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Cleanth Brooks and the Romantics.

Huey S. Guagliardo

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Huey S. Guagliardo
B.A., University of New Orleans, 1971
M.A., University of New Orleans, 1973
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ABSTRACT

This chronological study of Cleanth Brooks's works dealing with the English poetry and poetic theory of the Romantic period has a threefold purpose: to trace the changes in Brooks's attitudes toward this body of poetry and the expressionist theory associated with it; to explain why these changes occurred when they did; and to clear up some of the misunderstandings and correct some of the misrepresentations of Brooks's approach that have persisted over the years.

In his early work, Brooks described Romantic poetry as a deviation from the English poetic tradition as represented by metaphysical and modern poetry. His early practical criticism emphasized the "failings" of Romantic poetry, particularly what he believed was its tendency to oversimplify the complexities of human experience. Brooks insisted on the superiority of an "inclusive" poetry, a poetry which renders the full complexity of experience. Such poetry, he maintained, works through indirection rather than direct statement. Its radical metaphors and heterogeneous images are the instruments by which it dramatizes the complexity of the human
condition. Brooks generally found Romantic poetry to lack this quality of inclusiveness while he found metaphysical and modern poetry to possess this quality to a high degree. He believed that the problem with Romantic poetry centered around the failure of the Romantic poets to perceive the functional nature of metaphor. Brooks's early work is also characterized by an attempt to minimize the use of biographical and historical scholarship in order to shift the focus of critical inquiry from the poet to the poem. Brooks's attempts to disparage Romantic poetry and to minimize the use of biography and history during this period are part of his rhetorical strategy for defending the complex imagery of modern poetry and combating what he believed were erroneous critical principles carried over from the Romantic period, most notably the Romantic theory of poetry as self-expression.

Opponents of Brooks claimed that his work was narrow and intolerant. In order to defend his position, Brooks applied his poetic principles to Romantic poetry. Accusations of narrowness and intolerance also led Brooks to expand his approach by making greater use of biographical and historical material.

Demonstrating that his approach works for Romantic poetry led Brooks to modify his view of this poetry;
that is, he began to develop a genuine appreciation for some Romantic poems and to distinguish between the subjective theory of composition associated with Romanticism and Romantic poetry itself. Through his association with W. K. Wimsatt, Brooks came to an even deeper appreciation of Romantic poetry as he arrived at a better understanding of the metaphorical structure of this poetry, a structure based not on overt statement but on implication. He came to view Romantic poetry as "inclusive" after all.

Although Brooks's early work tends to minimize the importance of biographical and historical scholarship in order to establish a new, more objective critical approach, and although it is accurate to say that his theory broadened over the years with respect to other critical focuses, he has from the beginning recognized the importance of such scholarship and has spent years attempting to correct the misconception that his approach ignores biography and history. Brooks's own work often fuses criticism and scholarship while distinguishing between the two activities.

Brooks's later work is marked by an attempt to emphasize the common ground which Romantic poetry shares with the metaphysical poetry which preceded it and, more importantly, with the modern poetry which followed it. His recent efforts to emphasize the essential continuity which exists between the Romantics and the moderns clearly
illustrates the extent to which Brooks's attitude toward Romantic poetry has changed over the years.
INTRODUCTION

After graduating from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor's degree in 1928, Cleanth Brooks enrolled at Tulane University, from which he received his M.A. degree. In 1929 he accepted a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford where he studied until 1932. Brooks's return to the United States after completing his work at Oxford marks the beginning of a long and distinguished career as teacher, editor, and literary critic. This career began in earnest in the fall of 1932 when he took a teaching position in the Department of English at Louisiana State University. Here he began a long collaboration with Robert Penn Warren (the poet and novelist came to L. S. U. in September of 1934) which resulted in the publication of several highly influential textbooks, the earliest of which were An Approach to Literature (1936), Understanding Poetry (1938), and Understanding Fiction (1943). In 1935, Brooks and Warren, along with Charles Pipkin (all three were alumni of Vanderbilt) began the editing of the Southern Review. Although the review ceased publication in 1942, it became during its relatively brief life one of the most important literary journals in

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America. In 1947 Brooks migrated to Yale University where his impressive career continued. To date, Brooks is responsible for some twenty-seven books and for over two hundred essays. Aside from his textbooks, his most important works include Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939), The Well Wrought Urn (1947), Literary Criticism: A Short History (with W. K. Wimsatt, 1957), and two books on the works of William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country (1963) and Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (1978).

Thus, Cleanth Brooks stands as a major figure in modern American criticism. His numerous books and essays have made a lasting contribution to literary studies. His textbooks, particularly Understanding Poetry and Understanding Fiction have been especially influential and have been credited with revolutionizing the teaching of literature. As a principal proponent of the New Criticism, one aspect of which was the advocacy of the "close reading" of literature, Brooks is largely responsible for the tremendous impact which that methodology has had in this century. His tireless efforts at exege- sis have served as models for many young critics. But perhaps more than any single achievement, Brooks's sheer range as a critic and scholar has established for him a prominent place in our literary heritage. His concern has truly been with "universals." Unwilling to be content with merely staking out an "area of specialization,"
Brooks has sought to explain a great variety of English and American literary works, regardless of the genre or period to which they belong.

This study will focus upon Brooks's attempts to deal with the English poetry and poetic theory of the early nineteenth century, for his work in this area is perhaps the most misunderstood of all his criticism. Moreover, misunderstandings regarding Brooks's attitude toward this body of poetry and toward the expressionistic poetic theory associated with it have led to further misunderstandings of his entire critical approach. For example, since Brooks's objective approach to poetry is rooted in a reaction against the expressionism associated with the Romantic poets, and since his early work attempted to shift the focus of criticism from the poet to the poem, he has been labeled as an "anti-Romantic" and his criticism is generally assumed to be hostile to biographical and historical studies of literature. But are such labels and assumptions justified? Certainly, as most readers who are acquainted with Brooks's work are aware, his attitudes toward Romantic poetry and poetic theory have evolved through several stages over the past four decades. For this reason, only a thorough chronological examination of this aspect of Brooks's work from the beginning of his career to the present can do justice to the complexity of these attitudes and clear up some of
the misunderstandings which have persisted over the years. The present study will attempt such an examination.

While numerous books, articles, and dissertations have been written dealing with the criticism of Cleanth Brooks, no full study has been made of Brooks's work on the Romantics. Some important work, however, has been done on the relationship of the New Critics to romanticism, and the criticism of Brooks is dealt with to some extent in these studies. Eric Russell Bentley's "Romanticism--A Reevaluation" (1944) and Richard H. Fogle's "Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers" (1945) are two early essays which attempt to defend the Romantics against modern criticism. Bentley aligns Brooks with "anti-Romanticists" like T. S. Eliot and Allen Tate who exemplify "the modern passion for fixities," particularly a "fixity of aesthetic standards" which excludes Romantic poetry from the realm of the great and which "disapproves of the genetic or historical approach to literature" that is "linked both causally and historically with the Romantic Movement and with those changes in human consciousness and attitude which made the nineteenth century so different from the eighteenth." Fogle, declaring that "the reputations of all the English Romantic poets, and of Shelley in particular, have been vigorously attacked by an influential coterie of modern critics, the 'New' Critics, as John Crowe Ransom
has called them,"⁴ sets out to defend the Romantics, especially Shelley (whom he believes to be the favorite whipping boy of these critics), against such "attacks." Among the enemies of romanticism considered in Fogle's essay is, of course, Brooks, whom he regards as having confused "poetry with the objects and forms of nature."⁵ According to Fogle, Brooks finds romanticism "unsatisfactory both in theory and in practice."⁶ Two more extensive works dealing with the relationship between the New Critics and the Romantics are Murray Krieger's The New Apologists for Poetry (1956) and Richard Foster's The New Romantics (1962). Krieger attempts to show that critics, like Brooks, who claim to be anti-romanticist have "been battling romanticism with the tools furnished them by the romantics."⁷ The main tool, according to Krieger, was furnished by Coleridge, that is, the conception of the work of art as organism. Krieger believes that such a concept, for the New Critics, has led to a limited view of art as self-enclosed, separate from the world of reality. Their insistence on the autonomy of the poem, he observes, forces them to deny its logical structure, a position which, when taken to extremes, leads to "romantic irrationalism."⁸ Although Krieger acknowledges that "the critical sensitivity of Brooks protects him from the more extreme implications of this theory," he nevertheless concludes that "in the hands
of Brooks, the theory, ironically, would seem itself to be highly romantic in its emphasis on illogicality."

Foster sets out to prove that the New Criticism is essentially a Romantic movement rather than the classical revival it pretends to be. He finds it paradoxical that personality so often obtrudes into so much of the work of the New Critics—work which claims to be impersonal and objective (i.e., anti-expressionistic). Brooks, however, is treated as an exception, and Foster distinguishes between the impressionistic approach used by many of these critics and the impersonal and objective approach of Brooks. "Among the major New Critics," writes Foster, "only Cleanth Brooks comes to mind . . . as engaging mainly in the detailed and selfless analyses of particular works of literature." More recently, Gerald Graff, in Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma (1970), like Krieger, has attempted to point to the difficulties arising as a result of the New Critics' fashioning of Romantic organicism into a view of art as self-enclosed and divorced from reality. One chapter of Graff's book is devoted to Brooks, whom Graff treats as a "representative New Critical theorist." The problem with all of these studies is that, although each is illuminating in a limited way, none provides a comprehensive enough view of Brooks's work to be of much use in understanding something as complex as his attitudes toward Romantic poetry.
and poetic theory. Moreover, these works are limited in that they treat Brooks, not as a critic in his own right, but only as a representative of a literary movement.
NOTES

1 In a "Commentary" (on the study of English at Oxford) in American Oxonian, 49 (April 1962), Brooks explains that he chose to study for the Honours B.A. at Oxford "largely because the Honours B.A. was the degree upon which Oxford prided itself" (p. 125). Brooks received the B.A. (with honors) in 1930 and the Bachelor of Letters in 1932. The degree program chosen by Brooks emphasized extensive reading, unlike the typical Ph.D. program at an American University which divides the student's efforts between reading and scholarly research.


4 Richard H. Fogle, "Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers," ELH, 12 (September 1945), 221.

5 Fogle, p. 241.

6 Fogle, p. 240.


8 Krieger, p. 145.


CHAPTER 1

ANTI-ROMANTICISM IN THE EARLY WORK
OF CLEANTH BROOKS

I. AN OVERVIEW

The critical theory of Cleanth Brooks, like so much of what we have come to call "New Criticism," was born out of a reaction to romanticism. Anti-Romantic views are particularly evident in the early work of Brooks, that work which leads up to and includes *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939). From this early criticism I will extract what Brooks believes to be the essential characteristics of the highest type of poetry, his explanations for his belief that Romantic poetry generally lacks these characteristics, and his attempts at a reordering of the English poets and a reassessment of the English poetic tradition.

Generally speaking, the qualities which Brooks most admires in poetry are those which enable the poet to reveal human experience in all of its richness and complexity, such qualities as irony, realistic diction, wit,
and the ability to fuse recalcitrant and discordant materials. Brooks finds these qualities most evident in modern poetry and the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century, but absent from the Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century. In fact, many of the anti-Romantic sentiments found in Brooks's early work are expressed in the course of his attempt to defend the complex and heterogeneous imagery so important to modern poetry.

As an editor of the Southern Review, Brooks published a series of three essays under the general title, "Three Revolutions in Poetry." The three essays, "I. Metaphor and the Tradition," "II. Wit and High Seriousness," and "III. Metaphysical Poetry and the Ivory Tower," appeared in the first volume (1935) of the journal and can be said to constitute Brooks's first serious attempt to defend modern poetry as well as his first expression of anti-Romantic views. These essays are also important because they laid the groundwork for and were, with minor revisions, incorporated into Brooks's later and fuller study, Modern Poetry and the Tradition.

From these essays it becomes clear that Brooks believes that at the core of the method used by modern poets is the synthesis of diverse material into a new unity. Although many critics have protested against modern poetry for its "bizarre or undignified figures of speech," Brooks himself views the violent comparisons
found in these poems (figures such as T. S. Eliot's "Midnight shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium," for example) not as "illegitimate perversions" of the critical canons of the English poetic tradition but as "a reversion to an older type of metaphor," a reversion, in fact, to an older poetic tradition. For Brooks, the "true" tradition of English poetry is represented by the metaphysicals. The metaphysical poets, by using adventurous images which synthesized diverse materials, created a verbal context whose meaning resisted expression in any simple proposition or abstract statement. Thus, a metaphysical poem can be viewed as a dramatization of a particular situation rather than a statement of a generalization or an open expression of the poet's feelings or thoughts. Modern poetry, Brooks believes, can be viewed in the same way, and he frequently refers to the modern poets as the metaphysicals of the twentieth century.

In his preference for poetry built upon opposition or heterogeneity, Brooks is following the early work of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, that is, the influential books and essays published by Richards and Eliot in the 1920's. Of course, as Brooks observes, both Richards and Eliot were following Coleridge or at least a famous passage from Coleridge's Biographia Literaria which states that the imagination "reveals itself in the
balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities." Richards was the first modern to isolate and develop this important idea of Coleridge's criticism. In his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925), Richards distinguishes between poetry of "exclusion" and poetry of "inclusion" or "synthesis." According to Richards, the poetry of exclusion simply leaves out the heterogeneous or refuses to acknowledge disparities, while the poetry of inclusion or synthesis is built upon the tension created by the accommodation of disparate elements. Brooks demonstrates, in both the "Three Revolutions" essays and in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, that Richards' description of inclusive poetry can be applied to the poetry of the metaphysicals by comparing Richards' description with Eliot's remarks on metaphysical poetry. Through his comparison, Brooks shows that the qualities of metaphysical poetry which Eliot admires are the same qualities Richards uses to describe his poetry of synthesis. As Brooks points out, both Richards and Eliot are praising poetry which assimilates diverse materials. For example, Brooks compares Eliot's definition of the wit which characterizes metaphysical poetry as "a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience" to Richards' statement, in the *Principles*, that "tragedy (the poetry of synthesis at its highest level, in his opinion) is perhaps the most general, all-accepting,
all-ordering experience known." It should be noted here that Brooks himself, in an earlier essay, defines wit as "an awareness of all the alternatives which a given situation offers," and that he views the function of the conceit, almost a constant feature of metaphysical poetry, as "an instrument of precision by which the poet is enabled to express the most elusive states of feelings." For a critic such as Brooks, who believes that "poetry is not an isolated and eccentric thing, but springs from the most fundamental interests which human beings have," and who would agree with Richards and Eliot that poetry of the highest type should render the fullness and complexity of these interests, the superiority of inclusive poetry is obvious. Such poetry, by its very nature, will never oversimplify the human predicament but instead will always do justice to the infinite complexity of man's actual experience in the world.

Brooks observes, in the *Southern Review* essays and in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, that those critics whose premises of taste are firmly embedded in the poetry of the nineteenth century are the ones who protest most against the methods of modern poetry. He argues that to condemn the violent comparisons central to the method of modern poetry by the critical premises which have dominated in the last two and one half centuries is beside the point, for these critical premises themselves
are being questioned and a radical change regarding the whole concept of metaphor is at hand, a change which will bring about a revolution in the conception of poetry. As the general title of the Southern Review essays suggests, Brooks identifies three revolutions in poetry and traces the effects of each on the use of figurative language. The first revolution came about with Thomas Hobbes and the scientific rationalism of the seventeenth century. The Romantic Revolt was the second revolution, and the works of modern poets represent the third.

During the period of the first revolution, science began to impinge upon the language of poetry. "A tidying process" was begun "which attempted to separate into neat categories the poetic and non-poetic, the emotional and the intellectual, the serious and the frivolous, canalizing and departmentalizing the mind." Basically, figurative language was thought to function either as ornament (and certain images were believed to be inherently ornamental) or as illustration. The bold imagery which characterized Elizabethan and metaphysical poetry was replaced by "the rational act of sorting out the discordant and removing it from the context."

Thus language began to be used more denotatively or scientifically in poetry. Brooks associates the movement toward simplification with a pragmatic approach to poetry, that is, the idea that the end of poetry is "to instruct through amusing
devices." According to Brooks, "with such a view of the function of poetry, the character of the imagery is pre-determined," for "a serious expositor, one who endeavors to state 'high poetic truth' will use clear illustrations and illustrations which dignify and heighten; he will not indulge in fanciful playfulness; he will not leave the reader in doubt as to what he means, his attitudes will be relatively simple." This didactic approach, Brooks believes, resulted in the impoverishment of poetry since it brought about the decay of wit, the decay of tragedy, and the loss of the ironical function of imagery. In Brooks's words, poetry became "a coarser instrument," that is, an instrument less effective in dramatizing the subtleties of human experience.

The second revolution, the Romantic Revolt, did little to restore that which was lost in the first. "It did not clear up the confusion between science and poetry," writes Brooks. It might be said that, in Brooks's view, poetry got off course with rationalism and the new science of the seventeenth century (when elaborate figurative devices were abandoned in favor of more straightforward modes of expression) and the Romantic Revolt failed to change its direction, failed to be revolutionary enough. As a matter of fact, Brooks points out, with the Romantics "simplicity of expression was elevated to the status of a cardinal virtue."
Brooks believes that Romantic poetry actually represents a deviation from the true English poetic tradition, that is, from the tradition of metaphysical wit and complexity. According to Brooks, the Romantics lie outside of the tradition because, like the eighteenth-century neo-classicists, they misunderstood the nature of metaphor. As he explains in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, a "fundamental fallacy" underlies the Romantic and neo-classical account of the functions of metaphor. This fallacy is the notion that metaphor is "merely subsidiary," merely an accessory used to illustrate or decorate and not an essential part of the poem itself. In Brooks's view, metaphor is no mere accessory; it is fundamental to poetry. "Metaphor is not to be considered," he writes, "as the alternative of the poet which he may elect to use or not, since he may state the matter directly and straightforwardly if he chooses. It is frequently the only means available if he is to write at all." For this reason a new set of principles for testing the goodness of metaphor must be developed to replace the narrow principles of simplicity and decoration used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Brooks puts it, "our only test for the validity of any figure must be an appeal to the whole context in which it occurs: Does it contribute to the total effect, or not?" He points out that the metaphysical poets used metaphors functionally
rather than decoratively and that the comparisons cannot be removed from a metaphysical poem without demolishing the poem; that is, "the comparison is the poem in a structural sense" (MPT, pp. 14-15).

The functional character of metaphor, however, was not generally recognized by the Romantic poets. Like the eighteenth-century neo-classicists, the poets of the nineteenth century, says Brooks, believed that metaphors are used for the purpose of ornamentation or illustration. They also accepted the idea that certain items are inherently beautiful and poetic. "We are accustomed to think of the Romantic Revolt as having radically altered the conception of poetry," writes Brooks; "and important changes of course there were. But as regards the fittingness of metaphor, the basic conceptions were not profoundly altered. As Eliot has stated in his Use of Poetry: 'When it came to Donne--and Cowley--you will find that Wordsworth and Coleridge were led by the nose by Samuel Johnson; they were just as eighteenth century as anybody.'" The Romantics, Brooks points out, merely substituted their own poetic diction for the diction of the eighteenth century.

Brooks discovers in the Romantics the same prejudice against the ingenious or exact figure that can be found in the eighteenth century. By the eighteenth century, he says, "poetry had come to mean the presentation of
certain poetic, that is, sublime, objects for contemplation in an elegant and correct dress." Dr. Johnson, for example, "associates the poetic with generality, censuring the particularity and accuracy of many of the conceits of the metaphysical poets."\(^{16}\) Brooks compares certain passages from the critical writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge with some of Dr. Johnson's pronouncements to illustrate the similarity that exists between the eighteenth and nineteenth century concepts of metaphor. For example, Brooks believes that in distinguishing between the fancy and the imagination, Wordsworth is brought into agreement with Johnson that the "grandeur of generality" is lost when poetry resorts to such exactness of description as can be found in the metaphysicals. Wordsworth, says Brooks, believed that materials which are technical, sharply realistic, and definite should be assigned to the fancy and have no place in serious poetry, while "directly the reverse of these are the desires and demands of the Imagination. She recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite." Thus, Brooks concludes, "modern comparisons like those of Eliot, Tate, and Yeats would have been felt by Wordsworth to be merely fanciful." Brooks maintains that Coleridge and Wordsworth were in agreement concerning the concept of metaphor, as Coleridge also distrusted the ingenious or complex figure. Pointing to Coleridge's own poetry,
Brooks notes that "he rarely, if ever, uses the types of figures which Donne and Marvell used," and that although Coleridge frequently expresses admiration for Donne, he "does not show Donne's influence in his own poetry nor can he be said to have brought English poetry back to that influence."17 Wordsworth's statement that the imagination "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite" is used by Brooks as proof that the preference for the vague and general is characteristic of the Romantics and is hostile on principle to the types of comparisons found in metaphysical poetry (MPT, p. 5).

Brooks finds that the Romantic distrust of adventurous imagery continues in the form of protests against the radical metaphors used in modern poetry. He writes that "critics whose taste has been formed on the poetry of the nineteenth century" find the figures of speech contained in modern poetry to be "too prosaic and unpoeitic." This objection, Brooks says, is founded upon the mistaken belief "that certain objects are intrinsically poetic, whereas others are not." He compares lines from Wordsworth's "Beauteous Evening"--"The holy time is quiet as a Nun / Breathless with adoration"--with lines from T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"--"The evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table"--noting that critics
who object to figures of speech used by modern poets would find that Wordsworth's poem "makes use of an object which is exalting and poetic, to wit, the nun; whereas patients under ether are not poetic."

In addition to dividing the world into poetic and non-poetic objects, the Romantics also, according to Brooks, segregated the intellect from the emotions. Thus the exercise of the intellect demanded from the difficult figures used in modern poetry is objected to as hostile to the expression of deep emotion by those still influenced by Romantic premises of taste. With the Romantics, says Brooks, the emphasis was placed on emotion and the intellect was restricted. "Simplicity of expression was elevated to the status of a cardinal virtue" and great "stress was laid on the belief that the medium was to give the object clearly and simply with a minimum of intellectual effort demanded by the reader." Difficult figures such as those used by the metaphysicals or the moderns would be considered "artificial" by the standards of the nineteenth century. "The conceitist could by no stretch of the imagination be the simple peasant singing out of his simple heart." For poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge poetry was "the spontaneous overflow of emotion," says Brooks, "and any hint of the ratiocinative denies that there has been any overflow at all--merely a careful and ingenious ladling
out." Closely related to this "dissociation of sensibility," to borrow a phrase from Eliot who also discussed the failure of the nineteenth-century poets to unite thought and feeling, Brooks believes, is the fact that "the Romantics were careful not to mix their metaphors too much." He points out that such figures as Eliot's "Midnight shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium," figures which fuse emotion and intellect, "are simply not to be found in the poetry of the early nineteenth century." Of course, this inability of the Romantics to fuse intellect and emotion, Brooks would say, is but one example of their failure to render the full complexity of human experience—a failure which is a direct result of misunderstanding the true nature of metaphor.

Clearly, in order to return to what Brooks sees as the true English poetic tradition, a third revolution would be needed, one that would attempt "to repair the damage which ensued from the first." As Brooks repeatedly points out, "the second revolution, the Romantic Revolt, failed to be revolutionary enough. The poets, in attacking the eighteenth-century conception of the 'poetic,' attempted to revise it instead of discarding altogether the concept of a special poetic material or a poetic diction. Even Coleridge himself, with all his critical acumen, did not completely free himself from
the didactic conception. The didactic function, clad in iridescent colors as a revelation of the Divine, remained to confuse his critical theory." In Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Brooks insists that although modern poetry is generally regarded as antitraditional, it represents in reality a continuation of the tradition characterized by the metaphysical conceit. He announces that "the thesis frankly maintained in this study is that we are witnessing (or perhaps have just witnessed) a critical revolution of the order of the Romantic Revolt" (p. xxxi). The modern poets, however, understand what the Romantics did not understand--"the essentially functional character of all metaphor" (MPT, p. 15) and the true source of the poetic, that is, the idea that "the poetic becomes such by functioning in a poem and results from the act of the poet's making, not from something intrinsic in the material itself." Like the poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, modern poetry works not through direct statement but by means of functional, interrelated images. Moreover, these images are heterogeneous in nature, thus corresponding to the heterogeneity of human life itself. The basic materials of modern poetry--conceit, ironical contrast, wit, paradox--are the instruments by which it dramatizes the complexity of the human condition.

Although Brooks believes that modern poetry is
accomplishing a third revolution, at the same time he recognizes that "the prevailing conception of poetry is still primarily defined for us by the achievement of the Romantic poets" (MPT, p. xxx). This means that poetry will have to be redefined and that the orthodox histories of English literature will have to be rewritten "with emphasis on a more vital conception of the nature of poetry than that which now underlies them" (MPT, p. 244). In other words, all poetry will have to be reevaluated according to the high standards set by the complex structure of metaphysical poetry. Such a reevaluation, of course, will enhance the value of modern poetry but as regards the poets of the nineteenth century, some drastic revisions of the traditional estimates will have to be made. The concluding chapter of Modern Poetry and the Tradition contains "notes for a revised history of English poetry."

While Brooks believes that any revised interpretation of the history of English literature will have to acknowledge that the Romantic movement was essentially a reaction to scientific rationalism, he also believes that even though the Romantic movement recognized that poetry had become overly scientific--"it retreated, as we know, from the rationalistic, the ordered, and the classified"--it did not lead poetry back to the true tradition because it was "too much centered in the
personal and the lyrical" and was characterized by a
"concomitant lack of the dramatic." In Brooks's view
the Romantic movement merely substituted one kind of
simplicity for another, thus never achieving the complex
dramatic structure of metaphysical poetry; it "substi-
tuted romantic subjectivism for neoclassic objectivism
instead of fusing the two as they were fused in a great
dramatic period such as the Elizabethan." According to
Brooks, "Wordsworth has as little of the dramatic as
does Shelley, and where we find an overt attempt at the
dramatic, it is the personal self-dramatization of Byron--
the self-conscious actor, not the objectifying dramatist"
(MPT, pp. 216-17). The overemphasis upon self-expression
and the lack of the dramatic element are, for Brooks,
two important defects in Romantic poetry, for, in his
view, a poetry of direct statement--whether the didactic
statement typical of the eighteenth century or the state-
ment of the personal feelings of the poet more typical
of the nineteenth century--is an inferior type of poetry
because it does not do justice to the complexity of life.

In his "sketch of a new history" (MPT, p. 243),
Brooks sets out to reorder the traditional hierarchy of
nineteenth-century poets. For example, he elevates the
importance of William Blake because of the poet's use of
vigorouW metaphors. In Blake's poem "The Scoffers,"
says Brooks, "the metaphor is made to define and carry
the idea; it represents a fusion of image and idea, and it is thus a successful attempt to break through the deadening influence of Hobbes." But the critic hastens to add that this kind of poetic structure "stands almost alone in its period," for although Blake can be classified as a metaphysical poet, "the elements which make him such a poet appeared rarely in the poetry of his period and never elsewhere in a form so extreme. He remains an isolated and exceptional figure" (MPT, p. 235).

But while Blake's witty comparisons cause Brooks to elevate his importance as a poet, the critic believes that Wordsworth's "distrust of the intellect and the subtleties of wit" limit him as an artist. Brooks uses Wordsworth to illustrate the "new cult of simplicity" that gathered strength in the early nineteenth century. As has already been pointed out, Brooks views the Romantics as substituting their own version of simplicity for the neoclassical version. While the neoclassical poets had desired to be simple in order to be logically clear, the Romantics wanted "something quite different from logical clarity. The emphasis had shifted from the logical perspicuity of the poetry to the emotional lucidity of the poet. The Romantic poet distrusted the intellect as inimical to emotion and destructive of spontaneity." Wordsworth's distrust of the intellect, says Brooks, "rarely allows him to make use of indirection
in his poetry." The result of this is that Wordsworth characteristically lacks the dramatic quality that Brooks admires so much in the metaphysicals. Because he lacks this quality, says Brooks, Wordsworth's poetry "is often flat and heavy" (MPT, p. 236).

Brooks's most drastic re-evaluation, however, involves Shelley and Keats. "One of the most striking evidences of the inaccuracy of the traditional account of English poetry," he says, "is seen in the ease with which Shelley and Keats are paired." Brooks views Shelley as "a very unsatisfactory poet greatly inferior to Keats." In I. A. Richards' terms, Shelley's poetry is a poetry of "exclusion." Because it refuses to acknowledge disparities, Shelley's poetry cannot bear an ironical contemplation. According to Brooks, Shelley is guilty of "sentimentality, lack of proportion, confusion of abstract generalization with symbol and confusion of propaganda with imaginative insight" while Keats is "rarely sentimental," "maintains his objectivity," and frequently "attempts a qualifying self-irony" in his poetry. Brooks summarizes the essential distinction between Shelley and Keats as follows: "Shelley tends to make a point, to state a dogma, decking it with the beautiful and the ethereal. When his poetry fails, it fails through oversimplification or cloying floweriness. Keats, on the other hand, explores a particular
experience—not as a favorite generalization to be beauti-

fied—but as an object to be explored in its full ramifi-
cations." Brooks pairs Shelley with Wordsworth and Keats

with Coleridge. While he believes that both Shelley and

Wordsworth are guilty of overly explicit expressions of

feeling, flat generalizations, oversimplifications, and

of making straightforward pronouncements associated with

didacticism, he views Keats and Coleridge as "separated

from their contemporaries by a reluctance to force didac-
ticism. They respect the complexity of experience too

much to indulge in easy abstractions" (MPT, pp. 237-38).

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that a ser-

ies of oppositions emerge from Brooks's sketch of a re-

vised history of poetry. Poetry is opposed to science.
The intellect is opposed to the emotions. A respect for

the complexity of experience and an exploration of par-
ticular, concrete experience are opposed to oversimplifi-
cations, flat generalizations, and easy abstractions.

Finally, the objective dramatization of experience is

opposed to the more direct methods associated with didac-
ticism and expressionism. On the one side of the scale

are those qualities which characterize the highest type

of poetry, a poetry which renders the full complexity of

experience, while on the other are those which mark po-

etry of an inferior variety, poetry narrowly pragmatic

or sentimental. One might summarize Brooks's early
writings on the Romantics by simply observing that he believes that a great deal of Romantic poetry lies on the wrong side of the scale.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICAL CRITICISM AND SOME EARLY CRITICISM OF SPECIFIC ROMANTIC POEMS

In 1939 Cleanth Brooks wrote that "the prevailing conception of poetry is still primarily defined for us by the achievement of the Romantic poets" (MPT, p. xxx). Because he was opposed to the critical frame of mind which dominated the literary scene in the thirties, a frame of mind which resulted in college courses that made little or no attempt to teach poetry except by paraphrase, through the study of biographical and historical material, or by didactic interpretation, Brooks set forth in his early works several recommendations for the practical criticism of poetry. At the same time he attempted to point out what he considered to be erroneous critical principles. It was hoped that doing so would clear away much critical confusion, some of which, Brooks believed, had carried over from the Romantic period.

