

**THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW CRITICISM  
ITS BRIEF DIALECTIC HISTORY  
FROM I.A. RICHARDS TO NORTHROP FRYE**

by Edward Jayne

*American Studies*  
Volume 22, Number 1  
1975  
revised March, 2005

**ABSTRACT:**

In the early years of New Criticism, I.A. Richards' emphasis upon intensified literary response was also implicit in the criticism of Eliot, Pound, and Hulme. It was first diluted by Winters' ethical approach, then by the cognitive theory of Ransom, the formalist strategies of Brooks, Wimsatt, and Wellek, and finally the archetypal theory of modes and genres proposed by Northrop Frye. With Frye's archetypal emphasis the primary assumptions that initiated New Criticism were brought to their dialectic negation that reduced poetic experience to the task of recognizing and classifying literary categories. Today the task of criticism is to recover the response theory first elucidated by Richards, but this time within a synthetic context open to a variety of disciplines. These necessarily include the Marxist and Freudian theories despite their rejection by most New Critics including Pound, Eliot and Richards.

In the current assessment of New Criticism and its legacy of orthodox scholarship there has been an unfortunate tendency to lump together the entire four-decade movement as if identical principles were dominant from beginning to end--as if the only source of difficulty has been in the consistent elucidation of these principles. It has yet to be recognized that the intense fascination with New Criticism mostly derived from its essential inconsistency, the contradictions it was forced to resolve in order to provide a coherent theory of literature. As a school of criticism it was at war with itself from the very beginning, and only when victory was proclaimed and its fundamental issues decided did it finally begin to atrophy, though another decade or so would elapse before this outcome became apparent to friend and foe alike. In other words, it offered its best insights in the process of consuming itself; once it had done so it came to be treated as an institution rather than an ongoing collective response to literature, one of the most fruitful in the history of criticism.

At its commencement New Criticism occurred as a revolutionary movement of poets and iconoclasts against the jaded aestheticism that had been dominant since the late nineteenth century. Its initial purpose was to refine standards of taste, if necessary to liberate them, by explaining the unique experience of poetry both as aesthetic expression and as its sufficient

reenactment by readers in their own minds. Over the years, however, New Criticism developed its own conventions which sequentially eliminated from consideration first emotions, then the author's creativity, the reader's response, and even the mimetic relevance of poetic experience to the real world. Its early dedication to a singular clarity of vision adapted to language had imperceptibly evolved into a codex of decrees and official fallacies that restricted expressiveness to aesthetic context as an abstract and impersonal literary objectification. Not much was left beyond the poem as artifact located in a tradition of other such artifacts, as well, of course, as their explication by critics and scholars trained as experts in formal analysis. What had begun as a revolution in taste accordingly ended as another kind of establishment that was fully as academic and convention-ridden as that which had been attacked in the first place. Useful assessments of this transition include *The New Apologists for Poetry*, by Murray Krieger (Minnesota, 1956), and *The Partial Critics*, by Lee T. Lemon (Oxford, 1965). Both praise the advancement of New Criticism from "psychologist" speculation to the formal and contextual theories later adduced. Indeed, this purification was achieved, but at the sacrifice of both the flexibility and interpretive sufficiency essential to a full appreciation of literature.

However, this should be no surprise. In its historic development New Criticism shares the same fate as most other movements of its kind that its general acceptance could only be guaranteed through the transmutation and ultimate denial of its original inspiration. Typically, it supplanted its prophets with priests and hierophants who have dedicated their high capabilities to the formulation of rigid demands that undermine their dynamic origins. As with other such movements, the transition brought about by these priests has been from a spontaneous fulfillment of human potential to an orthodoxy of rules and prescriptions that have effectively perverted this achievement by means of its codification. Also predictable has been its advancement from curiosity to certitude, from intuition to rationalization, from imagination to talent, and from spontaneity to dogma. In terms proposed by Nietzsche, it has evolved, like tragedy, from Dionysian expressiveness to Apollonian clarity of judgment; and in terms proposed by Freud, it has evolved from moderate cathexis to intellectual reaction formation at the expense of potentially confessional literary experience. Its progress has likewise been from amateur psychology to misplaced positivism, and of course from romanticism to classicism, though with the curious paradox that its original proponents emphatically rejected romanticism while their orthodox successors restored it to its eminence in the tradition of high literature. Why this inversion? Very likely because the exploratory speculation of the earliest advocates of New Criticism could only be gained through the rejection of earlier modes of exploration. In contrast, the later effort to arrive at a universal theory consistent in its application obliged the readmission of romantic expressiveness to the canon of literature worthy of explication once it had been categorized and rendered harmless.

As in the case of other such movement, New Criticism seems to have advanced in a dialectic manner. Most simply stated, inspiration resolved itself by settling into systematic categories followed by habit and then attrition. Process became objectified as structure in order to attain fulfillment, but its accomplishment was preliminary to its demise, since structure reified inspiration and by doing so could only effect the negation of its dynamic origins as experience.<sup>1</sup> Its decline nevertheless remains important both in bringing its original ideas to their completion and in offering a fresh orthodoxy to whet the reactive vitality of its successors. Having played out its ideas, New Criticism actually collaborated in its demise in order to be replaced by a new

and more youthful commitment to spontaneity. What better way of doing this than by establishing itself as the standard methodology of the English profession! Of course the concepts of freedom and expressiveness had to be reduced to slogans and shibboleths, but its loss of vitality was evident in the increasingly pronounced orthodoxy of its exponents as well as the mounting indifference with which its doctrine was received among poets themselves. Its programmatic demands actually justified (and even predicted) its overthrow once its implicit ideals could be recovered from its moribund canons of explication. That is to say, the principles its categorization undermined were at least preserved as categories, providing the seeds of its destruction once they could be resurrected in a more dynamic context. If creativity atrophied as convention and academic trivialization, its decay left the path clear for new throes of discovery, new gestures of spontaneity. It can be demonstrated, I think, that this negative principle of dialectics has dominated the history of New Criticism as an incremental advancement from creativity to codification, from inventive theories of poetic experience to the subsequent doctrine of professional responsibility that necessitates a fresh return to first principles.

