "to experience the consummation of the sexual act." (MPT, 27) John Donne shows a similar usage in "Canonization," "The Ecstasy," and "Anniversary." He also injected a pun on his own name in his well-known poem "Hymn to God the Father," the general tone of which is quite serious. Hence Brooks maintains: "Most destructive of all to the proposition that wit can never be unified with seriousness is the case of poetry in
which the pun, the most frivolous of the instruments of wit, contributes to serious effects." (MPT, 26)

7. This brings us to the next type of irony, that related to wit and high seriousness. This is from Brooks's earliest writings: his *Southern Review* essays of 1935 and *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* of 1939. In illustrating his point, Brooks uses his typical approach, one which is itself ironic. Rather than seek examples among more obvious pieces, he looks to poems where one would not expect to find wit and seriousness intermingled: the love lyrics of the Elizabethans. Such verse often begins with the tone of vers de société only to deepen into something more serious (MPT, 20). Witty poetry is, at its best, "arch, adroit, and graceful"; but there are "witty poets who use the effect of frivolous ingenuity as a means to a serious intensity." (MPT, 20) Brooks cites Harbington's "To Roses in the Bosom of Castara," and Carew's "Ask Me No More," and John Hoskins's "Absence." While "a superficial view might dismiss the poem as merely pleasant sophistry, . . . closer reading will show that the development of wit has succeeded in endowing the poem with a sense of personal tenderness and sincerity lacking in the more abstract opening stanzas." (MPT, 23)

Brooks's analysis of wit shows that it serves various uses: precision, concentration, and breaking over the conventional boundaries of the "poetic" for the sake of an increased psychological subtlety or dramatic concentration of effect (MPT, 28). But his final conclusion is that the
most general and important function of wit is the ironical function. The detailed analysis of wit and its ironic function is a crucial part of his theory: it bears close relation to his concept of the poem as organism and that unity of poetic experience which repudiates the "dissociation of sensibility." Brooks develops this point at some length; in fact, it is elaborated throughout his essay on "Wit and High Seriousness." (MPT, 18-38) In brief, his line of thought is this: the metaphor carries the poem; the subject matter, the tone, the ironic contrast, the functions of intellect, imagination, and emotions are all concentrated in and upon the metaphor. The poem achieves itself by the ironic contemplation exercised by the imagination upon the metaphor. Indeed, the imagination is what activates the metaphor, both when it is projected by the poet and when it is grasped by the reader. But wit suffered depreciation when, following the lead of Hobbes and his simplified explanation of the mind, men placed primary emphasis upon analysis and classification. "There was a tendency to departmentalize the mind, separating into neat categories the emotional and the intellectual, the serious and the frivolous, the dignified and the mean, the 'poetic' and the 'nonpoetic.'" (MPT, 32) This led people away from that ironic contemplation which provides a simultaneous presentation of conflicting elements. In consequence, a dichotomy resulted which fragmented the psychological unity of poetic experience. This, in effect, destroyed the ironic function of wit: man was no longer able to be true to the
contradictions which he beheld in himself and in the world about it. As a result, he considered only a partial picture, quite bland and uniform, but lacking the ironic quality of wit. Brooks goes so far as to indulge in the paradox that far from being a playful kind of poetry, it is only the poetry of wit that can insure high seriousness (MPT, 38).

8. The next type of irony identified by Brooks hardly needs explanation: it is the **irony of understatement**. The chief practitioner of this type of irony cited by Brooks is Robert Frost. This irony of understatement comes through as the embodiment of the New England character; the dry and laconic elements blend with the whimsical and genial in such a way that makes him uneasy with hyperbole. "He prefers to use understatement to risking possible overstatement." (MPT, 111) W. H. Auden's "The Dance of Death" exemplifies "the sense of grim understatement native to the tradition of Old English poetry," (MPT, 127) In understatement, the psychological verve is minimal, emotion is almost absent. Perhaps this is why in one place Brooks distinguishes understatement from irony, rather than consider it a type of irony (MPT, 82).

9. The term "Romantic irony" goes back to Tieck and was practiced most notably by Jean-Paul Richter and Heinrich Heine, but was taken over and elaborated by Brooks. The

---

phrase occurs in Brooks's treatment of Tate's distinction between a "Platonic" or "allegorical" poetry and the poetry of the imagination. The allegorical deals with action, the Platonic with contemplation. Romantic irony turns out to be a negative phase of Platonic poetry: "a self-pitying disillusionment with the positive optimism" to be found in the cheerful, positive Platonism. The Romantic appeals to "a set of fictitious 'explanations,' by means of rhetoric, more congenial to his unscientific temper." (MPT, 46f.)

The concept of Romantic irony is clear and strong in Brooks's theory, but expresses a quality which he considers undesirable. It is the polemic tension set up by the romantic against science, either in defiance or disillusionment (MPT, 47, 91). An illustration is to be found in the last scene of MacLeish's play Panic. The protagonist McGafferty lacks character and manliness in his hubris. His is a hurt pride, a private and irrelevant pride, insufficient and therefore meaningless in the tragic sense. The irony here is romantic irony, not tragic irony (MPT, 121). In the regional literature of William Butler Yeats and that of Southern writers, Brooks finds a "split between the inner romantic self and the outer impersonal world." The inner self experiences "romantic anarchy" while the outer world is confronted with "some kind of faceless and anonymous communism." (E-105, a change of time, a personal comment, or a violently contradictory sentiment." Ibid., p. 407.)
Again, in MacLeish's *Conquistador* the imagery piles up items in juxtaposition with an effect of "reverie, not drama; the final effect pathos, not tragedy." *(MPT, 119)*

Romantic irony, to be sure, at times involves drama; but it is such that sentiment overrules reason. While it may be drama, it could never be tragedy. Tragedy requires a control of sentiment and a direction of the hero's powers so that the course of action may be seen not as haphazard but as directed. The hero must be self-directed in order to show his responsibility in the fate that befalls him. His interaction with forces about him provides that tension which yields an irony which is our next category: tragic irony.

10. The concept of tragic irony requires careful study for its proper understanding. In the first place, Brooks nowhere attempts to define the term. Most of the time he uses it obliquely and implicitly. The term occurs not only in the analysis of tragedy properly so called, that is, tragic drama, but in many other pieces of literature which involve tragic elements even though their over-all character is non-tragic. It is above all tragic irony "which maintains an equilibrium between opposing attitudes, . . . which acts as a stabilizing force." *(MPT, 121)* Both tragedy and irony must be present in their proper form to achieve tragic irony. Misfortune alone does not make tragedy, no more than mere contrast constitutes irony. The two terms, however, are highly complementary: no other dramatic quality so gives tragedy its true character as irony, just as there...
is no irony so true to the name as that which is tragic.

For present purposes it is necessary to adopt some fundamental concept of tragedy to serve as a frame of reference. From a standard source like the excellent essay of Oscar Mandel, *A Definition of Tragedy* (New York, 1961), one may derive many and diverse views of tragedy. Mandel has collected a wide range of statements on the subject. But in order to fix a focal point upon Brooks's tragic irony, I would like to cite two contrasting statements on tragedy: the first from Mrs. Suzanne Langer, the second from F. W. J. von Schelling. In her *Feeling and Form*, Mrs. Langer says:

"The big unfolding of feeling in the organic, personal pattern of human life, rising, growing, accomplishing destiny and meeting doom—that is tragedy."\(^6\) This statement could never pass for a definition of tragedy. Possibly Mrs. Langer did not intend it to serve that purpose. But even as a descriptive statement it is faulty on more than one score: sentimentalism (i.e., exaggerated sentiment), banality, and a lack of that binding element which gives tragedy muscle and sinew: irony. Mere rise and fall, even in the catastrophic proportions of accomplishing destiny and meeting doom, do not constitute tragedy.\(^7\) Two things at least are

\(^6\)P. 366 (New York, 1953).

\(^7\)"The necessity for a sudden reversal or catastrophe in the fortunes of the hero (Aristotle's *peripety*, which, he said, is found in all true tragedy) means that the fourth form of irony (form d) is almost inevitable. *Oedipus Rex* piles irony on irony." O'Connor, p. 408.
lacking here: the determined struggle of the protagonist and the ambivalent situation of his denouement. There must be not simply a downfall, but failure; a fall where there could have been success. It is this ironic dilemma above all that makes tragedy the poignant, cathartic, humanly gripping experience that it is. Contrast with Mrs. Langer's statement the following from F. W. J. von Schelling: "What matters in tragedy is a real conflict of freedom in the subject and necessity as objective; which conflict of freedom does not end with the defeat of one or the other, but with the simultaneous appearance in complete indifference, and victory and defeat of both."^8 The phase "complete indifference" is not to be taken as something wholly neutral or passive, as it might seem to indicate. In Schelling's concept of tragedy (Mandel tells us) indifference is a technical term for the Absolute. The subject and object—freedom and necessity—are its arms, which the protagonists and antagonists make concrete.\(^9\) Thus this "complete indifference" which at first seemed utterly passive is actually a reconciling master-control which balances the tensions of the tragedy. On the whole, Schelling's concept of tragedy coincides with that of Brooks, and this can be verified with specific citations: there is, first of all, the human


\(^9\)Mandel, p. 13.
struggle involving fundamental elements (freedom and necessity) engaged in serious issues (a real conflict). Brooks is in accord: "Tragedy deals with ultimates"; it is a "means of dramatizing the ultimate oneness of man." (E-85-4, 3). Further, there is in Schelling that irony so typical of Brooks: "... the simultaneous appearance in complete indifference, and victory and defeat of both." These phrases tie in well with Brooks's interest in ironic elements of action and passion, of initiative and suffering (i.e., being acted upon) so evident in Oedipus and Hamlet. Referring to such tragedies as Hamlet, Samson Agonistes, and The Brothers Karamazov, Brooks notes that "all these works deal with the meaning of suffering, and in none of them does the hero merely passively endure." (E-85-4) Brooks, like Eliot in his Murder in the Cathedral, is fascinated by the alternate roles of action and suffering or passion assumed by the protagonist. He quotes Milton's words on Samson: "then vigorous most / When most unactive deem'd," as applicable to Becket also, "suffering in action." Oedipus is another case in point (E-85-4f.). But the action is never merely imposed, nor for that matter is the suffering. The tragic hero incurs it by his own decision, or at least he wills to accept it as pertaining to the nature of things, including his own deepest nature (E-85-5). In this idea Brooks and Schelling agree on a real conflict, generated by a self-undertaken action.

But "the acceptance is not a weary submission: the tragic hero is possessed of tremendous vitality." (E-85-5)
This vitality springs from a desire of knowledge, especially of self-knowledge. It is here, I think, that the roots of tragic irony lie: not in the dramatic rise and fall (as Langer would have it), nor simply in the action of pride following upon the suffering of failure. Rather, it is something psychological: it is the awareness, the excruciating and paradoxical awareness of what-is in the presence of the contemplated what-might-have-been. As Brooks puts it: "the damning vision that costs the eyes themselves, as with Oedipus." (E-85-6) The vision may be damning; yet it yields the truth, "the truth that is the hardest to come by, truth about the ultimate nature of man." (E-85-6) This conflict, this vision, must be dramatized so as to externalize it and render it apprehensible to the reader or audience, else it remains within the mind of the protagonist and cannot be shared. According to Brooks, "In tragedy a conflict is set up within the mind of the auditor himself—a conflict between the impulse to condemn the protagonist as he breaks the moral laws in which the audience believes, and the impulse to sympathize with him in his struggle." (MPT, 205) This is one of the few times that Brooks engages in an analysis of what takes place in the reader's mind. Usually his critique is more objective, directed at the poem (or drama) itself, rather than the beholder. An excessive regard for the viewer or audience could lead to impressionism, which is definitely not Brooks's approach. Actually, what he is speaking of here is the effect of the tragedy rather than its actual nature.
The strong, almost stoic character of Schelling's tragedy is mirrored in Brooks's rejection of pathos as the telling factor. Brooks's war on sentimentalism and Romanticism is carried into this area as he reminds modern dramatists that tragedy is something quite other than pathos (MPT, 205).

Finally, it should be noted that tragic irony does not require a full-length tragedy (drama or poem) for its existence. It is sometimes present in shorter pieces. Instances abound in Modern Poetry and the Tradition as well as Brooks's articles on Southern literature where the poems of Ransom, Tate, and Warren are given in illustration of tragic irony. To cite only one: Warren's "Letter from a Coward to a Hero." (MPT, 85)

11. Related to tragic irony but having a character of its own is what Brooks calls Sophoclean irony (MPT, 167). It consists in that paradox so familiar to us from Oedipus: the more the protagonist seeks to free himself by the pursuit of truth and self-knowledge, the more he involves himself in self-condemnation. It is the type of situation that Brooks calls "ironic renewal." (E-121-102) It is that incongruity which all tragedy involves. "There can be no tragedy, not even drama, if the fate of the protagonist is expected and predictable, the most natural thing in the world. We must feel that it is inappropriate, upsetting, incongruous." (MPT, 205) The term "Sophoclean irony" occurs in his analysis of The Waste Land. In addition to the surface irony consisting in the contrast between the ancient use of the
Tarot cards and Madame Sosostris's use of them there is "Sophoclean Irony" in that her fortune telling, which neither she nor the twentieth-century audience believe in, "becomes true as the poem develops, true in a sense in which Madame Sosostris does not think it true." (MPT, 167) This is something quite different from the ironic contemplation consequent upon the protagonist's denouement. This is not so much the contrast of fortune as the reversal of expectation. True, it involves the same elements: what-is and what-might-have-been. But it sees them from a different viewpoint: in anticipation rather than in fulfillment, in becoming rather than in being. Moreover, in Sophoclean irony there is not yet the full impact of the fall; actually the protagonist is still engaged in an upward movement, or at least one that appears to be upward and liberating. But each step brings him farther away from his intended goal rather than closer to it. He is engaged in achieving his own frustration. Thanks to the Chorus in Sophoclean drama, the audience (and the Chorus) are in fuller possession of the Sophoclean irony than the protagonist himself. In fact, his awareness of his plight, being minimal and very gradual, delays the effect of reversal upon his course of action and his mind. For this very reason, the Chorus—and the audience with them—sense more keenly the plight of the protagonist as he goes ahead in his own undoing. The ironic contemplation of this reversal of his status, effected in direct ratio to his exertions to the contrary, is precisely the Sophoclean irony. The
neatness of this irony is in the manner of its performance:

Oedipus is not embarking upon a quest for self-knowledge or knowledge in any general sense. . . . The knowledge he seeks is ad hoc knowledge concerning his identity of Laius's slayer. But imperceptibly this search for specific knowledge turns into self-knowledge and becomes precisely that in the great climactic scene in which Oedipus does finally see who the murderer is and who he is, and in the agony of that knowledge, tears out his own eyes.

(E-130-8)

12. Still other types of irony are the satiric and the sardonic, whose names are self-explanatory. There is satiric irony in the works of MacLeish, such as "Memorial Rain," and the Frescoes (MPT, 121). The customs of men are held up for correction not by direct statement or didactic content but by implied relationships achieved through juxtaposition of ideas. Faulkner's novels are as good examples of satiric irony (E-126, E-127, E-128, E-129). The satiric elements in both Faulkner and MacLeish "go deeper than mere jesting," and have thematic relevance (MPT, 124f.).

13. For sardonic irony, Brooks cites the poetry of Thomas Hardy, A. E. Houseman, and Gray's Elegy (E-51-730, 731). Rhetorical questions, as in Gray's Elegy, are potent examples: the manner of the asking shows that there is no true question at all. The works of the World War I poets (British and American) are full of sardonic irony. So too is Warren's "History Among the Rocks." After recalling the various ways in which people die in the country of the rocks -- freezing, drowning, the bite of the copperhead among the wheat--the poet goes on to recall skirmishes fought there in the Civil War. But the sardonic element occurs not in the
meaninglessness of war in general—Brooks carefully notes that Warren does not allow his poem to fall into such an easy resolution (MPT, 79). Rather, the death of the young man, clashing as it does with all the natural, living elements about them suggests "that their choice was not an easy one and therefore meaningful and heroic for them." (MPT, 77)

Human powers are so constituted that they not only can go along with nature; they can also defy nature. This is the type of thing one beholds in sardonic irony.

14. The next type of irony is the irony of logic or ironic logic. It is hard to say whether Brooks intends logic or irony as the substratum. The main practitioner is John Donne, and the field of practice is his sonnets. He plays with logic. He teases his poem into a syllogistic form which the reader recognizes for playful sophistry. Donne "reasons" about his love for God, or his claims to God's love. Yet it is all tongue-in-cheek. The proofs advanced are not real logic, but they wear the robes of logic. It is the type of thing one finds in Lear's Fool and Hamlet's madness. The fact that it is employed to justify illogical positions betrays its alien character. There is a great show of logic, but it is clownish; the carrying force is a deeper sense underlying the caprices. The interplay of the real and the pretended establishes the irony of logic (WWU, 211, 212).

15. Our next category is especially interesting because at first sight it does not seem a type of irony at
all, yet upon examination it reveals a strong degree of irony. It is the irony of the pastoral. It occurs in both poetic and non-poetic pastoral literature. Brooks notes that Empson's title *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London, 1950) may have beguiled even the well-trained American graduate student into expecting quite a different type of subject matter from that which the essays actually contain (E-38-215). Rather than the typical "shepherd poems" of Elizabethan times, Empson's topics are a double plot, a Shakespeare sonnet, something from *The Beggar's Opera*, and even a chapter on *Alice in Wonderland*. Where is the pastoral? Brooks explains: "Empson's pastoral is a mode, a specialization of irony, an inner thing." (E-38-215) The classification is not playful; on the contrary, it is careful and academic. The pastoral mode involves something more essential than shepherds and their lasses tripping it on the green. It is not subject matter but a philosophy of life that specified the genre. Frank Kermode makes this clear in his introductory chapter, "Proletarian Literature," in *English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell*. He makes the pastoral consist not in its rural subject matter but in the contrast between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban. There is the "natural" life of the country and the "artificial product," the city. There is the animosity between the townsman and the countryman. There is the "primitive" style of the rural area in contrast to the polite society of the urban. At times the peasant is foil to the court poet. The pastoral,
then, depends upon an opposition between the simple, or natural, and the cultivated.¹⁰

Brooks's treatment of "American Innocence" (E-134), a study of Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner, is all in the pastoral mode. We are accustomed to regard innocence and beauty as gifts of nature, rather than as products of custom and ceremony, for we think of custom and ceremony as elements that corrupt. Yet ironically custom and ceremony can uphold and protect innocence and beauty, while the primitive individual (Nick Carraway, Gatsby, Sutpen, etc.) who attempts to pull himself up by his own bootstraps suffers from a deformity of an over-developed will. His native innocence becomes a murderous drive. In such a pastoral mode the irony is multiple.