Many of the mistaken approaches to the study of poetry, according to Brooks, arose from basic misconceptions about the nature of poetry and the role of the critic. A case in point is the tendency to describe the
literary work in terms of the mind of its creator, a tendency which was common in the textbook criticism of the 1930's and which can be said to have derived from the Romantic notion of poetry as self-expression. As M. H. Abrams has pointed out in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, there is "one distinctively romantic criticism," that is, "one essential attribute which most early nineteenth-century theories had in common: the persistent recourse to the poet to explain the nature and criteria of poetry." \(^{24}\)

Abrams has labeled as "expressive" that theory of art "in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged." \(^{25}\) In Wordsworth's Preface, of course, poetry is defined as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." This definition became the slogan for the expressionists. As Abrams points out, "almost all the major critics of the English romantic generation phrased definitions or key statements showing a parallel alignment from work to poet." \(^{26}\)

With the expressionist approach to poetry, the main criterion for criticism is sincerity; that is, a poem is judged to have value if it successfully expresses the poet's actual feelings and attitudes. Thus, writes Abrams, an "inevitable consequence of the expressive point of view" is "the exploitation of literature as an index to
If poetry is the expression of the poet's feelings, then it is logical for the critic to begin by attempting to find out as much as he can about the poet. How else will he be able to judge whether or not the poem is sincere and accurately expresses the poet's intentions? Since, from the expressionist point of view, the value of a poem depends largely on the quality of the author's mind, it follows that the critic's job is to find out all that he possibly can about this mind by carefully studying biographical and social material.

Brooks has from the start opposed the subjective theory of composition associated with romanticism in favor of a more objective approach to poetry. This opposition is clearly evident in two of his earliest but nevertheless most influential publications, the textbooks *An Approach to Literature* (co-authored with J. T. Purser and Robert Penn Warren and first published in 1936) and *Understanding Poetry* (co-authored with Robert Penn Warren and first published in 1938). In these works attempts are made to bring the study of poetry away from its Romantic focus upon the artist and lead it toward the art object itself, the poem. For Brooks, poetry cannot be defined as merely the expression of the poet's personality, but instead it must be looked upon as an objective dramatization of human experience, as a construction with its own internal unity and coherence. This objective view
of poetry, of course, changes the role of the critic, for no longer is it his function to understand the mind of the poet. Instead it is his job to examine the poem as "a literary construct" (UP/1, p. iv). Thus the primary recommendations for the study of poetry offered in the "Letter to the Teacher" section which begins Understanding Poetry are that "(1) Emphasis should be kept on the poem as poem; (2) the treatment should be concrete and inductive; and (3) a poem should always be treated as an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation" (p. ix). The objective approach, of course, also changes the criteria by which poetry is evaluated. No longer is the poet's sincerity at issue in judging the goodness of a poem; rather the emphasis is upon the unity and coherence of the poetic object and how well it dramatizes the human condition. It is also stated in Understanding Poetry that "the poem in itself, if literature is to be studied as literature, remains finally the object for study" (p. iv).

In his opposition to expressionism, Brooks was, of course, following directly in the footsteps of earlier critics, most notably T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot. The anti-Romantic movement in modern criticism can be said to have begun with Hulme's essay, "Romanticism and Classicism" (written in 1913-14 and published posthumously...
in 1924). In his essay Hulme calls for a new poetry based on simple, objective description rather than expressionism. Only this type of poetry, Hulme believed, can provide man with a picture of concrete reality in all of its fullness. The anti-expressionistic tendency is also clearly evident in the literary criticism of T. S. Eliot. Eliot's "impersonal theory of poetry," led him to reject, as "an inexact formula," Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility." According to Eliot, "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." As he progresses toward perfection the artist is faced with "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." For Eliot, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind who creates," for "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality." Eliot shifted the emphasis away from the poet and toward the consideration of the poem as an object in its own right. He wrote that "honest criticism and sensitive
appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry." For Eliot, historical, biographical, and sociological interpretations of literature should give way to close scrutiny of the literary text. The poem should be considered as a poem and not as another thing.

An essay published only three years after the first publication of Understanding Poetry illustrates how strongly Brooks rejected the biographical approach to poetic analysis. In "The Poem as Organism: Modern Critical Procedure" (1941), Brooks shares Eliot's objection to the Romantic metaphor which describes poetry as a spontaneous, gushing fountain and to the typical movement evident in Romantic critical commentary "away from the poem as such to the poet's personality." In such commentary, writes Brooks, "we even find the poem defined as the spontaneous overflow of such a personality." Brooks believes that critics and readers should be "warned against regarding the poem as a self-conscious statement of the poet; or if we regard the poem as the 'expression' of the poet, we need to remind ourselves that the poem is not merely an extension of the poet's personality, a bit of literary ectoplasm." It is the result of "a prejudice fostered by the Romantic tradition," he says, that leads to undue emphasis on the poet's biography and which distracts us from the poem as an independent object which exists. Eliot wrote that "to divert interest from
the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim; for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad," and Brooks would also detach the poem from the personality of the poet in order to allow the inspection of the poem as a structure in its own right. "Almost every English professor," writes Brooks, "is diligently devoting himself to discovering 'what porridge had John Keats.' This is our typical research: the backgrounds of English literature. And we hopefully fill our survey textbooks with biographical notes on the poets whose poems are there displayed. But one may know what the poet ate and what he wore and what accidents occurred to him and what books he read--and yet not know his poetry."39

Brooks's attempt to shift the focus of criticism from the poet to the poem, as already noted, was to publish his own textbooks. Unlike the typical anthologies of the time, which were heavily weighted with biographical and historical material, An Approach to Literature and Understanding Poetry attempted to facilitate the inspection of the poem as a structure in its own right, rather than as an appendage to the poet's biography, by sharply focusing upon the work itself and by leaving to implication its relation to biographical and historical matters. To properly deal with the poem as poem, however, it was also necessary "to dispose of a few of the
basic misconceptions" (UP/1, p. xii) about the nature of poetry and the role of the critic. One such misconception has already been dealt with, the Romantic tendency to define poetry as the open expression of the ideas and beliefs of the poet and the role of the critic as student of the poet's mind. But, according to Brooks, there is another, more basic, misconception out of which expressionism as well as several other misunderstandings arose.

"The source of most of the misunderstandings of poetry and of literature in general," Brooks believes, is the confusion between poetry and science, specifically that confusion which leads people to judge poetry as if it were science (UP/1, p. 10). It must be kept in mind that the kinds of materials dealt with in poetry are different from those dealt with in science. While poetry "attempts to communicate attitudes, feelings, and interpretations" (UP/1, p. 7), science involves the communication of matters of objective fact. Even more significant, however, is the distinction made between the method of science and the method of poetry. The method of science is direct statement, but the method of poetry is indirection. Symbols are used by the poet instead of abstractions, suggestions instead of explicit pronouncements, and metaphors instead of direct statements. An Approach to Literature states that while science is concerned
with bare facts, poetry is concerned with the "humaniz­
ing of the facts."41 Brooks believes that the ultimate
justification of all literature is that it "gives us a
picture of life--not the picture that science gives and
not a picture that is actually (historically) true, but
a picture that is true in the sense that it gives many
important things which science from its very nature can­
not give; and it presents this picture to us in its most
vivid and moving form" (AL/1, p. 7).

Of course, for Brooks, if poetry is to provide the
special kind of picture that only poetry can give, it is
essential that it be read as poetry and not as history,
biography, or sociology. Unfortunately, he would say,
all too often study of these fields has substituted for
the study of poetry. An Approach to Literature and Under­
standing Poetry, therefore, demonstrate a new approach to
literary study which focuses upon the literary documents
themselves. The anthologies include close readings of
individual works and discussions of various poetic ele­
ments--such as "meter," "figurative language," "tone and
attitude," and "statement and idea"--which are intended
to emphasize the poem as an organic system of relation­
ships. Even the arrangement of the poems in the texts is
intended to point out the unique nature of the poetic ob­
ject and to distinguish that object from ordinary dis­
course. Thus both anthologies contain hundreds of poems

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arranged in order of increasing complexity; that is, both texts begin with what the editors regard as the simplest type of poetry, poetry that tells a story, and gradually lead up to more difficult poems. The purpose of beginning with narrative poetry—the most direct kind of poetry—is to show that even the simplest poem is concerned with more than bare facts. The editors say that "a good prose paraphrase will give a mastery of the facts of the case; but the poem merely starts at that point. The poem is not attempting merely to give facts; it is attempting to stimulate a particular feeling about these facts" (AL/1, p. 429). Brooks believes that "narrative presents the most obvious form which our interest in the stuff of literature takes," and so Understanding Poetry uses the reader's interest in narrative "as a device for leading into the study of poetry" (UP/1, p. 166).

It is shown, however, that as poetry becomes more and more complex, it moves further and further away from narrative and from the direct, factual concerns of science, the implication here being that poetry must be both indirect and dramatic if it is to do justice to the complexity of human experience—the direct method of science will not do.

Of course, nowhere does Brooks suggest that the confusion between poetry and science originated in the Romantic period. It has already been noted, in fact, that
he traced this confusion back to the seventeenth century. However, Brooks does point out that the Romantics, because of their overemphasis upon the personal and the lyrical, failed to clear up the confusion that came about with Hobbes (MPT, pp. 216, 217). As a matter of fact, the Romantic notion of poetry as self-expression might be viewed as one form of the confusion between science and poetry, for, more often than not, Brooks would say, the end result of Romantic subjectivism is a poetry of direct statement—the method of science.

That Brooks, in his early work, found a great deal of Romantic poetry to be built on direct statement and therefore to be an inferior poetry incapable of presenting a full picture of life, is shown by the analyses of Romantic poems found in both Understanding Poetry and An Approach to Literature.

For example, Brooks finds Shelley's "The Indian Serenade" to be an unsuccessful poem mainly because of the poet's "direct method" of conveying to the reader the experience of intense love: "He [Shelley] might conceivably have conveyed the intensity of his love to the reader by hints and implications merely, allowing the reader to infer for himself the intensity. Or he might have given emphasis by understatement. But he has chosen to state the intensity directly and to the full." Brooks further explains that the "characteristic danger" of

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this direct method "is that the reader may feel that the statements are overstatements--merely absurd exaggerations"; the danger, in other words, is sentimentality and sentimentality, in Brooks's view, is one of the main faults of Romantic poetry. Sentimentality is defined as "the display of more emotion than the situation warrants" and it occurs in poetry when the poet has not properly prepared for the display of emotion. Such is the case, we are told, in Shelley's poem. The statement "I die! I faint! I fail!" seems absurd to the reader because the poet "makes no attempt to supply a context which would give a background for this particular experience." Furthermore, "there is little to keep us from feeling that [the speaker of the poem] is a confirmed sentimentalist, ready to faint and fail whenever the proper stimulus is applied. We know nothing of the lover except that he has lost control over himself." It should also be noted that this analysis points out that "the question at issue here is not whether Shelley felt 'sincere' when he wrote the poem," but rather, "are the statements made by the lover in this poem convincing to the reader?" The critical focus, then, is upon the poem rather than the poet. Brooks finally judges "The Indian Serenade" to be unsuccessful because it is "one-sided," that is, it fails, because of its direct method, to dramatize the full range of the experience with which it deals (UP/1, pp. 320-22).
Brooks also criticizes two poems by Keats for failing to take full advantage of the indirect language of poetry. Although Brooks admires the "Ode on Melancholy" and says that it contains "individual passages of fineness," he claims that it cannot be put beside the greatest poems because it is not ironical enough. This he explains as follows:

Keats has for his theme a variation of the old theme used so often by Shakespeare, for instance: the passing of beauty, or beauty destroyed by time. There are in general two approaches: (1) a rather straightforward, direct approach, or (2) an ironical approach. Keats's poem falls somewhere between the two. He is really using an indirect ironical approach: Don't look there for melancholy; if you want something really to be sad about find the most beautiful thing that you can, for the loveliest things must perish. His poem requires irony, therefore. But the poem does not have enough irony. ... The most successful passages which we have found are ironical or tend to irony. But the poem does not have enough to be entirely successful. (AL/1, p. 481)

But while Brooks believes the "Ode on Melancholy" at least manages "to separate the mood of melancholy from mere sentimentality" by connecting "the melancholy mood with something that is permanently true about human life" (AL/1, p. 480), he finds Keats's "Bright Star" to be "completely devoid of irony" and believes that for this reason the poem "dissolves into sentimentality." The speaker of this poem "does not apparently see the contrast" involved here. "He would have the immortality of the star, an immortality which he identifies with its isolation from
human life, however; but he would have in addition along
with this immortality, not isolation from life, but in­
deed, the satisfaction of his own particular personal
desires." The speaker of this poem lacks "a vivid sense
of the fact that the wish could not possibly be achieved."
Although Brooks characterizes the speaker's description
of the immutability of the star as "rather fine," his
attempt to apply this image of immutability to himself,
Brooks believes, betrays "a lack of a sense of propor­
tion" (AL/l, p. 482). Like Shelley's "The Indian Sere­
nade," Keats's poem could also be described as "one-sided"
and "sentimental": "We say that the ending of the poem
is sentimental, and in this case, as usually in cases of
sentimentality, we see that the emotion is serious for
the poet but we do not share it with him--we are inclined
to laugh" (AL/l, p. 482).

Just as the poet might confuse direct statement, the
method of science, for the true method, the indirect,
ironical-metaphorical method, of poetry, so the critic
might mistakenly attempt to judge poetry as if it were
science. This may lead to what is called the "message-
hunting approach to poetry," that is, "the business of
looking only for the statement of an idea [some good ad­
vice perhaps or maybe a noble sentiment] which the reader
thinks he can apply profitably in his own conduct" (UP/l,
p. 10). This is an erroneous approach because "an idea
in itself is not enough to make a poem, even when the idea may be a worthy one" (UP/1, p. 12). Such an erroneous norm, of course, might lead the critic to overrate one poem or underrate another. The analysis of Shelley's "Ianthe" found in An Approach to Literature can be used to illustrate this point. While the typical "message-hunting" critic of the 1930's would probably judge this poem a success because it has for its subject the admirable feeling of love which a father has for his child, the objective critic recognizes that this is not enough to make it a good poem. "It must bring renewed strength to the subject, if the poem is to be better than a mere prose statement of the subject"; however, "Shelley's poem presents no new body of perceptions and no enrichment of feeling for the subject . . . it fails, first, because the statement is flat without any interest in developing or exploring the idea, and second, because there is no attempt to make the poem clear-cut and vivid to the reader" (AL/1, p. 463). Shelley's "Ianthe" lacks the dramatic quality of good poetry. As is pointed out in Understanding Poetry, a good poet wants his readers "to visualize or feel or hear his images . . . for that is one of the chief ways a poet communicates his meaning, a way more important in the long run to most poets than that of the actual flat prose statement of idea" (UP/1, p. 389). Brooks describes Shelley's method of composing
this poem as "slovenly," and says that "Ianthe" "stands in the same relation to a good poem on the subject [which would present the theme indirectly and dramatically] as does a cheap picture of a mother and child on an advertising calendar to a good painting of the Madonna" (AL/1, p. 463).

It has already been pointed out that Brooks set out to reorder the traditional hierarchy of nineteenth-century poets according to a set of "objective" standards, and that, according to his revised history, poetry displaying a complex, dramatic structure is rated higher than simple, straightforward poetry. Thus Brooks believes that the direct, subjective poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth is overrated by message-hunting critics whose norms are much too narrow, while a poet like Blake is underrated by the same critics.

Brooks compares poems by Blake and Wordsworth in Understanding Poetry to again illustrate the point that there is more to a good poem than the message-hunter's abstract statement of an idea. The comparison of Blake's "The Scoffers" and Wordsworth's "A Poet's Epitaph" shows that "poems with similar themes may be vastly different." Brooks judges "The Scoffers" to be a better poem than "A Poet's Epitaph" primarily because Blake's method of conveying his theme is more indirect and dramatic than Wordsworth's. Although both poets deal with the same
basic idea--"they are protesting against the habit of breaking life up into neat and unrelated fragments instead of perceiving it as a whole, and against the habit of conceiving of it exclusively in terms of the intellect rather than in terms of the imagination"--Blake supports this idea by constructing a dramatic framework while Wordsworth makes use of a series of direct statements--"he states what he has to say" (italics mine). The result is that "Wordsworth's poem . . . is less concentrated in effect than Blake's, though his theme as a statement is more easily found. We have then what may seem an odd contrast: at a first reading we understand Wordsworth's poem more easily, but we feel Blake's more intensely. We have already found that poetry insists on more than abstract statement. Blake's poem, if we accept this view of poetry, scores higher than Wordsworth's even on a first reading" (UP/1, pp. 579-82).

It should be noted here that the only other poem by Wordsworth which Brooks fully analyzes in the first edition of Understanding Poetry also depends upon the direct method for conveying its theme. Brooks describes "Michael" as "a direct and simple narrative" whose method "lies very close to that of prose fiction in its lack of condensation" (UP/1, p. 83). Although Brooks pronounces Wordsworth's method to be effective for this particular poem, it is obvious from the commentaries throughout the
text that he believes poems such as this, which lack the concentration and intensity derived from a more dramatic method of presenting a theme, to be inferior because they do not present a picture of life "in its most vivid and moving form" (AL/1, p. 7). They may satisfy the norms of the message-hunters but not those of the objective critic.

It has already been shown that, in Brooks's view, the message-hunting impulse, or the identification of the poem with the idea or ideas expressed by the poet, "causes frequent misunderstandings and misreadings" which often result in the overrating or underrating of certain poems. Many such errors "result from the fact that the reader does not happen to agree with an idea expressed in a poem" (UP/1, p. 12). It has been pointed out, however, that, in Brooks's view, the goodness of a poem should never be based on the mere fact that it offers good advice or states some universal truth. This basic principle is part of another of Brooks's recommendations for the study of poetry. According to Brooks, "the real poet in presenting his theme never depends merely on general statement. The poem itself is the dramatizing of the theme in terms of situation, character, imagery, rhythm, tone, etc." (UP/1, p. 489). And because the good poem is a dramatization of complex human experience rather than a direct, didactic statement,
the reader should be, and Brooks believes most readers usually are, willing to suspend the question of agreement or disagreement with the attitudes presented in the poem. This "postponement of the question of agreement or disagreement—even the reader's feeling that the question may be irrelevant—arises from the fact that the attitude involved in a poem does not come merely as a bare general statement; it comes as part of a complex experience arising from the relation of many different factors to each other. The successful poem is a set of organized and controlled relations." Brooks believes that "any attitude or interpretation, whether or not the reader habitually adopts it himself, will not invalidate a poem, provided that the attitude or interpretation is one that would conceivably be held by a serious and intelligent person in the dramatic situation implied or stated in the poem" and that "it is only when the attitude involved in the poem comes as an over-simplified generalization or when the response which the poem insists on seems not warranted by the dramatic situation which is presented or implied . . . that the ordinary reader will reject a poem on the basis of his disagreement with its implied 'view of life'" (UP/1, pp. 492-93).

Of course, judging from the commentaries in Understanding Poetry and in An Approach to Literature,
particularly those dealing with the works of Shelley and Wordsworth, Romantic poems frequently depend merely on "oversimplified generalizations" and can validly be rejected on this basis alone. It must be kept in mind that "human experience is infinitely complicated and various" (UP/1, p. 492) and that, in Brooks's view, good poetry presents it as such. Thus Brooks condemns a poem like Shelley's "The Indian Serenade" because the conception of love expressed in the poem "is very superficial and immature" when contrasted with superior love poems such as Shakespeare's sonnets. "Obviously, a silly or superficial or childish attitude cannot result in a good poem" (UP/1, pp. 491, 492), and Brooks believes that "The Indian Serenade" is invalidated by such an attitude.

Related to the message-hunting approach is another mistaken conception of poetry which defines the poetic object as the "beautiful statement of some high truth," the basic idea behind this misconception being that "poetry is a 'truth' with 'decorations,' which may either be pleasant in themselves or dispose the reader to accept the truth." In other words, this definition treats poetry as a kind of "sugar-coated pill." Those who accept this view, Brooks believes, justify the various elements of poetry, such as imagery, rhythmical language, narrative, etc., "as a kind of bait that leads the reader to expose himself to the influence of the 'truth' contained.
in the poem" and "they value these characteristics only in so far as the characteristics lead to the acceptance of the 'truth'" (UP/1, pp. 16-17). Thus, as with the message-hunters, the value of a poem depends upon the value of the 'truth' which it contains.

However, Brooks also points out that "even if the person who regards poetry as 'fine sentiments in fine language' says that he values the language as much as he values the sentiments, or 'truths,' he is still using a mistaken approach to poetry. For he is apparently committed to saying that the language, quite apart from its relation to some central idea or 'truth,' is valuable." Brooks is very much opposed to the notion of a "poetic diction," that is "that certain words, or certain objects suggested by the words, are in themselves 'poetic.'"

To accept such an idea, he believes, forces one "to consider a poem as simply a bundle of melodious word-combinations and pretty pictures" (UP/1, p. 17). The notion of poetic diction, like the belief that poetry is merely the abstract statement of an idea, is contrary to Brooks's basic principle that "the successful poem is a set of organized and controlled relations" (UP/1, p. 492). In fact, one of the most important recommendations which Brooks offers for the practical criticism of poetry is that "a poem should always be treated as an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality

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should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation" (UP/1, p. ix). This "organic" conception of poetry is one of the fundamental tenets of Brooks's critical theory. In Brooks's view, "a poem is not to be thought of as merely a bundle of things which are 'poetic' in themselves; nor is it to be thought of, as the 'message-hunters' would seem to have it, as a kind of box, decorated or not, in which a 'truth' or a 'fine sentiment' is hidden" (UP/1, p. 18). For Brooks, all the parts of a poem are related to one another like the parts of a plant. Thus any one statement that a poem seems to make or even the meaning of any one item modifies and is modified by the whole context. "One must always remember," he writes, "that poetry is the result of a combination of relationships among the elements and does not inhere specially in any one of them" (UP/1, p. 215). The really important question then concerning any element in a poem "is not whether it is in itself pleasing, or agreeable, or valuable, or 'poetical,' but whether it works with the other elements to create the effect intended by the poet" (UP/1, p. 19). The test for organic unity, for whether or not all the elements of a poem work together to achieve the effect desired, can thus be used by the objective critic to determine the effectiveness of a poem.

It has already been said that Brooks believed that
the Romantic poets, like the eighteenth-century neo-classicists, misunderstood the nature of metaphor; that is, instead of recognizing the essentially functional character of figurative language, the poets of the nineteenth century believed it to be used for the purpose of ornamentation or illustration and accepted the notion of poetic diction. Several of the Romantic poems dealt with in *Understanding Poetry* and in *An Approach to Literature*, judging from the commentaries, can be said to embody this misconception. Because they fail to fuse form and content, they fail the test for organic unity.

For example, while Brooks acknowledges Shelley's skill in handling the meter of "The Indian Serenade," he judges the poem "as a whole" (UP/1, p. 492) to be a sentimental failure because the poet makes no attempt to supply a context for the lover's behavior. Successful meter alone, says Brooks, will not result in a successful poem, particularly when the ideas expressed in the poem are superficial and immature. By the same token, "a poem on a serious subject will not give us the intended effect if the poet has chosen a light, tripping rhythm--that is, if he has chosen the wrong kind of verse to be combined with the other elements of the poem" (UP/1, p. 218). Brooks uses Shelley's "Death" "to illustrate the choice of a wrong type of rhythm for a subject." In Shelley's poem "we have a case in which
the specific feeling stimulated by the jiggling rhythm, tends to contradict the response suggested by the ideas, images, etc. of the poem. The poem is an unsuccessful poem because the parts do not work together—they are not properly related" (UP/1, pp. 219-20).

Brooks finds a similar lack of unity in Shelley's "The Cloud." In his analysis of this poem, he criticizes the meter as "monotonous," "merely decorative," and "gaudy." In fact, he says that "we cannot hear the poem for the noise that the meter is making," and that the meter fails to "flex and bend to the play of the thought." He also criticizes the poem's imagery: "It is merely decorative in the same way as tinsel hung loosely on a Christmas tree. The images have no deeper significance and the more closely one considers them the weaker and less appropriate they become." (AL/1, p. 472).

Brooks compares two poems on the same subject, Blake's "London" and Wordsworth's "London, 1802," in order to prove that "poetry does not reside in a particular subject but in a treatment of the subject," another way of saying that the poetic effect does not depend on any single element, whether it be imagery, meter, theme, etc., but on the way in which the poet combines these separate elements into a new unity. As might be expected, he judges Blake's poem superior to
Wordsworth's. The basic fault of Wordsworth's poem, says Brooks, is that it is not unified. Wordsworth's images are "little more than decorations to some of Wordsworth's ideas," while Blake's images are "tightly tied up with each other and with the poem." The result is that Blake's poem "gives an effect of concentration and intensity that Wordsworth's poem lacks" (AL/1, p. 497).

According to Brooks, even Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," a poem which Brooks admires for the beauty of its images, is not totally unified. This lack of unity is "the essential weakness of the poem," he says. He goes on to point out that "the poem as a whole lives obviously in terms of its imagery, but the emphasis on the imagery is on the decorative side. The imagery is not welded sufficiently to the theme; the ironical effect of the experience as a whole is not achieved through the imagery. Indeed, this imagery, superb as it is, lies closer to the surface description than does, for example, the highly functional imagery of, say, Shakespeare" (UP/1, pp. 412, 413). Thus, in the final analysis, Brooks finds Keats's poem to be defective.

Brooks, in fact, finds most of the Romantic poems analyzed in the first editions of Understanding Poetry and An Approach to Literature to be defective in one way or another. He finds many of these poems to be overly
direct. Such poems, he says, are at best more like prose than poetry and at worst they are superficial or sentimental, depending as they do on oversimplifications and flat generalizations rather than the dramatization of complex human experience. Brook finds many poems lacking the unity necessary for great poetry. He criticizes such poems because their imagery is "ornamental" rather than "functional," and says that they fail because their various elements do not work together to achieve a single effect.

In other words, what Brooks looks for in great poetry, he does not find in the Romantics. Except for a few poems by Blake and for segments of poems by Keats, Brooks, in his early work, finds little of the irony, the paradox, the indirection, the organic structure which, he believes, characterizes the highest poetry. In later work, however, Brooks modifies considerably this early assessment of the Romantics, as he discovers more and more evidence in Romantic poetry of the qualities which he values. In fact, as early as 1942, in an important essay entitled "The Language of Paradox," first published in the volume The Language of Poetry and later the opening essay of The Well Wrought Urn (1947), Brooks begins to find some of these qualities in the Romantics. In this essay he finds that even Wordsworth, whose "poetry would not appear to promise
many examples of the language of paradox" since "he usually prefers the direct attack" (WWU, p. 3), typically bases his poetry upon a paradoxical situation. What Brooks is subtly pointing out here, of course, is that if paradox can be found in the poetry of Wordsworth, who insists on simplicity and directness, then it can be found in almost any kind of poetry. While this can hardly be considered unqualified praise of Wordsworth, it does mark an important point in Brooks's criticism of Romantic poetry, for the discovery of paradoxical elements in Wordsworth and in other Romantic poets eventually led Brooks to modify the generalizations which he made about Romantic poetry in his early work.
NOTES


2 Essays I and II were revised to become chapters 1 and 2 of Modern Poetry and the Tradition; the original titles of these two essays were retained in the book. Essay III was revised to become chapters 3 and 4, entitled "Metaphysical Poetry and Propaganda Art" and "Symbolist Poetry and the Ivory Tower," respectively.


4 In "Empson's Criticism," Accent Anthology (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), p. 496, Brooks says that he must have read Richards' Principles of Literary Criticism (1925) through at least fifteen times in the early 1930's. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917) and the essays collected in The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (1921) also influenced Brooks' early writings a great deal.

5 In his chapter on "The Imagination" in Principles of Literary Criticism (New York, 1925), Richards regards Coleridge's conception of the synthetic function of the imagination as "Coleridge's greatest contribution to critical theory" (p. 242) and believes that it would be hard to add to what Coleridge has said, although, for Richards, the theological implications of Coleridge's speculations on the imagination are best left alone. Earlier in Principles, Richards refers to the Fourteenth Chapter of the Biographia Literaria as "that lumber-room of neglected wisdom which contains more hints toward a theory of poetry than all the rest ever written upon the subject" (p. 140). Certainly Richards found enough "hints" there toward the development of his own theory of poetry as the balancing of conflicting impulses. In Coleridge on Imagination (1934), of course, Richards greatly expanded his discussion of Coleridge's criticism. Brooks reviewed this book in The New Republic, 85 (November 13, 1935), 26-27, and refers to it in "Three
Revolutions" on p. 157. Brooks's discussions focus on Richards' approach to Coleridge's distinction between the fancy and the imagination, a distinction which Brooks uses to support his own views on Romantic poetry.

6 Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 42. Further references will be cited parenthetically in my text by abbreviated title (MPT) and page number(s). See also "Three Revolutions," pp. 569-70.


8 Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York: Holt, 1938), p. 25. Further references will be cited in my text by abbreviated title (UP) and page number(s). Later editions will be indicated thus: UP/2, UP/3, etc.

14 Brooks, "Three Revolutions," p. 156.
17 Brooks, "Three Revolutions," p. 158.
19 Brooks, "Three Revolutions," pp. 156, 158.
21 Brooks, "Three Revolutions," pp. 577-78.

23 Of his own graduate work at Tulane University, Brooks writes that he "was appalled at the fact that so much of the conventional graduate study seemed to have
nothing to do with the interior life of the poem. What was provided was solid stuff, and I profited from it, but the question of whether a given poem was good or bad was either waived or never asked. . . . Graduate training at that time didn't pay much attention to it. It was all purely historical and biographical." Robert Penn Warren, "A conversation with Cleanth Brooks," in The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work, ed. Lewis P. Simpson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), pp. 4-5.


25 Abrams, p. 22.

26 Abrams, p. 21.

27 Abrams, p. 23.

28 Hulme and Eliot, of course, were not the only modern critics, besides Brooks, to oppose expressionism; they were merely the first to do so. See Richard H. Fogle's "Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers," ELH, 12 (September 1945), 221-50, which traces the New Critical opposition to Romantic poetry and attempts to defend the Romantics. See also Eric Russell Bentley's "Romanticism--A Reevaluation," Antioch Review, 4 (Spring 1944), 6-20, which also defends the Romantics against the modern critics.


30 Eliot, p. 43.

31 Eliot, p. 40.

32 Eliot, p. 42.

33 Eliot, p. 40.


36 Brooks, "The Poem as Organism," p. 35.
38 Eliot, pp. 43-44.

40 See, for example, The Cambridge Anthologies series edited by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), a series which, to quote the Preface, attempted "to provide the general reader with first-hand knowledge of the literary atmosphere and social conditions in which the masterpieces of English Literature were created, by selections from contemporary poetry and prose exemplifying the characteristic thought, temper, manners and activities of the various great periods" (p. v). The volume in this series entitled The Poetry of the Age of Wordsworth claims that "it deepens the spring atmosphere of The Ode to a Nightingale to learn for certain that it was written in May, while the date of La belle dame adds a sinister touch to the poem when we recall that it followed hard upon the poet's engagement to Fanny Brawne" (p. vi). See also the following anthologies: English Literature and Its Backgrounds, ed. Bernard D. Grebanier et al. (New York: The Dryden Press, 1939; The Literature of England: An Anthology and a History, eds. George B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, and George K. Anderson (New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1936); and Literary Masters of England, eds. Nelson S. Bushnell, Paul M. Fulcher, and Warner Taylor (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1936).