It should be no surprise that New Criticism began as a reaction against the comparable process of disintegration in English romanticism when it made its retreat from Wordsworth's aesthetics of poetic experience ("emotion recollected in tranquility") to post-Victorian sentimentality. The 'radical' effort of Wordsworth to use common language in order to capture the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings was first supplanted by presumably more inclusive theories of the romantic imagination (with far too many *lo*'s and *oh*'s), then by an emphasis upon episodes of nature appreciation and gothic wonderment that seemed to fit these theories. Coleridge initiated this post-Wordsworthian advancement with a hierarchic model of the imagination derivative of German metaphysics, followed by Shelley's neo-Platonic definition of poetry as a quest for the world's hidden beauty, infinite and supposedly inaccessible except through poetic inspiration. Both objectified the tasks Wordsworth set for himself, conceding and even extending his theory of imaginative spontaneity, but they also reified the poetic imagination by subordinating it first to reason, then to a supposedly transcendent principle of beauty. Keats next adopted Wordsworth's innovations to his own use with his brief allusion to "negative capability" (comfort with uncertainties), primarily emphasizing poetic technique to evoke romantic experience based on these uncertainties. Later poets in the romantic tradition could then concentrate their efforts upon mood and technique, gradually sinking into the use of conventions would have been as abhorrent to the early Wordsworth as those he rejected in the eighteenth century--culminating with the Edwardian flaccidity to be exposed by Richards in *Practical Criticism*. The bad eighteenth century poetry Wordsworth had ridiculed for its archaic rhetoric and exaggerated reliance upon conventional literary allusions was accordingly replaced by a new mode of bad poetry whose nature worship was a parody of the very principles of poetic inspiration he had first advocated as a means of escaping this kind of stultification. The post-Wordsworthian poetic conventions that reigned through the end of the nineteenth century totally undermined the synthesis of craft and emotion first proposed by Wordsworth, setting the stage for a brand new synthesis by New Criticism. Fifteen years later ten thousand academic poetasters imitated the voice T.S. Eliot, thirty years later the voice of William Carlos Williams .

## 1. Poet-Critics: Hulme, Pound, and Eliot

T.E. Hulme can be credited with having initiated the movement of New Criticism with his paradoxical demands for a renewed classicism. His objective would seem to have been formalist and anti-romantic, but his commitment to “small, dry things” was actually intended to regain the original spirit of poetic inspiration which he elsewhere ascribed to “wonder” and the “intensive” complexities of Bergsonian intuition. He was forced to resort to a compensatory precision to counteract the worn-out romantic vagaries typical of *fin de siècle* aesthetics. The clarity of perception he demanded was simply a means of rejecting abstraction and romantic stereotypes in order to reclaim the concentration of individual experience that had been of crucial importance to the early romantic poets.<sup>2</sup> The final sentence of his manifesto “Romanticism and Classicism” explained his crypto-romantic conception of art in dialectic terms which should have served as sufficient warning to his followers: “Wonder can only be the attitude of a man passing from one stage to another, it can never be a permanently fixed thing.” Wonder manifests the felt response to change rather than the final achievement of goals, an entirely different kind of experience. Specifically, with regard to poetry, it involves sensitivity to the phrases that “correspond to definite sensations undergone,” a principle originally suggested to Hulme by Ezra Pound.<sup>3</sup> Its experiential immediacy enabled Hulme, like Pound, to reject conventional usage in the supposedly pure poetry of the late nineteenth century, and it probably did not occur to him that his affective discovery would inspire new but equally restrictive conventions among the Anglo-American literary establishment. For like poetry itself, the “wonder” advocated by Hulme was inevitably transitional, mediating the advancement from post-Victorian aestheticism to its New Critical simulacrum fifty years later.

Ezra Pound’s oracular pronouncements bore a powerful influence on the early history of New Criticism, and his many dicta and manifestoes since then afford a wealth of insights pertaining to the craftsmanship of “hard” poetry. His aesthetic demands did not exactly fit the dialectic model suggested here beyond his relentless disparagement of the “blurry, messy” poetics prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, he repeatedly emphasized poetry’s intricate organization of experience brought to its fullest realization with the literary image. In “Retrospect,” gathered in 1918, he argued that an image is “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time,” and went on to explain—

It is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.<sup>4</sup>

In *Gaudier-Brzeskaa; A Memoir*, published in 1916, he added, “The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster”; and in *How to Read*, first published as a book in approximately 1927, he more inclusively advocated the pursuit of clarity and warned of what happens when “the application of word to thing goes rotten, i.e. becomes slushy and inexact, or excessive or bloated.” This, he claimed (pretty much in accord with Richards), was when “the whole machinery of social and of individual thought and order goes to pot.”<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, Pound turned out to have a different notion of social harmony than Richards. Both emphasized the importance of verbal clarity toward political reform, but Pound’s enthusiasm for Mussolini’s version of fascism totally differed from Richards’ libertarian pursuit of democratic reform.

Pound also distinguished three types of poetry, *melopoeia* (emphasizing sound pattern), *phanopoeia* (emphasizing imagery), and *logopoeia* (emphasizing “the dance of the intellect among words”). This third category, he claimed, “holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation.” He explained earlier that logopoeia “takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we *expect* to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances and of ironical play.” This relatively complex use of poetry, he said, “is the latest [to] come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode.”<sup>6</sup> In *ABC of Reading*, published in 1934, was more explicit in subsuming phanopoeia and logopoeia to logopoeia. He defined phanopoeia as “throwing the object (fixed or moving) on to the visual imagination,” and melopoeia as “inducing emotional correlations by the sound and rhythm of the speech.” He could then ascribe to logopoeia the more inclusive capacity of “inducing both of the effects [of phanopoeia and melopoeia] by stimulating the associations (intellectual or emotional) that have remained in the receiver’s consciousness in relation to the actual words or word groups employed.”<sup>7</sup> Pound’s argument here, as suggested by its sequence and wording, might well have been influenced directly or indirectly by Richards’ speculation in *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, published a decade earlier. In the same light, Pound argued, “literature is language charged with meaning,” but with the corollary that “great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.” Much later he took a more iconoclastic stance: “the purpose of poetry is to debunk by lucidity.”<sup>8</sup> His paradoxical insistence upon clarity in both prose and poetry that just happened to be replete with idiosyncratic pedantry remained the hallmark of Pound’s genius through his later career.