Empson finds pastoral irony in political life, in the contrast between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. Strong overtones of this type are to be found in Gray's Elegy, an excellent illustration of pastoral irony (WWU, "Gray's Storied Urn," esp. pp. 108-114). The bourgeois ideology is in vibrant contrast to the duress imposed by the nobility. The struggle is not only that of an individual against a class, or even of class-against-class. An attack from one side is not enough. There must be an interaction of the two, a clash of classes—at least in ideas if not in action. The dramatic conflict, not the mere presence of the rural and

¹⁰Kermode, pp. 14ff.
the urban, makes the pastoral mode a form of irony.

The old pastorals simply played upon the relation between rich and poor. A sophisticated society later injected a satiric note involving various types: shepherds standing for bishops—a pun on the name and office of pastor; Death, in skeletal agility, ironically taunting the living; and the clown, purporting to be the fool, becoming the bearer of wisdom. Shakespeare's fools, in the main, are excellent examples. All these are personifications of pastoral irony. Finally, coming to the ironies of justice and injustice in law courts, of guilty judges and innocent plaintiffs condemned, there are abundant examples of social irony in literature. Witness Albert Camus's Judge-penitent in The Fall.

Thus the irony of the pastoral resolves itself into a kind of class contrast, a social satire, and even "poetic statements of human waste and limitation." The genre is evidently universal and has earned its place among the types of irony. It is found in classical literature and is also present in as recent an author as William Faulkner. The ethnic irony of the deep South is best classified, thinks Brooks, as pastoral irony. The tone of "The Hamlet" is one of irony and wonder, as is also that of "Light in August" and "As I Lay Dying." But Brooks contrasts Faulkner's pastoral mode with Wordsworth's, as being more earthy and

11Empson, p. 19.
more violent than the latter's (E-132-605). The tone of social irony is more like that of Swift's in *Gulliver's Travels*: the scene is stylized and formalized, yet in detail is almost microscopic. The pastoral irony here is anti-romantic and satirical.

16. The next type of irony concerns a theme that has never ceased to fascinate man and to win a place in his literature: the irony of time. This is a multiple irony, including the plain contrast of past, present, and future; the existential balance of the present between the past and future; and also the illusions of swiftness and slowness with which time goes by. Even the Psalmist was intrigued by the contractability of time when he saw that a thousand years were like a day in God's sight. Probably no two non-existents have been more written about than the past and the future. Yet whatever is said about them must be said in their ironic mid-point: the present. The fascination with time relationships in Proust, Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner has provided contemporary critics with a wealth of material for comment. In Eliot's *Waste Land*, Brooks calls the "ironic contrasts of the glorious past and the sordid present . . . the irony of the poem at its most superficial level." (MPT, 166) Yet this "superficial" irony merits over a page and a half of Brooks's discussion (MPT, 166-168). In *The Waste Land* the time irony is developed by means of juxtaposition of characters out of historical context: Madame Sosostris of the twentieth-century, with her medieval Tarot cards, and
Tiresias of Grecian legend, etc. Upon this framework is an offshoot of what Brooks calls "Sophoclean irony" (MPT, 167), as the fortune telling, taken by a twentieth-century reader as so much spoofing, ironically becomes true as the poem develops. Gray's Elegy is another fertile source of examples of irony of time. The Elegy, like The Waste Land, is a tissue of allusions and half-allusions (WWU, 107). The irony of time is implicit in every line: opportunity and its lack, the use and non-use of time, the ages of man depicted in detailed imagery, all bespeak the silent contrasts of life under the aspect of time. Similarly, Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears," is not just a sentimental reverie provoked by nostalgia; its clinching power lies in the contrast of time. The tears are provoked by a keen awareness of the incongruous image of the past as beheld in the present: "So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more," is the refrain concluding each stanza. A poignancy strikes the beholder in the ironic contemplation of time (WWU, 167-177).

In his preface to John Hazard Wildman's book of poems, Sun on the Night—a title which itself involves irony of time—Brooks notes how the sense of place in those poems dealing with New Orleans evokes the timeless character of life, history, and religion: the city is at once old and new (E-115-8). Similarly, the contrasts of space and size involved in the imagery of the violet and the star in the Lucy poems of Wordsworth evoke implicitly an irony of time because of the contrasting ages of the items compared.
(E-51-736; E-135-490). The same can be said of the Immortality Ode (WWU-125ff.). In John Donne's "The Good Morrow" and "The Canonization," wherein the vast world and the lover's eyes in which it rests are set up as polar contrasts, there is a spatial-temporal irony. In both Donne and Wordsworth, the poet-lover sees his girl, whom he considered untouchable by years, "caught up helplessly into the empty whirl of the earth which measures and makes time." (E-51-736) Brooks's later use of the Wordsworth poems as examples of irony tempers his early statements (in WWU) on the subject (see E-51-736; E-135-490f.). Nevertheless, he does not yield on the point that the Lucy poems are charged with irony. Moreover, it is on the basis of their containing irony of time that Brooks sees the total unity of the poems of both Donne and Wordsworth.

17. Brooks discusses, finally, an irony of religion. This type occurs in two forms: the contrast between the natural and the supernatural, on the one hand, and the contrast between religion and its absence or neglect, on the other. In Wildman's poems about New Orleans and its heavenly patroness, the Virgin Mary, Brooks notes the irony between devotion and lack of devotion among the citizens. "The candle flames on the altar in the little poem called 'Pentecost' find no answering flames in the congregation." (E-115-7) The closest response seems to be "the modish pink that blooms from the ladies' fertile hats." (E-115-7) An added irony is that even in the secular poems the reverent element
or sensibility of the religious poems comes through (E-115-7).

Again, Brooks notes a peculiar irony in Bishop Corbet's attitude toward religion in the poem "The Fairies' Farewell." It is a complex attitude: while not inconsistent with piety, it would definitely "cause alarm to the superstitiously pious." (E-44-383) The intermingling of abbeys and housewives' kitchens, fairies and Catholicism, makes for interesting religious irony. The irony is heightened by the fact that Bishop Corbet himself has given credence to the fairies and to Christian revelation, both, as sources of supernatural aid. In Paradise Lost, the juxtaposition of God and his creatures, the solemn and the ludicrous, the holy and the profane in the war in heaven, is an unending flow of religious irony. The poetry rides upon kaleidoscopic opposites.

The contrasts of God and not-God, God alive and God now dead, etc., are concepts Brooks dwells upon in his analysis of The Waste Land. This and several other of Eliot's poems (Murder in the Cathedral, Ash Wednesday, Choruses from the Rock) are replete with ironies involving contraries in religion. Man's suspension between belief and disbelief, between anxiety and peace, between salvation and damnation, between life and death, are all forms of the irony of religion (see MPT, 136-172, Brooks's analysis of The Waste Land). The citations of Scripture and sacred materials from Dante, mixed in with secular and vulgar scenes intensify the irony.
The whole theme of The Hidden God: Studies in Hemingway, Faulkner, Yeats, Eliot, and Warren (1963) is that of religious irony, an irony heightened by the inclusion of authors Christian, non-Christian, or without any religious commitment (B-22-vii). The five authors included represent perhaps some of the best efforts in the twentieth century to express Man's groping for God, or his blind wanderings without Him: everything from Hemingway's crass sensualism and Yeats's myth, to Faulkner's ethnic approach and Eliot's Christian anabasis. The role of poetry in helping man to solve his problems by better understanding himself may be part of the physical reality symbolically represented in the quickening rain yearned for by the protagonist in The Waste Land (E-135-500). Eliot exemplifies a definite Christian commitment, but other poets respond variously: Robert Frost seeking "a broken goblet in some lost township in Vermont to dip into the immemorial stream," while Wallace Stevens and many moderns "tend to find in the individual's own imagination the healing waters which will redeem a world of drab mediocrity and spiritual despair." (E-135-488)

4. The Role of Metaphor

No two elements in Brooks's theory are so intimately related as irony and metaphor. If "the language of poetry is the language of paradox" (WWU, 3), "the essence of poetry is metaphor." (WWU, 248) Brooks endorses Robert Frost's statement that poetry is essentially metaphor (E-79-133).
He calls it "the simplest but surely the most essential device of poetry." (E-131-6) When requested by the Kenyon Review to contribute his Credo of criticism to a series by leading American critics, Brooks included among some ten "articles of faith" this one: "That literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic." (E-70-72) The very title of The Well Wrought Urn was prompted by his belief that in Donne's "Canonization" "the poem itself is the well-wrought urn." (WWU, 17)

The centrality of metaphor is to be found in T. E. Hulme and in those who have followed Hulme concerning the essence of poetry: Eliot, Auden, Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, Winters, and Austin Warren (E-79-134). Their similarity lies in their line of approach, in seeing a mutual relation of image to thought rather than a hierarchical pre-eminence of thought over image.

Brooks rejects the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century account of metaphor in terms of illustration and decoration. Illustration implies the concrete embodiment of truth in sense imagery, decoration a kind of rhetorical gilding. In either case metaphor is treated "as a mere surrogate, an alternate way of saying something, not the necessary and inevitable way." (E-79-133) It is principally on the basis of metaphor that the metaphysical and the modern poets differ from the neo-classical and romantic (MPT, 11).

But if "poetry is essentially metaphor, the metaphor is finally analogical rather than logical." (WWU, 248) This
means that it is in the very nature of metaphor to state indirectly or obliquely the truth it bears. Metaphor proceeds by way of indirection rather than by direct statement. The fusion of elements which the imagination achieves in metaphor is the work of creative intuition: "It apparently violates science and common sense; it welds together the discordant and the contradictory." Following Coleridge's concept of the function of imagination, Brooks observes how "it reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities, etc." (WWU, 18)

Among critics who utilized the form-and-content division of analysis, the tendency was to divide metaphor into its decorative and functional aspects. Brooks, however, sees in metaphor a relationship similar to that of cells in a living organism (E-92-62f.). In fact, it is precisely to the divisive approach to metaphor that Brooks assigns the misconception of metaphor. Whatever has been said erroneously about it, whenever critics have failed to discern metaphor for what it really is—and hence its essential relationship to poetry itself—the result has been a minimizing of metaphor to a subordinate role in the poem.

What, then, is Brooks's concept of metaphor? In his address at the Ontario Educational Association convention (April, 1963), he referred to W. B. Stanford's interesting explanation of metaphor in terms of the old stereopticon which, utilizing two photographs, each of the same object but taken from a slightly different angle, caused the viewer
to see, not two pictures but one, "a picture that miraculously had a depth not possessed by either of the 'flat' views printed on the card." (E-131-6) In the case of poetry, the function performed by metaphor as such is not the conveying of knowledge, nor embellishment, nor even a simultaneous communication of these two elements. Rather, it is the imagination's producing from two known referents (one of which at least is a concrete, sense image) a third thing: the blossoming of the metaphor, so to speak. This recent statement is but a reiteration of Brooks's thought from his earliest writings on metaphor, such as the articles in The Southern Review on "Three Revolutions in Poetry" (E-13) and a revised presentation of same in "Metaphor and the Tradition." (MPT, 1-17)

Metaphor proceeds by way of indirection, being the oblique focal point arrived at, by the imagination, from the contemplation of two objects which the poet presents as somehow related to each other. Metaphor creates a fusion of opposites; it reconciles opposites (WWU, 18). Not only is it indirect; it is functional and structural: it gives the poem its being and form. "It is the poem in the structural sense." (MPT, 15) The interrelation of parts and their relative position is determined by the metaphor. The poetic experience rides upon the relationship established between the referents. The very tone of the metaphor is the tone of the poem (MPT, 95; WWU, 102; E-131-10f.). Further, the relationship in metaphor is ironic: it is unexpected and
paradoxical (WWU, 102). The two items compared or juxtaposed in a metaphor may not readily seem related. Recall the metaphysical conceit of the seventeenth-century poets. This spark of freshness, of extraordinariness, gives metaphor its vitality. To employ readily componable elements would be to make a combination that lacks the stuff of poetry.

From what has just been said follows the next characteristic of metaphor: its dynamic quality. Metaphor is not static; it is kinetic. Metaphor does not simply exist; it happens. And a good metaphor "happens" each time the poem is read. This dynamic quality of metaphor is intimately bound up with "dramatic tension and with the fusion of thought and emotion." (E-72-2) Dramatic quality replaces mere statement; its lack can account for the failure of a poem (UP, 20, 135). Housman is successful because he dramatizes the theme of his poem (E-27-106). Arnold Stein refuses to substitute logical judgment for dramatic experience (E-81-640). Milton's presentation of Satan comes off well because it is done dramatically (E-72-17). Southern writers have achieved their best successes when they saw sharply and apprehended dramatically basic human problems (E-31-9). In fact, for Brooks, "literature is ultimately a dramatization of a human situation, not a formula for action." (E-105-37) He recommends the use of the concrete and the dramatic in teaching the novel (E-101-206). Ronald Crane approvingly notes Brooks's comparing a poem to a play, a drama. (Critics and Criticism (Chicago, 1952), p. 94,
Brooks's concept of metaphor can be further explained in terms of the relationship of imagery, symbolism, and theme to metaphor. There is a neat progression here. First, there is **imagery**: it provides the basic elements, the referents of metaphor. Over and over Brooks insists upon concrete detail in imagery. "The general and universal are not seized upon by abstraction but got at through the concrete and the particular." (E-70-72) Tragedy requires concreteness to convey "the dramatic ambiguity, the irony, the resolution through the struggle." (MPT, 218) He notes that concrete detail is one of the strong traits of Faulkner and the other Southern writers in making their imagery effective (E-105, E-101-206; E-126-711). The richness of detail prevents the story from becoming a transparent allegory (E-132-603, 610). Imagery, then, in all its clear detail, is the basic component of the metaphor. **Symbolism** is the relationship achieved by a metaphor. It is one remove from imagery. It builds upon the basis established by imagery to extend itself beyond metaphor. Symbols rise out of metaphors. "The metaphor becomes a symbol," says Urban in his *Language and Reality*, "when by means of it we embody an ideal content not otherwise expressible." (Cited in WWU, 260f.) Symbol is an abstract representation which involves the use of concrete imagery to convey a further connotation; but this imagery must be first put in metaphorical form to serve the purpose of symbolism. In this way, metaphor becomes the
basic unit or constituent element of symbol, much as imagery is of metaphor. Brooks is in agreement with Urban's "metaphor as symbol," only he chooses to employ the term "functional metaphor" to convey the same idea. It is by means of symbol that literature manages to relate itself to life. The humanistic function of letters is achieved by means of a special kind of mirror--one that is a lens or prism--to give a particular focal character, an effect achieved by the selective and creative eye of the poet's imagination. Poetry speaks of life not by scientific statement, but essentially by metaphor. Metaphor in turn creates symbol. Even myth is included among the symbolic and non-scientific modes of expression which modern poetry has rehabilitated (E-120-102; E-70-72). Theme is the next item in this progression: it is the unifier of a set of symbols. It interrelates the symbols which occur in a given work; or better, the given symbols are so interrelated as to yield the theme. At times, theme may be the full development and expansion of a single symbol. Here again both tone and concrete detail have their place: "Theme in a genuine poem does not confront us as abstraction." (E-51-740) Theme becomes a part of the reality in which we live by "finding its proper symbol, defined and refined by the participating metaphors." (E-51-740) Brooks observes how Pope's themes running through The Rape of the Lock are all of a type in each of several sets of metaphors; thus they establish motifs (WWU, 85). In Housman's poetry, the theme is dramatized by sharp contrasts, vitalized by
means of metaphor (E-27-106). "Milton's sun simile (in P.L., IV, 32-41) is tightly integrated with the theme of the poem. It is not loosely decorative." (E-72-11)

Now the structural hierarchy of Brooks's analysis is visible: theme builds upon symbol, as symbol builds upon metaphor, as metaphor builds upon image. Theme is a "many-sided, three-dimensioned thing," . . . "an insight rooted in and growing out of concrete experience." (E-72-741)

5. The Function of the Poet

It is hard to imagine a practicing critic who would not take up sooner or later the question, "What is a poet and what is his function?" The query naturally suggests itself as a companion to an inquiry into the nature of poetry and the quality of given poems. Wordsworth's question and reply in his "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads has become a classic: "What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility," etc.

How does Brooks answer these questions? Brooks regards a poet primarily as a maker: "the poet is most truthfully described as a poietes or maker, not as an expositor or communicator." (WWU, 75) In this Brooks sets himself apart from those critics, such as F. L. Lucas and Max Eastman, who regard poetry as communication. This is not to say that poetry does not communicate something. A whole chapter is
devoted in answer to "What Does Poetry Communicate?" (WWU, 67-79) Rather, Brooks's point here is that the essence of poetry does not reside in communication; hence, the poet as such is not (primarily, at least) a communicator. Again, Brooks's position is different, on the one hand, from that of Sparrow, who is looking for poetry that makes a statement and, on the other hand, from that of Eastman, who is looking for poetry that does not make a statement but is rather a moment of pure realization (E-15-437).