41 Cleanth Brooks, J. T. Purser, and Robert Penn Warren, An Approach to Literature (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1936), p. 3. Further references will be cited in my text by abbreviated title (AL) and page number(s). Later editions will be indicated thus: AL/2, AL/3, etc.

42 My use hereafter of only the name of Brooks is for the sake of convenience and is in no way intended to imply denial of responsibility to Brooks's collaborators.

43 It should be pointed out that Shelley is again being criticized for his overly direct method.

ed. Allen Tate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 37-61. Further references to The Well Wrought Urn will be cited in my text by abbreviated title (WWU) and page number(s).
CHAPTER 2

ANSWERING THE OPPOSITION
AND BRIDGING THE GAP

While Brooks's early work was, by and large, favorably received, this work was not without its opponents. Significant for this study is the fact that the poetic theory put forth in *Understanding Poetry, Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, and other early works was said to be overly exclusive; that is, Brooks was attacked for advocating a set of critical principles too narrow to include all types of poetry, a set of principles which ignores historical and biographical approaches to literature and, in effect, ignores the relation of literature to human experience. Although his emphasis upon such principles as "irony," "paradox," and "inclusive-ness" might be useful for examining the works of the metaphysical and modern poets, what use are they when dealing with a group of poets, such as the Romantics, who preferred simplicity to complexity, the direct to the indirect method, and whose poetry is so often an expression of personal feelings and attitudes? Do not
such principles when applied to poetry of a simple and direct nature tend to overintellectualize this poetry or to demand from it qualities which it does not possess? Questions such as these were asked by some of Brooks's contemporaries who viewed his position as both limited and intolerent. In the works that will be dealt with in this chapter Brooks attempts to answer some of those who used words like "narrow," "rigid," and "intolerant" to describe his position.

As might be expected, several critics reacted to Brooks's early writings by rising up in defense of those poets, particularly the Romantic poets, who they believed were being treated unfairly by a theory which tended to esteem only metaphysical and modern poetry and to reject more simple and direct forms of poetic expression. Herbert J. Muller, for example, in his review of Modern Poetry and the Tradition, condemns Brooks for his "exclusiveness." In practice," says Muller, "he [Brooks] consistently disparages Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian poetry--even Coleridge, whom he admires, finally goes down because he is Coleridge and not Donne. In theory, he is uncompromising and forces a choice; no 'admirable tolerance' will do here." Muller calls for a more tolerant critical theory which would allow for differences in taste. He says that Brooks's "ultimate criterion of 'ironic contemplation'" is much too narrow in that it
leads him to equate "the simple with the naive and the 
passionate with the sentimental" and to ignore the fact 
that "almost all poets of the past did freely make large, 
simple statements, and not in their prosy or lax moments."
In summary he says that Brooks "considers only technique, 
mechanism, outward show. He overlooks the underlying 
attitudes, the world view, the quality of mind, the in­
forming spirit--all that makes Donne's poetry much greater 
than Herbert's, and very different from Mr. Ransom's, 
and that enables a Shakespeare or a Goethe to be as simple, 
forthright, eloquent as he pleases." Donald Stauffer is 
also unconvinced that irony and paradox are acceptable 
as a general rule of poetry. He complains, for example, 
that Brooks demands in the poetry of Wordsworth "quali­
ties which the Romantic poets did not possess to a notable 
degree." Like Muller, Stauffer believes that different 
forms of poetic expression call for different standards 
of judgement but that Brooks's theory is too narrow to 
provide such standards. In his review of the volume The 
Language of Poetry (in which Brooks's essay "The Language 
of Paradox" was first published), Stauffer writes that 
Brooks "seems almost to patronize Wordsworth for being 
unconscious of his own paradoxes, and to accuse him of 
timidity and of a preference for the direct attack." In 
short, Stauffer thinks that Brooks "is unfair to poetry 
as a whole" because "his position excludes from the
reader's enjoyment great areas of poetry." Stauffer wishes that Brooks, whom he believes to be "admirable and effective" as a critic, would develop a critical position of "greater inclusiveness," for Stauffer also shares with Muller the conviction that simplicity and sentiment are qualities often found in good poetry.⁵ Another critic who finds Brooks's poetic theory to be limited and intolerant is Richard H. Fogle who claims that Brooks "is rigidly committed to the view that poetry never states, that it is always dramatic, impersonal, and concrete," and that this rigid commitment leads him to reject a great poet like Shelley because the poet "sometimes makes direct, subjective statements."⁶ Finally, Darrel Abel, in another review of Modern Poetry and the Tradition, states that "it is hard to understand why, in order to appreciate Donne, one must depreciate Keats, or pervert his poetry to fit a narrow intellectual definition. If the poetry fails to fit the definition, it seems wiser to reject the definition than the poetry."⁷ The quotations by Muller, Stauffer, Fogle, and Abel cited above were chosen because they are representative of the kinds of attacks that were most frequently made against Brooks's early work, and because Brooks himself chose to respond to the objections of these same critics, believing their views were evidence of the kind of critical confusion derived from Romantic notions about the nature of poetry.
It might be said that in *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947) Brooks sets out to prove, among other things, that a wide range of poetry does indeed fit his definition. The book begins with the essay entitled "The Language of Paradox" in which Brooks asserts that "paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry" (p. 3). Like most of the other chapters in the book, this one had previously been published as an essay. Brooks points out in his "Preface," however, that he offers these essays to the reader, "not as a miscellaneous collection, but as a book, with a defined objective and a deliberate plan." This plan, as Brooks himself states it, is "to examine, in terms of a common approach [the approach is outlined in the opening essay] a number of celebrated English poems, taken in chronological order, from the Elizabethan period to the present." The main objective, of course, is to prove, in an empirical manner, that all good poems "possess some common structural properties" (p. ix), properties such as irony, paradox, and ambiguity. In *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, Brooks argues that the work of the modern poets implies a new conception of poetry and, therefore, a revised view of English literary history. And an important part of Brooks's objective in *The Well Wrought Urn* is to reassess the poets of the past in light of this new conception of poetry. At the same time, though, Brooks is attempting to show that his
approach works not only for the modern and metaphysical poetry for which it was developed, but for all poetry. In fact, in a reply to William Empson's review of The Well Wrought Urn, Brooks announces that his intention in that book was "to try to bridge the gap between metaphysical poetry and other poetries." Doing this successfully, of course, would answer his opponents' charges of intolerance as well as prove that his principles are common to all poetry, but, at the same time, it would require him to deal with poems that do not seem to suit his method as well as others. Indeed, in order to refute the charge that his method of poetic analysis is unjust to all poetry between the metaphysicals and the moderns, Brooks chooses as the subjects for his discussions in The Well Wrought Urn poems mainly from the Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian periods. As he explains, his aim is to replace critical relativism with an instrument "which may be used in the service, not of Romantic poetry or of metaphysical poetry, but of poetry" (WWU, p. 218).

At the conclusion of the last chapter it was pointed out that in "The Language of Paradox," Brooks uses Wordsworth's poetry to show that "even the apparently simple and straightforward poet is forced into paradoxes by the nature of his instrument" (WWU, p. 10). One of the works which Brooks uses to illustrate his point is
the sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," which he regards as "one of Wordsworth's most successful poems."
The sonnet is said to derive its power "from the paradoxical situation out of which the poem arises"; that is, the speaker manages to convey his "sense of awed surprise" at his discovery that the city, which one tends to think of in mechanical terms and not at all as part of nature, is truly organic, natural, and beautiful when viewed in the early morning light. It must be noted, however, that even here Brooks is careful to qualify his praise of Wordsworth's poem. The sonnet, according to Brooks, has neither nobility of sentiment nor brilliant images. The poem merely says "that the city in the morning light presents a picture which is majestic and touching to all but the most dull of soul; but the poem says very little more about the sight. . . . [T]he student searches for graphic details in vain; there are no realistic touches. In fact, the poet simply huddles the details together. . . . We get a blurred impression--points of roofs and pinnacles along the skyline, all twinkling in the morning light. More than that, the sonnet as a whole contains some very flat writing and some well-worn comparisons." But, for Brooks, Wordsworth's stale metaphors are revitalized and the poem is saved by the paradoxical situation which underlines it. Brooks concludes his discussion of the sonnet by saying that "it is not my intention to exaggerate
Wordsworth's own consciousness of the paradox involved. In this poem, he prefers, as is usual with him, the frontal attack. But the situation is paradoxical here as in so many of his poems" (WWU, pp. 5-7).

It has been noted that Donald Stauffer charges that "The Language of Paradox" tends to patronize Wordsworth for being unaware of his own paradoxes and that the essay generally reflects Brooks's intolerance of simple and direct poetry. Moreover, it has been said that Brooks was frequently accused, by critics like Stauffer, Herbert Muller, and others, of being unfair to Romantic poetry. In the first of the appendicized essays in The Well Wrought Urn, "Criticism, History, and Critical Relativism," Brooks states that the attack on his position "has come primarily from 'Romantic' sources--from critics whose opposition is based on an anxiety to protect the diversity of the various periods from an appeal to some universal criterion, or from critics whose opposition founds itself on a desire to protect 'simple,' 'spontaneous,' 'directly eloquent' poetry from what they feel is an overweening tendency to intellectualize it" (p. 238). In this same essay, Brooks summarizes the specific objections of Muller and Stauffer to his critical methods and replies to them in some detail. According to Brooks, Muller's and Stauffer's attacks stem from a basic misconception about the nature of poetry. Brooks observes
that Stauffer objects to his analysis of Wordsworth's
sonnet on Westminster Bridge because "the experience as
given in the critical account of the poem cuts across
the general experience of the poet's life--that is, the
critical account of the poem does not square with the
received biographical account" and because "the paradox
is 'analyzable'--a fact which apparently implies to Mr.
Stauffer a violation of the nature of the experience
which the poem records" (p. 219). Stauffer's first ob­
jection, writes Brooks, "raises the whole question of
the relation of criticism to biography. Is the experi­
ence of 'On Westminster Bridge' simply a morning out of
Wordsworth's life, a morning to be fitted neatly into
his biography? Or, is the experience of 'On Westminster
Bridge' to be considered as a poem--the dramatization
of an experience (real or imagined, or with elements of
both) in which the poet may make what use he cares to
of contrast, surprise--even shock? Mr. Stauffer's ob­
jection seems to be that the conviction that the man­
made city was a part of nature was arrived at slowly in
Wordsworth's own life, and therefore he feels that this
conviction cannot come to the protagonist of the poem
as a flash of intuition--cannot come to the protagonist
with some sense of shock." In short, Brooks believes
that Stauffer is guilty of confusing "the protagonist
of the poem with the poet and the experience of the
poem as an aesthetic structure, with the author's personal experience," and that this confusion is "confirmed by Mr. Stauffer's general skittishness about any attempt to deal with rhetorical structure" (p. 220). In fact, for Brooks, Stauffer's second objection results from his assumption "that matters of structure are irrelevant--that the poet can render his truth 'simply' and directly," an assumption which "has betrayed him into the common error that besets our criticism," that is, the conception of poetic form as merely "a kind of box, neat or capacious, chastely engraved or gaudily decorated, into which the valuable and essentially poetic 'content' of the poem is packed." And Brooks believes that the same "embarrassingly oversimple conception of the relation of form to content . . . underlies Mr. Herbert Muller's attack on my position" (p. 223). In answer to Muller's assertion that his [Brooks's] approach overlooks "underlying attitudes" and "the informing spirit" of the work, Brooks replies that if the form of a poem "is but outer envelope, an embellished husk, then Mr. Muller is perfectly right in rejecting it for something more inward ('informing spirit'), or deeper ('underlying attitudes')"; however, Brooks explains that he has intended "to deal with attitudes, superficial and underlying, but to deal with them in terms of the organization of the given poem itself," for he believes that "ultimately, if we are to
deal with poems as poems, we shall have to show how the attitudes reveal themselves in the poems." Says Brooks, "I have talked less about 'world views' and 'informing spirits' because I have been primarily interested in the specific view taken in the particular poem, and interested in how the attitude of the poem was made to inform the poem--and not primarily interested in historical or psychological generalizations about the poet's mind. But if Mr. Muller has missed these things--and if he has missed them, less acute readers must have missed them--I believe that it is because Mr. Muller refuses to take a discussion of tone, attitude, and ironic qualification as on other than a treatment of superficial mechanisms. He persists in seeing 'form' as something external and radically frivolous" (pp. 225-26). But while Brook accuses critics like Muller and Stauffer of misunderstanding the relationship between form and content, he acknowledges that they may have had some basis for their charges of narrowness. "It is true," he writes, "that in Modern Poetry and the Tradition I suggested the need for a radical revision of the history of English literature, and that I there criticized certain aspects of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry. I hope that the treatment accorded eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poems in this book [i.e., in The Well Wrought Urn] will perhaps put that criticism in better perspective. I should certainly
dislike to be thought to maintain that English poetry ceased with the death of Donne, to be resumed only in our time" (p. 224). Thus, as has already been stated, Brooks sought in *The Well Wrought Urn* to prove that his poetic theory was not the narrow and intolerant theory that many thought it to be. The book as a whole, in a sense, might be viewed as the author's attempt to place in a wider context the critical standards laid down in his earlier works--works such as *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* and even the previously published essay which begins *The Well Wrought Urn*, "The Language of Paradox." "One naturally sympathizes with Mr. Stauffer's objection to what has seemed to him a too narrow dogmatism," writes Brooks. "Moreover, it is entirely possible that the essay on which he has based his objection reflects just that--though I could hope that the essay, placed as it is now within the context of this book, will no longer appear narrowly dogmatic" (p. 222). Even Herbert Muller agrees that *The Well Wrought Urn* represents a more inclusive view of poetry than *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. Muller writes that "although his [Brooks's] early book, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, tended to restrict 'the' tradition to metaphysical and modern poetry, he has since sought to be less exclusive, and to demonstrate that the best Augustan, Romantic, and Victorian poetry also measures up to his standard."
Certainly The Well Wrought Urn seems to mark a change in Brooks's attitude toward Romantic poetry. The tone of the book is considerably less dogmatic than Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Of course, in order to answer his opponents and to show that his poetic theory constituted a universal criterion that could be used to measure the value of any poem whatever, Brooks was forced to look more closely at a body of poetry which he had all but dismissed in his early work. But perhaps to his own surprise, he found this poetry to be of greater value than he had previously suspected. The Well Wrought Urn includes extended essays on two Romantic poems, Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and the discussions of these poems illustrate the extent to which Brooks can be said to have modified his anti-Romanticism.

It can be said that in these two essays, as in his early work, Brooks rejects the biographical approach so often used by critics to discuss Romantic poetry and attempts instead to focus on the poems themselves. "Wordsworth's great 'Intimations' ode has been for so long intimately connected with Wordsworth's own autobiography, and indeed, Wordsworth's poems in general have been so consistently interpreted as documents pertaining to that autobiography," says Brooks, "that to consider one of his larger poems as an object in itself..."
may actually seem impertinent. Yet to do so for once at least is not to condemn the usual mode of procedure and it may, in fact, have positive advantages." In short, Brooks believes that "it may be interesting to see what happens when one considers the 'Ode' as a poem, as an independent poetic structure, even to the point of forfeiting the light which his letters, his notes, and his other poems throw on difficult points" (p. 124). Likewise, in his discussion of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Brooks makes the point that the attempts to explain Keats's poem in terms of the poet's reading, his conversation, or his letters are insufficient. "We shall not find our answer there even if scholarship does prefer on principle investigations of Browning's ironic question, 'What porridge had John Keats?'" says Brooks. "For even if we knew just what porridge he had, physical and mental, we should still not be able to settle the problem of the 'Ode'" (p. 153).

To anyone with knowledge of Brooks' early work, of course, this method is familiar. As in Understanding Poetry, Brooks continues to emphasize the study of the poem as an autonomous structure. However, what the critic discovers in his analyses of these two Romantic poems is not so familiar. In his earlier work Brooks had asserted that the Romantic poets, like their neoclassic predecessors, confused poetry with science,
conceiving of poetry as mere statement. In *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, and in the first editions of *Understanding Poetry*, and *An Approach to Literature*, Brooks frequently criticizes Romantic poets for being overly direct and for failing to understand the essentially functional nature of metaphor. Their work, he says, lacks the complex, dramatic structure characteristic of the highest poetry; as a result, it tends to oversimplify life and may appear foolish when subjected to ironic contemplation. In his analyses of the odes in *The Well Wrought Urn*, however, Brooks finds much more than simple, straightforward poetry. Indeed, he sets out to defend both poems by tracing the way each manages to exploit irony, paradox, and ambiguity. In effect, Brooks answers his opponents' charge of narrowness, not by accommodating his theory to the "simple" poetry of the Romantics, but by attempting to show that the best Romantic poetry is not at all simple. At the same time, though, he is naturally forced to modify, at least to some extent, his own view of Romantic poetry as a poetry of simple statement.

In his essay on the "Intimations" ode, entitled "Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination," Brooks decides to focus upon "the imagery primarily, and the success or relative failure with which Wordsworth meets in trying to make his images carry and develop his
thought." This study of the poem's imagery leads to some rather startling discoveries. In the third paragraph of the essay, Brooks says that "it may actually surprise some readers to see how much the poem, strictly considered in its own right, manages to say, as well as precisely what it says" (pp. 124-26). Perhaps Brooks himself was surprised at what he found in this poem. Certainly any reader acquainted with his earlier writings on Romantic poetry would have been surprised at what he found. The irony, paradox, and ambiguity which Brooks discovers in Wordsworth's poem shows that it possesses the kind of complex dramatic structure which he hitherto had associated with only metaphysical or modern poetry.

According to Brooks, "what Wordsworth wanted to say demanded his use of paradox" and "could only be said powerfully through paradox" (p. 150). Brooks says that "several varieties of irony" are present in the "Ode," and "some of the themes which Wordsworth treats in the poem are to be successfully related only through irony." He finds ambiguous symbols and paradoxical statements throughout the work. He says that the poem makes "more use of paradox than is commonly supposed," that it contains much "rich and meaningful" ambiguity, and that "it is in terms of this ambiguity that many of the finest effects of the poem are achieved." Certainly, if this is the case, Wordsworth's poem does not seem to
depend upon the direct method that Brooks, in his early criticism, had found so characteristic of Wordsworth's work and of Romantic poetry generally. In fact, Brooks himself remarks that "to propose to find in the poem ambiguities, ironies, and paradoxes will seem to many a reader an attempt to fit the poem into a Procrustean bed--in fine, the bed in which John Donne slept comfortably enough but in which a Romantic poet can hardly be supposed to find any ease" (pp. 125-26). It might be said that the Brooks of Modern Poetry and the Tradition would also have difficulty envisioning Wordsworth and Donne as bedfellows.

For the Brooks of The Well Wrought Urn, however, Wordsworth's ode, like a metaphysical or modern poem, grows out of a series of antithetical images; for example, fading is opposed to growing light, sleeping to waking, learning to forgetting, growth to decay, and blindness to vision. Brooks makes the point that the imagery of the poem, far from being merely decorative (as he had found so much Romantic imagery in his earlier criticism) is "functionally related to a theme--not vaguely and loosely related to it" (p. 148). For example, Brooks says that the lines from Stanza II--"The Moon doth with delight / Look round her"--"strike any sensitive reader as fine to a degree which their value as decoration will not account for." These lines have special power, he
believes, because they are so closely related to the poem's theme and because they prepare the reader for the famous passage in Stanza V in which the poet says that "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: / The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting." "Surely," says Brooks, "it is perfectly clear here that the child, coming upon the world, trailing his clouds of glory, is like the sun or moon which brings its radiance with it." The interrelatedness of these two passages and their close relation to the theme of the poem give them "more impact than the mere 'beauty' of the images will account for" (pp. 129-30). Likewise he believes that the ambiguities which the images of light and darkness take on in the poem are not confusions but "necessary paradoxes." According to Brooks, "it is inevitable that light should shift into dark and dark into light. For the man who has become immersed in the hard, white light of common day, the recollections of childhood are shadowy; just as from the standpoint of the poet, such a man, preoccupied with his analysis and dissection, must appear merely blind. . . . [T]here 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 analytic reason and that of the synthesizing imagination" (p. 133). Thus Brooks concludes that the poem's imagery renders its
theme "powerfully, and even exactly, defining and refining it" (p. 148).

In short, the "Ode" is found to possess organic unity (i.e., its various elements are interrelated and grow out of one another organically; the poem is no mere collection of beautiful or "poetic" images), and, as in what Brooks regards as the highest poetry, Wordsworth's poem makes use of the indirect, dramatic method of presenting its theme. The imagery of the poem aids in this dramatization by resisting generalization and abstract statement. Because the imagery tends to synthesize diverse and discordant ideas (most notably the paradoxical view of the child as at once both "divine" and "natural," and the "realist" and "projective" views of man's relationship to nature which Brooks believes are reconciled by the notion of the "synthesizing imagination" which, he says, lies at the center of the poem [pp. 144, 145-47]), the poem may also be said to fulfill, at least to some extent, I. A. Richards' criterion of inclusiveness. Finally, according to Brooks, "the greatness of the 'Ode' lies in the fact that Wordsworth . . . is about the poet's business here and is not trying to inculcate anything. Instead, he is trying to dramatize the changing interrelations which determine the major imagery" (p. 147).

Lest I make it sound as though Brooks has nothing
but praise for Wordsworth's poem, it should be pointed out that he is very careful to qualify his praise. For example, although Brooks finds that the paradoxes, ambiguities, and ironies which fill the poem are often effective and necessary, he believes that at times they are inconsistent and confusing because Wordsworth is unconscious of them or unwilling to accept their full consequences. Brooks says that while "Wordsworth himself must obviously have been aware" of some of the paradoxes in the poem, "he was probably not aware . . . of the extent to which he was employing paradox," that Wordsworth "was apparently only partially aware" of the ambiguous symbols in the poem, and that "the principle defect of the 'Ode' results from the fact that Wordsworth will not always accept the full consequences of some of his ironical passages" (p. 125). Brooks objects to Stanza VII because of its explicit nature. "It is a pity," he says, "that Wordsworth was not content to rely upon [his] imagery to make his point and that he felt it necessary to include the weak Stanza VII" (p. 140). For the same reason, he is unhappy with the resolution of the poem: "I must confess that I feel the solution is asserted rather than dramatized" (p. 148). All in all, Brooks believes that "the 'Ode' for all its fine passages, is not entirely successful as a poem" (p. 125). But, finally, despite all of these reservations, the emphasis
of Brooks's discussion is not upon the poem's weaknesses; rather the emphasis of the essay is upon the "subtlety and accuracy" (pp. 130-31) of expression found in the poem, upon the "brilliance and power of the imagery" (p. 150), and upon the other qualities which lead Brooks to say that "there is much greatness" (p. 149) in the "Intimations" ode.

Brooks begins his discussion of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by asserting that "there is much in the poetry of Keats which suggests that he would have approved of Archibald MacLeish's dictum, 'A poem should not mean / But be'" (p. 151). It has been shown that in Modern Poetry and the Tradition Brooks finds Keats, particularly when contrasted with Shelley, to be an objective poet who often "attempts a qualifying self-irony" in his poetry, a poet reluctant to force didacticism because he has such respect for the complexity of experience (MPT, pp. 237-38). Thus Brooks's early admiration for Keats as one of the better Romantic poets is well established. On the other hand, it is true that in Brooks's early criticism, Keats's poems often fall short of his standard. Brooks often faults Keats for failing to fully exploit the indirect language of poetry. The imagery of "Ode to a Nightingale," for example, fails to contribute to the ironical effect of the poem because it is decorative rather than functional (UP/1, p. 412). Other poems are
found to be ironical or to tend toward irony, but, in
Brooks's opinion, they do not go far enough in that
direction. The essay in The Well Wrought Urn entitled
"Keats's Sylvan Historian: History Without Footnotes,"
however, attempts to show that in his "Ode on a Grecian
Urn" the poet took full advantage of the ironic element
and that the result is a highly successful poem which
can be said to possess organic unity and "dramatic
wholeness."

Brooks's essay focuses on the last two lines of
the poem which, he says, constitute "a statement even
of some sententiousness in which the urn itself is made
to say that beauty is truth, and--more sententious still--
that this bit of wisdom sums up the whole of mortal know­
ledge" (p. 151). Critics such as T. S. Eliot, Middleton
Murry, and Heathcote William Garrod, Brooks points out,
objected to the poem's ending as a flat generalization
failing to grow out of the poem itself, as a blemish,
an intrusion, upon an otherwise fine poem. Brooks, how­
ever, sets out to defend the poem's final lines. He as­
serts that these lines must not be taken as an isolated
statement; instead they must be looked upon as part of
the poem's entire context. When viewed in this way,
Brooks believes, the ending of the poem is seen to be
"dramatically appropriate" and "properly prepared for"
(p. 154).
For Brooks, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn," like Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode, is filled with ironies, paradoxes, and ambiguities, as well as with images which are functional rather than decorative. If Keats's poem is to be fully appreciated and understood in its dramatic wholeness, says Brooks, it must be approached on these terms: "He [the reader] must not be allowed to dismiss the early characterizations of the urn as merely so much vaguely beautiful description. He must not be too much surprised if 'mere decoration' turns out to be meaningful symbolism—or if ironies develop where he has been taught to expect only sensuous pictures. Most of all, if the teasing riddle spoken finally by the urn is not to strike him as a bewildering break in tone, he must not be too much disturbed to have the element of paradox latent in the poem emphasized" (pp. 154-55).

Brooks identifies an "ironic undercurrent" running through most of the poem. This has to do with the fact that in the world of experience and change all beautiful things must eventually fade and die—heard music comes to an end; the flesh and blood lover is left cloyed—while in the perfect world of the urn immortality is achieved at the sacrifice of sensual experience—the figures on the urn are frozen, fixed, arrested, or, as Brooks puts it, "neither song nor love is consummated. The songs are 'for ever new' because they cannot be
completed," "the love depicted on the urn remains warm and young because it is not human flesh at all but cold, ancient marble" (pp. 158, 160). Keats, says Brooks, is "obviously stressing the fresh, unwearied charm of the scene itself which can defy time and is deathless. But, at the same time, the poet is being perfectly fair to the terms of his metaphor. The beauty portrayed is deathless because it is lifeless" (p. 157).

The fact that "the paradox is being used fairly" in order to express a complex attitude, of course, is, in Brooks's view, what makes the ode a great poem. Keats could have refused to acknowledge the disparity here by avoiding the darker implications of the urn's "perfection," but we would have been left with an inferior poem, a poem of exclusion highly vulnerable to irony. Instead, the poet chose to build upon the tension (what Brooks calls the "ironic counterpoise") created by the accommodation of disparate elements. In doing so he creates a poem which is inclusive, less exposed to irony, and just to the complexity of experience. Brooks points out that Heathcote William Garrod senses the ironic undercurrent in the poem but interprets it "as an element over which Keats was not able to exercise full control." But Brooks himself is convinced that "the poet knows precisely what he is doing." He writes that "Keats's attitude, even in the early stanzas, is more complex
and more ironic, and a recognition of this is important if we are to be able to relate the last stanza to the rest of the 'Ode'' (pp. 158-60).

In Brooks's view, Keats's poem begins and ends in paradox. For this reason the ending of the poem must be taken, not as an abstract statement that can be proven true or false, but instead as growing out of a pattern of paradoxical images in the poem, images such as the silent urn full of noise and action, the soundless pipes playing music sweeter than heard melodies, and the ardent lover whose love is never consummated. These and other images lead to the "central paradox" of the poem which, says Brooks, "comes to the conclusion in the phrase, 'Cold Pastoral.' The word 'pastoral' suggests warmth, spontaneity, the natural and informal as well as the idyllic, the simple, and informally charming" but, "the urn itself is cold, and the life beyond life which it expresses is life which has been formed, arranged. The urn itself is a 'silent form,' and it speaks, not by means of statement but by 'teasing us out of thought'" (p. 163). Thus, says Brooks, we are "prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox" in which the urn, speaking as a character in a drama, "makes a commentary on its own nature" (p. 165).

Finally, it can be said that Brooks finds in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" a confirmation of his own distrust
for what he calls, in *Understanding Poetry* and elsewhere, the "message-hunting approach to poetry," that is, the reduction of a poem to a statement of some idea or universal truth. "The relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert," he says, is "the question of real importance" when dealing with the problem of the ending of Keats's poem. "It is a question which has particularly vexed our own generation--to give it I. A. Richards' phrasing, it is the problem of belief" (p. 152). What the urn says, in commenting upon its own nature and upon the nature of poetry and of art in general, is that "'formed experience,' imaginative insight, embodies the basic and fundamental perception of man and nature." In the final analysis, the urn does what Keats's poem does; it does, in fact, what, in Brooks's view, all great poetry does. "It takes a few details and so orders them that we have not only beauty but insight into essential truth" (p. 164). The kind of truth (or knowledge) which the urn offers is not the same as scientific or historical truth. The urn provides no "facts" such as names and dates. Instead, it provides something better--knowledge or truth about man himself, about his nature and his relationship to reality. The "essential truth," of course, is not stated, rather it is rendered dramatically
through the poem. The idea that both nature and art insist upon the human predicament is absorbed into the poem itself. The "history without footnotes," then, is the imaginative insight into the complexity of experience embodied in the poem.

It is obvious that Brooks's strategy is to turn the tables on those who had accused him of being unfair to the Romantics by becoming himself a defender of Romantic poetry. The "Intimations" ode, while admittedly not wholly successful as a poem, is said by Brooks to contain "much greatness" which has gone unrecognized. The ending of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," often criticized as a blemish on the poem, is said to be dramatically appropriate when viewed in terms of the poem's entire context. But there is more here than mere rhetorical strategy. Both poems are praised for their functional imagery, their indirection, their inclusiveness (Brooks would, of course, say that Wordsworth's poem is less inclusive than Keats's), and for other qualities which, in his early work, Brooks found lacking in the poetry of the Romantics. One cannot help but suspect that in his attempt to defend his position, Brooks genuinely discovered much to admire in these poems. That this discovery led to a modification of his view of Romantic poetry generally is shown by the fact that in subsequent work he continues to discover qualities which he values.
in the poetry of the Romantics and also by the fact that, at times, he even revises his earlier negative judgements of some Romantic poems.

In "Ironic as a Principle of Structure," an essay published shortly after the appearance of The Well Wrought Urn, Brooks finds further evidence of irony in the poetry of Wordsworth. Here he uses two of Wordsworth's Lucy poems, "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" and "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," to show that a certain amount of ironic complexity exists even in simple lyrical poetry. Comparing Wordsworth to his favorite metaphysical poet, John Donne, Brooks notes that while Donne would have further developed and underscored the ironical contrast which exists in Wordsworth's poems, Wordsworth's method is one of "simple juxtaposition." The main point, however, is "that since both Wordsworth and Donne are poets, their work has at basis a similar structure, and that the dynamic structure--the pattern of thrust and counter-thrust--which we associate with Donne has its counterpart in Wordsworth. In the work of both men, the relation between part and part is organic, which means that each part modifies and is modified by the whole." Says Brooks, "Wordsworth's poem seems to me admirable, and I entertain no notion that it might have been more admirable still had John Donne written it rather than William Wordsworth."