As a protégé of Pound, T.S. Eliot also promoted “hard” poetry, in his case through the avoidance of emotion. On one hand he could say, “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from personality,” ostensibly through “significant emotion,” which he also called “a new art emotion,” actually the gratification in craftsmanship much earlier explained by Poe.<sup>9</sup> But Eliot also claimed that this emotion combines “a number of fleeting feelings,” many of which would necessarily be rooted in personality, and he later argued in “The Social Function of Poetry” that verse, “however intellectual, has to do with the expression of feeling and emotion” and that the poet articulates “new shades and variations of sensibility in which others can participate.”<sup>10</sup> The psychological dynamics implied here seem to have softened only slightly the proto-formalist assumptions that have made Eliot famous--most notably his concept of the poet’s creative faculty as a catalytic agent that remains separate from the emotions it evokes in the minds of poets and their readers (very similar to Poe’s aesthetics a century earlier), and his emphasis on poetry’s use of the “objective correlative” as the best and most vividly experienced thing or event for evoking these emotions.<sup>11</sup> Eliot’s initial objective to escape personality, which anticipated the later evolution of New Criticism, was supplanted by the compulsion to share his sensibility, but without mitigating his discomfort with issues of personality that later emerged as a dominant consideration in his personal life. Supposedly promoting the return to classicism, Eliot set the stage for a new revolution in poetic experience whose dependence upon emotion was perhaps best expressed by his own ambivalence in trying to explain its importance. Each of his essays was the model of reasonable discourse, but his studied display of equanimity and balanced judgment glossed over contradictions between and even within his essays, particularly with regard to this question. It was almost inevitable that his successors such as Winters and Ransom would reject his theory of emotion because of its inconsistencies. What they perhaps

didn't recognize was that this weakness provided the necessary tension crucial to both his poetry and criticism. To the extent that there was an "essential" Eliot that endured progressive disembodiment from "Prufrock" to the "Quartets," it should be recognized to have been theoretically expressed through this aesthetic confusion rather than the arguments he crafted to suggest his devotion a classical literary tradition.

## 2. Psychological Possibilities: I.A. Richards

Generally considered the principal spokesman of early New Criticism, I.A. Richards was more forthright in explaining art as the refined organization of one's impulses and emotions. In *The Meaning of Meaning*, published in 1923 with C.K. Ogden as a co-author, he treated the words of poetry as symbols that are flexible enough to be only partially extracted from their "sign situations" (i.e., their total meaning inclusive of themselves as signifiers) in order to represent the full experience with which they are associated. In *Principles of Literary Criticism*, published in 1925, he defined both irony and ambiguity to involve a doubling of meaning, tone to be the expression of the poet's attitude toward his readers, and irony to be an agreed on expression of opposites. In *Science and Poetry*, published in 1926, he explained how poetic truth comprises a benign use of "pseudo-statements" otherwise rejected by logical positivists for their inability to be demonstrated. In *Coleridge on Imagination*, published in 1934, he treated the projective function of poetry in shared mythology. And in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, published in 1936, he treated metaphor as an interaction between vehicle and tenor, the latter consisting of complex experience otherwise inaccessible to language. Finally, in a variety of papers published after World War II, Richards elaborated a theory of communication emphasizing feedback procedures by which poets and their readers are both able to confirm the validity of poetic language relative to its integration in their experience.

When Richards tried to incorporate the notion of pseudo-statement into literary criticism, the almost universal hostility of the literary profession led him to propose in *Practical Criticism*, published in 1926, almost exactly the opposite assumption, that the ultimate value of poetry must be determined by its sincerity, a quality so elusive that its final judgment must necessarily involve the choice of the *entire* personality by the reader. The elucidation of the poem's prose meaning and all other questions of practical criticism were preliminary to this overall assessment that necessarily makes personality itself the dominant factor in the experience of poetry, just as it is in the composition of poetry. If any single principle seems to have been dominant in Richards' theory of poetry, it would be this vitalist assumption of a holistic literary response on the part of both poets and their critics. For the significance of this "totalizing" principle can be extended to all of Richards' theoretical contributions throughout his entire career. Each word's "sign situation" as discussed in *The Meaning of Meaning*, for example, expands signification to involve one's total experience, especially as defined and elaborated in the context of poetry. Likewise, the tenor of metaphor expands to involve total consciousness, as do feedback procedures for the communication of particular words of poetry and even the projection of experience upon nature as explained in *Coleridge on Imagination*. Each of these theories formulated at one time or another by Richards effectively complements the rest, and all have in common the notion of poetry as an intensive communication (or "transaction") from the experience of one entire personality to that of another.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Hulme, Eliot, and Pound, Richards acknowledged the importance of emotion, perhaps because he was less a poet and relatively disinclined to treat felt experience as objective truth. But just as Eliot advocated the avoidance of emotion by the poet, Richards advocated the avoidance of precipitous overt behavior by both poets and their readers. In *Science and Poetry*, first published in 1926, he claimed that literature exerts an essentially inhibitive influence that discourages praxis through the adjustment and reconciliation it affords among discordant impulses. Emotion might have played a negative role in this paradigm, but there was room enough for its involvement on the assumption prevalent in psychology at least since James Ward's pivotal essay in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which treated cognitions, feelings, and conations as "invariable constituents" of human experience.<sup>13</sup> Richards accordingly stressed the total involvement of consciousness additional to the intrinsic features of poetry itself by treating the context of poetry as a stimulus of a superior organization of "impulses" in the reader according to a definition not altogether satisfactory (how exactly can an impulse be measured or studied in isolation?), yet more precise than Hulme's and Eliot's respective notions of "wonder" and "emotion."

Richards also acknowledged the affective significance of poetry with all its messy contradictions, in this way escaping the simplistic worship of aesthetic perfection that Santayana had already ascribed to "pleasure regarded as a quality of the thing," in this instance the poem itself experienced as a literary artifact.<sup>14</sup> Santayana's argument perhaps described Pound's emphasis upon the ultimate value of craftsmanship and Eliot's emphasis on catalytic genius, since both featured the text as artifact. For Richards, however, individual response matters quite a bit for both poets and their readers, and the poem is best interpreted as communication (or transaction) between the two. In retrospect, Richards may be seen to have ultimately failed in his effort to chart and analyze the reader's complicated response to poetry as a neurological phenomenon. His use of impulse theory to provide a psychological basis for literary experience was necessarily limited by the deficiencies of psychology at the time he was making this effort. However, he generally benefited from his willingness to treat poetry's unavoidable diffusiveness and variability rooted in personality as being essential to its interpretation.