What does Brooks's poet make? How does he go about doing it? The poet must develop symbols and establish relationships among them; he is forced by his instrument into irony and paradox; he must set a tone in his poem; he must reduce heterogeneous experience to some order. In handling this experience, he must respect its concreteness sufficiently so that he does not reduce it to abstraction (E-14-395). He must employ imagination to effect unity in heterogeneity, without destroying incongruity of detail. An easy solution, or the annihilation of opposites, is not desirable. The poet must be able to create a tight structure with components organically related and vitally vibrant in their ironic tension. And on what principle are these disparate items played off against each other? Partly by association, partly by juxtaposition; but such as not to nullify discordant elements (E-14-395f.).

In The Well Wrought Urn (pp. 212-214) Brooks lists and explains the tasks of the poet: he must analyze his
experience and choose ambiguity and paradox to express it rather than plain, discursive simplicity; he must dramatize his experience, making the poem really experience and not simply a statement about experience. This dramatization "involves, necessarily, ironic shock and wonder." (WWU, 213) The poet must not merely "spice it up"; he must use real ambiguity or paradox to create the ironic tension. Conventional assertion is not enough. "His task is finally to unify experience." (WWU, 212)

With Hulme, Eliot, and Pound, Brooks maintains that the poem is an artifact, something made, a construction. The poet, then, is the artificer, the maker, the constructor. "His art is more than an outpouring of personality." (E-92-65) Rather, it is the process of composition which he initiates and regulates. He employs a material—language—to fashion his poem. The material may offer resistance, in which case the resistance may lead to discoveries. The ensuing poem becomes an incarnate symbolism. Both Yeats and Tate speak of the ideal metaphor as that which wells up from human experience without the poet's opinions intruding. What the poet creates is "a simulacrum of reality," "a portion of the world of experience as carried and valued by a human being." (E-92-68f.) Thus, the poet's making is by way of imitation, the imitation of nature. His manner of imitation is personal: it is dictated by his individual talent.

When Brooks speaks of the poet as maker, he is all the while respectful of "the mystery of creation" which
"will always remain a mystery." (E-105-37) **Poiesis** is a human function and as such is personal, inviolable, and integral. The poetic creation reflects the genius and dignity of the poet as a human being. Yet Brooks is well aware that this poet, as individual and singular as he may be, does not come to full stature without the cooperative activity of many factors such as go to make up any human person. He includes in his list of influences a world of moral choices, including difficult choices. There is also the social engagement of the poet; the ivory tower tends to produce hallucinations rather than genuine emotion. Finally, there is the element of human interest, not to be superseded by "impersonal social and political forces." (E-105-37) The poet, the maker, must have a well-integrated personality whence wholesome creations can arise. His vision and his work must show a concern for history as well as for human nature, for tradition as well as his immediate milieu. Tradition gives background, tone, setting, dimension, and a concrete environment in which the poet operates (E-105-37).

Thus far the poet's function has been expressed in positive terms. But certain defects or sins must be avoided if he is to fulfill his task well. Brooks regards as failures in coherence the exploitation of "the sentimental, the merely sensational, the monstrous, and in general all obfuscations of human perception and action." (E-92-71) One may add to such faults "clinical and pornographic presentations." (E-92-71) The poet must pay due respect to the period in which
his poem or drama is set: "The play must be sociologically sound." (E-92-73) The poet cannot excuse his making an irrational, utterly incongruous, or psychotic portrayal by pleading that the experience or situation he is depicting is irrational, incongruous, or psychotic. In reality he is attempting to justify his incoherent poem on the ground that it mirrors an incoherent experience. This error Yvor Winters labels the "fallacy of imitative form," a condemnation which Brooks endorses (E-92-68).

It may happen that a poet considers himself a revolutionary poet who "foretells a future belief." His position is no better than that of "the nostalgic poet who expresses the belief of the past. Both poets find their problem in relating the belief to the unbelieving present, and either poet may falsify that position into sentimentality." (E-17-284) This is Brooks writing in 1937, when he was still strongly militant against three things, all of which appear in this quotation: (1), making of a poem the organ of a belief, or requiring of the reader a sharing of the poet's creed; (2) the Marxist tendency of certain poets in the 'thirties; and (3) the abuse of sentimentality. Mention of these helps clarify, by negation, some of his thought on the function of the poet.

6. The Function of the Critic

If the critic quite naturally falls to a discussion of the nature and function of the poet, he all the more
reveals his concept of the critic and his function. At times this may be in self-defense, at times simply a way to clarify and underscore what he is about. Or again, he may be analyzing a fellow critic and wants to show where he and his colleague differ or are alike. But more often than not—and this is true of Brooks—the critic regards his role as that of a creative writer, in which case the result will be a creative essay in literary theory.

Brooks, perhaps more than any other modern critic, weaves his literary theory into the fabric of his criticism. He proclaims the principles of his craft not only when professedly writing theory but even in the act of criticism. In fact, one would not be in error to state that much of Brooks's criticism of particular poems was undertaken and elaborated in illustrations of principles he maintained as literary standards. He himself acknowledges as much. When reviewing Empson's presentation of categories of ambiguity in the famous Seven Types, he declares a preference for a different and simpler order of presentation in which each type of ambiguity would have been treated individually. And he adds, pointedly: "... with no generalizations at all except: 'This can sometimes happen in poetry--look, this poem proves it.'" (E-38-211) One has the impression that much of his criticism is an endeavor to provide examples of his convictions about poetic theory by "using" actual poems. The fact also that Brooks is a critic but not a practicing poet explains in part a different tone and approach than one
finds in such poet-critics as Eliot, Ransom, and Tate.

What, according to Brooks, is the function of the critic and his criticism? The role of "literary criticism is essentially a description and an evaluation of its object." (E-70-72) The critic gives a descriptive analysis of the work and assesses its worth in terms of value judgment. The description is principally a linguistic analysis involving close textual reading (E-63-46). The linguistic phase of Brooks's ideal critic places him in company with Richards, Empson, and Burke, while the note of value judgments aligns him with Winters, Tate, and Ransom. Elsewhere Brooks lists three operations of the critic: (1) to give close textual reading without bias; (2) to put a reader in possession of a work of art; and (3) to recover (i.e., re-discover) poets and poetry (E-63-46). Very much is implied, both positively and negatively, in positing close textual reading as the critic's first function. Obviously this is an analytic approach: it deals with parts of the whole. But the aim is not so much to dissect the work as to heighten understanding and appreciation of its individual parts. Close textual reading is what French critics called explication de texte, which Brooks said consisted in reading the poem itself instead of talking about the poem (WWU, 199). The secret is "to contemplate the poem itself as a poem." (MPT, 136) The close reading is also a linguistic approach. It aims at ascertaining the meanings of words and phrases as they appear in the poem. In its furthest removes, it
includes word study, etymology, semantics, sound patterns, metaphor and symbol—but all of these seen in their proper order and interrelation, lest the unity and integrity of the poem suffer. For "the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity." (E-70-72) This is a strong affirmation. One might have expected Brooks to say the primary concern is with the discovery and analysis of irony or paradox, or of metaphor—since poetry is essentially metaphor, and the language of poetry is the language of paradox. Actually, there is no inconsistency here, since the ironic elements and the paradoxes are what make a poem unified. The critic must contemplate "the whole that the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole." (E-70-72)

Here one must recall all that Brooks has said about the unity of the poem, about the poem as organism, and about the four kinds of dualism that Brooks considers inimical to unity. This is part of his Credo: "That in a successful work, form and content cannot be separated. That form is meaning." Involved in the problem of unity is the critic's obligation to study the poem as a poem. This stipulation is one of Brooks's most repeated norms. (See WWU, pp. 215-217; E-92-31, 78; LC, 155; E-42-325; E-38-209; E-42-325; E-49-699; E-62-17; E-73-45; E-70-74; E-81-640, 643; E-121-98, 102, 108, 112f.; etc.)

Brooks has further delineated the critic's function in his statements in defense of the New Criticism. In reply
to Darrel Abel he clarifies the role of the intellect and the aims of criticism:

1. The criticism does not propose to substitute for the poem.

2. It does not pretend to constitute an expression of the critic's own emotional response to the poem.

3. It does not propose to "explain away the magic" of the poem. A good poem need not fear having its magic explained away.

4. It does not propose to "intellectualize" the poem unless talking about it as carefully and sensitively as possible constitutes intellectualization.

5. It does not propose to represent the process by which the poet worked out the poem or to constitute a formula by which other such poems might be written.

Brooks cautions against the danger of the critic's insistence upon finding the poet's intention within a poem. The fact that it is sometimes difficult to discern the poet's intention does not give the critic the right to read anything that he wants into a poem.

The study of the poem as poem implies the avoidance of other errors besides dualism. Here we meet the New Critic's lists of heresies and fallacies. There is first of all the intentional fallacy, the effort to interpret the mind of the poet rather than his work. This tendency was common in textbook criticism of the thirties, about the time when Brooks began his teaching career. It was one of the trends he felt obligated to correct, and spoke strongly against it. His analysis of Yeats's "Among School Children" shows his...
disparagement of those critics who are overly concerned about the significance of Maud Gonne in Yeats's life (WWU, 183), or about the life history of the dancer in the famous last line, "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" (WWU, 191) Even as late as 1951 he felt that cutting criticism loose from its author and his life as a man may seem "bloodless and hollow for the typical professor in the graduate school where the study of literature is still primarily a study of the ideas and personality of the author as revealed in his letters, his diaries, and the recorded conversations of his friends." (E-70-73) In his lecture "The Poem as Organism" (1940), in an effort to establish some criteria as to "what a poem is saying," he noted that not in every case is the problem solved by a statement from the poet as to his meaning. His poem may be ambiguous, and variant readings can be argued, each with justification, despite the author's admitted intent. Donald Stauffer's criticism to the effect that Brooks in his analysis of Wordsworth's "On Westminster Bridge" had overlooked some related evidence in The Prelude led Brooks to assert that the critic must not "confound the protagonist of the poem with the poet, and the experience of the poem as an aesthetic structure, with the author's personal experience." (WWU, 220) As previously noted, Brooks does not rule out entirely the aid afforded by biographical data, but he does stress concentration upon the work under consideration.

Brooks's teaching experience set him counter to another academic trend prevalent in textbooks of poetry: the
heresy of paraphrase, that is, the tendency to render "the meaning of the poem" in a prose statement. Here again one must distinguish between what Brooks concedes and what he denies. Naturally, a critic will restate portions of a poem (words, lines, ideas, even metaphors) in the course of his analysis. And he will do so quite frankly, to bring out and emphasize certain features, meanings, etc. Brooks has no objection here. But the capable critic, says Brooks, understands what he is doing when he paraphrases. He does not claim for his paraphrase a one-to-one ratio with the poem itself. He respects the poem as containing its meaning as only the poem itself can. Brooks believes that any good poem sets up a resistance against all attempts to paraphrase it. The falsity of such a technique lies in the claim that a prose paraphrase gives the "meaning" of the poem; this can be had only in the poem itself. The nature of poetic truth precludes an alien existence. Had the poet thought he could express his poem otherwise, he would have adopted that other form. His preference for the poem as it is shows the unique character of the poem. Brooks allows room for paraphrases "if we do not mistake them for the inner core of the poem— if we do not mistake them for 'what the poem really says.'" (WWU, 206)

Another fault in criticism is the affective fallacy: judging poetry in terms of audience response (E-63-43). This is a fault in the direction of impressionism, a shift away from the objective analysis which centers upon the art
object. The affective fallacy says that neither the poet's intention--expressionism--nor the poem in itself--objectivism--is what counts, but the reaction of the audience--impressionism. The fault here is one of misplaced focus; the thing being judged is the poem, not the audience's aesthetic sense. Criticism, says Brooks, "does not pretend to constitute an expression of the critic's own emotional response to the poem." (E-39-293) The point at issue is an act of judgment, not an expression of reaction. Besides, it would be unseemly to place a poem at the mercy of an unskilled, unappreciative audience.

On the other hand, if the audience gives "responsible" reaction, we may well ask why. On what basis? Evidently because of some qualities in the poem. And if those qualities are there to provide audience stimulation, they are there for the critic too, and they can be studied in themselves, apart from audience response. The critic, then, should direct his attention to the poem itself and not judge it by readers' response.

The didactic heresy or "message hunting" was another case of academic abuse that Brooks fought against in his early teaching career. It was relatively common among English teachers in the first quarter of our century, who had been trained according to the teaching of Arnold, who sought in poetry a substitute for religion; hence the quest for a "moral" in every poem--or again, a sentimental vogue fostered by a cheap brand of verse foisted upon a gullible
public who drew their taste from what they read in the daily newspaper, the women's magazines, the farm almanac, or pietistic religious journals. Not only religion but political propaganda was guilty of the didactic heresy. Particularly offensive were the Marxists: "For them, the end of poetry is to instruct and convert." (MPT, 47) Brooks was militant against Marxist criticism in the thirties (MPT, 47-53; E-17; E-79-130; E-120-100; E-121-107; etc.). His objection was twofold: as a Christian and an American, he objected to their militant atheism and denigration of human values. As a literary critic, he objected to the prostitution of poetry and the falsification of its purposes. They "have merely revived and restated the didactic heresy." (MPT, 47)

One must be careful to discern exactly what it is that Brooks condemns in this "didactic heresy." He is not against the instructive and delightful elements of poetry, those famous standards of the classical theorists (like Plato and Horace) and the Elizabethans: to teach delightfully. No, he notes for example, that the tragic poet is to keep clearly in mind that his poem is an instrument of virtue and that he himself is a teacher of virtue (MPT, 207). What counts is the manner in which the instruction and delight are produced: it must be done "poetically," i.e., artistically, in the language of poetry which is paradox and indirection. Thus Swift's satire in A Modest Proposal is didactic; but it is acceptable because of its irony and
indirection (MPT, 226). The "didactic heresy" that Brooks speaks of is the direct intent and set purpose of a critic to seek in every poem a "moral message" and to see this element as the core of the poem; and to consider poems without a "message" as of little value. In his analysis of Keats's Grecian Urn, and Shelley's Ode to a Skylark and Coleridge's Mariner, Brooks makes a similar allowance for the didactic: as long as irony and indirection are employed --and to the extent that they are employed--the poetry is good. An oversimplification or cloying floweriness would be fatal in didactic verse (MPT, 238).

Special mention should be made of Brooks's objection to Matthew Arnold's proposal that poetry substitute for religion; Brooks comes back to this idea over and over (Letter of 1-20-66). Arnold's reasoning was this:

The triumph of science had removed the basis for religious belief: fact had exposed religion's grounding in myth, and religion was thus destroyed as the vehicle for values. Religion, in short, had been reduced to art. But mankind needs values--cannot live without them--and Arnold's solution of the problem was admirably neat. Let us, he said in effect, clearly distinguish between science and art, and let the poets assume the burden of transmitting values. Literature, in short, was to serve as a substitute for religion, since literature, requiring no grounding in fact, and as an imaginative construct, could survive alongside science, as religion could not.

(E-79-128f.)

A critic should also beware of "symbol-monegring"--the term is Brooks's, coined to designate an abuse cited by Harry Levin in his Symbolism and Fiction (E-90-490). The mistake consists not only in beating the literary bush in
order to rout out all symbols, actual and possible, intended and imaginable; but to uncover so many items of symbolism and levels of meaning that the work ends up lacking all precision and structure. Excessive symbol-seeking begets unwarranted ambiguity. Ambiguity pushed so far leads to relativism both of meaning and of quality. On the other hand, a proper approach to symbolism is one which attaches thematic relevance to symbols with due respect to pattern and common sense.

Critical relativism is regarded by Brooks as erroneous in principle. Critical relativism holds that poetry is not all of one type or period, and that each period or movement in literature must be judged on the basis of its own standards, that is, by the critical norms of its age or type. Brooks has a long section on this topic in The Well Wrought Urn: Appendix One, "Criticism, History, and Critical Relativism," pp. 215-261. He contends that the existence of particular movements and their respective traits does not rob poetry of its underlying structure, which is uniform. There may be poems of all sorts, but there is only one poetry. This one poetry will inevitably involve irony and paradox and metaphor. Those who favor critical relativism are often critics who have falsely accepted biased or partial standards peculiar to a given age (WWU, 235-238). Revolutions of taste cannot be denied, but the assumption that a revolution is ipso facto an improvement is a gratis assumption (WWU, 228). Admittedly the ability to pass
judgment on literature of all ages and types in terms of a single set of norms requires extensive training and depth of reading. But the simplicity argued by critical relativists is not simple in the last analysis. It includes acquaintance with a set of norms for each type of literature to be evaluated (WWU, 229). The acceptance of critical relativism means the acceptance of "criticisms, not Criticism." (WWU, 231) "Critical relativism wins its simplicity and objectivity only at the sacrifice of the whole concept of literature as we have known it." (WWU, 232)

7. The Function of the Teacher of Literature

Much that Brooks has written deals expressly with the teaching of literature: aims, norms, methods, subject matter, and so on. But even where his writing is not professedly on teaching, he tells us much as to what and why and how to teach. Thus, if one were to ask what is the role of the teacher of literature according to Brooks, the answer obviously would include as a foundation all that has been said thus far concerning the nature of poetry, the function of the poet, and the function of the critic. All these things are a part of teaching literature. But if we ask what is specifically the teacher's function, the answer, Brooks thinks, is simple: the teacher teaches students how to read. This is a how that at the same time involves a what and a why.