Even more important here than Brooks's concession to
Wordsworth's value as a poet, however, is that he concludes his discussion of the Lucy poems with some remarks that are very significant in tracing the modification of his view of Romantic poetry. It has been said that Brooks answers his opponents' charges of narrowness, not by accommodating his theory to the "simple" poetry of the Romantics, but by attempting to show that the best Romantic poetry is not at all simple, that it does, in fact, possess the complex qualities which he values. After pointing to the implicit contrasts in Wordsworth's poems, Brooks writes as follows: "Yet to intimate that there are potential ironies in Wordsworth's lyric may seem to distort it. After all, is it not simple and spontaneous?" Brooks points out, however, that the terms simple and spontaneous, "two of the critical catchwords of the nineteenth century," and the term ironical are not necessarily mutually exclusive. "What after all do we mean by simple or by spontaneous? We may mean that the poem came to the poet easily and even spontaneously: very complex poems may--indeed have--come just this way. Or the poem may seem in its effect on the reader a simple and spontaneous utterance: some poems of great complexity possess this quality. What is likely to cause trouble here is the intrusion of a special theory of composition. It is fairly represented as an intrusion since a theory as to how a poem is written is
being allowed to dictate to us how the poem is to be read.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, according to Brooks, the poem itself must not be confused with the process of its composition, for how the poem came about is, in his view, a distinct problem from what the poem is. Even if, as Wordsworth would have it, a poem results from a spontaneous overflow of feeling on the part of the poet, this does not mean that the poem lacks complexity or that the critic must limit his discussion to those feelings which the poet might have had. Brooks, of course, believes that some of his opponents have fallen into this confusion which is an aspect of the "intentional fallacy." In another reply to Herbert Muller, for example, Brooks writes that "a whole cluster of Mr. Muller's difficulties stems from one important misconception: the assumption that what I say about the structure of a poem is directly referable to the poet. For example, if ambiguities are to be found in a poem, then I must hold that the poet put them there, deliberately and consciously. If a poem reveals a complex attitude, then the poet could not have held positive convictions. If a poem displays a complex structure, then I am forced to conclude (so Mr. Muller thinks) that the poet was not simple and spontaneous, but sophisticated and self-conscious." Brooks sums up his own position by stating that the "formal analysis of poetry does not require
that we suppose the poet a monster of self-consciousness. A poet, as Wordsworth observed, is a man speaking to men. He may hold positive convictions or he may not; he may be deliberate, or ecstatic; gravely thoughtful or rhapsodic; and his poem may come to him, sometimes almost spontaneously, or his poem may be a pastiche of second thoughts and third thoughts, deliberately mortised together. The record will indicate that there have been all sorts of poets and all sorts of methods of composition . . . but a particular theory of composition does not absolve the critic from trying to determine as carefully and accurately as he can what a given poem 'says.'

Moreover, the critic is not at the mercy of any given theory of composition, forced to trim his account of the poem to what he guesses was the artist's deliberate intention."16 In another essay, Brooks writes that he is "in entire sympathy" with the notion of "the intentional fallacy" as put forth by W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, and that "we had best not try to telescope the separate problems of 'the psychology of composition' and that of 'objective evaluation.'"17 In Brooks's view, Muller "telescopes" these "two distinct problems."18

It has already been pointed out that Brooks believes that a number of erroneous critical principles were carried over from the Romantic period. In Understanding Poetry, as has been shown, he discusses several of these
mistaken approaches to poetry. The entire text, in fact, attempts to shift criticism away from its Romantic focus upon the personality of the poet, toward a more objective focus upon the poem as an organic structure. Elsewhere Brooks writes that many of the misconceptions about modern criticism are rooted "in an essentially romantic conception of poetry" which "tends to take quite literally the view that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of emotion, and that its appreciation is best served by a corresponding overflow of emotion on the part of the reader. It conceives of the function of the intellect as only officious and muddling. The creation of poetry is magical, and if the intellect is brought into play at all in examining a poem, this is an attempt to expose the magic and thus do away with."19 Brooks also refers to the "Romantic perversion of the organic conception of poetry which . . . would remove the poem from the purview of criticism--it gives us, not an organism, but a mystic entity which eludes examination because it is plastic to the point of haziness."20

In attempting to trace the modification of Brooks's view of Romantic poetry, it can perhaps be said that in his early work he himself tends to equate Romantic poetry with Romantic notions about the process of composition. For this reason he finds most Romantic poems to be of a simple and direct nature containing, in an
ornamental way, certain elements of beauty, but lacking the unity and complexity found in great poetry. Later, however, in attempting to defend his own position, Brooks finds that the Romantic emphasis upon subjectivism need not lead to an inferior type of poetry. In "The New Criticism: A Brief for the Defense," a reply to Darrel Abel's charge that the New Criticism has tended to over-intellectualize the simple lyrics of the Romantics, Brooks writes that "the lyric quality, if it be genuine, is not the result of some transparent and 'simple' redaction of a theme or a situation which is somehow poetic in itself; it is, rather, the result of an imaginative grasp of diverse materials--but an imaginative grasp so sure that it may show itself to the reader as unstudied and predictable without for a moment relaxing its hold on the intricate and complex stuff which it carries."21

That Brooks manages, in his later work, to separate the subjective theory of composition identified with the Romantics from Romantic poetry itself as well as from the critical approach to this poetry is significant in that it allows him to continue to reject the biographical method of explaining a poem in favor of a more objective method which treats the poem as an organism, while at the same time allowing him to admire the "expressionist" poetry of the Romantics for its complexity. "There is no harm in thinking of Wordsworth's poem [referring to

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"A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal"] as simple and spontaneous," writes Brooks, "unless these terms deny complexities that actually exist in the poem, and unless they justify us in reading the poem with only half our minds." Without attempting to be ironic, I would say that the separation which Brooks is able to accomplish between the Romantic psychology of composition and his objective evaluation of Romantic poetry helped him to bridge the gap which his early criticism had left unfilled.
NOTES

1 Herbert J. Muller, "The New Criticism in Poetry," Southern Review, 6 (Spring 1941), 822.

2 Muller, p. 822-24.


4 Stauffer, "Cooperative Criticism," p. 137.


7 Darrel Abel, "Intellectual Criticism," American Scholar, 12 (Autumn 1943), 420.

8 "The Language of Paradox" was first published in the volume The Language of Poetry in 1942 as already noted. "Keats's Sylvan Historian" and "Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination" were first published in 1944 and 1946 respectively (see bibliography). None of these essays was significantly revised for publication in The Well Wrought Urn and all quotations from these essays are contained in the original versions.

9 As Brooks himself points out, the essays "obviously look forward to a new history of English poetry (even though, quite as obviously, the discussions of poetry which they contain do not attempt to write that history)" (WWU, p. 215).


12 See, for example, "The Poem as Organism: Modern Critical Procedure," p. 24.

13 A brief remark in the first edition of Understanding Poetry (pp. 548-49) indicates that Brooks had long held this view of the poem's final lines: "Many excellent poems do conclude with general statements, for instance Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' . . . . But one can observe that . . . the general statement grows intimately out of a special context, Keats' description of the urn . . . and does not come merely as a kind of disconnected comment on life or as an adage. We accept such a general statement, not because we promptly decide that it is true or false, but because we feel that it is justified and interpreted by the more directly imaginative elements of the rest of the poem in question." In this text, however, Brooks makes no attempt to explore the ironies, paradoxes, and ambiguities involved in the poem. The text of the poem is included in UP/1, but it is unaccompanied by an analysis.


20 Brooks, "The Poem as Organism," p. 27.

essay and incorporated it in The Well Wrought Urn as Chapter Nine, "The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper," omitting the answer to Abel.

CHAPTER 3

GAINING "A WIDER PERSPECTIVE"

The year 1947, besides being the year in which *The Well Wrought Urn* was published, marked the beginning of a new phase in Brooks's already impressive career, for it was then that he left Louisiana State University to become a member of the English faculty at Yale. At Yale Brooks would later rejoin his old colleague at Louisiana State, Robert Penn Warren (Warren left L. S. U. for the University of Minnesota in 1942 and moved to Yale in 1950) and began important associations with William K. Wimsatt and René Wellek. In the dozen or so years following the publication of *The Well Wrought Urn*, Brooks was at the height of his influence as a literary theorist and critic. At least part of this success can be attributed to the fact that with *The Well Wrought Urn* he managed to show that his approach could be applied to the poetry which lies between the metaphysicals and the moderns. The work which followed served to solidify Brooks's theoretical position by further expanding his critical method and by continuing to demonstrate the inclusiveness of his approach.
This chapter will focus upon the works which, at this particular stage in Brooks's career, shed the most light on his position regarding Romantic poetry. It will be shown that during this period Brooks's admiration for some Romantic poets increases as he discovers more evidence of complexities in their poetry, and that at times he even apologizes for failing, in his early work, to fully appreciate these complexities. It will also be shown that Brooks continues to answer, in a variety of ways, the charge that his critical theory is overly narrow and specialized. Finally, it will be shown that this important stage in Brooks's career is characterized by a series of more refined and tempered statements of a theoretical position that has been called anti-Romantic and antiexpressionist.

Several key collaborative works were published during these years, including Modern Rhetoric (with Robert Penn Warren, 1950) and The Poems of Mr. John Milton (with John Edward Hardy, 1952). Another collaborative effort produced Literary Criticism: A Short History (with W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., 1957), which will be discussed in chapter four. One of Brooks's most important accomplishments during this period, however, was the publication, in collaboration with Robert Penn Warren, of a revised version of Understanding Poetry (1950). Particularly for the purposes of the present study
this second edition of the textbook must be viewed as significant, for it contains further evidence of Brooks's growing acceptance of Romantic poetry. In the 1950 "Postscript," added to the original 1938 "Letter to the Teacher" section which begins the text, Brooks and Warren state that their "personal tastes have changed a little" since the first publication of their book. "In certain poets," they say, "we have discovered values that we had earlier missed" (p. xx). Upon closer examination of the revised text, one is led to suspect that the Romantics are to be included among these "certain poets."

For example, Brooks revised and expanded the analysis of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" for the second edition of Understanding Poetry. The result is unqualified praise of the poem. It should be recalled that in the analysis found in the first edition of the text Brooks judges the "Ode" to be a beautiful but flawed poem. The imagery of the poem, he says, is "on the decorative side" and "not welded sufficiently to the theme." The poem is thus found to have an "essential weakness," a "defect"; that is, its imagery does not help to make the most out of the ironical situation with which the poem deals. "The weakness," says Brooks, "is that Keats has not made a virtue out of the abruptness of the shifts and contrasts--which do exist in the poem--by calling our attention to them [through the imagery], and by
enforcing the irony inherent in the whole situation; the contrast between the world as it is and the world of ideal beauty which the poet longs for." Brooks concludes that while on the decorative side "the imagery is about as fine as it is possible for it to be," on the functional side, "in which idea is transmitted and developed through images," the images lack the coherence and closely knit character which one finds in Marvell or Shakespeare, and that "Keats himself realized that his weakness lay in general structure and in the occasional lack of positive relation between meaning and imagery in his work" (UP/1, pp. 412, 413, 415). In contrast, in the analysis in the second edition of the text Brooks finds the poem to be rich in irony, paradox, and ambiguity, and says nothing about the imagery failing to call the reader's attention to the shifts and contrasts in the poem. In fact, the later commentary goes beyond that of the first edition by attempting to read the poem "at a deeper level." Brooks states that "if we are to do full justice to the general architecture of the poem and to the intensity of many of the individual passages, one must read it at this deeper level" (UP/2, p. 342).

The revised analysis is divided into two parts. The first part is almost identical to the discussion contained in the first edition, with the exception that all references to weaknesses or defects in the poem are
omitted. The second part, however, is new and concerns the deeper meaning of the poem. Understanding this deeper meaning, says Brooks, requires "a reexamination of the whole poem," the effect of which is to reveal the full extent to which the poem's imagery reinforces the irony inherent in the speaker's attitude toward death. The result is that Brooks is forced to conclude that the poem "is not only about death and deathlessness, or about the actual and the ideal [essentially what was said about the poem in the first edition of Understanding Poetry]; it is also about alienation and wholeness."

According to the commentary, "it is man's necessary alienation from nature that invests death with its characteristic horror," but "to 'dissolve'--to 'fade'--into the warm darkness is to merge into the eternal pattern of nature." Thus "death itself becomes something positive--a flowering--a fulfillment" when thought of in this way. For Keats, the nightingale is immortal in the sense that "it is in harmony with its world--not, as man is, in competition with his." Man lives in a world overlapping, yet beyond nature; he transcends nature because of his consciousness, particularly because he is conscious of his mortality. "Man knows that he was born to die... and that knowledge overshadows man's life, and necessarily all his songs." The bird, on the other hand, was not born for death; he lives in a changeless present...
which is the next best thing to immortality. Lacking man's knowledge of death, the nightingale can express the wholeness of nature and can, in the poet's mind, merge into the eternal pattern of nature. The poet would also attempt to merge into the world of nature, but he realizes that the price is death, a "bleak and negative" prospect for self-conscious man (UP/2, pp. 342-45).

Certainly it can be said that when the first and second edition discussions of "Ode to a Nightingale" are compared, it becomes obvious that this is one poem about which the editors "discovered values that [they] had earlier missed."

One of the most important differences between the first and second editions of Understanding Poetry is that the revised version at times attempts "to view the poem in relation to its historical situation and in relation to the body of a poet's work" while the original version of the text includes virtually no material of this nature. Why the change when the first edition so strongly rejects the Romantic notion of poetry as self-expression, placing instead great emphasis upon detaching the poem from history and from the personality of the poet in order to examine it as a structure in its own right? Is this change consistent with the primary recommendation for the study of poetry offered in both versions of the text, that is, "that the poem in itself,
if literature is to be studied as literature, remains finally the object for study"?

According to Brooks and Warren, at the time they wrote the first version they were attempting to combat existing critical principles which they considered to be erroneous. They felt that a strong statement of their own position was necessary to establish a new critical attitude. At the time of the revised edition, however, there existed "a situation different from that of twelve years ago." The critical attitude which they had encouraged had "entered into hundreds of classrooms." Thus in the revised text they insist that although still committed to the idea "that poetry is worth serious study as poetry," perhaps "certain shifts of emphasis, or if not shifts of emphasis, at least certain expansions of treatment" are called for in order to prevent misunderstanding and confusion. Many believe, write Brooks and Warren, that the first edition of Understanding Poetry "implied a disregard for historical and biographical study." While they feel this to be a misunderstanding of their position, they do agree that it would be better to spell out, rather than merely imply, the relationship of criticism to other literary studies (UP/2, p. xxi).

At this point it must be said that Brooks himself, particularly after the publication of the first edition of Understanding Poetry, is very careful to spell out
his position regarding the role of biographical and historical studies in literary analysis. In fact, he has spent much of his time and energy trying to clear up misunderstandings related to this aspect of his critical theory. In essay after essay Brooks confronts what he considers to be the mistaken belief that his criticism is hostile to historical and biographical scholarship. The following titles alone attest to Brooks's concern with this problem: "Literature and the Professors: Literary History vs. Criticism"; "The New Criticism and Scholarship"; "Criticism and Literary History: Marvell's Horatian Ode"; "Criticism, History, and Critical Relativism"; "The Critic and His Text: A Clarification and a Defense"; and "A Note on the Limits of History and the Limits of Criticism."

Nevertheless the notion persists, well beyond the publication of the first edition of Understanding Poetry, that Brooks is opposed to historical scholarship. Monroe K. Spears, for example, in his review of The Well Wrought Urn, calls upon Brooks "to bridge the gap between scholar and critic" just as others had called on Brooks to bridge the gap between metaphysical and modern poetry. "That his [Brooks's] approach works for all poetry as well as for the modern and metaphysical poetry for which it was developed, may be granted at once," writes Spears. However, Spears believes that in The Well Wrought Urn,
Brooks, perhaps underrating the success of his earlier work, "is still fighting, with undiminished vigor, his battles against historical and moralistic criticism." According to Spears, "in spite of some verbal concessions, in practice he throws the historical approach overboard. His criticism, brilliant as it is, is really very specialized. He is not concerned with the relation of the poem to its historical milieu nor to human experience."\(^1\)

A close look at Brooks's own work, however, contradicts this assessment. In fact, even as early as 1940, in "Literature and the Professors: Literary History vs. Criticism," Brooks asserts that "literature cannot be taught in a vacuum" and that "literary history we shall scarcely avoid if we are to read the literature of the past at all." At the same time, though, he points out that "it is possible to have literary history and no critical discipline," and that "that is what we have now."\(^2\) He calls for closer attention to the literary text, hence the "vs." in the title which is an attempt to indicate a distinction, rather than an antithesis, between scholarship and criticism.

But the fact that Brooks calls for closer attention to the literary text does not mean that he would like to do away with scholarship. He is very careful to qualify his position. In "The New Criticism and Scholarship" (1946) he writes that "to ask that more attention
be given to criticism is not to demand that we abandon training in linguistics or in textual criticism or in literary history or in the history of ideas. Such a conclusion is entirely unwarranted. Yet, for good reasons or bad, many people have leaped to this conclusion; and perhaps the best service, therefore, that could be rendered the 'new' criticism (as it has been called for want of a better name) is to attempt to clear up this confusion." According to Brooks, the new criticism, "properly understood, is the criticism which is on principle least hostile to orthodox scholarship" since "such criticism must, in many cases, lean heavily upon the history of language, upon the history of ideas, and upon literary history generally." The new critic, says Brooks, "needs to know precisely and exactly what the poet wrote"; therefore, "he, of all critics, will be prepared to make use of the labors of exact scholarship." Furthermore, Brooks says that he wants "to stress the fact that criticism and orthodox scholarship are not on principle inimical to each other, to emphasize the fact that they actually supplement each other, and to suggest that they can, ideally, coalesce with one another in the person of that fabulous monster, the perfect critic."3 Here, as in most of his later discussions on the subject, Brooks concludes by analyzing a particular poem—in this case Bishop Corbet's "The Fairies Farewell"—
in a way as to suggest some of the potentialities of such an ideal union of scholarship and criticism. In "Criticism and Literary History: Marvell's Horatian Ode" (1947), Brooks points out that "to ascertain what Marvell the man thought of Cromwell, and even to ascertain what Marvell as poet consciously intended to say in his poem, will not prove that the poem actually says this, or all this, or merely this," for "there is surely a sense in which any one must agree that a poem has a life of its own, and a sense in which it provides in itself the only criterion by which what it says can be judged." At the same time, however, he again acknowledges that "the critic needs the help of the historian, all the help that he can get," and his analysis of Marvell's poem serves as another concrete illustration of the way in which formal analysis and scholarship can be combined. "The critic," writes Brooks, "obviously must know that the words of the poem mean, something which immediately puts him in debt to the linguist; and since many of the words in this poem are proper nouns, in debt to the historian as well." Brooks goes on to say that "I am not concerned to exalt the critic at the expense of specialists in other disciplines: on the contrary, I am only concerned to show that he has a significant function, and to indicate what the nature of that function is." At several points in The Well
Wrought Urn Brooks concerns himself with the relationship between historical and critical studies. In the Preface to the text he writes: "... if literary history has not been emphasized in the pages that follow, it is not because I have failed to take it into account. It is rather that I have been anxious to see what residuum, if any, is left after we have referred the poem to its cultural matrix" (p. x). And, in the first of the appendicized chapters, entitled "Criticism, History, and Critical Relativism," Brooks writes that the essays which make up his book "may very well seem to take history too little into account. Yet, though the discussions have been concerned with the poems as poems, the mind of the poet, it must be admitted at once, is not a tabula rasa. I certainly have not meant to imply that the poet does not inherit his ideas, his literary concepts, his rhythms, his literary forms" (p. 215). In "The Quick and the Dead: A Comment on Humanistic Studies" (1950), Brooks reiterates that "the critic's concern is not inimical to the historian's, but it goes beyond it, and properly so," and again he offers a concrete illustration--an analysis of Sir Richard Fanshawe's "The Fall"--of the way in which criticism and scholarship can coalesce. And in "The Critic and His Text: A Clarification and a Defense" (1950), Brooks once more replies to those who have attacked him for ignoring the historical
and biographical approaches to literature. Simply be-
cause one holds on to the belief that "an understanding
of the literary document as a literary document is cen-
tral to any valid discussion of literature," he says,
does not mean that he throws overboard all traditional
forms of scholarship:

Am I, then, saying that we are not to have any
of the larger speculations upon literary histo-
ry? Is no one to write a criticism which deals
generally with the whole cultural context as
it is reflected in literature? Is it not pos-
sible to try to assess the impact of certain
great books upon the American consciousness?
Are we not to undertake discussions of the
genesis of certain great books, or to inquire
how the author came to write them, or to specu-
late upon the general problem of how any author
works? I can answer very emphatically that I
hope we will have many such studies, that I
think they are legitimate fields for investiga-
tion. I certainly would not imprison the crit-
ic in a nutshell even if there, wrapped in his
own speculations and in his own conceit, he
might feel himself a king of infinite space."

It has already been pointed out that Brooks sees the
need to discriminate more closely among the various prob-
lems with which criticism is concerned, particularly to
distinguish between ideas about the process of the poem's
composition and the objective evaluation of the poem.
But although he insists on the need for "a clearer mark-
ing of boundary lines" between the various modes of
literary study, he is also careful to note that "clearly
marked boundary lines do not imply fences, barricades
or tariff walls. Nobody," he says, "wants to restrict
free trade between scholarship and criticism, and, least of all between the various areas of criticism."

Over and over again Brooks makes this same point. In "The Formalist Critic" (1951), an essay which might be viewed as the definitive statement of Brooks's critical theory, he again argues that even though the poem's "place in the historical context simply cannot be ignored," nevertheless, "distinctions [that is, between the process of composition and the poem itself] are necessary and useful and indeed inevitable." He writes that "the formalist critic knows as well as anyone that poems and plays and novels are written by men--that they do not somehow happen--and that they are written as expressions of particular personalities and are written from all sorts of motives," but he also states that "the formalist critic is concerned primarily with the work itself," and that "speculation on the mental processes of the author takes the critic away from the work into biography and psychology." According to Brooks, "there is no reason ... why he [the critic] should not turn away into biography and psychology." Such explorations are very much worth making. But they should not be confused with an account of the work. Such studies describe the process of composition, not the thing composed, and they may be performed quite as validly for the poor work as for the good one." Likewise, in The Poems of Mr. John Milton
(with John Edward Hardy, 1952), Brooks insists on the value of scholarly investigations but at the same time warns of the danger of stressing the knowledge gained from such investigations "at the expense of the reader's participations in the poetry," for such knowledge "in itself does not deal with the poetry."\textsuperscript{12} It must be noted that this entire volume is an admirable fusion of criticism and scholarship. In the words of John M. Bradbury, "this book reveals the complete synthesis of the scholar and the formalist critic in Brooks for the first time. Though the major essays on individual poems are couched in the familiar language of 'paradox,' 'irony,' and 'ambiguity,' and though they stress 'reading narrowly and precisely,' the editors explicitly employ all the resources of historical scholarship."\textsuperscript{13} Of course, it has already been shown that years before this volume Brooks was advocating such a synthetic approach and practicing it on a much smaller scale in his analyses of isolated poems.

In "A Note on the Limits of 'History' and the Limits of 'Criticism'" (1953), Brooks summarizes his position regarding the relationship between literary history and his own critical theory:

\begin{quote}
I want to emphasize the fact that my position involves no disparagement of history. . . . I say again that the literary historian and the critic need to work together and that the ideal case is that in which both functions are united
\end{quote}
in one and the same man. But historical evidence does not solve critical problems. In the first place, it is often inadequate or problematical. In the second place, the objective facts that can be pegged down and verified do not in themselves yield a judgment; the "historian" finds himself working with probabilities and subjective evaluations almost as much as the "critic." If the critic does well to remind himself how heavily he leans upon history, the historian does well to remind himself how often he is making a critical evaluation.14

Thus, when it is said that Brooks is anti-expressionist or that he rejects the biographical approach to poetic analysis, it must be understood that he makes it quite clear that he is not opposed to the study of a poet's biography or to the study of the historical background surrounding a poem but that he does see a need "to discriminate more closely among the various problems with which criticism in the large is concerned,"15 particularly the need to distinguish between the problem of the genesis of the work, that is, the process of its composition, and the problem of the analysis of the work. Brooks does oppose the critical approach which would confuse these separate problems. That he was forced to spend so much of his career clarifying this point is perhaps largely the result of the tendency shown in his early work to overstate his case for the close reading of the text. In this work he quite naturally minimizes the importance of scholarship in order to concentrate on the finished work of art, and thus to establish a new critical attitude. In his attempt to establish this
new critical attitude, however, Brooks became identified with an anti-historical bias. In spite of his efforts to correct this misunderstanding of his position, those who failed to read him carefully or who identified him too closely with other new critics, such as Eliot, Ransom, and Tate, whose opposition to expressionistic tendencies in criticism is much stronger than Brooks's, continued to misrepresent him as hostile to historical scholarship. In effect, Brooks, who would not "imprison the critic in a nutshell," has himself been imprisoned in a critical nutshell by his opponents.

Certainly the first edition of Understanding Poetry had a great deal to do with Brooks becoming identified as an opponent of historical scholarship, since the text placed much emphasis upon the study of the poem as poem and little or no emphasis upon biographical and historical studies. As has already been pointed out, however, the revised version of the text attempts to provide "certain expansions of treatment" and "to spell out rather than merely imply, the relationship of criticism to other literary studies." Spelling out this relationship is the function of the final two chapters of the revised text.

Chapter nine, entitled "How Poems Come About: Intention and Meaning," is an attempt to explain the value of investigations into the origin of a poem and to
distinguish such investigations from formal analysis. This chapter explores the accounts of personal experiences that became material for several poems in order to show that "what we can learn about the origin of a poem may, if we do not confuse origin and poem, enlarge our understanding and deepen our appreciation" (p. 592). Brooks provides several examples from the Romantic period: Dorothy Wordsworth's journal for April 15, 1802 which describes the event that provided material for Wordsworth's poem on the daffodils, Keats's letter to his brother in which the poet describes the experience that provided material for his "Ode on Indolence," and the account given by Coleridge of the experiences which led to the composition of "Kubla Khan." All of this material, when used to explore the process of composition, says Brooks, reveals something about the essential nature of poetry. What is revealed is that no poem is really simple or spontaneous; rather it is a complex relationship between experience, language and ideas. Exploring the process of composition also shows that "only poets dream up poems," for poetic inspiration "comes only to those who are ready for it." For example, Brooks points out that "Coleridge could dream up 'Kubla Khan' because he had thought long and deeply about poetry, because his mind was stocked with certain materials, images and rhythms and ideas . . . the effortlessness
was the result of long effort."\textsuperscript{16} Brooks uses a quotation from Wordsworth's Preface to the second edition of \textit{Lyrical Ballads} to sum up this last idea. In the quoted passage Wordsworth writes that although it is true that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," it is also true that "poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply." The important point here is that "Wordsworth took the most spontaneous poem, which might begin in a burst of feeling and with no preconceived notion of its 'purpose' or meaning, to be the fruit of his serious thinking at some earlier time" (pp. 609-10). Earlier in the chapter, Brooks uses another quotation from Wordsworth to support the idea that the poem must not be confused with information about the life of the poet or with materials that may have led to its composition. In a letter to James Gray, Wordsworth writes that "our business is with their [writer's] books,--to understand and to enjoy them. And, of poets more especially, it is true--that, if their works be good, they contain within themselves all that is necessary to their being comprehended and relished" (p. 591). Both of these quotations certainly seem to be directed toward those who would accuse the new critics of being unfair to
Romantic poetry and of rejecting the biographical and historical scholarship so often used to interpret the expressionistic poetry of this period. Look, Brooks seems to be saying, one of the greatest Romantics of all recognized that a spontaneous poem need not be simple and that the critic must separate the origin of the poem from the poem itself.

According to Brooks, regardless of how a poem begins—even if it is dreamed up as Coleridge claims Kubla Khan was—it can be said to have meaning, for its validity does not depend on its origin but on its own nature. "What is important," he says, "is that the first simple experience is interpreted, is turned about and about, until it gets a meaning for the poet and until he finds words that develop the meaning" (p. 599). In other words, the "process of creation" is just that, a process, a process of exploration and development; it is not analogous to building a house by blueprint. In building a house, the carpenter merely follows the plans of the architect, but the idea of a poem takes form while the poem is being written. As the poet composes his poem, "he is never simply following a plan; he is also exploring the possibilities of imagination and language. Until the poem is actually written down to the last word, the poet cannot be sure exactly what it will mean—for we know that the meaning of a poem is
fuller than the paraphrasable idea, that the rhythm, the
verbal texture, the associations of words, the atmos­
phere, all the elements, enter into and modify the mean­
ing" (p. 606).

This notion of the process of composition, of
course, is closely related to one of the fundamental
tenets of Brooks's critical theory, that is, the organic
nature of poetry (see pp. 48-49 above). In Brooks's view,
the parts of a poem are organically related to one an­
other like the parts of a plant; form and meaning are
the same because meaning inheres or is embodied in the
various elements of the poem. As the poet composes,
writes Brooks,

he moves toward his idea--toward his general
conception of the poem. At the same time that
he is trying to envisage the poem as a whole,
he is trying to relate the individual items
to that whole. He cannot assemble them in a
merely arbitrary fashion; they must bear some
relation to each other. So he develops his
sense of the whole, the anticipation of the
finished poem, as he works with the parts, and
moves from one part to another. Then, as the
sense of the whole develops, it modifies the
process by which the poet selects and relates
the parts, the words, images, rhythms, local
ideas, events, etc. As the sense of the poem
develops, as the idea becomes clearer, the
poet may have to go back and change his begin­
nings, revise them or drop them entirely. It
is a process in which one thing leads to an­
other, then to a whole, and the whole leads
back to single things. It is an infinitely
complicated process of establishing inter­
relations. (pp. 606-07)

That Brooks believes that the idea of a poem takes form
while the poem is being written, rather than being fully
formed in the poet's mind beforehand, enables him, when he comes to evaluate the poem, to view it as an object possessing or failing to possess unity. Although a large part of a poem may be traced to the poet's experience, in the final analysis, Brooks would say, the success or failure of the poem must depend upon the poem itself in its entirety and not upon a set of ideas or emotions which may have existed prior to it.

All this, of course, is not to say that Brooks denies the importance of statements or ideas in poetry. As pointed out in the "Postscript," "statement or ideas ... are tremendously important; but they are important as elements entering into the total structure which is the poem and into the total experience of the poem." Brooks's reply to the opponents of his approach who have voiced "the objection that it encourages 'mere estheticism,' that it makes no place for the human reference, the moral and social significance of poetry" is that "a study of poetry that starts from the notion of the poem as a little drama can scarcely be said to ignore the human materials that enter into poetry, for the dramatic situation is dramatic only because it urgently involves human impulses. As the poem starts from an urgent situation, so it ends by making, directly or indirectly, a comment on human conduct and human values." Only the values attached to a great poem
"are massively and organically involved together" and 
"the moral attitudes it embodies are . . . as deeply 
involved in the technical ordering of the poem as they 
are in any statement the poem may make. In fact, they 
are more deeply involved in the technical ordering. 
The meaning of the poem is, finally, in the kind of 
being the poem has and not in any particular statement 
taken abstractly that it may make" (UP/2, pp. xxiv-
xxv).