### 3. Disciples: Empson, Tate, Warren, and Brooks

Several critical approaches beginning in the thirties reflected the positive impact of Richards, most notably the theories of William Empson, Allen Tate, and Cleanth Brooks. Each of these three, in particular, winnowed from the wide variety of Richards' assumptions a theoretical perspective that could be elaborated relevant to his own interests. At Richards' suggestion, for example, Empson, a graduate student under his direction at the time, expanded upon his notion of ambiguity in *Principles of Literary Criticism* to propose his own far more inclusive assessment in, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, published in 1930. Empson explained at the very beginning, "I propose to use the word [ambiguity] in an extended sense, and shall think relevant to my subject any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language." He later expanded his definition, "'Ambiguity' itself can mean an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings."<sup>15</sup> On this relatively simple basis he undertook to elaborate seven types:

1. When a verbal meaning may be interpreted in more than one ways.
2. When two or more meanings can be resolved into one.
3. When two or more meanings are implied by one word.
4. When two or more meanings are in disagreement, but, once combined, clarify a more complicated state of mind.
5. When authors discover their thinking in the act of writing.
6. When there is so much confusion that readers are forced into making their own interpretation.
7. When two meanings are totally opposite, suggesting a fundamental division in the author's mind.

Obviously the seven types listed here overlap in many ways, with some uses of ambiguity arguably involving all seven of them, at least three or four. The primary justification of the sequence seems to be its increased complexity, permitting Empson to survey numerous critical issues from a perspective friendly with Richards' viewpoint, yet not entirely the same.

In a much briefer piece, "Tension in Poetry," first published in 1938, Allen Tate, one of the so-called Fugitive Poets (and/or critics) linked with John Crowe Ransom, proposed a theory of literary tension that was likewise derivative of Richards' critical theory. Tate probably took his cue from almost exactly the same pages as Empson had in *Principles of Literary Criticism*--specifically pp. 248-49--in which Richards discussed a "balanced poise" or equilibrium that accommodates the inclusion of apparently discordant feelings in one's response to poetry. Tate accordingly talked of each poetic work producing a whole that is the result of a configuration of meaning that is the appropriate subject of investigation by literary critics. Tension consisted of the balance obtained by all poets as their particular creative "strategy" between *extension* and *intention*. By "extension," Tate referred to poetry's overt meaning--its logic, imagery, and referential content; by "intention" he referred to poetry's connotations--its implicit meaning and affective state. An exaggerated emphasis on extension through excessive concern with literal statement, he argued, results in the "fallacy of mere denotation," whereas an exaggerated emphasis on one's affective state without sufficient clarity results in the "fallacy of communication." Mass language and metaphysical poetry test the limits of the first extreme, whereas symbolist poetry tests these limits with the second.<sup>16</sup> With perhaps excessive prudence, Tate conceded that not all types of poetry fit one or the other of the complementary categories he was suggesting.

In his influential essay, "Pure and Impure Poetry," first published in 1943, Robert Penn Warren only slightly qualified Tate's argument by acknowledging the importance of knowledge and experiential content as necessary "impurities" that cannot be entirely eliminated from the context of poetry, therefore complicating the poet's effort to obtain a satisfactory aesthetic whole. For "nothing that is available in human experience," Warren insisted in the spirit of

Pound and Eliot, “is to be legislated out of poetry.” He suggested a chemical formula as an extreme example of language that can be incorporated into poetry, but the many topical and economic allusions in Eliot’s “Wasteland” and Pound’s *Cantos* even better illustrated this important caveat. The same was true of the plastic arts. The collage depiction of a poster or guitar included in one of Picasso’s cubist paintings was to be judged as visual form quite aside from its depictive accuracy. How, then, does the poet attain acceptable formal integrity by putting to use such impurities? In the words of Warren--

. . . that the poet is like a jujitsu expert; he wins by utilizing the resistance of his opponent--the materials of the poem. In other words, a poem, to be good, must earn itself. It is a motion toward a point of rest, but if it is not a resisted motion, it is a motion of no consequence.<sup>17</sup>

In this case resistance refers to the non-poetic information brought into the context of poetry, and jujitsu refers to the poet’s skill in using this information to enhance the formal integrity of the poem. The inclusion of impurities intensifies the risk of failure, hence the more gratifying one’s sense of accomplishment once this risk is surmounted to gain an even more impressive level of formal attainment. Otherwise the poem becomes too easy, nothing more than “a toboggan slide, or a fall through space.” Elements resistant to form are acceptable, even needed, but the task of the critic is no less limited to formal issues, in this case the success of poet in submitting impure referential content to the non-referential experience of poetry as artifact. Warren’s concession to non-literary information accordingly neutralizes mimetic demands, since the poetic context divests non-literary facts of their informational relevance.<sup>18</sup>

Cleanth Brooks was probably the most influential critic inspired by Richards’ theory, at least in his early in his career. His text *Understanding Poetry* (1938), co-authored with Robert Penn Warren, was extraordinarily successful as a primary, or basic text in the interpretation of poetry, with an emphasis on New Critical principles of explication.<sup>19</sup> In *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, published in 1939, Brooks made a useful assessment of poetic tradition based on these principles and emphasizing the poets and schools of poetry already featured by Eliot. And in *The Well Wrought Urn*, published in 1949, Brooks took his turn offering a poetics representative of New Criticism by elaborating principles largely derivative of Richards’ theory, once again drawn from *Principles of Literary Criticism*. Like Tate, Brooks proposed as his basic paradigm an equilateral triangle, but with “Paradox” replacing “Tension” at the apex on the assumption that, one way or another, poetry necessarily manifests itself as “the language of paradox.” He thereupon identified the two alternatives at the base of the triangle as “Irony” and “Wonder,” the first consisting of paradox’s purest achievement, for example in seventeenth century metaphysical poetry, and the second comprising the wondrous experience of beauty produced by an essentially paradoxical situation, for example in Wordsworth’s poetry the sight of London, an ugly city, at sunrise, and the wisdom of a leech gatherer, the most simple-minded rural denizen. In either case no clear-cut explanation is offered--the poet’s answer can only be a sense of paradox to be shared with the reader. Literary structure accordingly succeeds relevant to both irony and wonder as a “pattern of resolutions and balances and harmonizations, developed through a temporal scheme,” its outcome a “working out of the various tensions,” its unity “achieved by a dramatic process, not a logical [one] . . . an equilibrium of forces, not a formula.”<sup>20</sup> Poets come to terms with their experience by sharing it with their readers. Literary

decorum remains essential, but it ultimately achieved by in the context of poetry through the synthesis expressive of paradox that is provided by the entire poem toward this end.