The teacher will first of all make his students aware
that literature is a study in its own right, not to be con-
fused with science or religion, though it often includes
subject matter from these two areas and often engages with
science and religion in dialogue and in mutual ancillary
functions, such as the use of electronic equipment in the
audio-visual field, or having recourse to theologians and
biblical scholars for aid in literary interpretations. But
each department must recognize its proper scope, aims, and
methods. Brooks credits our age with tolerance but also with
muddlement: "a hazy and ultimately patronizing view of
literature." (E-57-130) Emphasis on science has turned
literature either into a harmless diversion or else rhetoric
in the service of some given cause (E-120-5). Instead of
being accepted in its own right and taken seriously, litera-
ture is regarded either as "a kind of opium of the people, a
drug, etc." (E-57-130), or is exploited as a training ground
for the business world, for example, for advertising agencies.
Brooks assigns two sources to such misconceptions: Victorian
escapism on the one hand and Victorian didacticism on the
other. There was escapism in the Victorian concept of
literature as a pleasant diversion, a pasttime in no way
related to the serious business of life. Literature was a
minor element in man's existence. Victorians as a class also
looked to literature for neat little moral lessons. A poem,
a play, or a novel, if it was to be worth reading at all,
must inculcate some moral lesson. Literature's true worth
was measured in terms of its contribution to man's moral
uplift. Thus it was expected to function as a handmaiden to religion (Letter of 1-20-66). Apart from any supernatural power (such as divine grace, worship, or the sacraments) literature was to provide salvation to mankind—a sort of neo-Pelagianism. It is attitudes such as these which prompted Brooks to affirm: "Literature is to be confused neither with science, philosophy, or religion: it embodies its own principles and its own peculiar function." (E-120-102)

According to Brooks, there should be no separation of history of literature from criticism. The literature teacher should combine the functions of both historian and critic. His exposition should involve evaluation along with analysis and synthesis (E-22-404). The question here is not whether we shall study history of literature, but rather about what center this history will be organized (E-22-406). In the survey course in particular, certain dangers will be encountered. There is the danger of emphasizing cultural processes to the neglect of literature. There is the danger of relativism: tagging each type of poetry with the label of its age and declaring that it had relevance for the people of that time but not for us moderns. There is the danger of excessive use of "scientific," i.e., mechanical, analyses which lack literary relevance. To count up the animals in a poem, or to tabulate vowel sounds in relation to consonantal structure, are perfectly sterile pursuits when taken alone. Mere mechanical analysis does not dispense with the need of good critical judgment. "There is no substitute for the
imagination," says Brooks (E-22-411).

The teacher acquaints his students with the uses of literature. It is a means of keeping up with the rest of the world, on the one hand, and of getting away from it, on the other. It can serve the diverse ends of communication and of escape (E-130-2). Brooks suggests seeing literature as a kind of knowledge, a knowledge gained through concrete facts and images (E-130-4). Even where belief and moral values are involved, it is not the creed itself which is to be learned but rather "what it feels like to hold certain beliefs." (E-130-5) Literature, then, is more than a knowledge of facts; it is a knowing which is also an experience. Brooks would have men learn from literature the general relevance of the moral problems which are common ingredients of both literature and life. The learning process in this case is directed not so much to specific moral judgments as to "the experience of the agony of will." (E-130-6) Huckleberry Finn, Shakespeare's Isabella in Measure for Measure, and Antigone all teach us vicariously. In the best art, the lesson learned comes by indirection. Sometimes this new knowledge comes totally unexpected, as in the case of the true worth of Edgar and of Edmond revealed to Lear.

An aim sometimes proposed in literature is "To read for pleasure." Brooks prefers "not to make pleasure the end by which literature is defined," but rather to take the view that "any healthy use of literature is bound to be pleasurable." The point is well taken. Using pleasure as an
objective may falsely dispose the student to approach reading in a casual, lazy frame of mind, as though effortless reading would be to any degree productive. Rather, the teacher must present reading as an exercise which involves the whole man in a psychically alert experience (E-130-3). Thus reading is to be regarded as a creative experience, much as writing a poem or a novel: one creates the child of his imagination through visual and auditory contact with the poem or novel.

Where the writing process is concerned, Brooks sees a cathartic function. Literary expression, the creative process as actually experienced, engages man in a beneficial "purging of his emotions." (E-130-4)

When Brooks stresses independence for literature as a study in its own right, it is the fictional aspect that he regards as distinctive and deserving of special attention. By this he means not so much the "unrealness" of literature; he definitely wants a literature true to its culture and rich in human values. But he wants it understood as distinguished from life, despite its intimate relations with life (E-120-104). The literature teacher will be on guard against two trends which can falsify this "fictionality" of literature: one is a resurgent romanticism which is basically anti-intellectual and seeks to coalesce art and life; the other is "myth" criticism, when carried to the exaggerated position of interpreting literary works primarily as psychological data, wherein manifestations of archetypes and other aspects
of human psychology are the object of the quest. "The myth is psychologized: all literary symbolism . . . becomes a function of the basic postures of the human psyche." (E-120-106)

To come to actual classroom procedure: How does the teacher go about teaching his students to read? Simply by reading, by close textual reading. A faithful reading will include explication and demonstration of interrelation of parts: analysis and synthesis. Here any number of approaches may be employed. On this point Brooks is clear: There is no one way to present a poem (E-121-9).

Step by step the teacher will meet the various needs of the students as the close textual reading proceeds. Some background will be necessary; obscure meanings of words, literary allusions, forms and practices unfamiliar to the student (the rondel, the epigraph) may warrant explanation. The metaphor must be presented dramatically and not as a dull, flat statement of the relationship between item A and item B. The teacher will lead the students to see that the metaphor is a third thing, a new creation, distinct from A and B, that is to be experienced, not merely known; that it is to be grasped by the imagination (E-131-7). The teacher will help the student to see the different ways in which a metaphor may function: sometimes in ironic contrast, sometimes in a non-ironic parallelism. Brooks uses the various song images (the birds', the Highland girl's, etc.) in "The Solitary Reaper" to illustrate a metaphor that is incremental rather
than oppositonal (E-131-9f.)

The teacher will alert his students to the functional character of the metaphor. He will lead them to see how the poem resides structurally within the elements of the metaphor. He will show them how it is not mere images that make the poem, but rather the interrelation of images. The concrete images are selected by the poet to convey this dramatic experience. Once the student sees all the elements of the poem displayed in review, the teacher must see that the drama of the poem is not lost or ignored. Some teachers tend to make of image analysis nothing more than the discovery of a series of terms, each with its explanatory partner. The danger, says Brooks, is that the student "will want to flatten the poem out into mere allegory, and will insist on ravelling the imagery out into bold significance and explicit equivalence." (E-131-10) Another danger is that of proposing arbitrary, extravagant meanings, a tendency of some undisciplined minds who approach poetry with an attitude of "free association" which is little more than planned daydreaming. The imagination in such cases, instead of following carefully the analogical path proposed by the poet in terms of his concrete images, uses the imagery as a launching point for reverie. The teacher must channel the student's discussion along lines of relevance dictated by the objective materials before him.

The teacher will also give due consideration to tone, that is, to the poet's attitudes. This is especially relevant
in the case of those poets and poems where tone and attitude are the determinants of the character of the irony, the very things that make the poem this poem and no other. Brooks's prime example is Robert Frost, with his "dry whimsy, laconic understatement, and ironic fantasy which maintain the sanity of the poem." (E-131-10) Poetry, after all, is a human product; it is neither angelic nor mechanical (E-105-107). It exists neither as an abstraction nor yet as a machine-transcribed statement issuing from an electronic brain. It embodies all sorts of nuances of man's language: tones, overtones, shifts in tone—even pauses and silence. These elements the teacher must point out to the student.

Practical teaching experience in the classroom did not allow Brooks to leave unmentioned the fact that certain students, especially those with sophomoric attitudes, need to cultivate respect for the poet and appreciation of his poetry. Youth in its rebellious years is prompt to suspect esotericism, is impatient with refined or sophisticated manner, and chafes under discipline generally. The tendency here is to dismiss poetry and the poet as "impossible," "weird," or unduly difficult and remote. What must the teacher do in such cases? Certainly not vulgarize or oversimplify the poem. Nor, on the other hand, impose poetic analysis as a necessary drudgery incumbent upon all students. Rather, the teacher by his own example conveys insights and enthusiasm relating to the poem. He instructs and encourages the student to develop within himself similar insights and
enthusiasm. The ultimate goal is not an externally imposed
discipline of reading techniques but rather an instructional
and motivational procedure which assists the student in
self-development (E-131-12). This statement, true of all
teaching, is especially valid for teaching poetry. Because
students may manifest the anxiety they commonly experience
in their struggle to appreciate poetry, the teacher may be
tempted to take refuge in some compromise calculated to
relieve the tension but insufficient to generate apprecia-
tion for poetry. The goal in teaching poetry must not be
lowered to render it more accessible. Brooks insists upon
genuineness and propriety in objectives and methods (E-131-
14).

Literature is rich in religious and humanistic values,
but the teacher must never allow or ask literature to func-
tion as a tourist guide for culture or a brother sacristan
of religion. Recall for the moment Brooks's repeated objec-
tion to Matthew Arnold's idea of having poetry serve as a
surrogate of religion in the face of a scientific world
hostile to religious belief. (See the section on the
"didactic heresy," pp. 116f.; E-120-102; E-131-15.)

Bringing in some practical suggestions on the use of
audio-visual aids, Brooks recommends the use of recordings
to provide the student with actual aural experience of
metrical patterns. He and Warren edited a record to accom-
pany the most recent edition of their Understanding Poetry.
Another use of electronic material was the recording of a
panel discussion on the "Craft of Poetry" in which Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Lowell, and Theodore Roethke participated (E-112). Brooks's aim in publishing this discussion was to afford the student a chance to hear practicing poets discuss among themselves their creative techniques.

Finally, Brooks would have the teacher serve as the custodian and promoter of the uses of literature, which he lists as nine in a recent (1963) article. These are: to maintain contact with concrete reality; to reinforce our value system—this by indirection, not by direct moralizing; to provide a humanistic experience which yields pleasure—but not to exploit literature directly in quest of pleasure; to provide an experience of belief, as an experience, not as a belief; to provide a particular type of knowledge: one gained through concrete, not abstract, terms; to keep the imagination alive and the methods of communication between men unblocked; to depict moral problems, especially the agony of will in excruciating decisions, and the search for knowledge; to depict a world ordered with reference to human values; to keep our language alive, free from clichés (E-130-2-12).
CHAPTER IV

CRITICISMS OF BROOKS'S THEORY AND PRACTICE

Criticisms of Brooks's ideas and methods are not wanting. They have come from friend and foe alike and have been directed toward various aspects of his doctrine. The polemics include objections of different types: literary, linguistic, philosophical, cultural, pedagogical, and sociological. Because of the representative position that Brooks occupies in the New Critical movement, the criticisms take on a special character: They become the index of the success or failure of the movement itself, depending upon whether or not the objections are valid. Hence, a critical study of Brooks's books and essays can serve as a testing of the New Criticism itself. The movement can be said to stand or fall with Brooks.

From the rather large number of critical statements issued against Brooks, I have selected five as being the major ones which challenge his position. Under these five headings I propose to present the main objections to Brooks's theory and practice. At the same time I shall examine the validity of each with a view to a proper assessment of Brooks's doctrine.
1. Brooks's theory is monistic and as such inadequate to satisfy literary criticism. One of the earliest and most prevalent objections to Brooks's theory is its monism: the claim to analyze any and all literary materials by a single standard, without distinction as to genre or type. This critique was first proposed by Ronald S. Crane, spokesman for the Chicago critics, in an essay which set the tone for all subsequent criticisms against Brooks: "Cleanth Brooks, or, The Bankruptcy of Critical Monism."\(^1\) Crane's objection has been sustained by a number of critics: Donald Davie,\(^2\) Robert Marsh,\(^3\) Hugh Kenner,\(^4\) Herbert J. Muller,\(^5\) Frederick B. Rainsberry,\(^6\) Walter Sutton,\(^7\) and Oscar Cargill.\(^8\)


\(^4\)Cited in Davie, "Reflections," p. 442.

\(^5\)"The New Criticism in Poetry," *Southern Review*, VI (Spring 1941), 827.


It is interesting to note that although these and other critics charge Brooks with monism as his chief weakness, they are not agreed as to what constitutes that monistic element. Crane and Sutton, for example, say that the monism consists in a preoccupation with irony and paradox, while Rainsberry says it stems from a narrow application of Coleridge. Ong, on the other hand, finds that Brooks's zeal for objectivity, for concentration upon the poem as poem, is the monistic fallacy. For Gerald Graff, the critical issue is a failure of an epistemological nature: Brooks, in his attempt to define poetry as a non-intellectual, non-logical, "dramatic mode" of discourse, creates a system which entails a vicious circle.\(^9\) Still others (Davie, Marsh, and Cargill) find that Brooks's narrowness comes from an exaggerated distinction between the language of poetry and the language of science. Each of these points will be taken up in this or a later section.

Crane contends that Brooks's "irony," Tate's "tension," and Ransom's "texture" are all excellent traits to be observed in a poem, but that not one of these nor all taken together are sufficient as the unique quality to be sought in a poem.

\(^9\)See Graff's "The Dramatic Theory of Poetry," passim. According to Graff, Brooks insists upon regarding literature as autonomous, as independent of life and reality outside the poem; but when he comes to assess the poem and its elements, i.e., to say whether or not they are good, genuine, etc., he must perforce go back to his reality and life outside for a frame of reference. This is the vicious circle.
The language of poetry is not necessarily the language of paradox, as Brooks says it is in the opening lines of *The Well Wrought Urn*. There are many poems in simple statement, without ironic-content. Paradox as a norm sets up a bias in favor of certain types of poems, while slighting others. Pursued to its ultimate, paradox-and-irony reduces poetry to grammar by seeking the unity of poems in their rhetorical structure exclusively, without regard to the poet's unifying conception of them.\(^{10}\) In consequence of this monistic approach based upon structure, the poet has no way of dealing with individual poems otherwise than as instances of a universal poetic. In other words, the critic is constantly looking for a single item, whereas a poet writes individual poems, not poetry (an abstract, generic concept). Brooks can only differentiate these on a basis of linguistic necessity. The end-result of the close reading technique can be disappointing; it may become, as even Brooks admits, "verbal piddling."\(^{11}\) Concentration upon irony and paradox reduces criticism to a single approach robbing it of the breadth and fullness of a method or system.\(^{12}\) If Brooks's system is

\(^{10}\)Crane, pp. 94-96.

\(^{11}\)Robert Weimann states: "Gemeinsam ist auch das Dilemma, das aus der Sterilität einer solch 'reinen' Kunstwerk betrachtung folgert: close reading mit rein des- kriptiver Zielsetzung führt, sie Cleanth Brooks sehr rechtig erkennt, zu "verbal piddling." (P. 107.)

monistic, then it is not an aesthetic, not a complete theory. It disparages the element of over-all judgment,\textsuperscript{13} and reduces criticism to a mere word analysis in place of an act of critical assessment. Criticism becomes "readings" instead of critiques,\textsuperscript{14} and guarantees the neophyte critic a true criticism if he but explicate the words and their meanings well.\textsuperscript{15}

The objections stated thus far require some distinctions in order that one may answer them. First of all, if we are to assume that Brooks's system of poetical analysis is basically a search for irony and paradox—and I would agree that it is—one must understand the nature of this matrix in the same sense that Brooks uses it. Crane himself defends Brooks's use of the terms "irony" and "paradox" in the enlarged sense that he does. He considers this the right of any critic, to broaden or specialize a common word "which he has chosen to make the central term of his system. All critics from the beginning have done this."\textsuperscript{16} But Crane

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{13}"A common quality of all of them [i.e., the New Critics] is a patient attention to the words on the page rather than to an idea in one's head." Fraser, \textit{ibid.}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{14}Crane, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{15}Davie, "Reflections," p. 440.
\textsuperscript{16}Crane, p. 83. See also Charles Moorman, "The Vocabulary of the New Criticism," \textit{American Quarterly}, \textbf{IX} (1957), 184, where he not only defends the special use of the New Critical terms but considers them an important contribution to American letters. Recall also Horace's lines in his \textit{Ad Pisos} (\textit{De Arte Poetica}) where he states the right of the poet
\end{footnotes}
mistranslates the relevance of irony to poetry when he objects: "Why all the to-do about 'irony' in poetry? Why not look for 'irony' everywhere? For if we look, it will assuredly be found." We must answer that most assuredly irony is everywhere, but the manner of its presence in poetry is different. It is there by indirection, by metaphor. This is what makes the poem a poem and not exalted rhetoric. Irony and paradox as taken by Brooks represent large concepts of fundamental relationships: a comprehensive imaginative whole involving the suspension of opposites, sustained in ironic tension by the imagination. This is, then, no mere verbal piddling. It is more than linguistic; were it only verbal, irony would be synonymous with the pun, which is only one minor type of irony.

The next distinction which must be made—and this one, I believe, is the crucial one for the irony-paradox system—is to specify wherein the irony resides: in the poem (with its metaphor, themes, structure), or in the poet's imagination (contemplating the ironical situation), or in the audience (critic or lay reader, contemplating what he hears or reads—or what he thinks the poet meant!). As Graff well
to coin words and sets down instructions as to how to go about it.

observes, Brooks is not clear in his use of the term irony. He does not seem to have made up his mind where this element resides. Sometimes it is in the real situation upon which the poem is based, sometimes it is in the poet's treatment of that situation, and sometimes in the mind of the critic or in the critical method itself. This is probably why some critics have objected that Brooks is demanding of poetry, of all poems, a trait which is to be found only in some. Perhaps he sees two possibilities: an ironic contemplation in a simple situation, or an ironic situation (life and its problems) expressed in a simple poem.

My judgment, then, of the objection to the monistic character of Brooks's theory would be this: that paradox and irony, as understood by Brooks, do have an essential role in all poetry: either in the poetic experience or in its expression. The language of poetry, then, is the language of paradox. In other words, one can observe the irony either in the poem itself, or in the person who experiences what the poem expresses. As to whether or not all these elements come under the scope of the critic's function, depends upon what school of criticism one accepts. Of that, more later, in the criticisms that follow.