While Brooks acknowledges that Understanding Poetry 
emphasizes "the reading of poems as poems" and that the 
text is primarily "concerned with the poem as a poem 
rather than with the poem as a reflection of the poet's 
private life," he nevertheless agrees that the interest 
that a reader may have in a poet's life and ideas is a 
natural and legitimate interest. "We are interested in 
Wordsworth's ideas," he writes, "primarily because he 
was a poet. His status as poet makes us want to read 
his biography--to find out all that we can about him." 
In chapter ten, the final chapter of the book, Brooks 
attempts to view the poem in a "wider perspective," and 
he uses several poems by Wordsworth "to illustrate how 
one goes about studying the work of the poet as a whole." 
These poems--"A Poet's Epitaph," "Expostulation and 
Reply," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," "Lucy Gray; or 

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Upon Westminster Bridge," "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," and "Intimations Ode"--are not studied in isolation, but rather as to how each tends to throw light upon the other. Such an exercise, says Brooks, will reveal a great deal not only about the poems themselves but also about the poet's mind and personality, the study of which "may be a fascinating and valuable activity." This chapter, of course, is in keeping with the "expansions of treatment" promised in the introduction to the text, and it provides further evidence of Brooks's efforts to fuse criticism and scholarship while at the same time distinguishing between the two activities. Since "the work of a serious and able poet springs from certain basic ideas and attitudes that give it unity and continuity even in the midst of variety and change," Brooks believes that a study of the poet's work "as a whole" can provide additional insight into individual poems while at the same time providing insight into the poet's life and ideas (pp. 631-32). Brooks deals with Wordsworth's poems in the order of their complexity, beginning with what he considers to be the simple, direct, and least successful poems, "A Poet's Epitaph" and "Expostulation and Reply," and culminating in "Intimations Ode," a poem which he regards as highly complex and dramatic.

It is important to note that the observations
about Wordsworth's poetry that are made in this chapter modify considerably some of Brooks's earlier generalizations about the poet. In Modern Poetry and the Tradition, it should be recalled, Brooks finds Wordsworth's poetry to lack the dramatic quality, and describes it as "flat and heavy." Wordsworth's "distrust of the intellect," writes Brooks, "rarely allows him to make use of indirection in poetry." Instead, Wordsworth is frequently found guilty of overly explicit expressions of feeling, flat generalizations, oversimplifications, and of making straightforward pronouncements associated with didacticism. Brooks finds most of the poems discussed in chapter ten, however, to be "indirect in their approach to the theme." He believes that "they are concrete and independent embodiments of the theme," revealing that Wordsworth often manages to dramatize his ideas in his poetry. Brooks points out that "in Wordsworth's best poems, we are not told what the effect ought to be: it is generated out of the poem itself," that "the typical Wordsworth lyric works on the reader quietly and almost unconsciously," avoiding "self-conscious rhetorical devices," and that the poet "distrusts a special 'poetic' language and any 'mechanical device of style,'" for he clearly sees that poetry "does not reside in the glitter and shimmer of external ornament: it is the effect of the poem as a whole." Although
Wordsworth's poems are said "to show a surface simplicity," closer study, says Brooks, reveals the complexity of the poet's view of nature and of man's relationship to nature (pp. 636, 638-39).

According to Brooks, even the simplest of the Wordsworth poems "tells us a great deal about some of Wordsworth's beliefs and makes some very clear suggestions as to what Wordsworth felt the poet's function to be." From "A Poet's Epitaph," for example, we learn that Wordsworth "exalts the life of the emotions" over the "abstract intellect," since the emotions may "yield a wisdom to which 'reasoning' and 'understanding' do not give access, and that such wisdom is the basis of poetry. In "Expostulation and Reply," we are told more about this wisdom which "is acquired in a 'wise passiveness,'" a wisdom which "is associated with a feeling as opposed to mere intellection, and with a sense of the whole of being . . . rather than with analysis which breaks the world of things down into their separate parts." Brooks says that the two poems also "tell us something of what 'Nature' means to Wordsworth: it is not merely a mechanism to be analyzed by the intellect, and then manipulated by man to his own benefit. It is no mere machine, but is alive; it is not merely operated on by man, but moulds [sic] and influences man." He points out that "the theme of man's attitude toward nature was an important one for
Wordsworth" and that a "simple instance" of this theme can be found in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" which dramatizes "the sense of wholeness" which can be derived from man's communion with nature. "Lucy Gray; or Solitude" and "The Solitary Reaper," he says, can be "easily related to Wordsworth's abiding concern with nature and its effects upon people who are simple enough and innocent enough to let that effect operate upon them" while "'Michael' provides another dramatization of Wordsworth's conception of nature and its effects upon human nature."

Brooks is very careful to point out that the reader should not take a superficial view of Wordsworth's love of nature, "as if he were only interested in rural scenes and natural objects," for the poet can "feel the beauty of London" ["Composed Upon Westminster Bridge"] and at times even "use natural objects to suggest mechanism ["A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal"]. Finally he shows that "Wordsworth's dominant themes come together" in the "Intimations Ode," which is all important as "a document on Wordsworth's own development as a man and as a poet."

This "rich" and "complex" poem, however, is not dealt with merely as such a document, for, as might be expected, Brooks makes it quite clear that, in his opinion, "study of the poem in these terms does not preclude our going on to view it in other terms"; in fact, he believes that the poem should first be mastered as a poem, since "the
more nearly that we succeed in mastering it as a poem, the more light it will shed for us on Wordsworth's life and ideas" (pp. 632-40).

In the remainder of chapter ten, Brooks studies poems by Eliot and Marvell in roughly the same manner as he studies Wordsworth's poems, that is, in a wider perspective. The very fact that Wordsworth, a Romantic, is chosen to accompany Eliot, a modern, and Marvell, a metaphysical, is once again indicative of Brooks's desire to bridge the gap which his early work had left unfilled. It might also be said that by this point in his career Brooks himself had gained a wider perspective on Romantic poetry.

In his 1952 review of Richard H. Fogle's The Imagery of Keats and Shelley, in which Fogle attempts to defend the Romantics against Brooks and other modern critics, Brooks asserts that he does not accept as valid Fogle's argument that the new critics "are hostile to the Romantics generally." 17 Certainly, Brooks believes, insofar as Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth are concerned, a defense is not needed. According to Brooks, his quarrel with Fogle "ultimately stems from divergent conceptions of what the poem is," and "the very differences which Mr. Fogle finds between Keats and Shelley point toward those divergent conceptions." What Brooks is referring
to here, of course, is the difference between the poetry which moves by indirection (a quality which Brooks associates with depth, richness, and dramatic concentration) and the poetry of direct statement (which he associates with sentimentality and oversimplification). He writes that it is "not without significance that modern critics hostile to the poetry of Shelley have tended to praise that of Keats—and of Coleridge and Wordsworth." By this time, as has already been pointed out, Brooks had found much to admire in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, and he had openly expressed his admiration by praising their poetry. It is not surprising, therefore, that he felt the injustice of being identified as an enemy of Romantic poetry and of being included among "the hostile critics whom Mr. Fogle sets out to answer." 18

By 1957, in fact, Brooks had come so far in his admiration for Keats that he published an essay entitled "The Artistry of Keats: A Modern Tribute." Brooks begins this essay by noting that "there have been bitter observations to the effect that modern criticism has been concerned only with those virtues [of metaphysical poetry] and that it deliberately refuses to see any virtue elsewhere. The modern critic, so the charge runs, is on principle anti-Romantic." Brooks believes that "the charge is unfair" but that "in view of its alleged bias, it ought to be interesting to see what modern criticism
has to say about the poetry of John Keats." According to Brooks, "one point becomes immediately clear: John Keats is not one of the villains of modern criticism." Brooks again refers to Fogle who, "in his recent defense of Keats and Shelley against the attack of the modern critics, found, when he came to Keats, comparatively little to confute." But Brooks makes clear that his concern "is not to vindicate the modern critics but to pay tribute to the artistry of Keats," and he does this by praising the poet for integrating intellect and emotion, content and form, in his poetry. "Form is meaning" in Keats's Odes, writes Brooks: "the thinking goes on through the images and receives its precise definition and qualification from the images." Brooks must admit, though, that this generalization "is a conclusion to which I, at least, have not come speedily or easily." He writes that he "must apologize for past blunderings and misreadings, occasions on which I felt that Keats was confused or careless and that his images were used as mere surface decoration" and adds that "the blunders have turned out to be my own, not the poet's, and even Keats's apparently casual choice of a word has usually vindicated itself."\(^19\)

At the same time, however, Brooks is quick to point out that the fact that Keats's images are complex and meaningful does not mean that the poet "was a monster
of prevision, carefully working out the intellectual ramifications of his poems, adjusting this image and that to the precise development of a preconceived intellectual scheme." Once more Brooks is careful to preserve the distinction between the poem and the process by which it was written. He asserts that he has "no theory to offer concerning Keats's psychology of composition" and that his "case for the intricate coherency of the Odes is based upon the texts of the poems themselves." How the imagery came to the poet, Brooks says, is irrelevant in judging the poem, for all that really matters is "that the imagery, however spontaneously it may have come to Keats's mind, was shaped consciously or unconsciously, by that mind to a precision that is beautifully exact," resulting in poetry that is "inexhaustibly rich."

It has often been noted that in his early works Brooks criticizes the Romantic poets for failing to recognize the functional nature of metaphor, and that he often faults their poetry for avoiding difficult figures of speech, such as those used by the metaphysicals, and for depending too much on direct statement and simple description. In tracing the modification of Brooks's view of Romantic poetry, I have suggested that in his early criticism he tends to equate Romantic poems with Romantic notions about the process of composition,
and that for this reason he tends to find most of these poems to be of a simple and direct nature. I have also suggested that later in his career, as he manages to separate the Romantic psychology of composition from his objective evaluation of Romantic poetry, Brooks discovers that this poetry is much more complex than he suspected. It might also be said that Brooks discovers that the fault is not in the Romantic poet's failure to recognize the functional nature of metaphor, but in his own failure to understand the deceptive character of the imagery found in Romantic poetry.

In the third version of Understanding Poetry (1960), Brooks describes the special nature of this imagery by contrasting it with the kind of imagery used in metaphysical poetry: "At one extreme is the imagery characteristic of 'metaphysical poetry.' Here the comparisons tend to be quite explicit; the things compared may be shockingly different; they may be 'unpoetic'--neutral or even ugly and unpleasant in their associations. There may be a display of ingenuity in the comparisons; there is frequently a show of logic or pseudologic; the comparisons may seem far-fetched" while "at the other extreme, represented characteristically by some romantic poetry, the principle of analogy is more covertly used. Instead of metaphors that boldly declare that A is B, this poetry tends to make use of symbols--that is, images so used in
a carefully arranged context that A comes to stand for
and to suggest B—but the connection is left for the
reader to infer." Poetry structured in this way, says
Brooks, is like the Symbolist poetry written by the
French poets of the late nineteenth century, "a poetry
in which the metaphors have been reduced to one term—
that is, made implicit rather than explicit." He con­
cludes that both the Romantic and the metaphysical kinds
of imagery are valid and that "both can, on occasion,
yield great poetry" (pp. 272-73).

Brooks's discussion of Wordsworth's "Yew-Trees"
provides "an illustration of this imagery that looks on
the surface like simple description . . . but which may
come to carry a rather indefinite but quite powerful
symbolism." Although Wordsworth's poem "may appear to
content itself with description for its own sake," such
is not the case. According to Brooks, "the poem says
a great deal, but it says it indirectly. In great part
it says it through its imagery." The yew trees described
in Wordsworth's poem, says Brooks, symbolize a "permanence
in the midst of the ephemeral, a permanence that throws
into sharp perspective the little lives of men," but
there is no explicit statement of similitude; rather,
the reader must infer the connection. Brooks concludes
that "the genius of the imagery of this poem is in its
massive character, its rich potentiality" (pp. 273, 274,
278).
In light of his new understanding of Romantic imagery, Brooks, in "Literary Criticism: Poet, Poem, and Reader" (1962), corrects his earlier reading of Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper." He confesses, as he does in the case of Keats, that he erred in thinking of the poet's imagery as "merely decorative, vaguely ennobling." He writes that "it is small wonder that I found the poem rather flat and dull. It was only when I stumbled upon the fact that the thinking of the poem was really being done through the images [Brooks, by the way, says the same thing about Keats's Odes]--that the poet had implicated a whole manifold of relations in associating the natural spontaneous songs of the nightingale and the cuckoo with the natural and spontaneous singing of the girl--it was only then that the poem came to be deeply meaningful to me." According to Brooks, the bird comparisons in the poem "cannot be dismissed as mere decoration: what the poem 'says' is said primarily through the imagery." This, of course, is just one further example of the way in which Romantic poetry and the imagery used in this poetry become more meaningful to Brooks during his most influential years as a critic.
NOTES


5 Brooks, "Criticism and Literary History," pp. 204-05.

6 Brooks, "Criticism and Literary History," p. 222.


9 Brooks, "Introduction to Critiques and Essays in Criticism," p. xxi.
At the beginning of "The Formalist Critic" (see note 1) Brooks sets down his critical position in ten "articles of faith": "That literary criticism is a description and an evaluation of its object. That the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity--the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole. That the formal relations in a work of literature may include, but certainly exceed, those of logic. That in a successful work, form and content cannot be separated. That form is meaning. That literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic. That the general and the universal are not seized upon by abstraction, but got at through the concrete and the particular. That literature is not a surrogate for religion. That, as Allen Tate says, 'specific moral problems' are the subject matter of literature, but that the purpose of literature is not to point a moral. That the principles of criticism define the area relevant to literary criticism; they do not constitute a method for carrying out the criticism" (p. 72).

Brooks, "The Formalist Critic," p. 73.


The same observations about "Kubla Khan" and Coleridge's psychology of composition are made in the third edition of An Approach to Literature (1952), pp. 376-78, a book which contains no other changes of significance to this study, and in the fourth and fifth editions (1964, 1975) of the text which will be dealt with in a later chapter. Brooks's admiration for "Kubla Khan" is also shown in the third edition of Understanding Poetry (1960) where it is argued that the poem is whole and complete and not the fragment many scholars believe it to be.


CHAPTER 4

BROOKS, WIMSATT, AND THE ROMANTICS

Brooks's increased appreciation for the imagery found in Romantic poetry can perhaps be traced to his association with another of the American New Critics of poetry, W. K. Wimsatt. It has already been noted that Brooks accepted the idea of the "intentional fallacy" as put forth by Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley. Moreover, the distinction made in the third edition of Understanding Poetry between Romantic imagery and the imagery characteristic of metaphysical poetry probably was derived from Wimsatt's essay, "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery." In this essay, Wimsatt observes that "romantic wit differs from that of the metaphysicals . . . in making less use of the central overt statement of similitude which is so important in all rhetoric stemming from Aristotle and the Renaissance," and that the characteristic Romantic metaphor "is scarcely noticed by the main statement of the poem," both tenor and vehicle being "wrought in a parallel process out of the same material." According to Wimsatt, "if we think of a scale of structures
having at one end logic, the completely reasoned and abstracted, and at the other some form of madness or surrealism, matter or impression unformed and undisciplined . . . we may see metaphysical and neoclassical poetry as near the extreme of logic (though by no means reduced to that status) and romantic poetry as a step toward the directness of sensory presentation (though by no means sunk into subrationality)." He concludes that "as a structure which favors implication rather than overt statement, the romantic is far closer than the metaphysical to symbolist poetry and the varieties of postsymbolist most in vogue today," and that "both types of structure, the metaphysical and the romantic, are valid," each having "gorgeously enriched the history of English poetry." Wimsatt's remarks, of course, are strikingly similar to a passage already referred to in the third edition of Understanding Poetry (pp. 272-73) which concludes by observing that "both kinds of imagery [i.e., metaphysical and Romantic imagery] are valid" and "both can, on occasion, yield great poetry." Like Wimsatt, Brooks and Warren distinguish Romantic from metaphysical imagery and liken the metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry to that of the symbolists. In fact, a footnote on page 273 of their text advises the student to consult Wimsatt's essay for a more detailed discussion of the matter.
That Brooks was influenced by Wimsatt's ideas on Romantic imagery and the structure of Romantic poetry is not surprising when one stops to consider that by the time the 1960 edition of Understanding Poetry was published, the two men had been colleagues for thirteen years and had already collaborated on an important project, a history of literary criticism. Brooks's and Wimsatt's association, of course, began in the English Department of Yale University where they were to work together for many years. Brooks arrived at Yale, from Louisiana State University, in 1947 and was a member of the Yale faculty until retirement. Wimsatt began his career there in 1939 and remained until his death in 1975. During their years together at Yale they most likely shared a great many ideas on the nature of literature and the function of literary criticism. Certainly, being in such proximity, they were very much aware of each other's work. It might be said, therefore, that by the late 1950's conditions were right for the two critics to collaborate on a book that stands as a major achievement for both of them.

Brooks and Wimsatt had already served on the faculty together at Yale for ten years when Literary Criticism: A Short History was published in 1957. Although only seven (chapters 25-31) of the thirty-two chapters were actually written by Brooks, the authors, in their
introduction, declare joint responsibility for the entire book. "The whole work," they write, "has been written by a method of fairly close collaboration not only in the general plan but in the execution of each part. The authors have read and criticized each other's work closely and repeatedly at various stages." Thus, it seems safe to say that Brooks accepts the major points that Wimsatt makes in his portion of the book and vice versa.

Brooks's and Wimsatt's "history" is not merely an objective study of the variety of critical positions and methods in the history of criticism. Rather, the book is a history of western literary ideas which, in the words of the authors, "both grows out of and illustrates and contributes to a certain distinct point of view" (it is suggested in the introduction that an appropriate subtitle might be An Argumentative History of Literary Argument in the West), the view that "through all the ambiguous weave and dialectical play of the successive concrete situations which make the history of poems and theory, the sustaining truth continues and may be discerned and its history written." The "truth" to which the authors refer is the "one deeply rooted and perennial human truth which is the poetic principle" (pp. vii, ix, x); that is, according to Brooks and Wimsatt, that great poetry is an organic, dramatic,
metaphoric, tensional reconciliation of opposites re­
reflecting the complex nature of human experience itself.

Elements contributing to this universal poetic
principle, so the argument runs, can be found in the
literary criticism of every period, and the authors are
convinced that they see in the history of literary
opinion "a pattern of effort pointing toward at least
a certain kind of goal" (p. 735). They attempt to show,
for example, that the various conceptions of literary
genres "dominant in several ages" reveal, when carefully
examined, "not so many diverse views into multiplicity
and chaos but so many complementary insights" (pp. ix-x),
that is, insights into the single poetic principle toward
which the volume is directed. Of course a chapter by
chapter analysis of the way in which the authors trace
the progress of critical theory is beyond the scope of
this study; however, it can be shown, by focusing upon
the important position which Romantic poetry and criti­
cal theory is said to occupy in the history of this prog­
ress, that Brooks's already growing appreciation of
Romantic poetry was further expanded by his close col­
laboration with Wimsatt.

Among the first to comment on the volume were
Murray Krieger and Robert Marsh, a member of the Chi­
cago group of critics. The Chicago critics, of course,
since the early 1940's had been the chief opponents of
the tensional theory of poetry advocated by Brooks and Wimsatt--their principal spokesman, R. S. Crane, who maintains that the problems which criticism investigates are too complex to be encompassed by any one frame of reference, will be dealt with later in this chapter--and, as one might expect, the reviews of Literary Criticism to come out of this quarter were largely negative. As in The New Apologists for Poetry (see introduction above), Krieger argues in his review that the Romantic doctrine of organic creativity is not given its due by New Critics such as Brooks and Wimsatt whose own theory is heavily indebted to this doctrine. At the same time, however, Krieger remarks that "the reader must observe with some surprise that he is finished with all of literary criticism through the 18th century when he is only half finished with the book, that as much remains of the last hundred and fifty years." Thus, although he allows that "the authors faced severe limitations of space," Krieger does not seem to appreciate the real significance behind the fact that the period covering from approximately 1800 to the present is allotted over half the book, that is, that the disproportion of space is due to the fact that the authors assign the Romantic revolution an extremely important place in the history of criticism. Robert Marsh, however, whose review, entitled "The 'Fallacy' of Universal Intention," rejects Brooks's and
Wimsatt's idea of a universal poetic principle, does observe that in their book the Romantic revolt "seems to be presented as a sort of climax of recognition marking the beginning of the conscious emergence of the truth which had been until then sustained in various ways largely beneath the surface of critical consciousness."^5

That, for Brooks and Wimsatt, the Romantic period did indeed mark a "climax of recognition," a new critical consciousness of the universal poetic principle is signalled by the fact that the chapters dealing with Romantic poetry and poetic theory are placed at the very center of the book. This midpoint in Brooks's and Wimsatt's history is also presented as a turning point, for it might be said that, according to the authors, all previous critical theory was preliminary to the ideas discussed in these chapters and all subsequent theory evolved from these ideas.

In the first of these central chapters (all of which were written by Wimsatt), entitled "Poetic Diction: Wordsworth and Coleridge," Wimsatt shows that the new critical consciousness which came into being as a result of the Romantic revolt began with the Romantic reaction to "poetic diction." Wimsatt views the issue of poetic diction as "a good small-scale model" of larger critical problems. "The concept of 'poetic diction,'" he writes, "is at least a handy one both for the theorist and for
the literary historian, for "it has at least the ad-
vantage that it reduces to a nearly definable and
testable form a good many other problems of literary
criticism." According to Wimsatt, if one can distin-
guish between poetic diction (in the sense of something
undesirably false) and the valid language of poetry,
then he has gone a long way toward defining the very
essence of poetry. However, he recognizes that "it
may not be easy to isolate this critical question"
(pp. 340, 354).

As if to illustrate the complexity of the matter,
Wimsatt summarizes the arguments of Wordsworth and
Coleridge against poetic diction. Wordsworth, he points
out, viewed the problem of poetic diction as "an issue
between artifice and nature," while "to Coleridge it
seemed more like an issue between propriety and im-
propriety, congruity and incongruity." In his Preface,
Wordsworth announces that his purpose has been to
imitate the language of men, particularly the language
of "low and rustic" persons since such language repre-
sents the most natural form of human expression. "His
objection to poetic diction," writes Wimsatt, "is that
it is not true to nature--either to external nature or
to human nature in its responses to the external," and
"he seems to believe too that even honest expressions
can become bad poetry just by being repeated." Wimsatt
points out that Coleridge, on the other hand, "argued [in Chapter XVIII of the \textit{Biographia Literaria}] that if a given image or figure . . . is used badly by a given poet . . . the reason for the badness is not that the figure is a repetition of what other poets have done, but that it is in some way a violation of 'grammar, logic, psychology,' 'good sense,' or 'taste'--the 'rules of the \textit{IMAGINATION}'' (pp. 354, 346-48).

It is in Coleridge's recognition of poetic diction as a violation of the rules of the imagination that Wimsatt finds most significance, for in his view poetic diction is a reduction of a much larger critical issue centering around the idea of the poetic imagination. According to Wimsatt, the notion of poetic diction was demolished in the Romantic period in order to open the way for a new idea of the imagination.

Wimsatt deals with the concept of the Romantic imagination, with its emphasis upon the doctrine of coalescence, in the chapter entitled "Imagination: Wordsworth and Coleridge." Wimsatt notes that for Wordsworth the imagination was much more than the mere ability to combine images and make decorations (this inferior ability he attributed to the "fancy" as opposed to the superior faculty of the imagination); rather, the poet believed imagination to be "a 'con-ferring,' an 'abstracting,' a 'modifying,' an 'endowing'
power" which "'unites' and 'coalesces' . . . 'shapes and creates.'" According to Wimsatt, "Coleridge did not differ vitally from Wordsworth about 'imagination,'" and, for that reason, "the two may well be considered together, although Coleridge no doubt may be conveniently accepted as the more articulate and more theoretical spokesman of the two." He points out that the emphasis upon coalescence or reconciliation is "the most distinctive feature of Coleridge's theory," and quotes the famous passage from Chapter XIV of the Biographia in which the poet declares that the "'imagination . . . reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities" (pp. 386, 388-89, 395). Encompassing Coleridge's idea of poetry as a reconciliation of opposites, of course, is the notion of organic form (both ideas are shown to have a long history in literary criticism although Coleridge is credited with developing them into a coherent theory), which holds that the poetic quality is the result of the relationship among diverse elements and does not inhere in one or more factors taken in isolation, neither in the abstract statement of some idea nor in the 'poetic' language used to ornament an idea. Each element in the poem modifies and is modified by the whole context. It is easy to see that such an organic concept could not accommodate the idea of poetic diction, the belief in
the inherent beauty and poetry of certain words or images, or the ornamental or decorative definition of metaphor which accompanied the idea of the inherently poetic word or image.

Most importantly, this organic "doctrine of imagi-native reconciliation" Wimsatt sees as "an excellent description" of the formal, structural, and metaphoric aspects of the best Romantic poetry. He observes that the structure of this poetry "is a structure which makes only a restrained use of the central overt statement of similitude which had been so important in all poetry up to that time," and that in such a structure "both tenor and vehicle are wrought in a parallel process out of the same material." Wimsatt, as has been noted, made this same observation several years earlier in his essay "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery" (the last sentence quoted is taken directly from that essay) in which he defended Romantic poetry against its opponents among the modern critics. As in the 1949 essay, Wimsatt draws a distinction between the metaphoric structure of Romantic poetry and the metaphysical wit preferred by so many modern critics. Although he acknowledges that the structure of Romantic imagery "is no doubt a form of 'reconciliation,'" he also notes that "at the same time there are certain clearly 'anti-metaphysical' tendencies here--the absence of overt definition, the reduction of
disparity, the play of phenomena on the one hand and of 'spirit' on the other, rather than of entities conceived substantially." When Romantic poetry is approached on its own, symbolic, terms, however, Wimsatt believes that it is fully vindicated. "A brilliant host of symbolic nature poems by Blake, by Coleridge, by Keats, by Shelley, and above all by Wordsworth, illustrate the theory [that is, the Romantic theory of the poetic imagination] and justify it," writes Wimsatt. "No poetry before had shaded overt statement of spiritual or psychological meaning . . . so curiously, so dramatically, and with such sleights and duplicities of meaning, into the metaphorical intimations of the literally described landscape."

Furthermore, he points out that interest in Romantic poetry "derives not from our being aware of disparity in stated likeness, but in the opposite activity of our discerning the design and the unity latent in a multiformal sensuous picture" (p. 401). For Wimsatt, the Romantics succeeded in merging form and content and in creating a truly organic poetry which is no mere collection of 'poetic' imagery.

If Wimsatt seems to make few qualifications about the general quality of Romantic poetry, he does raise an interesting point concerning the limitations of Romantic poetic theory. "We have been bringing ourselves . . . to the point of asking an important question about the
limits of this doctrine of imaginative reconciliation and hence about the whole theory of poetic imagination entertained by Coleridge and, in fairly close concert, by Wordsworth," writes Wimsatt. "Was their story in fact a general theory of poetry? Or was it not rather a theory slanted very heavily toward a particular kind of poetry, one in which they themselves, and especially Wordsworth, excelled?" Wimsatt accepts the second alternative, although he is careful to add parenthetically that "the latter status would not have precluded a fairly wide extension of the theory, even by Coleridge and Wordsworth if they had been sufficiently interested." According to Wimsatt, Romantic poetic theory was mainly an attempt to justify expressionism. "In short," he writes, "we have a theory of 'animating' imagery, of romantic anthropomorphism, what Ruskin not many years later termed the 'pathetic fallacy' (and one may echo the term without the least hint of derogation), the fallacy, the fiction, of portraying the face of nature so as to invest it with reflections of our own mind and feelings and hence with expressions of the divinity which is the 'one life within us and abroad'" (pp. 398, 400-01). Whatever the motive for the theory, however, Wimsatt concludes that it resulted in a truly organic poetry.

It has been shown that Brooks has often dealt with the problem of the relationship between the poem itself
and theories of its creation, that, in fact, as he carefully distinguishes, in his later work, between Romantic theories concerning the process of composition and actual Romantic poems, he comes to acknowledge his own failure to recognize the true value of much Romantic poetry. Wimsatt, in chapter three of *Literary Criticism*, traces his own position regarding this critical problem all the way back to Aristotle who, it is said, "tends to shift the emphasis of inquiry away from what poetry may say, or tell us, in a practical or even in a philosophic sense, toward what poetry may embody or in itself be." And it is at the end of this chapter that Wimsatt, speaking in behalf of Brooks, describes the theory of criticism espoused and practiced by the two authors:

This seems the place for a candid assertion that our own view as theorists of poetry is something like that which Aristotle is made to confess. We argue that criticism, if it is to occur at all, must be like that. It must be rational and aim at definitions, whether it can or cannot quite achieve them. But what is left over and above definition, we argue furthermore, is still an objective quality of poems, knowable if indefinable, and distinguishable from that other realm, the dark well of mystery and inspiration—which is the poet's alone. If these two areas, the knowable yet indefinable individuality of the poem, and the unknowable or incommunicable mystery of the poet's inspiration, are alleged to show limits to the critic's activity, we concede the point. The first area, the individuality of the poetic utterance, may tease the critic's ambition. He would conquer it if he could though this is not required of him. With the second, the inspiration, he is scarcely concerned. (p. 53)
In his chapter on the Romantic imagination, Wimsatt focuses upon "a difficulty that has always been rather prominent for romantic scholarship," that is, that "the assertion of the romantic poetics seems always to lurk not far from the embodiment in the poems and to be needed for the deciphering of the latter." It is, of course, not surprising that Wimsatt, who together with M. C. Beardsley identified as the "intentional fallacy" the attempt to derive the standards of criticism from ideas concerning the origin of the poem, is quick to state that "the assertion (the content) of a poem is . . . never the same as the embodiment (the poem itself, the achievement), and the first never assures us of the second," and that "a confusion between poetic theory as operative in poems and poetic theory as their stated content is most often a feat of the historian and critic, rather than of the original theorist or the poet." It has been said that Brooks himself was guilty of this kind of confusion in his early work, equating, as he did, for example, Wordsworth's pronouncements about simplicity, directness, and spontaneity with the poet's actual achievements. Although Wimsatt believes that Romantic poetic theory is an attempt to justify expressionism and that Romantic poets tend to use their poetry to "assert" a philosophy of art--"romantic poems," he says, "tend to be about romantic imagination"--he
recognizes that such assertions most often become embodied in the poems themselves instead of merely being stated directly. According to Wimsatt, "Shelley's West Wind and Wordsworth's Prelude are triumphant instances of how the assertion may be dramatized and assimilated into structure," while "Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, which may be read as a poem about imagination, gets along with so little assertion that its theme has perhaps not even been suspected until very recently" (p. 404).