#### 4. Opponents: Yvor Winters, J.C. Ransom, and W.K. Wimsatt

It was inevitable that a reaction set in against the theoretical looseness of these early spokesmen of New Criticism, and perhaps just as inevitable that this reaction involved simplification and codification according the dialectics of negations already explained: the affirmation of fixed principles that could be extrapolated from the writings of Hulme, Eliot, and Richards, but implemented through a rejection of their affective assumptions.<sup>21</sup> The original inspiration of their theories had to be reduced by their followers into its manageable formulation that emphasized “contextual” self-sufficiency as indicated by Murray Krieger in his popular introduction, *The New Apologists for Poetry*, in which he emphasized “non-referential discourse,” “independent structures,” “meanings and values lying permanently within the object,” and “a role [for poetry] perhaps analogous to the function of logic in philosophical discourse.”<sup>22</sup> The so-called vitalist perspective of Richards had to be stripped down to issues of literary form, flow reduced to structure.

The first important stage in this process of absorption and denial was undertaken by Yvor Winters, who sought to resurrect an ethics and rationality in poetry that would protect poets and their readers from the temptations of unrestrained experience exemplified by the personal circumstances of Hart Crane, Winters’ alter ego and fallen former friend. To his credit, Winters was candid of his motives:

In fact, all feeling, if one gives oneself (that is, one’s form) up to it, is a way of disintegration: poetic form is by definition a means to arrest the disintegration and order the feeling; and in so far as any poem tends toward the formless, it fails to be expressive of anything.<sup>23</sup>

It is only possible to bring feelings under control, he argued, through logic and orality, interrelated virtues both of which impose shape upon experience in the context of poetry. He also emphasized denotation over connotation and idea over feeling, a priority he found in the nature of words that he argued must necessarily be carried over into the composition of poetry:

Now a poem is composed of words; that is it is conceptual in its origin, and it cannot escape from its origin. A poem about a tree is composed primarily of abstractions, and secondarily of the feelings aroused by those abstractions.<sup>24</sup>

Winters rejected Hulme’s original effort to avoid abstractions as much as possible and contracted Richards’ inclusive judgment of the reader’s entire personality into a Manichaeian distinction between feeling and morality, one that exalted form and reason at the expense of any experience which might be deemed irrational, abnormal, or shapeless and elusive of definition. These features of consciousness could only be conveyed by the logic of poetry, accordingly reduced to a subordinate role if not eradicated from its context.

The next major step in marginalizing poetry's experiential matrix was undertaken by John Crowe Ransom, whose 1941 text *The New Criticism* first provided a name for the critical movement, both in the book's title and in a sentence in which he referred to the theoretical contribution of both Richards and his protégé William Empson as "a principal reason why I think it is time to identify a powerful intellectual movement that deserves to be called a new criticism."<sup>25</sup> Ransom, however, advocated as a useful modification a "cognitive" approach based on the premise that poetry is essentially mimetic (or "iconic") in its concentrated reference to experience.<sup>26</sup> The proper response to poetry, he maintained, involves the objective study of its complexity as an artifact of language, dispensing with affect and sensibility as questions of "indeterminate meaning." He maintained the experience of a poem is primarily cognitive, the recognition of "determinate meaning" as expressed by a "determinate sound structure." The appreciation of poetry could be brought a quantum jump closer to the tenets of scientific inquiry as proposed by the logical William Morris, whose influence Ransom gladly acknowledged in establishing the basis for his aesthetics.<sup>27</sup> Epistemological consistency could be attained in poetry comparable to that of logical positivism simply by treating literary experience as a type of cognition different only with regard to its density and predictability as well as the compromises that had to be made to accommodate its sound structure. The job of criticism was strictly cognitive analysis rather than the choice of one's entire personality. To be emphasized was the specific interpretation of a poem's complexity of statement according to exegetical guidelines that had already been elucidated by Brooks and Warren in their influential 1939 primer *Understanding Poetry*. Particular aspects of poetry such as rhythm, metaphor, irony, and ambiguity could be evaluated as literary functions that refract observation in specific definable patterns, reducing poetic response to a matter of skill interpreting (or decoding) these patterns.<sup>28</sup>

This shift from the inclusiveness of Richards' "affective" emphasis to Ransom's more limited "cognitive" demands effectively dispensed with all differences between literary criticism and logical positivism except on a *quantitative* basis. The seemingly empirical *qualitative* distinction emphasized by Richards' theory of literary "pseudo-statement," offered in chapter six of *Science and Poetry*, published in 1926 and revised in 1935, argued the supposition suggested by logical positivism that the truth of poetry is always of secondary importance to telling pleasant untruths without any need for verification. Ransom rejected Richards' deceptionist radicalism by taking an entirely different stance derivative of logical positivism. Instead of differentiating poetry from science based on the concept of the pseudo-statement, Ransom emphasized the similarity between science and poetry by emphasizing the importance of cognitive experience in both of them, limiting the appropriate consciousness of poetry to its objective interpretation. Emotion, affect, and all residual aspects of personality were demoted, if not entirely eliminated, from both the analysis and appreciation of poetry. Ransom's simplistic epistemology (quite aside from his complicated explanation) foreshadowed the reduction of criticism to its own version of science cleansed of introspective distractions. Poetry could be dissected with the precision needed to dissect a frog or human cadaver. Ironically, Ransom proposed his cognitive restrictions as a defense of art's spiritual values against the "positivist" arguments advanced by Richards to differentiate art from the descriptive sciences. What actually happened, however, seems to have been an unsuccessful marriage of convenience between religion and positivism to exclude psychology from literary criticism.