Further, there is no doubt that Brooks's preoccupation with irony and paradox have caused his critical studies to

take on a limited character. We seldom hear him discussing,
for instance, the aural traits of poetry: tone, meter,
rhythm, sound structures and balance. But here I think it
would be fairer play to acknowledge what the man has done,
rather than take him to task for what he has left undone.
Any positive contribution to letters or criticism is a good
thing. And after all, what end is there to the naming of
things any man has left undone or unsaid? Rather, should
not Brooks be deserving of special mention for his contri­
bution to American literary criticism in his development and
enlargement of the concepts of irony and paradox? Who
else in this century has produced as much and as perceptive,
relevant writing on the subject, in England or in America?
The matter of Brooks's bias in discussing only poems
he likes (the metaphysicals, the modern poets, especially
Eliot, Yeats, Ransom, Tate, and Warren) to the disparagement

19It should not be conjectured, however, that Brooks
never discusses these elements. They are to be found scattered throughout his books and essays, especially in Understanding Poetry. They may occupy a minor position, but they are there just the same. But Sutton rather questionably objects that "Cleanth Brooks's theory of irony as a principle of structure blinds the critic to other defects in works which possess the qualities of irony and paradox," p. 132.

20Moorman, praises Brooks and company: Whereas in the past literary criticism has either used stock terms adapted to its purposes or else created new terminology with totally new terms, Brooks et al. have emerged with a new type of coinage: the use of non-literary terms and bodies of knowledge (e.g., the organic concept, from biology; the orthodoxy and heresies, from religion), p. 184.
of other types (Augustan, Romantic, Victorian) might be answered in a similar fashion: the critic is not to be damned for what he leaves undone when what he has done is well done. Moreover, once the objection was made (by Herbert J. Muller and others), Brooks gave a reply in the form of an entire book, *The Well Wrought Urn*, in which he deals specifically with poetry from the Augustan and Romantic periods.21

2. Brooks derives his doctrine on imagination and the nature of poetry from Coleridge, but either misconstrues Coleridge's meaning or else neglects its philosophical implications. The objection here, voiced by Crane,22 Trowbridge,23 Weimann,24 and Sutton,25 is that Brooks has not

21Muller, p. 361; Pulos, p. 82; Weimann, pp. 227-266; Sutton, p. 132. Muller suggests that one reason why Brooks's method can so easily demonstrate the virtues of contemporary poetry without explaining why so much of that poetry is unsatisfying is precisely the fact that "irony or paradox is not the essence of poetry" (p. 361). To this Brooks replied that, in effect, he was dealing with particular poems and treating them in their peculiar manner, explicating them "in terms of organization of the given poem." (WWU, 225) Hence the appearance of a more narrow view than if he were advancing a general theory. Brooks also answers Muller in kind by noting Muller's own prejudice in favor of Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian poetry (pp. 370f.).

22Crane, p. 102.

23Hoyt Trowbridge, "Aristotle and the 'New Criticism,'" Sewanee Review, LII (October-December 1944), 543.


25Sutton, p. 117.
been faithful to his source. He uses Coleridge as his
basis for an understanding of the poetic imagination, and
openly admits this dependence (MPT, 40ff.); but his use of
this material is in a sense other than that intended by
Coleridge. From the sophisticated and multi-dimensional
type of Coleridge, Brooks retained two points: "The
proposition that the imagination reveals itself in the bal­
ce or reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities,
and the proposition that the contrary of poetry is science." Brooks, like Richards and Tate before him, oversimplified
Coleridge and reduced the theory of poetry to a single
principle or cause. Where Coleridge had spoken first of
poetry in general, then of particular poems or critical
method for particular poems, Brooks took all of this material
as one and attempted a univocal application. The result was
that his critical essays took on a highly particularized
caracter: some critics cannot see in them any theory for
all the criticism. Moreover, by attempting to reduce poetry
to a monistic principle, Brooks was unable to generate the
full range of distinctions and criteria that would otherwise

26 Pulos and the Neo-Aristotelians of Chicago see a
rejection of more than Coleridge here. It is also a rejec-
tion of Aristotle's theory of metaphor. Both rejections
stem from the same cause: "the determination of the New
Critics to draw an absolute distinction between the poetic
and the scientific uses of language." (Pulos, p. 5)

27 Crane, p. 89.
have been accessible for poetic analysis. A further repercussion was that the full psychological range of the imagination was truncated. For example, the emotive and sense components of the imaginative process are minimized by Brooks. Because he wanted to devise and maintain a strictly objective criticism, Brooks refused to deal with those affective elements which he knew very well entered into poetic experience. His point was, precisely, that they are part of poetic experience but not matter for criticism. His reasoning is that they are not measurable, they are not subject to objective rating. Besides, they are not traits of the poem itself but rather something that the poem produces. Consequently, Brooks "can derive his canons of criticism only from vague concepts like maturity, heterogeneity, or fulness of human experience, for which it would be difficult indeed to find any solid basis in general philosophy."^20

A case in point of a result of such restriction of Coleridge's doctrine occurs in Brooks's analysis of Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode." According to Wallace W. Douglas,

---

^20See Trowbridge, p. 543, on this point. "Mr. Brooks, a good modern, does not share Coleridge's faith in philosophical psychology." (p. 543)

^29See how Brooks, even to the present day, refuses to reckon with emotive elements in his criticism: E-136-437ff. Ronald Moran and George Lensing take Brooks to task in their forthcoming article in Southern Review (Fall 1966?), "The Emotive Imagination: A New Departure in American Poetry."

^30Trowbridge, p. 543.
Brooks has misinterpreted Wordsworth by taking his "light" image in terms of a "speaker" image or persona.  

In reply to this objection, it must be said that Brooks's narrow borrowings from Coleridge have definitely imposed upon his critical method a consequent impediment which not only restricts Brooks from including much wealth of meaning which he no doubt perceives. It actually militates against his quest for organic unity and contemplating the poem as a "total experience." Moreover, because of the limited scope of psychological investigation which he assumes as his range, he sometimes talks in circles and even begs the question. In evidence of this, I submit the following statement. Brooks finds Warren's poetry "hard to summarize, not because of its vagueness but because of its precision. 'What it says'--the total experience, which includes the speaker's attitude as part of it--the total experience can be conveyed by no document less than the poem itself." (B-22-117) Here the critic is begging the question; he is not criticizing the poetry.

Although Brooks acknowledges Coleridge as one of the sources of his theory and even emphasizes the importance of Richards's statements on the imagination (also derived from Coleridge) in the formulating of his understanding thereof, he shows little use of Coleridge in his criticism. The role

of the imagination, for example, he considers important. But one would not suspect a dependence upon Coleridge in this regard were he to judge on the basis of Brooks's writings. His use of the imagination involves no refined or academic concepts, such as Coleridge proposed in his *Biographia Litteraria*. It is a rather generalized presentation. He sees the synthetic function of the imagination as the unifying power of experience, melding with the creative talent of the poet. From this issues the poem. Or again, at the receiving end of poetry, the reader's imagination is stimulated by the metaphors and irony of the poem to an imaginative pitch of response. A further reliance upon Coleridge might have afforded Brooks a scientific defense of his method and a set of terms in which to answer those critics who, like himself, admired and followed Coleridge.

3. The principle of "dramatic propriety" advanced by Brooks is self-contradictory and involves a disparagement of moral values. In his effort to express how the truth of the poem is different from logical or scientific truth, Brooks resorted to saying that "the poem is a little drama." (*MPT*, 44) The poem is not a simple statement. It conveys meaning by indirection, by metaphor. But more than that, it has a vitality beyond the truths of logic and science. It does not simply state truth, it *dramatizes* it. The poem, then, in Brooks's view, takes on something of the theatre. And like the drama, it is a world and an existence of its own.
Consequently, when one wishes to examine the "truth" or reliability of what is being presented, he is cautioned not to seek a norm outside; the solution lies within the poem itself. The poem exists for itself and is self-validating. It is autotelic. It is true only if it is true to itself; it is false only if it is false to itself. At first sight, this seems a legitimate claim: it is the standard of coherence. If the poem sets up one metaphor or one theme and remains true to that metaphor or theme, it is a good poem. But the problem arises when one asks: And how is one to judge the internal value of the poem, the true character of those elements within the poem, in order to ascertain whether they are genuine? The formalist critic (and Brooks is such) must rely upon external evidence, upon life-experience. Hence, the autonomy of the poem involves a vicious circle. The critic is faced with the ambivalent position of disclaiming any relevance to external reality and (at the same time) of judging the quality of the poem and its elements by the standards of that external reality.

Graff pursues the dilemmatic character of this principle of "dramatic propriety" or autonomy by pointing out certain corollaries.32 The very "total experience" which Brooks sought, the wholesome integrated human experience

which he claimed for modern poetry as a remedy to the dis-
sociation of sensibility is defeated in the act: the critic
dissects the poem into its elements and fails to appreciate
the whole. The same critic who fought dualism now creates
one more dichotomy: the language of poetry and the language
of science.

One of the strong objections to this concept of
autonomy in literature is the implication of moral indiffer-
ence that goes with it. Both Donald Davie and Gerald Graff
see in it "an avoidance of resolution and commitment."
Such a surmise betrays a lack of awareness of just how strong
are the religious, philosophical, and political convictions
of the Southern critics individually and as a group, as well
as of such men as Winters and Burke. A solution toward the
inclusion of the moral values in the criticism, while yet
safeguarding the old principle of autonomy was reached by
Brooks by referring to the values outside the poem and noting
how they made one feel, without an outright proposal that one
adopt the creed expressed in the poem. Brooks speaks of such
an approach in his "Uses of Literature" (E-130). Sister M.
Jerome Hart has traced the shift in Brooks's contextualist
position toward a viewpoint which admits philosophical and
moral values in criticism. Her thesis is that Brooks accom-
modated his original doctrine by devising the two standards

---

33 Davie, "Reflections," p. 444; Graff, "Dramatic
Theory," p. 91.
of Coherence and Correspondence. "Coherence deals with the
traditional contextualist principle of internal organic unity,
but Correspondence is external, demanding that the appre­
hension of reality conveyed in the poem correspond to the
general norm of human nature and experience."^34

The validity of the first part of Objection Number 3
(the self-contradictory nature of the principle of "dramatic
propriety") cannot be denied. Yet if we take into account
the situation of literary criticism at the time the New
Criticism arose, we shall recall that Brooks and the New
Critics generally initiated their critical systems and norms
precisely as reactionary measures against an overly didactic,
overly biographical literary tradition; hence their insis­
tence upon autonomy, i.e., a non-moral approach. On the
other hand, it is to be noted that modern critics, especially
during the past decade, have shifted their radical position
which at first insisted upon the autonomy of literature to
include elements of actual experience: philosophical,
political, ethical, religious, and even Christian values.
This is what has come to be called the "Newer Criticism."^35
Thus Brooks escapes a condemnation his earlier writing justly
deserved for its circular thinking inasmuch as he has since
modified his position. The inclusion of moral and Christian

^34From Sister Jerome's abstract in DA, XXXIII, 745.

^35By Father Kenneth Barthe, S.J. See the section
above.
values to an increasing degree is evident in Brooks's recent work. This is not to say that the man himself is "coming of age" or has begun to experience a growing Christian commitment such as Eliot experienced between Prufrock and Ash Wednesday. The values that pertain to human dignity and the Christian faith were present in Brooks from the beginning and were even implicitly guiding his writing. Their recent prominence is a matter of their coming to the fore. Their admittance into his criticism is a tribute to his insight which perceived a generation ready to accept the inclusion of moral values without making of literature "a handmaiden of religion" (Letter of 1-20-66) or making criticism primarily a quest for the moral message. Brooks safeguards his position of literary autonomy while including the moral insights by stating that "what Lucretius and Dante teach you, in fact, is what it feels like to hold certain beliefs," rather than the actual beliefs themselves (E-130-5).

36 Notable in this regard are Brooks's two latest books, The Hidden God: Studies in Hemingway, Faulkner, Yeats, Eliot, and Warren (New Haven, 1963) and William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven, 1963). Among his recent periodical articles, "The Uses of Literature," Toronto Educational Quarterly, II (Summer 1963), 2-12, is outstanding for specific mention of moral values: e.g., "the experience of the agony of the will," for "having been faced with the moral responsibility of choosing even when there could be no simple, clear, and just choice." (E-130-6f.)

37 Donald Davie's objection that the autonomy of literature has created "an indifference to subject matter in order to come to enjoy the poetry without having to come to terms with the doctrine it expressed" (in "Reflections," p. 444) is mirrored in Graff's statement about "the adoption of a 'dialectical' method with its tortured [sic] qualifications
4. The New Criticism employs a terminology which is difficult and needlessly esoteric. An age, a movement, a writer of theory can all be expected to make their impression upon language and semantics. Brooks and the New Critics have definitely done so, much to the chagrin of contemporaries, not the least among them some erudite men. We have already made reference to Douglas Bush's presidential address to the general meeting of the Modern Language Association in 1949. In that talk, which was a strong attack against the New Criticism, not the least complaint was "the technical language which may be of interest to older readers who have been accustomed to mere English." The reference was to William Elton's "A Glossary of the New Criticism," twenty-four pages of definitions listing the more popular terms and their special usages. The very fact that such a glossary was composed and printed is plain evidence of the special character of the New Critical vocabulary. The fact that it was so long (some 65 items) indicates the scope of this nomenclature. Elton's treatment of the glossary is a neutral and avoidances of resolution and commitment" (p. 91). Both men betray a lack of acquaintance with the Southern critics as men for whom religion, philosophy, and politics are matters of strong conviction.

38Printed in PMLA, LXIV (March 1949), 13-21; reference is to p. 20.

and fair presentation; but Bush, Weimann, and Malcolm Cowley objected to the strange terminology. Cowley took exception to the classification of words as "good" and "bad," a bifurcation also noted by Davis. Naturalism, liberalism, and progressive, for example, were "bad" words; tradition, values, irony, and myth are "good."

On the other hand, Crane admitted Brooks's right to use irony and paradox in an enlarged sense. Moorman and Mizener not only defended the New Critical vocabulary but considered it a positive contribution to American criticism.

In reply to the objection that the New Critical vocabulary is strange and difficult, it cannot be denied that many new usages of old terms came into being, causing some perplexity for readers as yet unfamiliar with the cant. Many of the special meanings and nuances were the natural outgrowth of conversation and discussion, such as those of the Fugitives. This is a natural phenomenon in any field of

40Bush, MLA address, p. 20.


43Davis, p. 10.

work. Specifically, for literary purposes, we have already noted Crane's approval of Brooks's extended meanings of irony and paradox, a development which every poet and critic employs to some degree. Moorman notes the advantage of using existing words from the field of science (organic, tension) and religion (orthodoxy, credo, heresy). The critics thus "can approximate the scientist's tone of exactitude and accuracy, while at the same time utilize the connotational value present in these terms from their general usage." Arthur Mizener denies that the vocabulary is strange at all. He maintains that the New Critics have sought to retain the familiar rhetorical and prosodic terminology and yet make some intelligent interpretation possible by defining the terms with great precision. Sutton cites the glossary of Understanding Poetry as evidence. With few exceptions, then, I would say that the terminology of the New Criticism stands on good ground.

---


47 Sutton, p. 132.

5. Brooks's concentration upon the poem to the exclusion of concern with the poet or with audience reaction is an exaggeration of the ontological nature of the poem and a neglect of the personalist element. Father Walter Ong confronts Brooks on a philosophical level, but not for epistemological reasons like Crane. His ground of dissent is rather metaphysical: Brooks by his exaggerated emphasis on "the poem as poem" has conferred upon the art object a status of being it does not actually possess. Brooks has definitely minimized the personalist element in poetry, at both ends: producer and consumer. He excludes consideration of the poet; he will have no "intentional fallacy" in his criticism, no seeking of the poet's mind; nor of his life and interests, for that matter. Nor must the emotive reaction of the reader, or any kind of personal impression enter into the critique. The result? Brooks has created the paradoxical non-entity: a poem that exists by itself. The belittlement of personalist factors on the part of the poet and the audience, extols the poem itself into a self-sufficiency, a self-existence, which in reality it does not have. Roy Harvey Pearce shares Ong's criticism of Brooks on this score:

In trying to escape the poet's private life, the heresy of paraphrase, and historical and critical relativism, he has not quite escaped the danger of blinding himself to one aspect of the initial (and

historical concreteness of the poem, its normative ideological structure as it was and is to be experienced immediately and intensely.50

A poem, Ong contends, is an interesting meeting place of persons; it involves human elements in its very nature as artifact and communication-piece. As such it has a high human element which a critic cannot afford to ignore or neglect. The poem does not exist per se. It is held in existence by its maker (the poet) and its reader, be he critic or layman. As Jacques Maritain observes, "A poem, however, has not a will of its own, unless metaphorically."51 The written manuscript must not cajole us into assigning to the poem an autonomy it never had or can have. It is a very dependent kind of being. But the New Critics—and Brooks foremost among them—in their quest for objective analysis based upon objective norms, and in their zeal to turn the focus of criticism away from the extrinsic elements (poet's life, diaries, historical and sociological backgrounds, on the one hand, and reader reaction, on the other), back to the poem itself, insisted upon the object—existence of the work of art, thus creating an anomaly: they bestowed upon the poem a self-possession and an independence from other reality that only a person, by definition, can possess.