Although Brooks was attempting to distinguish between the objective evaluation of poetry and theories concerning the process of composition even before Wimsatt and Beardsley's 1946 essay on the intentional fallacy, it was Wimsatt who provided him with new insight into the symbolic nature of Romantic imagery, thus enabling him to recognize and to fully appreciate the achievements of the Romantic poets, and to once and for all separate these achievements from the limitations of Romantic poetic theory. On the basis of this new insight, several of Brooks's later essays on Romantic poetry attempt to correct earlier evaluations. It has already been shown, for example, that in "Keats: A Modern Tribute" (it is interesting to note that this essay was published in 1957, the same year as Literary Criticism: A Short History), in the essay on Wordsworth's "Yew Trees" in the third edition of Understanding Poetry (1960), and in
"Literary Criticism: Poet, Poem, and Reader" (1962), which deals in part with Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper," Brooks apologizes for his own failure to understand Romantic imagery. But how Brooks arrived at his new view of the Romantics is perhaps best explained in his "Retrospective Introduction" to the 1965 paperback reprint of Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Here he states that "I am confident that I would have avoided some confusions had I made in Chapter 1 [of MPT] a much sharper distinction between the limitations of Romantic theory and the actual achievements of Romantic poetry" (p. x). Now able to make this distinction, Brooks writes that "though the great Romantic poets were characteristically interested in the process of composition rather than in the structures of the poems they had composed, their own poems, needless to say, have structures, some of them of great intricacy and beauty. Had I discussed some of these in the first four chapters of this book," he says, "my remarks on the relation of symbol to metaphor--and of Romantic to metaphysical poetry--would have gained in precision" (p. xii). Brooks, it will be recalled, had, in the 1939 edition of Modern Poetry and the Tradition, charged that the Romantics had failed to understand the true nature of metaphor, and that this failure resulted in imagery that is ornamental rather than functional and in poems which lack unity because form and content are
at odds. Twenty-five years later, however, distinguishing between Romantic poetic theory and actual poems, he writes that "though the English Romantic poets did not provide in their critical writings a satisfactory account of the nature and function of metaphor, essential metaphor is very important in their poetry—even though the analogical machinery tends to be masked and the element of contrast between the terms of the comparison is minimized." Referring to Wimsatt's "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery," and calling it a "pioneer essay," Brooks summarizes Wimsatt's description of the characteristic structure of Romantic poetry, a structure which "foreshadows the characteristic structure of Symbolist poetry," which "does not abandon metaphor, but . . . does rely for its most important statements on the symbol, that is, on an image which, through its special relation to the context in which it is embedded, is made to point beyond itself to other and larger meanings" (pp. xii-xiii). While Brooks regrets his failure, in his early work, to specifically define the basic methods used by the Romantic poets—"methods not always dealt with or even fully envisaged in the critical theories held by their authors"—he notes that when he wrote Modern Poetry and the Tradition "the most exciting discussions of Romantic poetry—discussions of which I should now avail myself—had not appeared," and that the criticism of
that time, "though it had much to say that is interesting about the poet's process of composition, was not much concerned with the poems as structures in themselves" (pp. x-xi). Certainly a key discussion which resulted in the broadening of Brooks's own approach to Romantic poetry was Wimsatt's 1945 essay, for it enabled him to see, perhaps for the first time, the similarity between Romantic and symbolist poetry and to fully appreciate the complexity of Romantic imagery. Brooks's long association with Wimsatt on the faculty at Yale, and their collaboration on Literary Criticism: A Short History, must have served to increase Brooks's interest in Romantic poetry even more.

Brooks, of course, is the first to admit that his view has broadened over the years. "What a deal of water has run under the bridge since 1939," he writes in the opening paragraphs of his "Retrospective Introduction." "A wider experience, a more catholic taste, perhaps simply the caution of middle age, now suggest qualifications of the more one-sided judgments and alterations of the sometimes peremptory tone." No longer, for example, would he insist, as he did in 1939, that Romantic poetry represents a deviation from the true English poetic tradition as represented by the metaphysicals and the moderns. Rather he asserts that "today I should want to lay more stress on the extent to which Eliot, Yeats, and
the other modern poets built upon the Romantic tradition and incorporated structural devices that are a part of the general Romantic inheritance, . . . particularly . . . the structure of simple juxtaposition and occasional stark confrontation" (p. xiv).

Brooks does explore, at least to some extent, this "Romantic inheritance" in his portion of Literary Criticism: A Short History. Here the Romantic tradition, with its emphasis upon the reconciliation of opposites and its conception of organic form, is shown to have greatly influenced poetic theory down to the present time. One is reminded that Wimsatt, in his central chapter on the Romantic imagination, pointed out that simply because Wordsworth and Coleridge did not recognize the full potential of the Romantic theory of the imagination as a general theory of poetry, that simply because they did not take it very far beyond expressionism, does not rule out the possibility of a "fairly wide extension of the theory." That this extension was, in fact, made by later critics, even if it was not made by Wordsworth and Coleridge, is one of the key points that Brooks attempts to make in the chapters for which he was directly responsible.

The notion of art as a reconciliation of discords, of course, is an important part of Coleridge's poetic theory, and Brooks traces the various expressions and
extensions of this idea in modern literary criticism. He provides, for example, an extended discussion of the writings of the German philosopher and poet, Friedrich Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, writes Brooks, the artist is a man to whom ugliness and disorder constitute a challenge. "The artist does not passively record a beauty that he finds in nature. Beauty is not found--it is made by the artist, who imposes it by his own will, and thus wins a victory over disorder. For in beauty," says Brooks quoting Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, "contrasts are overcome, the highest sign of power thus manifesting itself in the conquest of opposites.' The artist creates out of joy and strength--not out of weakness--and the most convincing artists are precisely those 'who make harmony ring out of every discord.'" Furthermore, Nietzsche's artist "is a man who is hard and lives dangerously, scorning cowardly generalizations and shop-worn solutions, despising syntheses that he has not 'earned,' daring to subdue to his purpose the most recalcitrant materials, always 'setting his chisel to the hardest stone.'" Brooks also notes that William Butler Yeats "had learned, in part from Nietzsche, the uses of tension and conflict in art." Yeats's poetry, says Brooks, "is filled with tensions between stubbornly recalcitrant contraries. Everywhere Yeats finds the drama of the antinomies" (pp. 565, 566, 606, 605).
It has already been said that encompassing the idea of poetry as a reconciliation of opposites is the notion of organic form. "The doctrine that words create knowledge is a part of the romantic theory of the imagination," writes Brooks, noting that Coleridge "constantly verges upon such a conception in his speculations upon poetry as a way of mediating between the subject and the object." Brooks quotes a letter from Coleridge to William Godwin which raises a number of questions relating to this conception: "I wish you to write a book on the power of the words. . . . [I]s Thinking impossible without arbitrary signs? And how far is the word 'arbitrary' a misnomer? Are not words, etc., parts and germinations of the plant? And what is the law of their growth? In something of this sort I would endeavour to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things; elevating, as it were, Words into Things and living things too" (p. 584).

Brooks believes that this desire to merge form and content, "to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things," a desire which was given its first full expression by Coleridge, had revolutionary effects upon poetry and literary theory. For example, the French symbolist movement can be described, says Brooks, as "the effort to bring poetry to the condition of music" where form and content coalesce. Brooks finds this same attempt to
merge form and content in the American Romantics, particularly in Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, and Melville.

"Coleridge's American followers," he writes, "more nearly than his English, entered into direct engagement of the problem of symbolic form." And this line of thinking is continued in "the more recent developments in literary theory" which, according to Brooks, "can be read as attempted answers to the questions which Coleridge puts . . . to Godwin." Brooks writes that "present-day philosophers like Croce, R. G. Collingwood, Ernst Cassirer, and Suzanne Langer have concerned themselves with the laws that govern the growth of words and may indeed be said to have gone far to destroy the old antithesis between words and things. Even a theorist like I. A. Richards, who began with the thesis that words were arbitrary signs, in the course of time proceeded toward a correction and modification of that thesis, and in doing so came to argue for a much more organic conception of words, finally arriving at the view that reality itself, as man can know it, is a symbolic construction" (pp. 593, 585, 584).

Brooks devotes an entire chapter and portions of several chapters to the work of Richards, pointing out that although Richards' "poetics of tension" was primarily affective or psychologistic in nature, the result of his effort to apply psychology to criticism was an
organic critical theory that could be used to evaluate poetic structure. Brooks believes that "Richards finds in Coleridge's celebrated description of the imagination as a 'synthetic and magical' power an early hint of the doctrine of synaesthesia," or the notion that beauty results in the harmony and equilibrium of man's impulses. Indeed, Richards' characteristic method of poetic analysis is said to be founded upon Coleridge's famous commentary on Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Brooks, quoting from Richards' *Coleridge on Imagination*, elaborates:

Coleridge's discussion of concrete instances of the "synthetic and magical power" reveals him to be a semasiologist, that is, a man centrally concerned with "the meanings of words," and as part of this concern, anxious to inquire into "the behaviour of words in poetry." Moreover, Coleridge's account of the behavior of words in certain passages of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* provides admirable instances of poetic analysis. For example, Richards quotes Coleridge's commentary upon the lines:

*Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky,*
*So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.*

Coleridge emphasizes the number of "images and feelings" that are here brought together without effort and without discord--the beauty of Adonis--the rapidity of his flight--the yearning yet helplessness of the enamoured gazer. . . . And Richards, picking up the theme, enlarges further upon the interconnections among the various images.

Brooks concludes that "a great deal of Richards' practical criticism, much of it incidental to the stated topic of discussion and scattered through his various books, is criticism of this kind" (pp. 636-37), that is, criticism
which attempts, through a close analysis of the poetic structure, to explain how diverse elements are brought together to form a new unity.

Richards' attempt "to distinguish a richer, deeper, and more tough-minded poetry [what he calls the poetry of 'inclusion or synthesis'] from a more 'limited and exclusive' kind of poetry" (p. 619), Brooks observes, is not unlike Nietzsche's "insistence that the greatest artists are those 'who make harmony ring out of every discord.'" Indeed Brooks believes that "Nietzsche anticipated Richards' conception of a 'poetry of inclusion,' though Nietzsche gave his 'inclusion' a clear structural reference;" that is, "the discords are in the composition, and the larger harmony in which the momentary disharmonies are finally resolved is obviously to be referred to the total structure." Ultimately, Brooks argues, Richards' theory must also fall back upon a structural referent. Richards does, after all, suggest that the stability of a poem may be tested by subjecting it to ironical contemplation; thus, writes Brooks, he "seems to regard the differentia of 'inclusive' poetry as structural. For, though the reader supplies the ironical squint, the subsequent collapse in the defective poem is a structural collapse" (p. 621). The contextual theory of meaning which Richards formulated later in his career is presented by Brooks as further evidence of the fact...
that "Richards . . . has from the beginning focused attention upon the problem of discriminating good art from bad and he has to a remarkable degree, sometimes one feels in spite of his own more extravagant theories, stressed the organic structure of the work itself" (p. 632). Brooks summarizes what he believes to be the five major points of Richards' contextualist theory:

First, words interanimate one another. They are qualified by the whole context in which they figure, and they bring to that context powers derived from other contexts in which they have figured in the past.... Second . . . the meaning of a poem or drama or piece of fiction is seen to be a matter not easily or summarily determined. It is not enough to seize upon one or two "statements" as indicating the thesis and to relegate everything else to the role of ornament of detailed illustration. "Statements" . . . are subject to all the pulls and attractions of the other elements of the work. Third, the poet necessarily tailor-makes his language as he explores his meaning. . . . [W]hat we call the "meanings" of his words "are resultants which we arrive at only through the interplay of the interpretive possibilities of the whole utterance." Fourth, the reader, like the writer finds the meaning through a process of exploration. . . . Fifth, in light of the context theory, metaphor is seen to be a typical instance of the merging of contexts. A metaphor is more than a mere "comparison" that illustrates a point, or recommends a doctrine by lending it an attractive coloring. A metaphor is the linchpin joining two contexts, contexts which may be quite far apart and, in conventional discourse at least, utterly unrelated. The meaning achieved by a metaphor--and certainly by the most vigorous and powerful metaphor--is not simply a prettified version of an already stated meaning, but a new meaning in which imagination pushes itself forward and occupies new ground. (pp. 643-44)
Brooks invites his readers "to apply the contextual theory of meaning as elaborated by Richards in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* to his earlier distinction between poetry of 'exclusion' and a poetry of 'inclusion.'" It might be argued, writes Brooks, that

that which is "excluded" for the sake of unity . . . is a different "context." A sentimental love poem, to take an easy and obvious example, systematically excludes from its context such matters as doctors' bills, squalling babies, and the odors of the kitchen. Its unity depends upon the reader's viewing it from a certain perspective and in a certain light. When the reader, because of the enlargement of the relevant context, is forced to view such a poem from a different perspective, the essential flimsiness of the poem is revealed. The altered perspective reveals that the recalcitrant and contradictory elements of the experience in question have not been taken into account--they have simply been ignored. The poetry of "inclusion," on the other hand, systematically draws upon other and larger contexts. It has already made its peace with the recalcitrant and the contradictory. That is why it is, as Richards says, "invulnerable" to "ironic contemplation." (p. 646)

It must be kept in mind, of course, that in his preference for heterogeneous poetry, Richards was following the lead of Coleridge.

As an illustration of the kind of semantic approach advocated by Richards, Brooks turns to Richards' disciple, William Empson, whose "contributions to this kind of criticism are more extensive than those of Richards and . . . on the whole more daringly ingenious." Brooks notes that Empson's work, particularly his 1930 study *Seven Types of*...
Ambiguity, like Richards' is characterized by a general psychologistic bias, and that his approach raises some problems because of this bias; however, he believes that Empson, in spite of his psychologistic emphasis, must be credited with a substantial contribution to the study of literary works as organic structures. Empson's semantic analyses of particular poems, writes Brooks, "brought home to a whole generation of readers the fact of the many-sidedness of language" (pp. 637, 638).

Brooks's own sympathy with the kind of critical approach advocated by Richards and Empson is revealed when he uses his discussion of Empson's critical method to once again respond to two of his old adversaries, Donald Stauffer and Herbert Muller. According to Brooks, a "typical protest" against "Empsonian-Ricardian complexity" was made by Stauffer. For Stauffer, writes Brooks, "critics who insisted upon the complexity of poetry were guilty of partial sympathies: they demanded that all poems be 'original, spare, and strange' and thus disparaged verses written 'with simplicity and sentiment.' What, he asked, would such critics do with the simple lyrics of a Wordsworth or a Blake?" Brooks believes that the central misconception latent in Stauffer's protest is "that a complex structure must necessarily reflect an equally complex intention on the writer's part. The poem could not be so complex as Empsonian analysis would
make it, for that would argue that the writer was intolerably self-conscious. To this criticism, "Richards and Empson would no doubt answer that it is naive to equate a theory of structure with a theory of composition"--a point, as has been shown, often made by Brooks himself. Brooks points out that "a second misconception reveals itself when someone offers a great line or a memorable passage of poetry as an example of how truly simple great poetry can be, forgetting that it depends for its power upon the great literary context from which it has been taken. Thus Herbert Muller, echoing the method of Matthew Arnold, has quoted brief memorable passages from Shakespeare and Dante as proof of the poetic power to be found in the simple statement of a great master" (pp. 649, 650).

Brooks once again turns to Wordsworth in order to show that the best Romantic poetry is not at all simple. "An amusing illustration of the amount of complexity that may lurk beneath a commonly accepted simplicity," writes Brooks, "is provided by Laura Riding and Robert Graves" who "in their Pamphlet Against Anthologies . . . set forth a detailed discussion of the complications of meaning to be found in Wordsworth's 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal.'" In an attempt to expose the poem as confused and illogical, Riding and Graves submitted a rewritten version, only to discover, in Brooks' words,
that the revision reduced the poem to "a tidy emptiness." Thus their commentary culminated by arguing that in spite of its illogical details, Wordsworth's poem should be praised for its "supra-logical harmony." Brooks himself agrees with this general conclusion (although his own interpretation of the poem differs from Riding's and Graves's). He believes that "it can be argued that Wordsworth's 'misplacing' of words is the best placing of them," that "the apparent contradictions and violations of logic turn out to be refinements of meaning and subtleties of statement," and finally that "Riding and Graves by their proposed revisions, clearly showed how far this 'simple' poem departs from straightforward statement and how much it partakes of the ambiguous and the paradoxical." Brooks then states that "semantic analysis such as that associated with Richards and Empson does seem to imply a value in complexity itself. The great poems reveal an organic structure of parts intricately related to each other, and the totality of meaning in such a poem is rich and perhaps operative on several levels. In terms of this view of poetic excellence, a principal task of criticism--perhaps the task of criticism--is to make explicit to the reader the implicit manifold of meanings." Brooks concludes by observing that modern semantic criticism, in rejecting "any simpliste notion of art," that is, any notion that
the poem can render his truth "simply" and directly, "has insisted upon its debt (as through Richards) to Coleridge, remembering his emphasis upon organic form" (pp. 651, 652, 653).

Finally, Brooks discusses two other important modern literary theorists, T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot, who are both indebted to Coleridge and responsible for extending his poetic theories. Hulme's and Eliot's main contribution to the history of literary criticism, Brooks might say, was that they formulated, out of Coleridge's theory of organic form, a more objective approach to poetry, an approach which Brooks and many other modern critics would adopt. This emphasis upon objectivity, Brooks believes, was the next logical step in the evolution of critical theory since, as he puts it, a thoroughly organic view of art "implies as a corollary an impersonal art; that is, that the work grows in accordance with some inner principle of its own being, and is not merely the creature of the writer's ego, either as an expression of his feelings as a man or as an assertion of his opinions" (p. 683).

Brooks says that according to Hulme "the complexity with which poetry deals is not mechanical but organic," and that "each 'part' of a poem is 'modified by the other's presence, and each to a certain extent is the whole,'" a view not unlike that held by Coleridge.
Indeed, Hulme's central essay, "Romanticism and Classicism," notes Brooks, "makes extensive reference to Coleridge," although "Hulme does emphasize the art object more cleanly than Coleridge" and "has a positive distaste for that expansive 'genius,' or mind producing the art object, which was Coleridge's chief distraction."

Thus, according to Brooks, Hulme offers a more "objective version of organicity" (p. 662) than that offered by Coleridge who maintained a characteristically Romantic interest in the process of composition.

The emphasis upon objectivity, upon the art object as such, continues in the critical theory of T. S. Eliot. In Brooks's words, Eliot's "'impersonal' conception of art is almost belligerently 'anti-romantic,'" in that "it focuses attention, 'not upon the poet but upon the poetry.'" But even Eliot is indebted to Coleridge, for like Coleridge he "suggests that the work of art is to be regarded as an organism," and, also like Coleridge, he insists that the creative imagination involves a reconciliation of opposites. Brooks quotes a passage from Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets" in which Eliot declares that "when a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience." Of course, Eliot admired the wit which characterizes metaphysical poetry precisely because it served to unify heterogeneous material. As Brooks
points out, Eliot's belief in the power of great poetry to amalgamate disparate experience can be compared to Richards' conception of "inclusive" poetry or to "Nietzsche's conception of a 'harmony' that is rung 'out of every discord.' For in saying that witty poetry implies 'in the expression of every experience' the recognition of the fact that 'other kinds of experience . . . are possible,' Eliot is saying that wit calls to our attention the potentially discordant; that is, the unity of the witty poem is not a unity easily won by glossing over the discordant elements of human experience" (pp. 665, 666, 621). That Coleridge anticipated this preference for poetry built upon opposition or heterogeneity when he wrote that the creative imagination "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities" goes without saying. 7

For Eliot, great poetry always moves toward drama, and, as Brooks makes clear, "the conflicts between rival attitudes, the ironic qualification, the various stages of the dialectic--all of these are of the essence of dramatic presentation." And Eliot also believed that the essence of poetry is metaphor, for it is through metaphor that poetry unites disparate experiences. It is also metaphor that helps to make poetry the impersonal, objective, dramatic medium that Eliot views it as being. Eliot's famous notion of the "objective correlative"
(as formulated in his essay "Hamlet and His Problems"), writes Brooks, "puts the emphasis firmly upon the work itself as a structure. Since the poet cannot transfer his emotions or his idea from his own mind directly to his readers, there must be some kind of mediation." Metaphor often serves as this mediation. Brooks observes that "Eliot found in the bold and often strenuous figurative language of the metaphysical poets [as well as in the imagery of the French symbolist poets in whom he discerned a method similar to that of the metaphysicals] the necessary means for achieving 'a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling'"—a dramatic mode of presentation—and that "he saw that the problem of 'acceptable' metaphor was continuous with the general problem of poetic unity" (pp. 674, 667, 666). The true function of metaphor, then, according to Eliot, is not ornament or illustration (like the Romantics he would demolish the notion of poetic diction) but the objectification and dramatization of what the poet has to say about the complex nature of human experience.

In "Implications of an Organic Theory of Poetry," an essay published in the same year as *Literary Criticism*, Brooks observes that "a renewed consciousnss of a poem as an object--an artifact--and with that a renewed respect for craftsmanship, have been salient traits of
twentieth-century literary theory," and that "this
respect for the thing made and for the craft that goes
into the making have gone hand in hand with the humility
and self-effacement on the part of the maker. His art
became more than an outpouring of personality—or an
imposition of his own ideas upon limp and passive mate-
rials. Rather the process of composition has been con-
ceived of as one of experimentation and exploration--
a testing of insights against the funded experience of
the race as contained in, and reflected through, language.
Composition included an element of struggle with a re-
sisting medium; hence the recalcitrant nature of dramatic
truth."⁸ Thus, Brooks might say, did modern critical
theorists extend the ideas of their Romantic predecessors.
In this same essay Brooks expresses agreement with Eliot
"when he says that poetry does not advocate certain be-
liefs but tells us what it feels like to hold certain
beliefs,"⁹ and observes that his own organic, dramatic
theory of poetry results from the realization, shared
with so many other modern theorists, that a good poem is
"more than a skillful rhetorical packaging of some proposi-
tional truth," and that metaphor, "much more than mere
ornament" has much to do with what the poem "says."¹⁰
Brooks says that he believes, "as my colleague W. K.
Wimsatt has put it," that poetry is analogous to light
refracted through a crystal,¹¹ for "the light that
literature sheds is indirect lighting" and "the reality treated by poetry is a reality refracted through human responses."\textsuperscript{12}

By tracing the indebtedness of the tensional, organic aesthetic to its Romantic inheritance, Brooks reveals the importance of the Romantic theory of the imagination. Although its full value as a general theory of poetry was not recognized by its Romantic inventors, this theory, Brooks would say, laid the groundwork for what he and Wimsatt believe to be the universal poetic principle. Indeed, the authors' own debt to Romantic poetic theory is acknowledged in their concluding chapter when they state that they "find little difficulty in explaining to themselves a strong sympathy for the contemporary neo-classic school of ironic criticism and for what it has in common with the theory that prevailed in the time of Coleridge and the Germans" (p. 742). The operative words here are "in common," for Brooks's recognition of the important position which the Romantic revolution occupies in the line of development of critical theory--he, in fact, views Coleridge's poetic theory as a preview of his own objectivist position--foreshadows his willingness to accept the idea, an idea perhaps first suggested to him by Wimsatt, that an essential continuity exists between the poetry of the Romantic

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period and the symbolist and modernist poetry which followed it.

Before going any further, something more must be said about the extent of Brooks's indebtedness to Coleridge, and notice must be taken of the controversy surrounding this indebtedness. Opponents of Brooks have often used his indebtedness to Coleridge to point to inconsistencies or failures in Brooks's critical method. For example, he has often been accused of using ideas derived from Coleridge as weapons against the Romantics, and, more importantly, he has also been accused of borrowing some of Coleridge's vocabulary while ignoring the substance of Coleridge's theories in order to fashion a woefully inadequate theory of poetry.

R. S. Crane, the central figure in the Chicago group of critics, uses the latter strategy in "The Critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks." Crane's essay, originally published in Modern Philology (May, 1948) as a reply to The Well Wrought Urn and later reprinted in Critics and Criticism (1952), a collection of essays by the Chicago Critics, attempts to show that Brooks and other modern critics who share his views have impoverished Coleridge's poetic theory by using only part of it and by discarding the rest. The famous passage from Chapter XIV of the Biographia Literaria in which Coleridge says
that the imagination "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities," Crane points out, was intended by Coleridge to refer to the operations of the mind rather than to poems. Brooks, however, says Crane, "prefers to talk about the structure of poetry rather than about the imagination."¹⁴ Likewise he ignores Coleridge's distinction between "poetry"--which "comes into being, no matter what the medium, whenever the images, thoughts, and emotions of the mind are brought into unity by the synthetic power of the secondary imagination"--and the more limited "poem"--"a composition in words of a special kind."¹⁵ At the same time, however, Brooks is said to retain "two of Coleridge's points: the proposition that the 'imagination' reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities; and the proposition that the contrary of poetry is science," although Brooks is found guilty of separating even these points from their original context. "In that context," says Crane, "the antithesis of poetry and science formed a part . . . of Coleridge's definition of 'a poem,' and the concept of the balancing and reconciliation of opposites formed a part of his definition of 'poetry' in terms of the 'poet.'" The result of Brooks's deviation from Coleridge, writes Crane, "is a much simpler scheme than Coleridge's, and one capable of generating
far fewer distinctions and criteria for the analysis and judgment of poems. The most obvious contrast is that, whereas Coleridge was concerned alike with indicating differences, both as between poems and other forms of composition and as between different sorts of poems (witness the beginning of chap. xiv), and with establishing the unifying basis of all these distinctions in the powers and creative operations of the mind, Brooks is concerned solely with constituting poetry—that is, poems considered collectively—as homogeneous by attributing to poetry a 'special kind of structure,' to be found in all poems . . . but distinctive of poems as opposed to works of science." While Coleridge's theory of poetry is said to be "multidimensional" and to "form a coherent whole," which takes into account the object, manner, and effect, as well as the medium of poetry, Brooks's reduction of this theory is said to be inadequate. According to Crane, "all the multiple principles which Coleridge found it necessary to invoke—in proper subordination—for the adequate criticism of poetry are collapsed into one—the single principle, essentially linguistic in its formulation, which is designated as 'irony' or 'paradox.' Brooks, in short, is a complete monist, and given his choice of language rather than subject matter or the poet or the ends of poetry as the unique basis of all his explanations, a materialistic monist at that."
In view of the diverse concerns shown in Brooks's work, Crane's charge of "monism" is exaggerated to say the least. Wimsatt replies to Crane and other members of the Chicago school in "The Chicago Critics: The Fallacy of the Neoclassic Species," an essay first published in 1953 and later reprinted in The Verbal Icon (1954). Here Wimsatt defends Brooks and other New Critics by explaining that "it is a commonplace with the Chicago critics to assert that the critics they dislike deal only with 'parts' of poems, not with the whole 'objects,'" while "at the same time they assert that they themselves, the Chicago critics, are peculiarly devoted to the study of the concrete artistic whole." Wimsatt believes, however, "that the wholes contemplated by Crane and his friends are, not only ideally but actually, those indicated by the main and superficially inspectable shapes of works, those designated by authors and publishers in their title pages . . . and by genre definitions"; on the other hand, critics attacked by Crane (Brooks, for example, whom Crane labels a "monist"), says Wimsatt, "have shown a more marked tendency to look on the larger architectural wholes as ideas to be recognized when encountered but also to be tested severely in their parts. . . . The holism of such modern critics as Eliot, Richards, and Brooks (as, earlier, of Coleridge and the Germans) has been something not so much determined by
size, titles, and genre definitions as by the value principle of variety in unity or the reconciliation of opposites; and hence it has been something related quite practically to technical principles of ambiguity, polysemy, paradox, and irony. Wholeness is not just a form, but a form arising out of a certain kind of matter; wholeness is a certain organization of meaning in words; it supposes a certain grade and intensity of meaning. Wimsatt also accuses the Chicago critics of failing "to distinguish between passion as objectified or embodied in poems . . . and passion, along with intentions and other thoughts, as the psychological source of the poem, its inspiration, or 'cause' in the efficient sense." Although he maintains "that the romantic and lyric mind tends strongly to slip over into various genetic theories," he does not think it follows "that all romantic and lyric poems are as weak as romantic inspirational and intentionalistic theory." Indeed, he believes it is possible to have "romantic lyric poetry of passion along with an objective frame of mind about it." According to Wimsatt, this failure of the Chicago critics to discriminate between "the lyric poetry of passion" and "romantic personalism and intentionalism" is evidence of "their latent affectivism." Thus, in answer to the charge that critics like Brooks have taken Coleridge's remarks about the imagination out of context--applying them to the poem
rather than to the operation of the mind as Coleridge intended--Wimsatt says that "the modern critics have done well to take the cognitive parts of Coleridge's meaning and keep away from the affective lapses."\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, a very recent and a most informative and objective discussion of Brooks's relationship to Coleridge is provided by René Wellek, another of Brooks's colleagues at Yale University and the man to whom \textit{Literary Criticism} is dedicated. Like Crane, Wellek observes that although "Brooks is undoubtedly indebted to Coleridge," he "completely cuts off Coleridge's thought from its metaphysical roots." According to Wellek, Brooks is not concerned, as Coleridge is, with "the dialectics of subject and object . . . the reconciliation of man and nature, the distinction between poetry and poem." Furthermore, Wellek says that Brooks "expressly disapproves of what he considers the romantic perversion of the organic concept of poetry to a mystical unity," "has no use for Coleridge's distinction of imagination and fancy" (believing that "Coleridge wrongly devalues fancy and wit and thus reintroduces a ranking of poetic subjects, a depreciation of the witty and low in favor of the serious and sublime"), and "also objects to Coleridge's suspicion against the share of intellect in poetry, to his defense of inspiration and even divine madness." Thus, Wellek concludes that "the attempts of
some recent commentators such as Richard Foster to derive the New Criticism from Coleridge, and hence to claim the New Critics as romantics despite their anti-romantic professions, clearly fall in the case of Cleanth Brooks" who "sees Coleridge through the lenses of Richards' interpretation of Coleridge." Wellek points out that while Brooks disagrees with many of Coleridge's ideas, he seizes upon the poet's definition of imagination as the reconciliation of opposites and, like T. S. Eliot, quotes the passage in a variety of contexts. For Brooks, says Wellek, the passage is often used as a definition of I. A. Richards' poetry of inclusion or synthesis. Wellek explains that Brooks is primarily interested in Coleridge as "an authority for the view that a work of art is a totality, a unity in multiplicity, an organism," but that "Brooks stresses that this multiplicity can be and should be contradictory, should be a multiplicity of tensions." Although "he inherited from Coleridge (and his sources, Kant and August Wilhelm von Schlegel) the concept of organism and with it all the difficulties raised by a view which seems to make the work of art self-enclosed and to make criticism, in Eliot's term, 'autotelic,'" Brooks, says Wellek, "never embraced the identification of a work of art with a biological organism, or even analogue to God's creation, but picked the term 'organism' to mean
'organization,' ordering, coherent design." Indeed, in Brooks's writings, the term "is used as a defense of the inseparability of content and form, as a term implying a rejection of the reduction of a work of poetry to a disguised statement of philosophical truth or an immediate appeal to the reader's beliefs and convictions . . . or generally art as distinguished from reality, but it is not and could not mean 'aestheticism' or 'formalism' or even an isolation of the work of art from everything outside itself." Thus, although Wellek agrees with Crane that Brooks modifies Coleridge's theory, he does not agree that the modification results in a reductive, inadequate theory of poetry. And while Wellek is certainly aware of the problems raised by a theory of art as self-enclosed—he refers to Krieger's The New Apologists and Graff's Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma as two works which explore "the troubles into which such a view, rigidly held, runs"—he does not believe that these problems can generally be associated with Brooks's criticism. Wellek reminds us that "Brooks tirelessly argues that language itself carries us outside of the poem," that "he has on many occasions and with many examples, combated the misunderstandings that he would want to interpret poems in a historical vacuum," and finally that "he has never been a 'formalist' in the sense in which the term has been used by the opponents of the New Criticism."22
But what would Brooks himself say about the controversy surrounding his use of Coleridge's definition of the imagination? As already pointed out, Brooks and Wimsatt agreed that the Romantic theory of imagination was inadequate as a general theory of poetry, and that it had to be extended by later critics. Brooks would probably argue, then, that while he does indeed deviate from Coleridge's intentions by extracting certain key passages from his writings, as Crane and others have observed, the deviation results in an expansive, rather than a reductive, theory, a theory capable of accounting not only for Romantic poetry or metaphysical poetry but for poetry in general. Therefore, when Brooks uses Coleridge as an authority for the principle of ironic oppositions, for a tensional poetics, he is merely using a rhetorical device. Brooks, of course, is aware of the context surrounding Coleridge's definition of the imagination (at least he certainly became aware of this context when he began his association with Wimsatt and Wellek), and he views Coleridge's remarks as providing no more than the seeds for a general theory of poetry which he himself would help to bring to fruition.