The third major step in the formal codification of New Criticism occurred after World War II with W.K. Wimsatt's celebrated effort to consign all theories of literary experience to the dustbin of the "intentional" and "affective" fallacies. Any projective or introjective concept of poetry had to be discarded in favor of the formal judgment of its value as a "concrete universal," a Platonic integration of the universal forms embodied in poetry's specific details," of course necessitating "objective criticism," the dispassionate study of how complex poetic structures integrate these universals.<sup>29</sup> Wimsatt proposed the Intentional Fallacy to reject excessive interest in the poet's motivation on the assumption that "judgment of poems is different from the art of producing them." The poet's feelings and personal circumstances do not matter--it's the poem itself that deserves our attention: "A poem can *be* only through its *meaning*--since its medium is words--yet it *is*, simply *is*, in the sense that we have no excuse for inquiring what part is intended or meant." Wimsatt quoted an outspoken "intentionalist" (F. Paulhan) to confirm the validity of the Intentional Fallacy on the assumption that Paulhan refuted himself with his own words: "The poet's aim must be judged at the moment of the creative act, that is to say, by the art of the poem itself."<sup>30</sup> Exactly so, replied Wimsatt, for the poem's "art" (or act) at the moment of its inception is exclusively the stuff to be examined by criticism--as if there is any single moment that can be ascertained in the inception of poetry. Wimsatt similarly proposed the Affective Fallacy to reject excessive interest in the reader's feelings and emotions in response to poetry--exactly the concern of Richards in much of his criticism. According to Wimsatt, this particular fallacy confuses a poem with its results, and it too often "ends in impressionism and relativism." Experienced vividness, Wimsatt claimed, "is not the thing in the work by which the work may be identified, but the result of a cognitive structure, which *is* the thing." He approvingly quotes Matthew Arnold to the effect that poetry "attaches the emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact," and explains--

The more specific the account of the emotion induced by a poem, the more nearly it will be an account of the reasons for emotion, the poem itself, and the more reliable it will be as an account of what the poem is likely to induce in other-sufficiently informed--readers.<sup>31</sup>

With both the poet and reader excluded from the proper domain of explication, nothing was left but the poem itself, a "thing" examined on a necessarily formalist basis, or so it seemed.

Fallacies and heresies came into vogue among New Critics during the fifties, encouraged by the popularity of Wimsatt's two examples. Earlier fallacies and heresies restored to the limelight included Poe's Didactic Heresy, Mathew Arnold's Historic and Personal Fallacies, and A.C. Bradley's Paraphrastic Heresy. Fresh fallacies invented by New Criticism during its heyday included Yvor Winters' Fallacy of Imitative Form (writing boring stories about boring people, etc.), Cleanth Brooks' Heresy of Paraphrase, and Allen Tate's Fallacies of Communication and Mere Denotation. All these critical transgressions described an excessive reliance on whatever critical tactic was indicated by the name of the fallacy. Their cumulative impact of all these fallacies for the most part encouraged paring down literary criticism to a full examination of the text in and of itself without any extraneous distractions. However, this too was vulnerable to criticism based on A.C. Bradley's Formalist Heresy, specifically an exaggerated concern with formalist issues at the expense of everything else. Much later Stanley Fish introduced the concept of a fallacy-fallacy, any fallacy that derives from excessive

avoidances dictated by another fallacy. Anybody driven, for example, by the Intentional and Affective Fallacies to exaggerate the importance of textual analysis, as promoted by Wimsatt, would accordingly be guilty of a fallacy-fallacy as already suggested many decades earlier by Bradley's Formalist Heresy. So the fallacy police were hoisted by their own petard. As with the Reign of Terror back in 1794, strictly in the realm of politics, New Criticism's revolutionary pursuit of aesthetic purity devoured itself in purging its potential enemies. But this is getting ahead of the story.

### 5. Formalists: Joseph Frank, R.S. Crane, and Rene Wellek

Sheer formalism became an attractive possibility in the early fifties. Two years after *The Well Wrought Urn*, Cleanth Brooks explored some of its assumptions in his 1951 manifesto, "The Formalist Critic," by suggesting that the principal purpose of literary criticism is the study of form as a self-sufficient context of language.<sup>32</sup> However, he later retreated from its radical assumptions. Far more influential at the time, Joseph Frank's 1945 essay, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," became obligatory reading among students and advocates of New Criticism because of its argument that simultaneity totally usurps process in the best modern poetry:

Since the primary reference of any word-group is to something inside the poem itself, language in modern poetry is really reflexive. The meaning-relationship is completed only by the simultaneous perception in space of word-groups which, when read consecutively in time, have no comprehensible relation to each other. . . . Modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal reference can be apprehended as a unity.<sup>33</sup>

Frank did not proscribe the dimension of time, nor the reader's experience, but his emphasis on spatialization tended to minimize the role of experiential process in the response to literature. The reader was expected to store up the memory of all the specific contexts, then judge their impact in its entirety once the reading experience was completed, exactly as a painting might be judged once all its detailed had been considered.

Also supportive of the cause, if on a slightly different basis, R.S. Crane, of the so-called neo-Aristotelian School of criticism that thrived at the University of Chicago during this period sought to retain process as an important component of the literary whole. He first proposed the treatment of poetic form as a "concrete whole" whose "formal nature" is more important than its "material nature":

A poem, on the view of its structure suggested by Aristotle, is not a composite of *res* and *verba* [thing and word], but a certain matter formed in a certain way or a certain form imposed upon or wrought out of a certain matter. The two are inseparable aspects of the same individual thing, though they are clearly distinct analytically as principles or causes, and though, of the two, the formal nature is necessarily more important as long as our concern is with the poem as a concrete object.

The conclusion was therefore obvious:

In a well-made poem, everything is formed, and hence rendered poetic (whatever it may have been in itself), by virtue simply of being made to do something definite in the poem or to produce a definitely definable effect, however local, which the same materials of language, thought, character-traits, or actions would be incapable of in abstraction from the poem, or the context in the poem, in which they appear.