50Roy Harvey Pearce, "'Pure' Criticism and the History of Ideas," JAAC, VII (December 1948), 128
51Maritain, p. 356.
A good case can be made for the personalist approach as an integral part of criticism. First of all, the autobiographical strain of much fiction and poetry (F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway, William B. Yeats, for example) is undeniable. Next, an author's works collectively taken constitute a whole, a corpus. (*Sweeney Agonistes* belongs with *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in a way it does not with Pound's *Cantos* or with a poem by Auden.) Then, there is the association of the poet's birthplace and memorabilia by popular interest with his work, the sense of communion with the artist. But above all, there is the fact that works of art often—perhaps always and necessarily—derive from personal relations and tensions. The very nature of the creative act supposes a human involvement rich in person-to-person relationships.52

The objection to Brooks's ignoring the poet and the reader is not a new one. Donald Stauffer in 1942 had taken Brooks to task for excluding from his critique of Wordsworth's Westminster Bridge sonnet certain relevant data available in *The Prelude*.53 The disregard for this information led to a

52The very title of Father Ong's essay, "The Jinnee in Well Wrought Urn," ironically suggests that this mysterious spirit within the urn—that is, within the poem itself; as Brooks says about John Donne's metaphor in "The Canonization," "the poem itself is the well wrought urn"—who can do the reader's bidding regarding interpretation, is the spirit of the poet who created it.

misconstrued meaning in one section of the poem. Brooks replied that the poet may well develop a single experience differently in two different poems. He takes occasion to chide Stauffer for a limited view on "the relation of criticism to biography." (WWU, 220)

Douglas Bush on more than one occasion differed with Brooks over the latter's almost total disregard for critical scholarship with its wealth of information on a poet's life, notebooks, and philosophy. According to Bush, Brooks's attitude seemed to be one of conveniently ignoring evidence that was signal inconvenient for his reading of the poem. As a matter of fact, Bush pointed out that Brooks initiated certain supposed attitudes on the part of Marvell which did not agree with the poet's political views; recourse to history would have obviated this discrepancy. It was because of such irresponsible ventures that Bush pointed out the contradictory behavior of the New Criticism: "Its approach to poetry tends to be narrow and dogmatic and also erratic, and that its end-products can be no less complete and unsatisfying than those of the old scholarship which the critics so often denounce."55

The objection to Brooks's lack of a personalist


approach merits the same reply that was given to objection on literary autonomy: The New Critics were trying to overcome an excessive concern with the poet and his backgrounds. They were trying to set the focus back on the poem. This was a necessary measure at the time. If the poet and the reader deserve recognition, all the more so does the poem, which is the very object of critical analysis. Hence, it is understandable that the New Critics underscored their point to excess, in order to drive it home. The present popularity of close textual reading shows how successful they were in conveying their lesson.

Secondly, regardless of any current trend in criticism or any abuse that needs correction, it is always in order to distinguish between the poet and the speaker in the poem: the persona technique. A critic errs if he identifies the two. The poet may be using personal knowledge or experience as a frame of reference: how else can he depict life? There are no alternatives beyond these. All a man knows, he has either lived through or else committed to memory by some form of learning. In any case, the knowledge is his, not another's.

Finally, I consider Father Ong justified in his ontological presentation: the poem is not the isolated art object that Brooks and others would make it. And because it is not, because it lives upon an interpersonal texture, the critic should give due regard to the maker and the audience.
Naturally, such reference to the poet and the audience must rest upon solid ground, with basis in fact. Brooks has begun to show more and more of his personal feelings and convictions in his criticism. Perhaps in time he will admit a new dimension existing in the personal and interpersonal tensions which will open up to his critical method a new world of irony and paradox.
CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION OF CLEANTH BROOKS;
AN EVALUATION

An evaluative study of the New Criticism and Brooks's part therein naturally raises several questions. How effective have the New Critics been? What is their current influence and what sort of reputation do they enjoy? Is the movement known in literary circles of other countries? Interestingly enough, the answers to these questions bear a strong correlation to the influence and renown of Cleanth Brooks himself. In fact, a review of the literature shows that if we are to ascertain how the New Criticism has fared in recent years, our index is nothing less than the literary world's judgment of Cleanth Brooks. He is a key figure, important from the start as a promoter and decisive today as its strongest voice.

1. Influence and Reputation

The influence of Cleanth Brooks has been manifold. He has stocked the literary heritage of the twentieth century with many original, perceptive essays: explications of poems and declarations upon the nature and function of literature, both in the novel and in poetry. Outstanding in the field
of poetical explication are his analysis of *The Waste Land*, his studies of Yeats, and of our modern American poets: Ransom, Tate, and Warren. In fiction, he has produced capable studies of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and (especially) Faulkner. His *Yoknapatawpha Country* is probably the most detailed, comprehensive, and assimilative study on Faulkner to date. He has substantially contributed toward the revived appreciation of the metaphysical poets and through them a fuller understanding of modern poetry. In this regard, he has established as an accepted literary fact that the emergence of modern poetry and criticism is a third revolution in English literary standards, the other two being that of the neo-classical and the Romantic-Victorian. Brooks has taught both the academic world and the reading public that the modern poems which they found so difficult and bizarre in the twenties and thirties are not only good and acceptable but also in the best English tradition.

Brooks is responsible for the establishment of a critical attitude concentrating upon the poem as a poem: a unique, whole work. He drew the attention of criticism away from biography and sociology to a focus upon the poem itself and upon its analysis by close reading. If a revolution of literary standards has been accomplished in our time, and if literary criticism has assumed prominence in the past three decades, it was Cleanth Brooks who "pre-eminently defined
its spirit and prosecuted its causes.\footnote{1}{John E. Hardy, "The Achievement of Cleanth Brooks," \textit{Hopkins Review}, VI (Spring-Summer 1953), 150.}

But by far the greatest achievement of Cleanth Brooks has been the effect he has had upon the younger generation in colleges and universities, and upon the teaching of literature. Brooks has devoted himself to the education of a generation of readers,\footnote{2}{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 151.} even though many young people probably are not aware of their indebtedness to him.

\textit{Approaches to Literature} (1935) was his initial effort at creating a textbook which would reflect and propagate his critical principles. But it was Brooks and Warren's \textit{Understanding Poetry} (1938) which became the primer of the New Criticism, so much so that a recent observer singles out this volume as the manifesto of the New Critical approach to poetry.\footnote{3}{Donald Hall, \textit{Contemporary American Poetry} (Baltimore, 1962), p. 17. Hall depicts a mock battle in which the more recent American poets adopt as their battle-cry against current critical standards: "Down with \textit{Understanding Poetry}"} A brief survey of the acceptance of this volume is in order.

As early as 1939, only a year after its first appearance, John Crowe Ransom referred to \textit{Understanding Poetry} as a "monument of this age," an "admirable book," "the first textbook of its kind. . . . Mr. Brooks has established his place among the subtler critics. . . . and Mr. Warren is one
of the really superlative poets of our time." Two years later, Herbert J. Muller, who had previously challenged Brooks's insistence upon absolute norms for poetry, stated that Brooks and company were "distinguished for their analysis of the immediate text of poetry: their fine appreciation of the imaginative object, of the poetic experience, and of purely aesthetic values. They give an inside understanding, let the reader in on what a poem is actually about." 

Brooks's publications of 1938 and 1939, Modern Poetry and the Tradition and Understanding Poetry, had about them a retrospective and a prognostic character. In these volumes Brooks not only collected his best essays and pedagogical techniques to date; he also opened doors for projected activities, such as a revision of English literary history (suggested in MPT, 219-244), and an implicit invitation to critical reaction to his theory. Neither was long in coming. The critical reaction was immediate, and the literary history saw its fulfillment, in one phase at least, when Brooks and Wimsatt came out with their Literary Criticism: A Short History (1957) which retold the story in terms of the New Criticism. Brooks replied to the significant criticisms of


his Modern Poetry and the Tradition with The Well Wrought Urn, a complementary volume which substantially updated the former. Where Brooks had used mainly metaphysical and modern poems for illustration in Modern Poetry and the Tradition, he concentrated upon selections from the Romantic and Victorian periods in The Well Wrought Urn, in order to prove the applicability of his methods to almost any kind of poetry. His successful attainment of this end was recognized.6

By 1949 it could be said that Brooks and Warren had already brought the New Criticism into the universities,7 quite an achievement for one decade, especially since many of the old guard in English departments were hostile to some notions of the movement. "What had been considered irresponsible opinion in the Twenties became, by the middle Forties, an accepted academic specialty,"8 by the middle Fifties, a nationally influential technique, and by the

6Monroe K. Spears said of WWU: "This is a very important and valuable book, . . . using the same approach that has been so successful with the metaphysicals and the moderns." It is notable for "close, detailed studies of specific poems, and clear and explicit formation of the theory of poetry implied by the analyses. . . ." In "The Mysterious Urn," Western Review, XII (Autumn 1948), 54-55.


8West, p. 2.
middle Sixties, a mature movement.

In 1957 Nation magazine published a symposium of some twenty outstanding teachers on the general theme of significant activities of the day, especially of a literary nature. Out of all possible inclusions, Understanding Poetry received two special mentions, both rather strong. Alan Swallow said: "In the field of literature, . . . it is very clear that one of the truly revolutionary books of our times is Understanding Poetry by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. It has a host of imitators, in both poetry and prose. . . . Why has the book been revolutionary? Because it has been the single most important influence upon a whole generation of teachers in college English departments; it has changed the teaching of literature in our colleges."\(^9\) Karl Shapiro acknowledged that "one of the most important works of the century is the textbook called Understanding Poetry."\(^10\) While he strongly deplored its pejorative influence upon genius and creativity, he had to admit that "it has not only revolutionized the teaching of literature. . . . Every composition text and anthology shows its influence."\(^11\)


\(^10\) Ibid., p. 208.

\(^11\) Shapiro says that UP has taken "poetry off the street and put it in the laboratory . . . it has practically put a stop to genius. . . . the brainless and beautiful poetry of our leading verse magazines derives from Understanding Poetry," p. 208. But he seems to contradict himself when he
Two years later, Raymond Smith in an essay on Fugitive criticism made the observation that "the almost universal use of textbooks edited by Brooks and Warren in undergraduate English courses" has considerably affected the tone of American culture as a whole. "The effect on the thinking of the rising generations of Americans is incalculable." Commenting on the transmission of New Critical ideas, Norman Friedman said: "The influence which these notions have had and are still having can be seen in representative form in the work of Cleanth Brooks."13

As we reach the present decade, we find a New Criticism which has come of age under the aegis of Understanding Poetry. Where new departures now tend to break away from the mainstream, it is against this volume that they declare their position.14 At this time we can look back upon the major revisions effected by Brooks and his colleagues. In an age of the novel, they gave poetry the ascendancy. In defiance of the Academy, they shifted emphases in regard to certain writers, retiring certain accepted ones (even Milton) and advancing others who were lesser known. In an era of

says that "the objectivity of such teaching tools ... results in no standard at all." Ibid.


13In "Imagery: From Sensation to Symbol," JAAC, XII (September 1953), 30.

14Recall Donald Hall's statement; see Footnote 3, p. 158.
liberalism and progressivism, they successfully preached conservatism and traditional social ideals based upon agrarian culture. They emerged from a reactionary coterie to become the new establishment. With their literary quarterlies, with their zeal for teaching, and with original textbooks, they propagated the New Criticism. Brooks and Warren made their name in all three areas just mentioned. Their Southern Review received international acclaim. Their Understanding Poetry has been called "one of the classics of modern pedagogy," a book that was "revolutionizing the teaching of literature chiefly by teaching the younger teachers what they had never been taught in college themselves—how to read poetry. . . . The huge success of that effect is attested to by the fact that Understanding Poetry, still an academic best seller, looks today rather ordinary."\[15\] It has dozens of imitators. A cursory look at the college English textbook catalogs shows that the vast majority of poetry manuals have either known or copied the Brooks and Warren method.

Such is Brooks's reputation and influence in the United States. What has it been abroad? In some foreign countries his criticism has been esteemed and his method imitated. Obviously the New Criticism is known in England and has had its effect there. It was born of the critical ideas of Eliot, Richards, Pound, and Hulme. Its emphases were linguistic analysis and explication de texte. But the British do not

take criticism as seriously as the Americans of the past generation have.\textsuperscript{16} The English critic is more amateur than his American counterpart. His method and style are more informal and subjective; highly personal, too, if he so wishes.

In Ireland we find a lone pioneer, Denis Donoghoe, who is a thoroughly convinced imitator and evangelizer of Brooks.\textsuperscript{17} Donoghoe is an inventive critic who, much like Brooks, is not simply taking over another man’s style and method, but rather assimilating principles and applying them to his native material. He acknowledges a strong indebtedness to Brooks, especially to Modern Poetry and the Tradition and The Well Wrought Urn, but draws also upon Jacques Maritain and Suzanne Langer, for his aesthetics. His kinship with Brooks is further to be seen in his rejection of Granville Hicks and anyone else who proposes a propagandistic

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{16}In America the professional critic seems to enjoy so much esteem that some Americans . . . think it is high time his wings were clipped. . . . One gets the absurd impression, reading some current American criticism, that the poet in the U.S.A. exists chiefly to feed his poems into the mills of criticism. . . . In England and Ireland, however (how the Scots and Welsh manage, I don’t know), it is still widely assumed that criticism is something that anyone can do; something that the philologist or the moralist or the retired colonial governor or the poet (any poet) can . . . turn out in a spare half hour.” Donald Davie, “Reflections . . .,” p. 440.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{17}Denis Donoghoe, ”Notes Toward a Critical Method,” Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, n.v. (Summer 1955), 181-192.
\end{quote}
literature such as Hicks did in *The Great Tradition*, "a misguided work which ignored literary values altogether in its concern for Marxist dogma." 18 Donoghoe's quest for a method of criticism suitable to Irish letters drew a comment from one Vivian Mercier, who showed (in terms of its origins) how the American New Criticism might and might not be applicable to Ireland. 19

A similar adherence can be found in Germany. Wolfgang Schmidt-Hidding in his "Methoden der Interpretationen englischer Gedichte" 20 uses in his poetic analysis three principles taken from Brooks. These he announces at the outset of his essay, along with a statement of three critical errors he will avoid—another dependence on Brooks (from MPT and WWU). His five-point summary is essentially Brooksian.


19 Vivian Mercier, "An Irish School of Criticism?" (Reply to Denis Donoghoe's "Notes . . ."), *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, n.v. (Spring 1956), 83-87. Mercier notes that the New Criticism in America was a reaction against the "literary-historical tradition, borrowed from Germany." As previously mentioned above Mercier credits the N.C. with teaching reading and writing English, a dire need occasioned by mass immigration and the theories of John Dewey, p. 85.

1962). This is a most significant book. It is the only foreign work to my knowledge which gives such extensive analytic treatment to the New Criticism and in particular to Cleanth Brooks. Brooks is the most frequently mentioned American author. Interestingly enough, the book comes from behind the Iron Curtain and betrays the propagandistic tone which all Soviet literature and art is obliged to assume. While Brooks gets due praise for his method and contribution, Weimann also misses no chance to insinuate the absurdity of the absolutistic and highly developed notions of Brooks and his colleagues. The proletarian tone is already evident in the title, with its reference to "bourgeois literary science." The preface announces that "the way of evolution of the bourgeois science of literature manifests itself as a confused panorama of research studies, methods, and disciplines. The unifying center of science was lost during the nineteenth century. The present phase of development is characterized by a blind collapse of bourgeois science through the 'destruction of reason' by the fascist (Hitler) regime."\textsuperscript{21}

When Weimann makes the observation that the cultivation of "analytic criticism" and "a neo-classical revival" at Cambridge, Chicago, and the Southern States, gave literary criticism a prominence over creative writing. He goes so far as to say it has substituted for philosophy.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21}Weimann, pp. 5ff. \textsuperscript{22}Ibid., pp.9ff.
The remainder of continental Europe shows no trace of the New Criticism.\textsuperscript{23} This is quite understandable even beyond the element of cultural lag. In France and Italy, for example, the technique of *explication de texte* was in vogue long before it was introduced into the United States.\textsuperscript{24} On that score, there would be no question of the French or the Italians "converting" to a method in which they were already versed, even though they employed it with a certain abandon that the New Critics would condemn for its admission of the quest for the moral lesson, biographical relevance, and sociological criticism.\textsuperscript{25} A survey of French criticism from the nineteenth century to the 1940's further explains why the New Criticism had no effect upon the French literary

\textsuperscript{23}In an effort to obtain some notion of the current status of criticism in Europe, I questioned several exchange graduate students at Louisiana State University. Andrée Courrieu and François Leblanc from Paris stated that they had never heard of our American New Criticism nor of Cleanth Brooks; that they had studied poetry according to the *explication de texte* method, which they said allowed much improvising and comment along with textual analysis. It was both a creative and critical venture. Franco Tonelli of Rome gave a similar report for Italian college classes in poetry. He conjectured that only in a formal class in contemporary literary history or comparative literature would one come across Brooks and the New Critics. On the other hand, Hans Elshorst of Germany said that every German college student had his paperback copy of Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* and were at least superficially aware of the New Criticism and its aims. He had heard of Brooks before.

\textsuperscript{24}Malcolm Cowley in the American Scholar Symposium, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{25}Loc. cit.
world. They were undergoing a similar development of their own. If we begin with 1870, we can find within the various groups of critics some trends comparable to those of the New Criticism. There was, for instance, the provincialism and strong nativism of Jules Lemaître and Emile Faguet. Their school climaxed its activity with the formation of the politically oriented *L'Action Française* (20 June 1899) which strove to give the authentic image of French life: an echo of the Fugitives and their Southern ideals. Charles Maurras's reaction against romanticism recalls Brooks's stand. Professor Lanson (1857-1934) of the Sorbonne began a trend of historical and scientific criticism, but scientific in a philological sense. *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (1911) was the organ of an aesthetic group: Gide, Rivière, Ghéon, and Copeau. Their stress was upon concrete imagery. Marcel Proust, also a contributor, gave the literary critic an esoteric place, much like the New Critics had done. Between the Wars, Charles Du Bos and Thibaudet came to the fore with their respective tenets of creative criticism and organicism. Brémond, Valéry, Claudel, Giraudoux, and Mauriac, much like the Americans of the Newer Criticism, looked to Christianity for the hope of modern literature. From Fénélon they derived a Christian mystique and declared that only when men consecrates himself to the peace of poetry is he whole. . . . But

26 The summary which follows is digested from *La critique littérale en France* (Paris, 1960), pp. 158-209, a literary history by Pierre Moreau, professor of the Sorbonne.
in all this there is never any mention of the American New Criticism or of Brooks.