This chapter cannot be concluded without a few observations about the Epilogue which rounds off Brooks's and Wimsatt's history and which is both a description
and a defense of the critical position maintained by
the two authors. This position, of course, is primarily
objectivist. "Impersonality, craftsmanship, objectivity,
hardness and clarity of a kind, a union of emotion with
verbal object, a norm of inclusiveness and reconciliation
and hence a close interdependence of drama, irony, am-
biguity, and metaphor, or the near equivalence of these
four--such ideas made up the neo-classic system as it
worked its way into practical criticism about 1935 or
1940," writes Brooks and Wimsatt describing the critical
system with which they align themselves, a criticism
which they hope will supplant a variety of expressionistic
and affective strains and which they believe represents
"a new technical and objective interest in poetry" (pp.
730-31). But it is also a critical system which is being
called into question by what the authors refer to as
"post-romantic didacticism." "This is being expressed,"
they write, "not only in direct misgivings about analysis,
or pleas for a more 'open' contextual reading, but also
partly in the form of proclamations about the need for
doing justice to the overall structure of stories and
dramas, their motives, plots, actions, tragic rhythms,
their deeper, wider, and more bulky symbolism, their
bigger meaning--in short, all that part and aspect of
them which may be supposed to be too massive and too
important to be penetrated by the technique known as
verbal criticism" (p. 732). Brooks and Wimsatt, however, in answer to this "anti-verbal poetics" (p. 734), insist that verbal criticism does indeed take into account the "bigger meaning," for such a criticism forces the theorist to face up to the reality of the human predicament just as the artist himself must do. "The theorist says that art ought to have the concreteness which comes from recognizing reality and including it. Art ought to have tension, balance, wholeness" (p. 743), write the authors. At the same time they believe that the theorist himself must face up to the conflicting elements of which art is made--the good and evil, pleasurable and painful, tragic and comic--and that he must also face up to the difficult question of values which inevitably arises from such a conflict. According to Brooks and Wimsatt, "a theorist of poetry may be driven to be some kind of idealist about the nature of poetry itself or the area of its operation. But if he remains close to the objects of his scrutiny--that is, to the actual poems--he will be equally driven to remain a realist in his conception of the universe in which the poetic area is contained and in which poetry finds its reasons. Theories of sheer affectivity and subjective valuing have suffered the paradox of promoting not enthusiasm for value but distance, detachment, cooling, neutrality. The sterner metaphysical, cognitive theories,
talking about real right and wrong, real beauty and ugliness, are the theories which actually sustain value and make responses to value possible. For response cannot feed indefinitely on itself" (p. 739-40). Thus, although the authors are committed to an objectivist position, to "a theory of irony and metaphor" (p. 747), they would certainly not agree, as many of their opponents charge, that such a position must result in the isolation of the poetic structure from life itself. On the contrary, they argue that such a position recognizes the true relation of poetry to life and of poetic form to poetic content. It recognizes that the poet avoids "any direct assault upon the affections at all," that he resorts to an "indirect, mixed, reconciling, tensional . . . strategem [sic]," a "devious technique" allowing him to indulge in "talk about love and anger and even in something like 'expression' of these emotions, without aiming at their incitement or even uttering anything that essentially involves their incitement" (p. 741). It also recognizes that "'form' . . . embraces and penetrates 'message' in a way that constitutes a deeper and more substantial meaning than either abstract message or separable ornament" (p. 748). In fact, Brooks and Wimsatt claim that "the ultimate advantage of the theory of irony and metaphor is that it is a theory that involves both poetic content and poetic 'form' and
demands the interdependence of these two" (p. 747). Lastly, it should be observed that Brooks and Wimsatt view their "metaphoric theory of poetry" as "a theory of multiple focuses and hence a historic theory and a perspective theory" which "entertains not historically separate and opaque conceptions but a translucent continuous view of history as vista and development." According to the authors, "the theory implicit in our narrative sees three main focuses or three most radical ideas in the history of literary criticism, believes them interrelated and reconcilable, and aspires to discard no one of the three." These three focuses are "the mimetic or Aristotelian, which does justice to the world of things and real values and keeps our criticism from being merely idealistic"; "the emotive (as developed with most subtlety by Richards), which does justice to human responses to values and keeps criticism from talking too much about either ethics or physics"; and finally "the expressionistic and linguistic, . . . which does justice to man's knowledge as reflexive and creative and keeps criticism from talking too much about poetry as a literal recording of either things or responses."

Brooks and Wimsatt believe that all three focuses "can be made the main points of reference for an indefinitely variable criticism of all poems" (p. 750).

Certainly all of this sounds different from the
early Brooks, and it might be said that he broadened his
time over the years with respect to other critical
focuses just as he gained a wider perspective regarding
Romantic poetry. As has already been explained, Brooks's
ever publications were designed to establish a new
critical attitude in opposition to expressionistic tend-
cencies in criticism. Once this attitude was established,
one would expect a general broadening of view to occur.
Precisely the extent to which this broadening of view
can be attributed to the influence of Brooks's collabora-
tor on Literary Criticism: A Short History would be dif-
cult to determine, but it is probably safe to assume
that Wimsatt played a significant role in Brooks's devel-
"opment as a critic.23
NOTES


In the acknowledgment section of Hateful Contraries: Studies in Literature and Criticism (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), Wimsatt notes that he and Brooks worked together for a period of seven years on Literary Criticism: A Short History (p. ix).


5 Robert Marsh, "The 'Fallacy' of the Universal Intention," Modern Philology, 60 (May 1958), 266.

6 See Brooks's "Literature and the Professors," p. 405, for example.

7 Brooks, however, is careful to take notice of the fact that on certain issues Eliot clearly diverged from Coleridge. Although noting that while "a high point of his [Eliot's] praise of Andrew Marvell is that Marvell's best verse satisfies 'the elucidation of Imagination given by Coleridge,'" Brooks also points out that "in terms reminiscent of Hulme, Eliot speaks of Marvell's 'bright, hard precision,' which, as achieved by Marvell does not render his poetry less but more serious." This

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view, Brooks believes, "challenges Coleridge's distinction between the fancy and the imagination, for many of the devices in Marvell's poetry that Coleridge would have to range under fancy are actually used to achieve effects that show the full power of the imagination" (pp. 666-67).


11 The passage to which Brooks refers is found on pp. 737-38 of Literary Criticism and reads as follows: "A refraction of light through a crystal tells us something about the light, something about the crystal; the refraction itself is a kind of reality, interesting to observe. Let us say that poetry is a kind of reality refracted through subjective responses. This refraction itself is an area of reality. Does the refraction tell us something unique and profound about the reality beyond itself? We need not actually say much about this for the purpose of a workable poetics. (Much will depend on what we conceive the ultimate character of that reality to be.)"


13 Fogle, in "Romantic Bards," maintains that modern critics like Brooks and Eliot find the Romantics unsatisfactory because they failed to have confidence in the imagination as the reconciler of opposites. Fogle then notes that since this notion of the power of the imagination was derived from several statements made by "that incorrigible Romanticist Coleridge, it seems a little ungracious of Mr. Eliot and Professor Brooks to use them as a weapon against the Romantics" (p. 240n). Likewise, Krieger in The New Apologists claims that Brooks and other New Critics have "been battling romanticism with the tools furnished them by the romantics" (p. 33).


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15 Crane, p. 87.
16 Crane, p. 89.
17 Crane, pp. 92-93.
23 All of these points made in the Epilogue are also made by Wimsatt in the opening essay of Hateful Contraries, which again surveys the state of modern criticism and attempts to defend the tensional theory of poetry against the claim that it isolates poetry from life. While acknowledging the difficulty and danger of maintaining a tensional theory (for such a theory may easily slip over into the extremes of didacticism or formalism, or result in a kind of Manichaean dualism), Wimsatt, in this essay entitled "Horses of Wrath: Recent Critical Lessons," concludes that it is the most complete type of theory available. As in the chapters on the Romantics in Literary Criticism, Wimsatt emphasizes the important position which the principle of ironic opposition held for the English Romantic poets, only here the focus is on Blake and Keats--both poets. Wimsatt, "were absorbed in the hateful siege of contraries" (p. 22)--instead of Wordsworth and Coleridge. "Horses of Wrath," it should be noted, was rewritten from parts of three earlier essays: "Criticism Today: A Report from America," in Essays in Criticism, 6 (January 1956); "Poetic Tension: A Summary" in the New Scholasticism, 32 (January 1958); and "Horses of Wrath" in Essays in Criticism, 12 (January 1962). In fact, the Epilogue to Literary Criticism is an adaptation of the 1956 "Criticism Today" essay.
CHAPTER 5

LATER WORKS

In the 1960's and on through the 1970's, Cleanth Brooks has continued to add to his impressive list of achievements. Two major studies of the works of William Faulkner, *The Yoknapatawpha Country* (1963) and *Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (1978), a collection of essays entitled *A Shaping Joy: Studies in the Writer's Craft* (1971), new editions of *An Approach to Literature* (1964, 1975), a fourth edition of *Understanding Poetry* (1976), and a massive two-volume anthology, *American Literature: The Makers and the Making* (with R. W. B. Lewis and Robert Penn Warren, 1973), must top the list of Brooks's later works. As might be expected, Brooks's writings dealing with the Romantics during this most recent period of his long career are characterized by a deep sense of appreciation for Romantic poetry, by continued attempts to correct any misinterpretations or erroneous views for which he might have been responsible (as well as by attempts to correct misrepresentations or misunderstandings of his own position regarding Romantic poetry and poetic
theory), and, finally, by a more open acceptance of the biographical and historical critical focuses that can and have been used in the reading of Romantic poetry.

In the previous chapter it was shown that primarily as a result of his association with Wimsatt, Brooks came to recognize that he had underestimated the Romantic conception of metaphor and that this recognition led him to revise his views of several poems. Another example of Brooks's attempt to correct an earlier interpretation can be found in the fourth and fifth editions of An Approach to Literature. While the analysis of Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" contained in the first three editions of the text concludes that "the poem does not have enough [irony] to be entirely successful," the revised commentary in the fourth and fifth editions contains no such objection. And certain images which were said to fail in the earlier commentary are justified in the revision. With the "globèd peonies" figure, says the original commentary, "the fleetingness of the beauty is not emphasized and the climactic order of the images which the poet has been building up to is broken--and broken probably to no good purpose" (AL/1, p. 480; AL/2, p. 480; AL/3, p. 357). The revised analysis, however, attempts to explain the fact that the figure "does not stress the fleetingness of beauty" by suggesting that "perhaps the poet wants here a less striking--a more desultory--image before he
reaches his climactic image, that of the woman in the fullness of her beauty, a woman agitated, filled with emotion, seen for a moment in all her pride of life" (AL/4, p. 350; AL/5, pp. 421-22). Indeed, the earlier analysis, in reference to the image of the angry woman, concludes that "the figure here is unsuccessful" and that "this particular digression really weakens the poem considerably" (AL/1, p. 481; AL/2, p. 481; AL/3, p. 357). The revised commentary, however, finds no "digressions" in the poem; on the contrary, the poem is praised for the unity of its imagery and it is said that "throughout the poem . . . there is a thinking through images" (AL/4, p. 351; AL/5, p. 422). All of this, of course, is in keeping with Brooks's earlier modification of his view of Keats's poetry. Although Brooks, from the very beginning of his career, admired Keats as a poet, he often criticized Keats's imagery for being decorative rather than functional. Later, Brooks would apologize for such "blunderings and misreadings," asserting that "form is meaning" for Keats and that in his poems "the thinking goes on through the images and receives its precise definition and qualification from the images."¹ This change in Brooks's thinking, as has been shown, probably resulted from his familiarity with Wimsatt's ideas on Romantic imagery.

It has been said that Brooks's theory broadened
over the years with respect to other critical focuses. That a friendlier tone toward biographical and historical studies emerges in the 1950 edition of *Understanding Poetry* and that this tone is indicative of Brooks's efforts to fuse criticism and scholarship while at the same time distinguishing between the two activities have already been demonstrated. As might be expected, this broadening of view continues in Brooks's more recent work. Like the second edition of *Understanding Poetry*, the fourth and fifth editions of *An Approach to Literature* contain a chapter in which there is an attempt to analyze several poems by the same poet. In the revised version of *Understanding Poetry*, of course, a number of poems by Wordsworth are studied under the assumption that "the work of a serious and able poet springs from certain basic ideas and attitudes that give it unity and continuity even in the midst of variety and change" (UP/2, p. 632). As already noted, this procedure was in keeping with the "expansions of treatment" promised in the introduction to the text (see p. 113 above). Such expansions of treatment can also be found in the most recent editions of *An Approach to Literature*, only this time the poems examined are by Keats rather than Wordsworth. Here it is pointed out, in terms that sound rather expressionist for Brooks, that "one way to study a poet is to see how his poems
can help interpret each other and how the whole mass of poems sometimes has a unity of mood and even of technique, how, in fact, the body of a poet's work is a personal projection, an elaboration of some central and perhaps obsessive concern of the poet" (AL/4, p. 411; AL/5, p. 475). Three poems by Keats—"Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and "To Autumn"—are discussed with special attention to the various ways in which the poet treats the theme of melancholy. In both texts this section follows the analysis of the "Ode to Melancholy" treated above and it is said that "the theme that dominates the 'Ode to Melancholy' is one that runs through a great many poems by Keats" (AL/4, p. 411; AL/5, p. 475). Brooks insists on the absence of sentimentality in Keats's poems and on their inclusive nature:

Both ["Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale"] are also clearly related to the "Ode to Melancholy," for both imply that the man who is most aware of the threat of mortality and the frailty of beauty is the man who is most sensitive to the beauty of nature or of art. This is not to say that "Melancholy" or the "Urn" or the "Nightingale" is in the least sentimental; the poet does not whine or complain. He is very much aware of the intense beauty of both nature and art, but he is a realist too. Neither nature nor art is a refuge for man. Neither will save man from old age, sickness, or sorrow, though they will give him something very precious. Moreover, man feels the power of nature and art as intensely as he does just because their immortality stands in contrast to his own mortality. (AL/4, p. 418; AL/5, p. 482)
The discussions of "Ode to a Nighingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" are similar to earlier discussions of these poems, while the analysis of "To Autumn" merely explains that the various images used to describe the season in this poem grow out of one another and unite to embody a certain attitude about "the human season" (AL/4, p. 420; AL/5, p. 483). There is, however, a passage of special interest in the analysis of "Ode to a Nightingale." Brooks compares the poem to a blank-verse sonnet by Keats entitled "What the Thrush Said," and the point seems to be that the sonnet, like the ode, is a poem about the contrast between the world of nature and the world of human consciousness. According to the commentary, "this little poem was addressed to a friend of Keats' and forms part of a letter to him written on February 19, 1818. The bird is speaking to a young man who is wearied with the winter and longs for springtime. Since this young man is John Keats, we know that he too has been wearied with the waiting for his own talent as a poet to blossom and that he now hopes that his springtime as a writer will soon come" (AL/4, p. 413; AL/5, pp. 477-78). What is interesting here, of course, is the readiness with which Keats is identified as the speaker of the poem, and that no attempt is made to disassociate the speaker of the poem from the personality of the real life poet. In view of the fact that
Brooks so often insists that even the smallest lyric can be regarded as dramatic and in view of his insistence upon an objective, as opposed to an expressionist, approach to poetry, this may seem inconsistent. However, it has already been shown that Brooks has never gone as far as Eliot and some of the other anti-expressionists in insisting on the separation of poetry from the poet's personality, and that while it is true that he does, particularly in his early work, reject the biographical approach so often used to discuss Romantic poetry in favor of a more objective view, he has never been hostile to biographical scholarship as such. In fact, he has written that "the formalist critic knows as well as anyone that poems and plays and novels are written by men—that they do not somehow happen—and that they are written as expressions of particular personalities and are written from all sorts of motives." Thus, although Brooks believes that literary criticism must do more than merely attempt to discover "what porridge had John Keats," and although he sees the need for "a clearer marking of boundary lines" between different forms of criticism, he never denies the value of significant historical research; rather, he insists that there be "free trade" between critical methods (see p. 110 above).

The expressionistic language found in some of Brooks's more recent writings on the Romantics, however, is rather
uncharacteristic even if it is not inconsistent. It must be recalled that Brooks began his career by attempting to shift the focus of criticism from its Romantic emphasis on the poet's personality to a consideration of the poem as an objective dramatization of human experience, as a construction with its own internal unity and coherence. One strategy used to bring about this shift in critical focus was, quite naturally, to alter the language used to discuss poetry (especially Romantic poetry), to refer, for example, to "the speaker of the poem" rather than to "Keats" or to "Wordsworth." Such language helps to identify even the smallest lyric as a "little drama" and helps to separate the poem as object from the poem as an expression of the poet's personality. While Brooks has certainly not abandoned his conviction that the primary focus of attention for the critic as well as for the teacher and the student is the poem itself, it does seem that he no longer feels the need to rely on a rhetorical strategy that emphasizes this conviction. 2 It might be said that a confidence in the wide acceptance of the objective view combined with a general broadening and enlargement of his own approach has allowed Brooks, in his more recent work, to travel more freely in and out of the "boundary lines" that he believes should mark the various modes of literary study. In fact, toward the end of the discussion of Keats's
poems in *An Approach to Literature*, the student is encouraged to do likewise. "He [the student]," it is said, "might look up, for example, Keats' sonnet 'On the Grasshopper and the Cricket' as a slight but charming foreshadowing of one of the elements in 'To Autumn.' He might also enjoy looking into Keats' letters for passages which throw light upon the poems and consulting other poems of Keats' to see their connection with the poems already examined." Furthermore, the student is encouraged to "go on to relate this group of poems, not only to the rest of Keats but to other Romantic poets, such as Shelley, Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge," since "these poets shared a world view, characteristic attitudes toward nature, and, for all their differences, similar poetic methods." Finally it is recommended that the student consult René Wellek's "recent and authoritative account of Romanticism" which "sees it as constituting 'a closely coherent body of thought and feeling,'" whose "fundamental characteristic is described as the endeavor 'to overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious'" (*AL/4*, p. 420; *AL/5*, pp. 483-84). Thus it is plain that the pedagogical methods used in these later editions of *An Approach to Literature* have been extended to include the study of biography, literary history and the history of ideas, and even the creative
processes, all of these modes of literary study being viewed as aids to the student's understanding of the work itself.

The chapter on Keats's poems concludes by stating that "during the last twenty-five years the Romantic poets have received renewed attention and their work has been reassessed" (AL/4, p. 420; AL/5, p. 484), and by sending the student to M. H. Abrams' *English Romantic Poets* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1960) for a sampling of recent discussions of the Romantics. Abrams' book, it should be noted, reprints Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian," one of the essays which marks Brooks's own reassessment of Romantic poetry.

The fourth edition of *Understanding Poetry* (1976) also illustrates the broadening of Brooks's method. The chapter "How Poems Come About: Intention and Meaning," which originally appeared in the 1950 edition, is retained here, and, moreover, the individual commentaries contained in this most recent edition often take the student beyond the poem itself to investigations into the poet's biography or into the process of composition. For example, Brooks quotes Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* to give the student insight into the circumstances surrounding the composition of Wordsworth's "Written in March" (pp. 74-75), and a brief note following Keats's "When I Have Fears" attempts to relate the poem to the
life of the poet. "This is a poem," says the note, "addressed by a young poet to an imagined love. Keats died early, before he could marry the actual girl with whom he was in love and before he could be sure that he could realize his ambition to be 'among the English poets after my death.' He asked that on his tombstone should be inscribed: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water'" (p. 273). The commentary which accompanies Wordsworth's poem might be viewed as a qualification of Brooks's earlier rejection of Romantic poetry for being "too much centered in the personal and the lyrical" and for lacking the dramatic quality which characterizes great poetry (see pp. 23-24 above). "There is certainly nothing amiss in a poet's giving us subjective interpretations of life experiences," writes Brooks. "In fact, it would be hardly possible (nor in every case desirable) to do otherwise, for we do not read poetry in order to obtain dry and clinical descriptions of the world about us. The point is that the good poet does observe the surrounding world and ultimately finds instances in it reflecting a personal interpretation of experienced reality." However, as the commentary makes clear, the "interpretation" of experience in "Written in March" "is not really the poet's interpretation but a kind of metaphor" (p. 75). Wordsworth's method, then, is not direct statement but the indirect, objective, dramatic language.
of poetry. It might be said that Brooks never comes to accept didactic poetry; he simply comes to view most Romantic poetry as essentially dramatic in spite of its expressionistic tendencies.

In the important fifth chapter of the most recent edition of *Understanding Poetry*, entitled "Theme, Meaning, and Dramatic Structure," some of the central tenets of Brooks's objectivist position, particularly as related to the organic and dramatic nature of poetry, are restated. According to Brooks, "when we talk about the theme of a poem we must be careful to distinguish between the ostensible topic or even the statement of a poem and the basic attitude and idea implied by a poem when it is understood as a whole," for "it is plain that the total meaning of a poem can never be fully summed up in a 'statement.' The meaning is the special import of the dramatization of a situation. In sum, a poem, being a kind of drama that embodies a human situation, implies an attitude toward that situation. It is we, the readers, who often abstract the 'theme' and express it as a statement." Thus it can be said that "poems do not so much 'state' themes as 'test' ideas and attitudes by putting those ideas and attitudes into dramatic situations, by dramatizing human concerns and interests" and that "we may think of a poem, in one sense, as an experiment in living--that is, as an imaginative enactment."
A poem built directly on a statement of an idea, writes Brooks, may result in "a flat didacticism that kills the drama and turns the poem into moralistic advice." He goes on to explain that "to build on a 'statement,' the poet must convert 'statement' into 'experience'--into drama and feeling," and he uses Keats's "To Autumn" as one example of a poem in which such a conversion is accomplished, a poem "in which there is no statement of an idea, but in which the general mood, built up by the rhythm and imagery, leads us inevitably to a certain attitude toward life--that is, to an idea, a theme" (pp. 267-68). All of this leads into the conclusion of the chapter which is yet another discussion of an issue that is of great importance to Brooks, that is, "the problem of belief," for if "the theme of a poem . . . amounts to a comment on human values, an interpretation of life" then "what are we to make of poems in which the theme does not accord with our own feelings about life?"

Brooks suggests that "it may help us to think of our estimates of poems (or poets) as we think of our estimates of other people," for poems, like people, may represent "differences of opinion, taste, and values." According to Brooks, "in people whom we respect we recognize some underlying good will, some attempt to make sense of things and deal honestly with them. In recognizing this fact about others, we discover in ourselves some tolerance
and some power of sympathetic imagination that enables us to feel ourselves into another person's skin and to understand how the world looks to him. In this process of imaginative sympathy we realize that the world is complicated and the richer for its complications" (p. 269). Of course, all of these same ideas are discussed in the earlier editions of the text. In an earlier essay, Brooks writes that "the poem . . . is a portion of the world of experience as viewed and valued by a human being" and that "this is presumably what Eliot means when he says that poetry does not advocate certain beliefs but tells us what it feels like to hold certain beliefs"; Brooks goes on to explain that "what the author and the various readers of a work do need to hold in common . . . is not so much the same set of beliefs about the universe as the same set of general human responses." 4 In the fourth edition of Understanding Poetry, Brooks repeats a statement made in the very first edition of the text, that is, that "no attitude or interpretation will invalidate a poem if it is an attitude or interpretation that can conceivably be held by a serious and intelligent person in the dramatic situation stated or implied in the poem" (UP/1, p. 492; UP/4, p. 269). This, he says, "is not to be taken as saying that one thing is as good as another," for "ultimately, we each have to work out our own scale of
values and try to justify it and live by it. But it
does mean that when we encounter differences, we must
try to understand their nature and try to find the under­
lying common ground that makes respect and appreciation
possible." According to Brooks, the "common ground" in
poetry "is the understanding of the fact that, insofar
as a theme is coherently developed through a poem, in­
sofar as it actually flowers from the whole process of
the poem, we are witnessing and taking part in the great
human effort to achieve meaning through experience."
He adds that "it is only when the attitude involved in
the poem comes as an oversimplified, and unvalidated,
generalization, when the response that the poem demands
is not warranted by the dramatic situation, when, to
sum up, the poem is incoherent--it is only in these
cases that we ordinarily reject a poem." For Brooks,
then, a successful poem must correspond to the reality
of human experience, that is, to a set of shared human
responses, for it is "an image of our life process--
and in being that, an enlightening image of ourselves"
(p. 270), but, at the same time, Brooks insists that
"the correspondence to reality that a poem achieves is
mediated through its special kind of structure."5 In
short, the successful poem must also possess internal
coherence. The point of importance for this study, of
course, is that as Brooks's career progresses he more
and more comes to view Romantic poetry as possessing both of these qualities.

In Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Brooks insisted that Romantic poetry was a deviation from the true English poetic tradition as represented by the metaphysicals and the moderns. In his most recent writings on Romantic poetry, however, Brooks attempts to mark out the common ground which Romantic poetry shares with the metaphysical poetry which preceded it and with the modern poetry which follows it. This shift in emphasis clearly illustrates the extent to which Brooks's attitude toward Romantic poetry has changed over the years.

"Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet" is a 1970 essay in which Brooks attempts to show that "Coleridge took far more than a desultory interest in the metaphysical poets, particularly in John Donne," and that "what appealed to him in Donne's poetry was not the accidentals but the essence, its characteristic and animating principle." Consulting Coleridge's letters and marginalia--the essay is another example of Brooks's increasing use of biographical and historical approaches--Brooks finds numerous examples of Coleridge's genuine admiration for Donne. But more importantly, Brooks suggests that there is also some evidence of Donne's influence in Coleridge's own poetry, revealing itself through poetic methods and techniques as well as through certain themes and dramatic
situations. This is especially interesting in view of
the fact in an early essay Brooks states that Coleridge
"rarely, if ever, uses the types of figures which Donne
and Marvell used," and that "he does not show Donne's
influence in his own poetry."^8

Of course, the 1970 essay does not go so far as to
really attempt to prove that Coleridge was actually a
metaphysical poet. "The title of this essay may sound
willfully perverse," writes Brooks. "For though Coleridge
is often spoken of as a metaphysician, and Byron twitted
him for 'explaining metaphysics to the nation' in lieu
of writing poetry, nobody, I believe, has ever claimed
that Coleridge was a metaphysical poet. I shall not be
so rash as to make that claim here."^9 Indeed, Brooks
is faced with the problem of reconciling Coleridge's
admiration for Donne with the Romantic poet's "general
reprehension of the artificial, the contrived, the witty,
and the fanciful when offered as serious poetry," with
such things as the following "squib of verse" which
Coleridge "scribbled in a copy of Chalmers' British
Poets:

'With Donne, whose muse on dromedary trots,
Wreathe iron pokers into true-love knoths [sic];
Rhyme's sturdy cripple, fancy's maze and clue,
Wit's forge and fire-blast, meaning's press and screw.'^10

and with Coleridge's view of the fancy as an "inferior
power" which "simply shuffles and rearranges the 'fixi-
ties and definites' with which it is condemned to deal"
and remains "powerless to render them part of an organic whole that is vibrant with its own individual life."\textsuperscript{11}

To a person with such views, Brooks observes, "Donne's iron pokers would seem all too definite--quite inflexible fixities--and if they are to be woven into such arabesques as true-love knots, the weaver will indeed have to have recourse to the forge, pump the bellows hard, and raise a real fire-blast to render the recalcitrant metal workable."\textsuperscript{12}

Nevertheless, Brooks finds Coleridge's praise of Donne's poetry to be "so fervent and so obviously genuine that" he "is tempted to ask whether Coleridge did not radically modify his censure of wit and the fancy's 'compulsory juxtapositions' of recalcitrant materials."

Recalling Coleridge's definition of the imagination in the Biographia, Brooks asks, "When Coleridge stresses the power of the imagination to bring into unity 'opposite and discordant qualities,' what else is he talking about other than the ability of a poet like Donne to fuse the apparently contradictory and to harmonize the discordant?" Brooks believes that "the temptation to answer yes here is almost overwhelming, and to the modern critic it is particularly inviting." Thus, he writes, "Coleridge's concept of the imagination as a reconciling and unifying power has made its fortune in modern criticism." Brooks summarizes the various uses which modern
critics, himself included, have found for Coleridge's famous definition of the imagination:

It has been invoked in a dozen critical contexts: to destroy the notion that there is any special "poetic" subject matter; to affirm the principle of tension within the structure of a literary work; to provide a charter for the difficult and, for some readers, the deliberately shocking kind of poetry written by the moderns; to suggest why the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century are to be regarded not as bemused vagrants who took a bypath leading off into the wilderness of eccentricity, but as travelers along the king's highway of the English poetic tradition.

"Yet," writes Brooks, "though I myself made such use of this passage, and though I am willing to accept Coleridge's theory of poetry--at least as typified here--as providing the basis for a general theory of poetry, I must agree with Professor William K. Wimsatt's estimate of what Coleridge probably meant to say." Brooks paraphrases the argument put forth by Wimsatt in Literary Criticism, that is, Wimsatt's conclusion "that Coleridge's theory of poetry is much more limited than the interpretation that the enthusiastic modernizing theorist would like to place upon it."13

But even though Brooks must agree that many of Coleridge's remarks are difficult to reconcile with Donne's poetry, and that "we had best be cautious in attributing to Coleridge any serious attempt to make room for Donne and the metaphysicals in his theory of poetry,"14 he persists in emphasizing the common ground shared by the two poets. Brooks insists that "what Coleridge tends to
stress is Donne's analogical power: as we would put it today, his ability to think through his images. . . . Donne's masculine strength and his fire--his ability to shape recalcitrant materials."¹⁵ Toward the end of his essay, Brooks cites evidence of Donne's influence in Coleridge's own poetry. Brooks acknowledges that Coleridge had little admiration for Donne's handling of meter as he had difficulty appreciating the special complexities of tone in Donne's poetry; however, Brooks does discover, especially in some of Coleridge's later poems, "something of the paradoxical quality of metaphysical poetry,"¹⁶ and even a few elaborate conceits. All of which leads Brooks to conclude that "as he grew older, Coleridge's liking for the metaphysical poets seems to have grown stronger."¹⁷ Of course, it might also be said that as Brooks grows older, his liking for the Romantic poets seems to grow stronger as does his desire to find in these poets some of the characteristics which he so admires in metaphysical and modern poetry.