The goal of criticism became even more obvious:

For if we are to consider poetic works, in practical criticism, from the point of view of their concrete wholeness, then our central problem is to make their elements and subordinate structures causally intelligible in the light of their respective organizing forms.<sup>34</sup>

Causally intelligible? Organizing forms? Here were literary categories beyond Frank's theory of literary structure. That forms organize causal intelligibility offered ample opportunity to draw upon Aristotle's theory of plot dependent on beginning, middle, and end additional to complication, denouement, and all the rest of Aristotle's categories. So the Stagyrite himself was enlisted to join the legions of defenders supportive of textual purity.

And last but not least, the Yale historian of literary criticism, René Wellek, argued that the "real" poem is actually to be dealt with as an artifact, a "system of norms and units of meaning" that is only partially realized in the actual experience of its readers. As opposed to Richards' "vertical" emphasis upon the experiential aspect of signification in poetry, Wellek restricted poetics to signifiers alone in a "horizontal" context with little relevance both to the signified and its overall context of specification.<sup>35</sup> Just as a scholar (for example Wellek himself) might treat poetry as a congeries of evidential data to be sorted and categorized, readers could appreciate the very stuff of poetry (its "norms" and "units of meaning") as specific data whose experience involves precise observation rather than Richards' notion of felt response. Richards' earlier reification of the so-called impulse, challenged by his successors, could be replaced by the so-called norm, no less a reification, but one that seemed entirely appropriate, as in fact it was symptomatic of New Criticism's fatal affliction once it became dominant in the academic marketplace. Appropriately, Wellek taught at Yale as a colleague of Wimsatt and eventually Brooks and Warren, all of whom shared the role of New Criticism's grand hierophants during its autumn years. Just as important, however, Wellek was linked at the beginning of his career with Prague School formalists (Jan Mukarovsky, etc.), who were inspired by the Russian Formalists active during the Russian Revolution and Civil War. As much as anybody, Wellek bridged the gap between the remarkable earlier achievement of formalists such as Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson and the increasingly formalist speculation of Anglo-American New Criticism during the fifties. His concept of norms effectively extended Jakobson's obsessive concern with literary form as a composite admixture of binary oppositions, each of which can be isolated and interpreted as a single definable function. However, the concept should also be recognized to have reversed Shklovsky's original formalist theory to the effect that art is a texture of surprises that subvert any emphasis upon norms except perhaps in their organization as surprises. To this extent, at least, Wellek seems to have brought Russian formalism and New Criticism into a remarkable synthesis that culminated the historic roots of each through the denial and reification of its original assumptions.<sup>36</sup>

What happened at this late stage in the dialectic advancement of New Criticism, which seems to have peaked in the years 1947-48, is simply that Ransom's argument was taken to its logical conclusion. Once he had divided the response of poetry into (a) cognitive experience and (b) its aura of indeterminate meaning, the second term could be totally eliminated from criticism as a dimension of irrelevant associations that preclude serious inquiry. Moreover, formal devices could be emphasized at the expense of their felt experience, which merely duplicates the literary artifact and can presumably be taken for granted by competent critics. The poem in and of itself was entirely what mattered, not its matrix in the feelings of either the poet or reader, nor, for that matter, in its referential content. Like a painting or symphony, the poem as artifact took precedence, limiting critical analysis to the study of its formal integrity rather than its accuracy in depicting life experiences.

The only problem with these various arguments supportive a formalist theory of literature was that they afforded little more than a tactical advantage against poetry's experiential content for both poets and their readers. If Wimsatt had been serious in proposing the concrete universal, little more than an oxymoron exaggerated to the proportions of theory, he would have directed at least a portion of his subsequent energies toward a modern Kantian or neo-Platonic aesthetics, which he didn't (in contrast to Ransom); and if Wellek had been serious in proposing norms and units of meaning--reifications no less vulnerable to ridicule than Richards' controversial theory of impulses--he would have tried to formulate an epistemology to justify their relevance, which he didn't. In fact, both offered their thumbnail phenomenologies only to suggest a theoretical basis for simplifying interpretation, in contrast to the affective speculation of Richard that had arisen from his more extensive exposure to current psychology during his early years at Cambridge and had then led him to his equally fruitful studies of rhetoric and semantics late in his career. Yet this theoretical gimmickry at the expense of Richards served its purpose well for the emergent postwar generation of New Critics. It became their relatively simple task to complete the formalization of literary experience through systematic analysis of particular texts, usually short poems such as Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Milton and Spenser were out of the question, and fiction was limited to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* plus maybe Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. For poetry, interpretation was based on guidelines spelled out by Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938) and later elaborated by William Elton's "A Glossary of the New Criticism" (Modern Poetry Association Chicago, 1969). For Fiction E.M. Forster, Edwin Muir, and a couple others were adequate, but with the novel pretty much understood as an elongated poem with thematic emphasis. And professional explications useful to the task were listed in useful one-volume bibliographies such as Joseph Kuntz's *Poetry Explication* (Swallow, 1950, rev. 1962) and Inglis Bell and Donald Baird's *The English Novel* (Swallow, 1958).

There was no pedagogical obligation except on a preliminary basis ("Hey kids, whaddya think of the Keats assignment," etc.) to take into account the historic circumstances of the text, or to explore in depth the felt experience of a text. Messy implications at this level of interpretation could be jettisoned on a presumably theoretical basis with emphasis on the text itself independent of everything else. It accordingly became possible to make claims for a "science" of literary criticism strictly limited to issues appropriate to its subject matter, the poem or novel as an objective artifact minus any distractions, either factual or theoretical, that would transgress the

boundaries of criticism as a unique field of inquiry comparable to chemistry or political science.<sup>37</sup>