Canada has also felt Brooks's influence. Invited to publish his ideas on "The Uses of Literature," in the Toronto Educational Quarterly, Brooks was hailed as "an eminent literary critic who has also had a profound influence on the teaching of literature." 27

Lastly, and most important of all, Cleanth Brooks was nominated to the post of cultural attaché to the U. S. Embassy in London, in 1964. In this capacity he enjoys the unique distinction of being ambassador of letters and culture in the household of the mother-country. The London Times reporter commented as follows upon Brooks's mission: "The United States has seldom paid Britain a warmer compliment than in appointing CLEANTH BROOKS, one of her most distinguished men of letters and teachers, to be Cultural Attaché at the Embassy." 28 His function is to serve "as a liaison between British universities and American ones, British critics and American ones, and between our two cultures in general." 29 Brooks modestly refers to this as a very valuable function. The appointment is far more significant. It

27Editorial note attached to Cleanth Brooks's article, "The Uses of Literature," Toronto Educational Quarterly, II (Summer 1963), 2-12.


29Cleanth Brooks, in the same article.
is the seal of official American approval upon the academic and cultural stature of Cleanth Brooks. It is hard to imagine greater acclaim than to have merited assignment by one's government to speak in behalf of literature and life in the Embassy at London and in the assembly halls and salons of England.

2. Evaluation

My evaluation of Cleanth Brooks will be a brief retrospect and a distillation of what has gone before.

1. Cleanth Brooks is an admitted disciple of Coleridge, Eliot, Richards, Ransom, and Tate; but a disciple who refined and developed the ideas derived from his masters.

2. Among the American New Critics, he stands out as the most prolific, most consistent, and most persevering. As of now he is their chief representative.

3. His early career indicates an inventive critic who had the courage to speak out against unsatisfactory literary and critical standards and to propose a method, in part considered bizarre, in part directly opposed, by well-known professors of English.

4. The majority, if not all, of Brooks's literary sins are imputable to an overemphasis required at the time in order to establish strong critical principles in opposition to existing norms which he considered inadequate or erroneous.
5. Brooks's literary theory is not merely (as some contend) an "approach" to literature, nor yet just a "method." It may rightly be regarded as a system, that is, as a totally organized and integrated theory for the analysis of literature. Although Cleanth Brooks at no time pretended to set forth a complete literary theory, the sum total of his writings yields a well-integrated system. A study of his writings shows the following general pattern of development: he treats the nature of poetry and of the individual poem; the positive and negative norms whereby one may analyze and evaluate a poem; the role of the critic, of the literature teacher, and of the poet. As to the nature of poetry, he establishes a neat progression of image, metaphor, irony or paradox, and theme—all in that order.

6. While not a member of the original Fugitives, his later association with these Southern critics made him a representative of the best religious, political, and literary traditions of the movement. In religion he is a staunch Anglican; in politics, a respecter of conservative growth of an agrarian bent; in literature, he is a Christian humanist, one who holds strongly for the autonomy of literature and the integrity of supernatural Christian faith.

7. The body of Brooks's writings reveal the living spirit of a critic who held fast to his early convictions and adapted to current exigencies without compromise. For example, when he felt that the didacticism of Victorian days had run its course, he did not hesitate to include moral and
Christian values in his criticism, yet with the proper order of literature and religion, each in its place. This was not so much a case of personal growth, but rather of a penetration of Christian morality present in his mind from the first. This more recent development, in Brooks and other critics, has been aptly labeled the Newer Criticism.

8. Significantly, the Fugitives have altered the Christian element of American literature from the Puritanism and Calvinism of New England, which held sway until World War I, and have introduced the more orthodox Catholic presentation, characteristic of the Anglican Communion.

9. As the New Criticism begins to be seen in some sort of final shape, it becomes increasingly evident that Cleanth Brooks will have to be considered its outstanding exponent.

10. Through his Modern Poetry and the Tradition and The Well Wrought Urn and the textbooks that he produced with Warren and Heilman, Brooks revolutionized the teaching of English in American colleges and universities and educated a whole generation of young teachers who will pass on the best traditions of this third revolution in English criticism.

21 March 1966
Feast of St. Benedict
St. Joseph Abbey
St. Benedict, Louisiana
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. A Checklist of Writings by Cleanth Brooks

A. BOOKS


B 15. **The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes,** ed. by A. F. Falconer. Baton Rouge, 1953. For part in general editorship, see Item B 5 above.

B 16. **An Anthology of Stories from The Southern Review,** ed. by Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren. Baton Rouge, 1953. (These stories are from The Southern Review, of which I was managing editor and later editor, 1935-1942.)

B 17. **The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Evan Evans,** ed. by Aneirin Lewis. Baton Rouge, 1957. For part in general editorship, see Item B 5 above.


B 20. The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and George Paton, ed. by A. P. Falconer. New Haven, 1961. For my part in the general editorship, see Item B 5 above.


B. ESSAYS, ARTICLES AND REVIEWS


E 6. Review of Millay's Wine from these Grapes, Southwest Review, XX (January 1935), 1-5.


E 29. Review of Auden and Bishop (poetry), Kenyon Review, IV (Spring 1942), 244-247.


E 34. Review of MacNeice's Poetry of W. B. Yeats, Modern Language Notes, LVIII (April 1943), 319-320.

E 35. "The Case of Miss Arabella Fermor," Sewanee Review, LI (Autumn 1943)

E 36. "Housman's 1887," Explicator, II (March 1944), Item 34.
E 36A. "On 'Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics,'"
American Scholar, Letter to editor (with Robert Heilman), XIII (Spring 1944), 248-252.


E 42. Review of Tate's The Winter Sea, Poetry, LXVI (August 1945), 324-329.

E 43. Review of Colum's From these Roots and Jones' Ideas in America, Sewanee Review, LIV (Spring 1946), 334-343.


E 47. Review of Stauffer's Nature of Poetry, Modern Language Notes, LXII (June 1947), 357-359.


E 60. "Character is Action" (excerpts from Understanding Fiction, see B 6), The Writer, LXIII (June 1950).


E 62. "The Quick and the Dead: A Comment on Humanistic Studies," pp. 1-21; and


E 131. "New Methods, Old Methods, and Basic Methods for Teaching Literature," English Exchange (Published by the Ontario Educational Association), IX (Fall 1963), 3-15.


C. POETRY


P 3. "Two Variations on a Figure," *Southwest Review*, XVIII (Winter 1933), 124f.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
II. Books and Articles on Brooks


A protest against the new criticism approach to poetry as a "diagnosis." Brooks replies in E 39.


222, 355n., 390n.

———. "Unconscious Expectations in the Reading of Poetry," ELH, 9 (1942), 235-244.


Suggests a knowledge of Irving Babbitt's New Humanism as a complement toward a better understanding of the New Criticism. Proposes Wimsatt and Brooks's Literary Criticism: A Short History as "the new orthodox version of literary history."


88-91, 97-98.


137.

Cites the name of Brooks among "the big names of contemporary criticism" who are representatives of the "new analytical criticism."

1 Included are books, articles, and other sources which treat of Brooks's theory and practice, or at least make mention of same. After each item page numbers are given where Brooks is mentioned, unless the whole item is on Brooks. Occasionally annotation is included.


Auden, W. H. "Letter to the Editor on 'The New Criticism,'" American Scholar, XX (Spring 1951), 234.


Views the work as primarily on anti-Romantic statement.


Disagrees with Brooks and Warren's interpretation of Irwin Shaw's "The Girls in the Summer Dresses," on two scores: seems to ignore, or misinterpret, basic human nature; does not lead the student to an interpretation but instead imposes one.


60-62. Notes the shift of the New Criticism to an inclusion of philosophical, ethical, and religious values, after a twenty-year period of strict autonomy of literature from religion, philosophy, politics, etc. Cites several authors and works of past decade in illustration of his point. Singles out Brooks as significant example, esp. in his two most recent books, The Hidden God and William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country. Observes, however, that this shift does not violate the autonomy of literature, but rather criticism now takes into account "value significance."


Review of The Well Wrought Urn.


110, 616-618, 744-750, 1061.
Treats Brooks's work with R. P. Warren, his part in the New Criticism, and his writing on the English language in the South.


xiii, xxi, xxii.
Sees Brooks as a carrier of the methods of Ransom, Empson, and Blackmur (through Understanding Poetry) to many people who would not otherwise have read the works of those critics. Notes that Brooks follows Leavis's pattern in the "evaluation" method.

On Brooks, p. 15.

Review of The Well Wrought Urn.

336, 338.


Review of The Well Wrought Urn, NYTBR (June 8, 1947), 6, 25.


Bloom, Edward A. "The Vatic Temper in Literary Criticism," Criticism, V (Fall 1963), 297-315.

28, 32, 38, 145.
Notes influence of Understanding Poetry, "which profoundly altered the teaching of poetry in college classrooms."

11, 16, 40, 107, 117.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


2, 4, 28-29, 35-36, 58, 70, 79, 95-99, 100, 103, 110. Notes Brooks's use of "conventional" in a derogatory sense, but his fuller use in an accepted sense, comparable to that of Tate.

Burke, Kenneth. "Version, Con-, Per-, and In- (Thoughts on Djuna Barnes's Novel, Nightwood)," Southern Review, n.s., II (Spring 1966), 329-346.

329-330. Burke notes that Brooks has departed from his strict Formalist critical position in his book on Faulkner. He offers no examples to substantiate his claim to a departure. Perhaps his point is the inclusion of materials outside of the text in Brooks's discussion of the Faulkner novels.


17, 18.


270n. Explains and justifies the inclusion of Christian elements in criticism and proposes a thoroughgoing Christian criticism as the only one adequate today.


ix, 14, 22f., 29-31, 36, 46, 172-173, 175, 184n. Finds a shift from the socio-economic or political to the literary in the Southern Review. The Brooks and Warren textbooks teach "closer" reading.


xix, 201.
Crane, Ronald S. "Cleanth Brooks, or the Bankruptcy of Critical Monism," Modern Philology, XLV (May 1948), 226-245.

Crane. The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry. Toronto, 1953.
4, 5, 84, 92, 96, 98-105, 107, 109, 118-120, 175-176, 185.

162-167, 278; cited on 300, 313, and 328.
An excellent presentation which unashamedly interweaves long passages from critics ancient and modern. Various philosophical inquiries into aesthetics are followed by practical applications. The relation of criticism to other disciplines concludes this timely historical-theoretical survey.


106-107.


Deutsch, B. Reference to Brooks's values in The Well Wrought Urn, Tomorrow, VI (December 1947), 58-59.


Fuson, B. W. Review of The Hidden God, Library Journal, LXXXVIII (April 1, 1963), 1526. Senses a timorous reader as Brooks's representative in modern fiction reading; considers the scope of the
novelists in question far greater than Brooks conceives them to be.

Notes Brooks's view that "the unifying principle of the poem . . . is an attitude or complex of attitudes," (WWU 175) and that the poem is basically dramatic. Applies Brooks's principle of "the heresy of paraphrase" to the sound structure, an application Brooks himself ignored and one that has even stronger validity than in the area of meaning or sense of the poem.

Disagrees with Brooks's finding a "crypto-Christianity" in Faulkner and Hemingway.


Brooks passim.
Challenges the antithetical status of logical and aesthetical truth proposed by Richards, Tate, and Brooks. Rejects Brooks's principle of dramatic propriety for poetic statement. Notes the need of logic, not a hostile element, for the full play of Brooks's paradox.


Handy, William J. "Imagination and Understanding: Contemporary Versions," Texas Studies in English, XXXVI
(1957), 20-27.

Shows the relation of the Kantian distinction between the respective activities of the cognitive faculties (imaginative and understanding) in modern critics like Ransom, Tate, Brooks, Susanne Langer, and Eliot. Like Kant, these critics hold that "the subject matter of literary art is man's qualitative experience."


"Science, Literature, and Modern Criticism," Texas Quarterly, I (Spring 1958), 147-156.

Proposes as the integrating theme for the school of criticism represented by Ransom, Tate, and Brooks, the belief that "the special symbolic formulation of language which characterizes the literary work is unique in its ability to represent a part of man's experience that cannot be represented adequately by the abstractions of logic."


Hassan, Ihab H. "Criticism as Mimesis," South Atlantic Quarterly, LV (October 1956), 473-486.


Hirsch, Jr., E. D. "Objective Interpretation," PMLA, LXXV (September 1960), 463-479.
365-370.

Includes Brooks's ideas and methods in the course of presenting other critics. Explains the absence of a special chapter on Ransom, Tate, Brooks, and Pound (and Warren?) "because their work either does not illustrate a significant method or does not illustrate it as clearly as someone else." It is hard to find, however, among Hyman's selections, the equivalent of the Southern New Critics. The exclusion of all the Southern critics leaves his criterion suspect and the end-product incomplete.

Indicates that the New Criticism is a technique, not a "school." It offers much help, but also encourages errors and oversights in the intelligent reading of poetry.

This was an invaluable aid in locating material on Brooks and the New Criticism.

Review of *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*.

Review of *The Well Wrought Urn*.

336.
Cites Ransom's praise of Brooks for keeping poetry and science distinct and preferring the former as "capable of better structures." His chapter, "Criticism at the Poles," traces first the Marxist trend of the thirties (Granville Hicks, et al.), then the new traditionalism of the South established by Ransom and company.

Finds a lack of "any true sense of either Christian or religious feeling as a whole."


______. Review of Richard Foster, The New Romantics (Bloomington, 1962), Criticism, IV (Fall 1962), 369-372. Agrees with Foster as to the New Criticism being essentially a romantic movement rather than the classical revival it pretended to be. Rejects Foster's objection that the rhapsodizing of the N. C. would rob it of philosophical status.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


307n., 355n., 362n.
Cites approvingly Brooks and Warren's treatment of theme.

A review of Wimsatt & Brooks's Literary Criticism: A Short History.


106-107. Recommends Understanding Poetry as "a must on every teacher's list of background references." Upholds Brooks's principles of close reading, avoidance of paraphrase, etc.

Review of The Well Wrought Urn.

A review of books on criticism, including Brooks and Warren's Understanding Poetry.


Purports to refute Brooks's rejection (E 136-499) of Donald Hall's new type of imagination as not new.

39.


Nemerov examines Warren's "Love Parable"; an application of Brooks's method of explication to examine the "sense in which paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry" (p. 36).


16, 26, 35, 185, 205.

155n., 259, 289, 298.

Indicates that Southern poetry, too conservative prior to World War I, came into its own in the inter-war period and has since been boosted by the appreciative publicity given by the New Critics in their reviews and critical articles.

124, 126, 127, 128, 130.
Pearce reviews briefly the scope of the history of ideas as it relates to literature. He seeks to know in greater detail how knowledge of various kinds of meaning is significant for literary analysis and value judgments. Says Brooks has failed in ignoring historical data on poems he analyzes.

Where the Old Critics employed historical background
to account for literary power, the New Critics (Ransom, Tate, and Brooks) have often as not used myth. Notes relation of Christian orthodoxy to their criticism. Mentions Brooks's desire to avoid both "ersatz religion" and "ersatz poetry."


Pottle, Frederick A. "The New Critics and the Historical Method," Yale Review, XLIII (September 1953), 14-23. The claim of the New Critics to establish the autonomy of literature from other disciplines, even from historical research, has served to improve the understanding of the relationship of literature and the historical method.


Pulos, C. E. "The New Critics and the Language of Poetry," Monograph in the University of Nebraska Studies, n.s., No. 19 (March 1958). Seven critics are treated: Ford Madox Ford, T. W. Hulme, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, and Cleanth Brooks. Brooks is selected to represent the later members of the movement. Pulos sees as the aim of the New Critics the task of affirming the importance of poetry within the scientific orientation of the age. Notes the New Critic rejection of Aristotelian theory (esp. of metaphor) and of critical tradition. Brooks's effort to see all poetry on the matrix of the metaphysical (17th century) prototype enables him to include the poems of intervening periods (1660 to 1900's). This is one of the most illuminating studies on Brooks, has a number of insights not to be found elsewhere. I rank it with Crane's "Monism" essay in significance for an understanding of Brooks's doctrine.

Radin, Paul. "Primitive Literature," in The World Through Literature, ed. Charlton Laird (New York, 1951), pp. 3-46. Takes into account the relation of the structure of society upon the content and form of the literature which develops in that society. Exemplars of this dictum are Eliot, Richards, Brooks, Tate, and Ransom. These men,
while recognizing and using myth in their writings, reject as false the view that myth is a surrogate for religion, or that it comes from a "religious instinct."

Shows how the New Critics who have employed the 17th century metaphysical tradition in their search for objectivity in poetry have ironically absorbed the defects along with the dynamic qualities of the metaphysical tradition.

7, 51, 256n., 286n.
Considers Brooks's chief contribution to current interest in the metaphysical tradition is his observation that the metaphysical poets and the modernists stand in opposition to the new-classic and Romantic poets on the issue of metaphor.


Criticizes two chapters of Brooks's Urn: "The Language of Paradox" and "The Heresy of Paraphrase." Considers Brooks as unrealistic "in not wanting us to resolve his paradoxes."

82-83.
Praises highly Brooks and Warren's Understanding Poetry for being the first book of its kind: "a smartly varied anthology of 240 or so poems, richly furnished with analytical aids" (p. 82).


87, 88, 107-110, 124, 142.
Brooks and Wimsatt maintain that literary judgment should be rational and aim at definitions, a point well taken but which tends to ossify criticism in that it finalizes critiques where other versions are admissible. Admits Brooks's broad use of irony but questions his
explanations and illustrations. Prefers Brooks's architecture metaphor to Ransom's democratic state in illustration of the organic concept.

Rillie, John A. M. "Orange or Grid? A New Model for Critics," Twentieth Century, CLXV (March 1959), 246-253. States that criticism is heading into a recession. Sees two fundamental issues of modern theory that remain to be settled: the concept of the work of art as organism and the linguistic theory which attends it. Rillie objects to "organic" as a literary term. There is need for a thorough analysis and revision of organicism.