In "Poetry Since 'The Waste Land,'" a 1965 essay which in a revised form became the "Retrospective Introduction" to the 1965 paperback edition of Modern Poetry and the Tradition and which was reprinted in a slightly shortened version of its original form in A Shaping Joy (1971), Brooks writes that "the distinctive element--or at least what was to become the distinctive element in
modern poetry—is stark confrontation, the juxtaposition without explanation or rhetorical accommodation."\textsuperscript{18} Of course, it goes without saying that Brooks, who believes that authentic poetry involves much more than the "skillful rhetorical packaging of some propositional truth"\textsuperscript{19} and who, like Eliot, believes that great poetry moves toward drama, admires this anti-rhetorical characteristic of modern verse. It is noteworthy, however, that he believes this same characteristic to distinguish the poetry of the early Romantic period.

Explaining why Wordsworth and other Romantic poets began to use "illogicality" in their poems, Brooks writes that "this device of direct confrontation and juxtaposition came into being . . . as an almost instinctive attempt on the part of Wordsworth and his brother poets to circumvent what had seemed to them the numbing effects of misapplied reason. These poets will forego the logical structure dear to a Pope or a Dryden."\textsuperscript{20} Brooks says that he agrees with W. H. Auden who, in the introduction to Volume IV of \textit{Poets of the English Language}, remarks that "'if the Romantic poets . . . after rejecting Pope and Dryden, did not rediscover Donne and the metaphysical poets, this was because the latter, no less than the former, organized their poems logically.'"\textsuperscript{21}

Brooks believes that Wordsworth's Lucy poems provide clear examples "of the a-logical structure of Romantic
poetry." He quotes the second stanza of Wordsworth's "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," in which Lucy is described as "A violet by a mossy stone / Half hidden from the eye! / Fair as a star when only one / Is shining in the sky," and comments: "Wordsworth has simply set down the comparisons side by side, with not an 'and' or a 'but' or a 'therefore' or a 'nevertheless' to relate one to the other. Are they related? Or do they cancel each other out? For if Lucy's loveliness is indeed scarcely visible, half hidden from the eye, how can she be as prominent as the evening star?" Brooks proceeds to explain that "though Lucy, to the great world, is as obscure as the violet, to her lover she is as fair as Venus, the first star of the evening," and that this contrast between Lucy's obscurity in the eyes of the world and her overwhelming importance to her lover is the theme which unites the poem's three stanzas. Like many modern poets, Brooks would say, Wordsworth leaves the interconnections to the reader's imagination. Brooks also uses "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" to illustrate the "structure of simple and unanalyzed juxtaposition" which he believes characterizes Romantic poetry. "Wordsworth here manages a series of paradoxes worthy of John Donne," he writes, "but . . . Wordsworth presents them in a completely un-Donnelike way. Donne would have pointed up the paradoxes. . . . [B]ut
Wordsworth leaves us to find the paradoxes as, and if, we can. He has been content with the simple juxtapositions. The distinction that Brooks makes between Donne and Wordsworth, of course, is the same distinction that Wimsatt, in "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery," makes between metaphysical and Romantic poetry (see pp. 134-35 above).

Brooks believes that the Romantic poets, like the moderns, can generally be said to reject logical structure in favor of a more dramatic mode of presentation. In an analysis of Keats's "To Autumn" in the fifth edition of An Approach to Literature, for example, he states that "the burden of meaning, the thematic development" in the poem "is carried by the imagery. Statement is minimal." Keats's poem, he says, "is very close in method to the work of the Imagists . . . but with one difference: here the theme is given a complex development, with numerous tonal shifts" (p. 407). However, Brooks finds the "anti-rhetorical" tendency to be even more pronounced in the poetry of Wordsworth. "Wordsworth," he writes, "tended to strip away even more: he abjures formal rhetoric, including elaborate analogies and complicated metaphors. He will make scenes from actual life rise up before us and trust that if he has chosen the right scenes and presented them in the right order, that very presentation will generate directly any proper commentary and
interpretation." In other words, Brooks believes that the dramatic quality which he so admires in modern poetry (and in modern fiction, for that matter) is also present in the best poetry of Wordsworth. He, in fact, goes so far as to say that Wordsworth's notion of an objective, dramatic mode of presentation "is not unlike that of the late Ernest Hemingway: render detail faithfully enough and your writing will attain a kind of fifth dimension."27

Although Brooks is afraid of overstating his case and of making Wordsworth appear "a great deal more self-conscious than he actually was,"28 about the a-logical structure of his poetry (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the other Romantic poets, Brooks says here as he says elsewhere, were more concerned with the problem of poetic composition than they were with the structure of their poems), he is forced to conclude by observing that "Wordsworth's simplest poems, when thrown on the screen of the twentieth-century sensibility, light up in a special way. They reveal gaps in logic that the reader is forced to cross with a leap of the imagination--they hint at analogies that cry out to be completed--and yet which can only be completed by the reader himself."29 The result, of course, is a poetry which, like modern poetry, leans toward drama, a poetry which speaks for itself.
In "Wordsworth and Human Suffering: Notes on Two Early Poems," another 1965 essay later reprinted in A Shaping Joy, Brooks finds, this time by focusing upon "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and "The Ruined Cottage," further evidence of Wordsworth's objectivity, of his dramatic art.

Brooks's commentary on "The Old Cumberland Beggar" praises Wordsworth's "detailed and realistic presentation of the beggar's 'useless life,'" and contains repeated references to the poet's "honesty" and "realism." Wordsworth's opening portrait of the old man as he unconsciously shares his meal with some little birds, says Brooks, is "so very vividly done, and honestly done." And Brooks goes on to point out that while one might expect the poet "to make much of the old man's friendly intercourse with nature," he instead "honestly records the fact that the stooped old man sees very little of the world except that which lies just before his feet." According to Brooks, the concessions which the poet makes to realism are important, "for it behooved Wordsworth to avoid the trap of turning the old beggar into a person as sensitive as himself, simply another Wordsworth."30

Because of its realism and honesty, Brooks would say, Wordsworth's poem necessarily partakes of the ambiguous and the paradoxical. Brooks paraphrases the
poet's argument as follows: although the beggar may appear to be useless, his function in the world is both "important and unique," for "like a kind of inverse scapegoat . . . he bears back and forth through the community a memory of its good offices and charities."

Brooks says that "Wordsworth is very honest" in his description of the relationship between the old man and the community, and he quotes the following lines:

Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love; and habit does the work
Of reason. . . .

"This is indeed to put it bluntly and even paradoxically," writes Brooks. "Can acts of love be compelled? Can habit really do the work of reason? Strictly speaking no, though perhaps the influence of Hartley made the notion seem more plausible to the young Wordsworth than it now seems to some of us. Yet as presented in the poem, Wordsworth's account of the matter has a fine common sense." Brooks explains that Wordsworth is really talking about education, and "that men can be coaxed and even compelled into uses which are tinged with goodness. The villager who falls into the habit of giving charity may finally become disposed to 'true goodness.'" Thus, "the beggar, by prompting that 'first mild touch of sympathy,' may indeed engender what will later flower into genuine philanthropy." Of course, as Brooks points out, the old man's usefulness is costly--"the beggar

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serves, but he suffers in the process." Brooks observes that "in the very act of breathing a blessing on the beggar's head, the poet rather goes out of his way to express a wish that the beggar's blood should 'Struggle with frosty air and winter snows.'" All of which, Brooks believes, raises an interesting question concerning tone. That is, is the poet, by not wishing to see the beggar confined to a workhouse but, instead, wishing to see him pursue his rounds, whatever the hardships, expressing a heartless attitude? Brooks, describing Wordsworth's attitude here as "shockingly candid," does not think so, and to explain why he does not think so he cites the following "ambiguous" passage:

Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness
Gives the last human interest to his heart,
May never HOUSE, misnamed of INDUSTRY,
Make him a captive!

"These cloudy lines," writes Brooks, "suggest that one's interest in living depends upon a hope whose other face is necessarily anxiety, and that the beggar, in losing his vocation with its attendant incitements and apprehensions, would lose his very reason for being. His freedom depends upon a 'vital anxiousness.' Remove the anxiousness, and the beggar, though certain of food in the workhouse, is merely a captive." Brooks would say that Wordsworth's attitude here is not heartless, but merely realistic. It is, to use Richards' term, an "inclusive" attitude which attempts to do justice to
the complexity of human experience. Wordsworth's recognition that the beggar's "hardships are mingled with joys" is, according to Brooks, the very reason that the poem is so successful.

To illustrate this, Brooks contrasts "The Old Cumberland Beggar," in which Wordsworth avoids straightforward statement in favor of a dramatic method of presentation, to a later poem by Wordsworth which begins "I know an aged Man constrained to dwell. . . ." Brooks explains that although this poem concerns an old man who in many ways resembles the Cumberland beggar, it contains none of the "complications of tone" that can be found in the earlier poem. "The later poem," writes Brooks, "is much too explicit, and comes perilously close to descending into sentimental bathos in the last stanza." On the other hand, "'The Old Cumberland Beggar' is, in its honesty and realism, more ambitious and, perhaps not in spite of, but because of, the risks that the poet takes, much more successful."

Brooks finds in "The Ruined Cottage" the same objective quality that he admires in "The Old Cumberland Beggar." He believes that this quality is evident in the narrative method used by the Wanderer to tell the tragic story of Margaret. "The Wanderer tells Margaret's story very effectively indeed," writes Brooks. "His is an art that conceals art. He uses restraint and is
careful not to make any overt bid for sympathy. He also has an eye for the exact detail. And it is interesting to see how much he makes the details tell the story of Margaret's grief." Brooks points to the Wanderer's description of Margaret's decaying cottage and observes that "her own sad decay is reflected in the gradual decay of her poor hut." But, perhaps more importantly, Brooks praises Wordsworth for managing to avoid didacticism in conveying the Wanderer's interpretation of Margaret's suffering, an interpretation which Brooks sees as "deeply tinged with religion." Brooks explains that the "religious" nature of the Wanderer's attitude as it is embodied in the early versions of the poem is not to be confused with Christianity. Even in the revised text of 1845, he says, the Wanderer's attitude can be more accurately described as "pantheistic" rather than "orthodox." Brooks observes that "it would not be easy to give a systematic account of the 'theology' that underlies the Wanderer's religious experience" and that, in fact, he is "not sure that Wordsworth could have done so himself." Brooks believes, however, that Wordsworth's ability to dramatize the Wanderer's religion so well as to convince us of the integrity of his emotions is what is really important. "In short, says Brooks, "the poet has enabled us to know what it 'feels like' to hold the Wanderer's faith. This he has done

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through his art—through what reveals itself as a most skillful and delicate management of the resources of language. The accomplishment is of the highest importance and it must not be misunderstood: the art is not cosmetic but structural—not a rhetorical presentation of plausible arguments but a poetic creation." One, of course, is reminded of Brooks's statement, quoted earlier, concerning the "power of sympathetic imagination" which "enables us to feel ourselves into another person's skin and to understand how the world looks to him" and of Brooks's paraphrase of T. S. Eliot's notion "that poetry does not advocate certain beliefs but tells us what it feels like to hold certain beliefs" (see p. 200 above).

In a recent essay, in fact, Brooks tries to reconcile the poetic theories of Wordsworth and Eliot. "In Defence of 'Interpretation' and 'Literary History'" (1975) is, first of all, another of Brooks's attempts to clarify his position regarding the role of biographical and historical studies in literary analysis. Once again he insists that his "stress on the autonomy of the poem" should not "be misinterpreted as an attempt to ignore the obvious fact that literary works are influenced by historical circumstances, or that, with tact and insight, they may be used to point up the changes in sensibility through history." At the same time, however,
Brooks also insists, as he has so often insisted in the past, that "authentic literary works must not be reduced to mere historical documents," for literature is "a fictional construct" and not "a recipe for action." Says Brooks, "the fact that literature dramatizes a situation rather than drawing some conclusion from it or reducing it to a statement has important consequences with reference to the relation of literature to action"; that is, "art is not raw response, but response mediated through contemplation. Moreover, art is not life, but a fiction."

According to Brooks, Wordsworth clearly subscribed to the view that "fiction can . . . provide us with knowledge of reality--but only on its own terms. Such was clearly Wordsworth's view of the matter. A poet, he insisted, was, first and foremost, a man speaking to men, and speaking about the most important things--speaking about truth itself, no less--yet truth that is 'not individual and local, but general and operative; [truth] not standing upon eternal [sic external] testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony. . . . '"

In describing poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," writes Brooks, Wordsworth "was careful to add that 'it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an
emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." Brooks says that "though Wordsworth's statement is somewhat cloudy, one thing is crystal clear: he is insisting that poetry is not an immediate response to a stimulus. It is a distancing of the experience in question. The emotional experience is thereby given shape and form." Brooks believes that "T. S. Eliot must have meant something like this when he insisted that 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion,' that it 'is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.'" Although Brooks acknowledges that "it may seem whimsical to try to reconcile Wordsworth's theory of poetry with Eliot's," nevertheless he concludes that "the theories of these two poets have much in common, just as their poetries have much more in common than most people think."  

Brooks makes this same comparison between the poetic theories of Wordsworth and Eliot in "T. S. Eliot as a 'Modernist' Poet" (1973), only in this earlier essay Brooks goes further by explaining that the similarity results from a common perception of the cultural situation; that is, both Wordsworth and Eliot, according to Brooks, were attempting to deal with a dissociation of sensibility, a split between the realm of value and the realm of fact, between emotion and intellect, heart and
head, science and poetry, a divided psyche that is often traced back to the philosophy of René Descartes. Like Eliot, says Brooks, the Romantics sought to reconcile the separations by finding verbal equivalents for states of mind and feeling. Thus, Wordsworth and Coleridge use nature as a symbol of human values and emotions. In support of this view, Brooks refers to Wimsatt's explanation of the structural differences between metaphysical poetry and Romantic poetry, that is, the tendency of Romantic poetry to avoid the kind of overt statement of similitude so important to the metaphysicals:

Wimsatt concludes his essay on "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery" by remarking that as "a structure which favors implication rather than overt statement, the romantic is far closer than the metaphysical to symbolist poetry and the varieties of postsymbolist poetry most in vogue today." This is true, and it is true of Eliot's own poems. For in spite of his admiration for Donne and Marvell, since the ground plan of most of Eliot's poetry is symbolist, his is closer to that of the Romantic poets than to the metaphysicals.40

But if this is true, "then why," asks Brooks, "did Eliot, in looking for masters who might help him solve his problem as a twentieth-century poet, pass over the great English Romantics?" Brooks observes that because Eliot was committed to make poetry out of the modern city, he tended to see "Romantic nature poetry as an evasion of the crucial issue" offering "no promise of the unification of sensibility that he sought." However, Brooks goes on to explain that "today many of us who admire..."
the poetry of Eliot and his masters, Donne and Baudelaire, can find in Romantic poetry instances of the unification of sensibility that Eliot required.

In his most recent work, then, Brooks finds thematic as well as structural similarities between Romantic and modern poetry. Indeed, he finds in Romantic poetry—as he finds in modern poetry—an attempt to deal with the problem of man's alienation. For Brooks, "Wordsworth and Coleridge . . . were the first poets to bring into distinct focus the predicament of modern man." He goes on to explain that "a poet like Wordsworth found himself cut off from the world of human values and imprisoned in a 'Newtonian' universe in which the great machine of the world moved in terms of inexorable mathematical laws and therefore had no concern for, or relation to, the hopes, fears, and ardors of the individual human being." Brooks believes that man's predicament is often dramatized by the Romantics in terms of what might be labeled "the Romantic paradox." Cut off from nature by their own reason, Brooks explains, "men felt the need to recover the wholeness of life, and with it faith and vitality." "Rather early in his career," writes Brooks, "Wordsworth touched upon the problem of man's self-consciousness and his alienation from nature. The theme is to become explicit in Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale,' where the bird's immortality derives from the fact that the bird, completely
submerged in nature, having no memory of the past and no prevision of the future, lives in an eternal present with no sense that it can ever die; whereas man, knowing what the bird 'amongst the leaves' has never known, is indeed, as the bird is not, 'born for death.' Man's consciousness, through which he is able to savour so fully the bird's special kind of happiness, is the very barrier which keeps him from slipping into nature and joining the bird in its state of timeless being. 44 Thus, as Brooks views it, Keats's poem "shows itself to be not finally about a nightingale but about man's consciousness, at once his burden and his glory." 45 Viewed in this context, Keats's poem becomes the perfect embodiment of the Romantic paradox. The introduction to Thoreau in American Literature: The Makers and the Making states that "for Thoreau, as for most of the other Romantics, British and American, the problem of uniting the self with the world outside the self is complicated by the problem of consciousness. The happy animal, with its keen senses and its apparently complete rapport with nature, can indeed revel in the world of the senses, for it lacks man's complex consciousness and his sense of the death that will some day bring an end to the world of sensation. Thus, it is man's consciousness that cuts him off from full immersion in those delights of nature, and yet it is that same consciousness that gives a
special savor and massive intensity to them." The introduction goes on to observe that "this paradox is implicit in all romantic experience." In summary then, it can be said that, for Brooks, man's alienation, a problem basic to the human predicament but greatly intensified in a technological and industrial age and a theme which characterizes so much of twentieth-century literature, was also a major concern of the great Romantic poets. Thus, Brooks, who in his early work attempted to show the various ways in which Romantic poetry differed from modern poetry, has in his more recent writings tried to point out the essential continuity which exists between the Romantics and the moderns; by doing so, of course, Brooks reveals his deep sense of appreciation for Romantic poetry.
NOTES


2 Indeed, it should be noted that even in his early work Brooks's use of this strategy is inconsistent, and we frequently find him referring to "Wordsworth" or to "Keats" rather than to "the speaker."


7 For example, Brooks observes that "Coleridge's most nearly 'metaphysical' poems are addressed to . . . or are inspired by" Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson (p. 138), "the young woman with whom Coleridge had fallen hopelessly in love in 1799' (p. 136). In discussing one such poem, "Constancy," Brooks relies heavily upon biographical data. "This poem is what might be called a 'private poem,'" Brooks explains, and "we must know a good deal about Coleridge's intimate life in order to see what the poem is talking about" (p. 150).

8 Brooks, "Three Revolutions," p. 158.


10 Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," p. 140.

11 Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," p. 142.
Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," p. 143.


Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," pp. 146.

Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," p. 141.


Brooks, "Coleridge as a Metaphysical Poet," p. 149.


Also, Brooks points out, in "Poetry Since 'The Waste Land,'" that just as modern poetry has so often been misunderstood, so the lack of logical structure in Wordsworth's poems has presented problems for readers. Brooks notes that "at least one unwary scholar of our own generation--in spite of what the violet-star comparison might have told him--has discovered that Lucy was neurotic: her shyness concealed 'an unpleasant rejection of other people.' For he takes the lines, 'A maid whom there were none to praise / And very few to love,' to mean that few people loved her, and of those who did, none could honestly say a good word in her behalf" (p. 491).


In "Irony as a Principle of Structure" (pp. 734-37), Brooks uses the same two poems to show that a certain amount of ironic complexity exists even in simple lyrical poetry. Here, however, Brooks goes a step further by insisting that Romantic poetry and modern poetry share the same illogical structure.


31 Note Brooks's use of biographical data.


36 A Shaping Joy (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1971) contains another of Brooks's attempts to break away from the "New Critic" label. In that volume he declares that "a hurried and cluttered age such as ours must necessarily rely on classifications and labels and, in the interest of good housekeeping, has to put people into appropriate pigeonholes and keep them there. The pigeonhole assigned to me carries the label 'The New Criticism'. Now, it is bad enough to live under any label, but one so nearly meaningless as 'The New Criticism'--it is certainly not new--has peculiar disadvantages. For most people it vaguely signifies an anti-historical bias and a fixation on 'close reading'. The New Critic would seem to be trapped in a cell without windows or door, staring through a reading glass at his literary text, effectually cut off from all the activities of the world outside--from history and science, from the other arts, and from nature and humanity itself" (p. xi). This passage can be compared to Brooks's Foreword to Stallman's Critiques and Essays in Criticism in which Brooks comments on the diversity among the New Critics, observing that "they do not constitute a school--much less a guild" and that "it is even a question whether they are accurately described under a common name, and most of all under the name which has caught on--the 'new criticism!'" (p. xvi). In defining "New Criticism" for The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry...
Brooks remarks upon the irresponsibility with which polemists have used the label. He also defends the new critics, once again, against the charge that they have cut literature off from life. Finally, Brooks's choice of images in the passage quoted from A Shaping Joy seems to indicate that he has Murray Krieger in mind, particularly Krieger's A Window to Criticism: Shakespeare's Sonnets and Modern Poetics (Princeton University Press, 1964). In this book, as in The New Apologists, Krieger probes the problem of the relation of the poetic content to the world of reality. The New Critics, says Krieger, tend to view the language of poems "as an enclosed set of endlessly faceted mirrors ever multiplying its maze of reflectors but finally shut up within itself." Krieger views his own work as an attempt "to construct a new bridge that would connect the insular criticism of literature as literature with the mainland of man's concerns as a social-historical being" (pp. 3-4).

37 Cleanth Brooks, "In Defence of 'Interpretation' and 'Literary History,'" Mosaic, 8 (Winter 1975), 10, 11.
38 Brooks, "In Defence of 'Interpretation,'" p. 2.
39 Brooks, "In Defence of 'Interpretation,'" pp. 3-4.
CONCLUSION

In a recent interview with Robert Penn Warren, Brooks explains how he came to write Modern Poetry and the Tradition. The book, he says, was written in order to defend contemporary poetry, for, as he puts it, he "often ran into friends with old-fashioned tastes who didn't know the new poetry and couldn't see it as poetry at all." Indeed, the anti-Romantic sentiments expressed in Brooks's early work can be viewed as a rhetorical device or strategy for defending the complex imagery of modern poetry and combating what he believed were erroneous critical principles. Because the opponents of modern poetry had "old-fashioned tastes" which were formed on the poetry of the nineteenth century, Brooks reasoned that perhaps the best way to gain acceptance for what he regarded as a revolutionary poetic structure was to point out the defects in the poetry of the previous period and in the principles by which that poetry was frequently so favorably evaluated. This, of course, is exactly what was done in the first editions of Understanding Poetry and An Approach to Literature and in Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Romantic poetry was condemned for its
tendency to oversimplify the complexities of human experience, for its sentimentality, and for lacking the dramatic quality characteristic of great poetry. Likewise, the Romantic critical frame of mind which continued to dominate the literary scene was condemned and held responsible for creating much critical confusion.

The methods used by Brooks in his early work were also part of his strategy for combating what he believed to be erroneous critical principles derived, at least in part, from the Romantic notion of poetry as self-expression. The first editions of Understanding Poetry and An Approach to Literature, therefore, place great emphasis upon detaching the poem from history as well as from the poet's personality in order to examine it as a separate structure. Even the simplest lyric poem, when examined objectively, it is said, is shown to be a "little drama" with a "speaker" that can be distinguished from the personality of the poet. Such a distinction, of course, prevents the critic from being distracted by the poet's biography and helps him instead to focus his attention on "the poem as poem," on the paradoxes and ironies that are an inevitable part of the poetic structure.

Brooks's early work met with opposition from those who charged that his poetic theory was narrow and intolerant, that it tended to esteem only the complex poetry of the metaphysicals and the moderns and to reject the
simpler and more direct forms of poetic expression such as those found in the Romantics. In an attempt to defend his position against such attacks—attacks which, in Brooks's own view, originated "primarily from Romantic sources" (WWU, p. 238)—Brooks set out to prove that his objective principles could be applied to a wide range of poetry, including Romantic poetry. In his own words he tried "to bridge the gap between metaphysical poetry and other poetries." Brooks's defense of his position, however, did more than merely demonstrate that his approach works for Romantic poetry; it also led to a modification of his view of this poetry. It can be said that many of the complaints against the Romantics expressed in Brooks's early work were borrowed from anti-Romantic critics like Hulme and Eliot; that is, these complaints did not arise out of a genuine understanding of Romantic poetry so much as out of a knowledge of the views of these earlier critics whom Brooks so admired. But in order to answer his opponents, Brooks was forced to take a close look for himself at a number of Romantic poems. The result, to Brooks's own surprise, was that he came to realize that certain poems which he had regarded as overly direct or even sentimental, and which he believed to be characterized by imagery that is decorative rather than functional, in reality possess a complex dramatic structure. This realization led him to
make a clear distinction in his own mind between the subjective theory of composition associated with Romanticism and Romantic poetry itself. Once this distinction was made and Brooks could separate the Romantics' simple, spontaneous notions about poetic creation from their actual poetry—which he came to view as anything but simple and spontaneous—the way was open for Brooks to modify even further his view of Romantic poetry. Through his association with Wimsatt, Brooks came to a new understanding of the metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry; that is, he came to realize that Romantic poems generally avoid explicit comparisons of images, a device found in metaphysical poetry, and instead rely on direct juxtaposition. Comparisons are implicit and left for the reader to infer. Such a structure, of course, has as rich a potential for ambiguity and paradox as the structure of metaphysical poetry, only the ambiguities and paradoxes emerge in a different way. Wimsatt pointed to the structural similarities which exist between Romantic and symbolist poetry, and this observation eventually led Brooks to draw some comparisons between the Romantics and moderns such as Eliot.

Although it is true that Brooks's early work tends to deemphasize historical scholarship in order to establish a new, more objective critical approach, a close examination of Brooks's position on the roles of criticism
and scholarship contradicts those who have charged that his method is so specialized that it ignores historical and biographical approaches to literature. Throughout his career Brooks has stressed the importance of biographical and historical studies, but at the same time he has stressed the need to distinguish between the study of a poem's genesis and the study of the poem itself. What Brooks first rejected, and what he has continued to reject, of course, is a "Romantic" critical approach which would substitute a discussion of the poet's life and times for an analysis of the poem. It has been shown that Brooks has spent years attempting to clarify his position. And while Brooks was clarifying his position, he was broadening his critical method. Brooks's own work, in fact, quite often fuses criticism and scholarship, and down through the years his method has increasingly broadened to focus more and more on biographical and historical studies. Monroe K. Spears, who once attacked Brooks's approach by declaring that "in practice he throws the historical approach overboard" and by observing that "he is not concerned with the relation of the poem to its historical milieu nor to human experience" (see p. 105 above), has, in a recent essay, observed that Brooks's "last three books . . . are not limited to close reading, since one, The Hidden God, deals explicitly with the religious implications of literature and the other
two, William Faulkner and A Shaping Joy, are, in their different ways, richly historical." Spears goes on to say that "it is not that Brooks has changed . . . but that the stereotype that made him archetypal New Critic never did correspond to the facts" and that "far from being the irresponsible aesthete or technician that his opponents have represented him as (in the polemics of literary journals and seminar rooms), Brooks is . . . distinguished among critics precisely by his strong sense of responsibility."²

While Brooks's method has broadened with respect to other critical focuses, his overall theory has remained consistent in its insistence on the superiority of an inclusive poetry and on the need for a tensional, organic aesthetic. The universality of an organic poetic principle is affirmed by Brooks and Wimsatt in Literary Criticism: A Short History, where it is also shown that the Romantic theory of the imagination marked a new critical awareness of this principle and, in effect, opened the way for its extension, by later critics, into a general theory of poetry.

Whether or not the Romantic notion of the poetic imagination--particularly Coleridge's theory of the imagination as put forth in the Biographia Literaria--can legitimately be used as the basis for an objective poetic theory primarily focusing on irony, paradox, and
ambiguity as qualities characterizing the highest poetry has been the subject of much debate. R. S. Crane, the leader of the Chicago school of criticism, accused Brooks of "critical monism," that is, of limiting critical investigation to a single frame of reference, and of misusing Coleridge's theory. Crane, holding that the reality which criticism investigates is too complex to be contained by any one frame of reference, maintained that Coleridge recognized this fact but that Brooks perverts Coleridge's theory to suit his own narrow ends. Yet Crane, in his 1948 essay, like so many of Brooks's more recent detractors, was guilty of distorting Brooks's position by representing it as narrow and intolerant. René Wellek, who has often defended Brooks and the New Critics in general, points out, in "Literary Theory, Criticism, and History" (1960), that "a straw man is set up" by opponents of the New Critics; that is, the New Critic is portrayed as one "who supposedly denies that a work of art can be illuminated by historical knowledge at all." Wellek, however, does "not believe that there ever was a single reputable 'New' critic who has taken the position imputed to him. The New Critics," he says, "have argued that a literary work of art is a verbal structure of a certain coherence and wholeness, and that literary study had often become completely irrelevant to this total meaning, that it had moved all
too often into external information about biography, social conditions, historical backgrounds, etc. But this argument of the New Critics did not mean and could not be conceived to mean a denial of the relevance of historical information for the business of interpretation." As an example, Wellek points to Brooks who "has, in a whole series of essays, . . . shown very precisely some ways in which historical information may be necessary for the understanding of specific poems."³ In his very recent essay "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra" (1978), Wellek refutes the ideas, as put forth by Krieger and Graff, that the New Critics reject history and cut poetry off from reality (creating, in essence, "a prison-house of language") by pushing Coleridge's notions of the unity and organicity of art too far. Citing Brooks as an example of New Critical comprehensiveness, Wellek tries to show that critics like Krieger and Graff have posed "a false dilemma," for "a poem may have coherence and integrity without losing its meaning or truth." Only a gross misconception, says Wellek, would lead one to interpret Brooks's remarks on the "heresy of paraphrase" or his broad use of the concept of irony, a concept designed to examine the meaning of a work as well as its "form," as attempts to sever poetry from reality and reduce it to "a simple entrapment in language."⁴ Finally, according to Wellek, the New Criticism, far
from rejecting history, "embraces a total historical scheme," a philosophy of culture and history derived from Eliot's notion that a "dissociation of sensibility" took place in the sixteenth century which divided and alienated man. Although additional work might be done regarding Brooks's relationship to Coleridge and the legitimacy of Brooks's adaptation of Coleridge's theory, hopefully this study has at least succeeded in demonstrating the inclusiveness of Brooks's approach and the extent to which this approach has so often been misunderstood and misrepresented. Perhaps the question of the validity of Brooks's method must finally be answered, not in terms of its origins, but in terms of the extent to which it illuminates individual works of art. Few critics, even among Brooks's opponents, have denied the value of Brooks's analyses of individual poems from the Romantic period or have failed to appreciate the way his commentaries seem to throw a new light upon these poems.
NOTES


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VITA

Huey S. Guagliardo was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 20, 1948. He was graduated from St. Aloysius High School in 1967, and then from the University of New Orleans with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1971. He spent the period from September 1971 to August 1973 working toward the M.A. at the University of New Orleans, where as a graduate assistant he also taught English. From the fall of 1973 to the present, he has been teaching English at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, while working toward a degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Huey S. Guagliardo

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: Cleanth Brooks and the Romantics

Approved: [Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]
Donald J. Stefflen

[Signature]
Thomas L. Watson

[Signature]
John R. Hay

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