Schmidt-Hidding, Wolfgang. "Methoden der Interpretation englischer Gedichte," Die Neueren Sprachen, n.s., XI (May 1962), 193-206. 194-195, 205. In this discussion on poetic analysis, the mainstay is Brooks's method. Of some eight works in English cited in the article, three are by Brooks (AL, UP, WWU).


Shapiro, Karl. "The Careful Young Men: Tomorrow's Leaders Analyzed by Today's Teachers," Nation, CLXXXIV (March 9, 1957), 208. Shapiro maintains that Understanding Poetry (by Brooks and Warren) has revolutionized the teaching of poetry and has affected the approach to poetry, making it a clinical specimen. He dams the influence as baneful while he admits it to be widespread.


Smith considers The Fugitives generally informative, though lacking in a statement as to the place of the Fugitives in American literary history. The review indicates the influence of Brooks and Warren upon (i) the tone of American culture and (ii) on college English (pp. 116-117).


A Review of The Well Wrought Urn.

Indicates the influence of Brooks upon colleges, English courses.


A review of three surveys of criticism, including Wimsatt and Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History. 367, 368, 369.


This is a thorough and excellent annotated bibliography on Brooks, in three sections: I. His Books and Essays, including some 13 reviews of MPT, and 20 of WWU; II. His Reviews; III. Criticism on Brooks. Stallman gives a brief note on content of each item and suggests the significance of more important items.


I consider this the most representative anthology of critical essays of the period. It is lacking, however, in a fair sampling from the Chicago critics, there being only one item, Elder Olson's "An Outline of Poetic Theory," from them. This book with Crane's Critics and Criticism would provide an excellent over-all coverage of New Criticism.


28, 73-74, 110, 111-112, 189, 199-200, 213, 236.

A schematic anthology of critical statements from renowned critics under headings such as: Form, Meaning, Imagery, Function of the Poet, Function of the Critic. Some citations lack the substance that the writers in question have stated better elsewhere.


_____. Review of The Well Wrought Urn, Modern Language Notes, LXII (June 1947), 426-429.


Summary of a questionnaire; thirty-four respondents, among them Heilman, Stallman, Wm. Van O'Connor.
Topic: The New Criticism, its character and effect in colleges and universities. Reported as widespread and beneficial.


A neat summary, with illustrations, of some of Brooks's chief tenets. Two corollaries: one, that the criteria for the poem inhere in the poem; two, that there is a need of a revision of English literary history.


States that the use of linguistic principles, such as advocated by Richards and Brooks, would not interfere with metrical analysis but rather aid it.


Shows reconciliation of aims of poets and scientific linguists in the contextualist approach.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
To my knowledge, the best survey of moderate length of the critical movement in America, 1910-1960, including early psychological criticism, the New Humanism, Liberal and Marxist criticism, the neo-Aristotelians, psychological and myth criticism; histories, theories, and critiques of criticism. Sutton gives criticism its orientation for the next decade when he suggests in his last chapter that criticism be a social act.


Acknowledges Understanding Poetry as one of the truly revolutionary books of our times. Not only of wide influence but widely imitated. "It has changed the teaching of literature in our colleges."


20, 117, 176-178, 180, 216, 218, 223-224, 510, 520, 556.

Notes Brooks's opposition to Arnold & Eastman.


632.

Tate reviews Matthew Arnold's ideas on poetry-science relationship and notes Brooks as diametrically opposed.


Page 11 annotates Brooks's Modern Poetry and the Tradition as "probably our ablest defense of the modern Symbolists and metaphysical poets."


Contrasts MPT with Max Eastman's The Literary Mind. The latter more clever but less like to endure. History is the authenticator of Tate's prophetic dictum.


Waggoner, Hyatt H. "The Current Revolt Against the New Criticism," Criticism, I (Summer 1959), 211-225. 217, 224. Waggoner indicates that with the singling out of the New Critics whose religious position is clear and positive (Eliot, Brooks, and Ransom as Anglicans, Tate and Wimsatt as Roman Catholics). Makes it impossible not to conclude that a very important motive in the current wave of attacks on the New Criticism is religious and philosophical. These New Critics are suspected of not being sufficiently "liberal," i.e., pragmatic, secular, and naturalistic.


Wasiolak, Edward. "Croce and Contextualist Criticism," Modern Philology, LVII (August 1959), 44-54. The contextualist method of criticism which Brooks and other New Critics are using was systematically

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
worked out by Croce at least a generation ago; but the New Critics seem to be unaware of this. Also, Wimsatt and Brooks in their Literary Criticism: A Short History, and Murray Krieger in an article on Croce, show a misunderstanding of Croce's work. Croce proposed two standards which Brooks has followed: the unparaphrasability of poetry and the canon of complexity.


This is a most significant book. It is the only foreign work to my knowledge which gives such an extensive treatment to the New Criticism and in particular to Cleanth Brooks. Interestingly enough, the book comes from behind the Iron Curtain (East Germany) and betrays the propagandistic trend of all Soviet literature. While Brooks gets due praise for his method and contribution, Weimann also misses no chance to insinuate the absurdity of the absolutistic and highly developed notions of Brooks and his colleagues.


6-7, on UP, etc.

Indicates UP was the herald of change in college English teaching.


Some seven pages devoted to criticism as it developed in U.S.A. in 20th century. Considers the New Criticism as the greatest hope for the reconstitution of literary study. Calls it a moment "outside the Academy" (p. 120).


260, 331, 333, 342.
Brooks is against relative critical standards. He is also good in his image analysis. This book is regarded as indispensable in German universities. Every student of literature has his paperback copy.


6. A reference to the Brooks-Warren relationship and their "'New Critical' textbook, Understanding Poetry (1938), which . . . revolutionized the teaching of poetry in American universities and colleges."


2. Special mention of the Southern quarterlies: Southern, Kenyon, and Sewanee Reviews. Notes that a literary period has come to an end.


Emphasizes the objective focus over the impressionistic for the critic.


III. Other Materials Consulted


On emotion in poetry; T. S. Eliot's notion.

   Articles and studies presented at the first International Conference of Work-in-Progress devoted to Problems of Poetics, August 18-27, 1960.


Fogle, Richard H. "Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers," ELH, XII (September 1945), 239ff.
   An attack upon the New Critics. In defense of the Romantics, especially Shelley.


   New Critics, Formalists, on p. 330.


   On Blackmur's concept of paradox.


Mercier, Vivian. "An Irish School of Criticism?" (Reply to Denis Donoghoe's "Notes"), Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review (Spring 1956), 83-87.
   Suggests that the American New Criticism approach, as well as it may have suited American needs (i) to counteract John Dewey's educational philosophy and (ii) provide a needed training for undergraduates in how to read with care and comprehension, something of a
different order would serve Ireland's purposes better. A survey of significant literary works since the Celtic revival is proposed as a basis of a literary history and criticism.


Shows the philosophical basis for the contextualist position in criticism, against "the Cartesian-Kantian dualism which had obscured the fact that concepts and judgments cannot be prepared in one mind and handed like tokens to another."


Shows traits shared by Jeremy Bentham's philosophy and the New Criticism: Universality of scope; scientific, objective, and concrete approach; claim to supplant predecessors; systematic methodology working from part to whole; importance of linguistic structure for poetic value—there are traits which reinforce the concept of semantic relevance.


Richards, I. A. *Practical Criticism.* New York, 1929.

Principles of Literary Criticism. New York, 1925.


Shapiro, Karl. "What is Anti-Criticism?" *Poetry*, LXXV (March 1950), 339-351.


Examines the possibility of reading a poem as in a non-aesthetic mode, as, e.g., historical, sociological, or psychological document.


Mention Eliot, Burke, Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, and Wilson, as representative New Critics. Strange selection equalled by strange omissions.


An interesting study of the role of irony in the South, especially in desegregation, industrialism, agrarianism.


Includes Winters's previously published *Primitivism and Decadence, Maule's Curse, The Anatomy of Nonsense, and The Significance of "The Bridge" by Hart Crane, or What Are We to Think of Professor X?*

APPENDIX

"THE NEW CRITICISM" OF JOEL E. SPINGARN

The term "New Criticism," popularized by Ransom's book (1941), was the title of a most significant lecture delivered by Josel Elias Spingarn, Professor of English, at Columbia University, March 9, 1910. A brief survey of the textual history, the contents and relevance of this lecture follows. Because there is no evidence of a literary bond between Spingarn's lecture and the work of the New Critics—both so much alike in many respects—its inclusion in the text might have seemed an unwarranted digression. But because the lecture is so close in its doctrine to the New Critical writings and because it appears to be a pioneer work of the twentieth century deserving of recognition, the present essay is very much in order.

Spingarn's lecture was published six times between 1911 and 1962, but without notable reaction. It was first published by the Columbia University Press in 1911; reprinted in Creative Criticism: Essays on the Unity of Genius and Taste (1917, 1931) and again in Criticism in America: Its Function and Status (1924). The lecture subsequently appeared in a volume which took its title from this initial essay: The New Criticism: An Anthology of Modern Aesthetics and Literary Criticism, edited by Edwin Berry Burgum (New

In Spingarn's essay, "The New Criticism," can be found statement after statement which, might have come from the pen of a Ransom, a Tate, a Brooks—or even from an Eliot or a Richards. After an introductory section in which Spingarn marshals a concise review of the path of early nineteenth century literary criticism he comes to his matter which, I maintain, is as genuine and clear a manifesto of the New Criticism as ever appeared in the *Fugitive*, the *Kenyon Review*, or the *Sewanee Review*, or in any essay of Ransom, Tate, or Brooks. Allow me to quote at random: "No, it is no new battle; it is the perpetual conflict of Criticism. In every age *impressionism* (or *enjoyment*) and *dogmatism* (or *judgment*) have grappled with one another." (p. 8) There follows a resume of the Romantic criticism of France and of Germany. Then: "The *objective*, the *dogmatic* . . . critics of our day may set for themselves very different tasks. . . ." (p. 10) "The problem is not how to determine by what mechanism Addison composed sentences and struck out similitudes, but by what far finer and more mysterious mechanism Shakespeare *organized* his dramas. . . ." (pp. 10f.) "What is this *unity* . . . and can our deeper inspection discern it to be indivisible and existing by *necessity*"
because each work springs as it were from the general elements of thought and grows up therefrom into form and expansion by its own growth? Not only who was the poet and how did he compose, but what and how was the poem, and why was it a poem and not rhymed eloquence; creation and not figured passion?" (p. 11) Let us interrupt the quotations to point out the tenets of the New Criticism implicit in the phrases I have taken the liberty to underline, which anyone with some knowledge of the movement will immediately recognize: Concentration upon the text, not upon the poet or his intention; unity of structure; the organic theory; emphasis upon the poem and not upon the poet; the quest for the essence of poetry in place of a sentimental indulgence of emotion.

After this, he launches into a series of declarations about new departures in literary theory. "In the first place, we have done with all the old Rules." (p. 14) "We have done with genres, or literary kinds." (p. 15) Many New Critics of the thirties and forties were of this spirit. "We have done with . . . an army of vague abstractions. . . ." (p. 16) The New Critics, especially the Fugitives—and Brooks not least among them—were strong on concrete images. "We have done with all moral judgment of art as art. . . . It is not the inherent function of poetry to further any moral or social cause." (p. 18) Burke and Winters excepted, the New Critics regarded this as one of the strong points of the New Criticism: that literature is independent of religion, science, and philosophy; a point to which Brooks returns
again and again, as we shall see later (E 120-102; see p. 87). We have done with technique as separate from art. . . . We have done with history and criticism of poetic themes. . . . We have done with the race, the time, the environment of a poet's work as an element in Criticism." (pp. 21ff.) This was to be an area of high dispute between the historical scholars and the New Critics, which climaxed in the famous diatribe of Douglas Bush at the general meeting of the Modern Languages Association, New York, December 29, 1948 (PMLA, LXIV (March, 1949), 13-21). Finally, Spingarn concludes: "We have done with the old rupture between genius and taste—taste must reproduce the work of art within itself in order to understand and judge it." (p. 24) This is similar to Brooks's contention that in the last analysis, taste and good judgment are indispensable.

I am amazed to find, however, after going through many books and articles on the New Criticism, that so little recognition has been given Spingarn for his pioneer work. Appearing as early as it does, it is truly a herald of new developments yet to unfold in the twentieth century. In fact, it contains pointed expression of principles upon which the New Criticism of the thirties took its stand. Despite the repeated appearance of Spingarn's essay through the years, none of the New Critics to my knowledge give it more than token mention—as in Ransom's title and Brooks's casual observation that Ransom may or may not have known about Spingarn's lecture.
Bernard Smith, literary historian in his *Forces in American Criticism: A Study in the History of American Literary Thought* (New York, 1939), devoted a third of a chapter (pp. 277-285) to Spingarn and his literary ideas expressed in "The New Criticism" as reflecting the teachings of the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce. Smith ranks the essay as "the best exposition of the Crocean esthetic that has ever been made by an American." (p. 277) He adds the praise: "... and because it was made by an academician who opposed academicians, at the moment when the academy began its enforced retreat from a position of critical authority, it has a historic interest possessed by no other system of comparable content." (p. 277) While both Smith's treatment (p. x) and that of Oldsey and Lewis (p. xv) rank him as an expressionist, there are others who consider him an impressionist. It is clear, however, that his emphasis is upon the expressionist position, but in an objective sense; he demands good judgment and taste in the poet in order to insure their existence in the poem. His interest in the poet's intention, taste and genius is with a view to seeing them expressed outwardly. "Every true intuition or representation is also expression. That which does not objectify itself in expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation and mere natural fact. The spirit only intuits in making, forming, expressing. He who
separates intuition from expression never succeeds in re-uniting them.\(^1\)

Sutton well observes, "The critical movement Spingarn prophesied failed to materialize (he has no direct connection with the later New Criticism)." (p. 1) Probably L. Marshall Van Deuse is correct in assigning the lack of concrete critical productions as the reason for Spingarn's ideas not taking root in the decade following the 1910 lecture, ideas which were in principle later proposed and proved highly productive in the twenties and thirties through the writings of Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, Winters, and others.\(^2\)

Along with Sutton, Oldsey and Lewis give Spingarn due credit for his expression of the credo which was to hold for twentieth-century American criticism. While granting "it would be an exaggeration to claim that all modern American criticism has evolved from this one essay, . . . there would be less exaggeration in saying that this piece constitutes a landmark in American criticism, ranking with the publication of Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919)."\(^3\)

The significance of Spingarn's lecture as a prophetic piece of twentieth-century criticism can be seen more clearly

\(^1\)Spingarn, p. 35.


\(^3\)Oldsey and Lewis, p. xiv.
if it is viewed in contrast to a contemporary piece such as Paul E. More's "Criticism" (1910). More's essay is totally retrospective: high praise of Matthew Arnold and his "sweetness and light" and "high seriousness" as the tests of great literature. The style is heavy and periodic. More lacks the vitality and originality of concept displayed by Spingarn.

Evidence that Spingarn's ideas did not take root in American letters or criticism can be deduced from a typical survey of American literature which was once popular in colleges and considered a standard reference: Vernon Louis Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920 (New York, 1927, 1958). Parrington does not even mention the name of Spingarn or other contemporary Columbia critics, such as Lewis E. Gates and H. T. Peck. His chapter on "The Origins of Criticism" deals mainly with the social criticism that started with William Dean Howells and the rise of realism (in the essays of Hjorth Boyesen, the Norwegian-American essayist and philologist), the naturalism of the twentieth-century novelists like Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis and Frank Norris, and its reply in the new romanticism of James B. Cabell (pp. 373ff.).

---

L. Marshall Van Deuse in his doctoral dissertation, *J. E. Spingarn and American Criticism*, \(^5\) records the academic clash that Spingarn had with Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia, resulting in the loss of his position. His revolutionary ideas and his polemics in defense of them were deemed inconsistent with school policy. Van Deuse also indicates a strong humanistic and religious bent in Spingarn, a trait kindred to the spirit of the Fugitives and Agrarians.

Apart from Van Deuse's dissertation, there were no notable studies on Spingarn and the new criticism controversy until the 1960's. The most substantial study comes from abroad, in the work of the German author, Hans-Joachim Lang, *Studien zur Entstehung der neueren amerikanischen Literaturkritik* (Hamburg, 1961), who devoted an entire chapter to the American scholar. In fact, in this work which proposes studies on the more recent American criticism, Spingarn alone is taken to represent the New Criticism. There is no mention at all of Ransom, Tate, Warren, Brooks, Blackmur, Winters, Pound, etc. In 1962 were published both Oldsey and Lewis's anthology on American critical essays and Walter Sutton's *Modern American Criticism*, both of which devote the keynote phase of their Introductions to Spingarn's essay, "The New Criticism," and his *avant-garde* approach.

VITA

The Reverend Anthony Tassin, O.S.B., was born 14 January 1925, the youngest of the fourteen children of Charles J. Tassin and Evelina Marie Breaud. Upon completion of his elementary and secondary education at Edgard High School, he entered Saint Joseph Seminary, near Covington, Louisiana, September 1940. Four years later he entered Saint Joseph Abbey to become a Benedictine monk.

His undergraduate work was done at the Seminary (B.A., 1947) and Loyola University of the South (B.S., 1952). He holds a Master's degree in Education from the Catholic University of America (1956). From 1954 to 1962 he was sub-prior of his monastery. From 1957 to 1962 he was Rector (principal and dean) of St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary. He studied at Louisiana State University in the summer of 1956 and again from 1963-66. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of English.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Reverend Anthony Tassin, O.S.B.

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: The Phoenix and the Urn: The Literary Theory and Criticism of Cleanth Brooks

Approved:

[Signatures]

Donald E. Stanford
Major Professor and Chairman

Max Goodrich
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

James T. Harbin

William L. Van Riper

Thomas A. Kirby

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

May 4, 1966