## 6. Archetypes: Northrop Frye

The final stage in the formal codification of New Criticism was to be the accomplishment of Northrop Frye, who advocated a science of literary criticism in his somewhat jumbled “Polemical Introduction” to *Anatomy of Criticism*, preceding his remarkable effort to create a taxonomy of modes and archetypes that might finally transcend the raw experience of poetry emphasized by Richards. Mythical criticism had been prevalent in the early Twentieth Century based on research by such figures as Sir William Frazier, Carl Jung, Jane Harrison, Jessie Weston, Robert Graves, and Lord Raglan, setting the stage for the contributions of Joseph Campbell and Philip Wheelwright. Also popular were the western frontier myths offered by R.B.W. Lewis, Richard Chase and Henry Nash Smith, among others. Northrop Frye culminated this entire movement with a theory of archetypes that supplanted the earlier emphasis on myth. With myth the primary concern, the emphasis was mostly limited to primordial beliefs linked with received tradition perhaps rooted in the collective unconscious; with archetype as a substitute for myth, much of this baggage could be abandoned for a strict taxonomy of types, tropes and images at all stages of literary history. Historic antecedents could be abandoned for a taxonomy that emphasized a synchronic relationship among categories rather than their respective diachronic histories from ancient times. Not surprisingly, the system Frye constructed was itself of epic proportions, its intra-referential complexity both embracing and exceeding the internal complexity that supposedly gives individual poems their formal justification. In other words, Frye made criticism a kind of second-order aesthetic accomplishment, a perfect symmetrical embodiment of theory with “iconic” (or mimetic) value in the fact that its complexity is homologous to a single text, but also, on a far more ambitious scale, to the whole of literature, exposing a variety of otherwise obscure relationships among genres and particular texts.<sup>38</sup> The cost of this success was a vast schematism that too often tottered at the brink of absurdity. Richards’ questionable paradigm representing aesthetic experience as a cross-section of the brain’s surface with pustules, follicles, and helixes was accordingly brought to its appropriate antipodal complement no less absurd for its schematic extravagance in the magic circle of Literature Frye proposed among the myths of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, all of which were situated on a plane perpendicular to the hierarchy of modes descending from (high) mythic to low mimetic, i.e., from pure literary archetype to its dilution in ordinary fantasy.<sup>39</sup>

There was no direct line of descent from Richards to Frye, but Frye did culminate critical trends toward the end of the fifties with a theory that was in all particulars exactly the opposite of Richards’ theory. And, indeed, the notion of archetypes proposed by Frye could be understood as meta-norms emphasizing modes and genres rather than the specific contexts of particular texts. Richards’ emphasis upon the reader’s response was perhaps granted its niche in this system, but through a dualism acquired from Blake that opposes experience to innocence to provide the genesis of the four seasonal myths: summer romance expressive of pure innocence, winter satire expressive of pure experience, spring comedy representing the ascent from experience to innocence, and fall tragedy representing the descent from innocence to experience. The reader’s sensitivity to literature was accordingly demoted from the judgment of his entire personality to

one term in a loaded dichotomy that makes it inferior to (or lower than) innocence. Frye also proposed two other binarisms pertinent to experience: (1) between cyclical and dialectical forces, the latter usually involving external relationships (for example social and political issues) without genuine dialectic integration, and (2) between centripetal and centrifugal forces that respectively turn inward to literary form and outward to objective reality.<sup>40</sup> However, Frye only paid lip service to centrifugal (or “dialectic”) relationships, concentrating his attention upon the centripetal dynamics of literary structure, apparently satisfied that his taxonomy’s fourfold acknowledgement of the category of experience (counting the “low mimetic”) was concession enough to affective and mimetic demands.

It should be recognized that Frye’s reification of affective theory has itself been dialectic, not absolute, in resolving the development of New Criticism from an experiential to a formal emphasis. His catalogue of modes and archetypes is essentially centripetal according to his own terms and as such complements Richards’ centrifugal theory of literary response, so the validity of either of them need not be insisted at the expense of the other. Moreover, the shift in emphasis from affect to archetype in the advancement of New Criticism offers itself as a remarkable phylogenetic counterpart to the individual experience of literature as a dialectic interaction between consciousness and its aesthetic embodiment projected into fiction and poetry. Exactly as readers immerse themselves in the context of literature, New Criticism’s development occurred as a transition from affective speculation to the theory of form, then archetype--in other words, as indicated earlier, from process to the structure it produces to resolve itself. As a result, the theories of Richards and Frye can be seen to be interdependent as polar opposites in explaining literature as the fulfillment of one’s feelings and expectations in archetypal literary structure. It is ultimately human emotion that generates literary archetype, providing the source of myth and literature; obversely, archetype stimulates affect guaranteed by the outcome it promises. For Richards literature entailed the process of coming to terms with oneself by reading poetry and fiction; for Frye, it entailed locating a particular text within the total historic tradition of literature from the Gilgamesh to Zap comic books, all of which has at one time or another served to produce this effect in particular groups of readers. Richards explained poetry according to current theories of semantics and psychology, while Frye abandoned all extra-literary theory, even the Jungian concept of unconscious archetypes, in order to found a “science” of literature, a Linnaean (even Ramist) taxonomy of modes and genres that could provide literary scholarship its centripetal validity equivalent to the archetypal organization of literature.

Where Richards had emphasized one’s aesthetic response involving his entire personality, Frye emphasized its relationship to the entirety of literature. Both sought connections beyond the particular literary text, Richards by tying it to its conscious effect, a question of psychology, Frye by securing its archetypal identity, necessitating expanded literary scholarship. For Richard form was simply a way to trigger certain kinds of response; for Frye it consisted of the differentia that identify a text relative to its fit among modes and genres. Even the titles of their books suggest their complementary approaches. Richards explored the “principles” and “practical” questions involved in the meaning and imagination of particular texts, whereas Frye concentrated upon a text’s taxonomic specification. If Richards’ slice of brain tissue can be understood to have been a vertical trope exaggerating brain physiology to represent the depth and sensitivity of one’s response to literature, measured by Saussure’s

vertical axis of successions, Frye's cyclical theory of literature became its schematic opposite, a horizontal mandala of exactly four genres that quadrate the plane on Saussure's axis of simultaneities. And the contrast has been entirely appropriate, for in the words of Saussure--

Certainly all sciences would profit by indicating more precisely the coordinates along which their subject matter is aligned. Everywhere distinctions should be made . . . between (1) the axis of simultaneities which stands for the relations of coexisting things and from which the intervention of time is excluded; and (2) the axis of successions on which only one thing can be considered at a time but upon which are located all the things on the first axis together with their changes.<sup>41</sup>

According to this all-purpose quadrant, Frye's theory is essentially "taxonomic" and "synchronic" (i.e. simultaneous), since it treats all literature as if it coexists on the axis of simultaneities, whereas Richards' theory is "syntagmatic" (i.e. sequential) and "diachronic" (i.e. organized in time) since it takes into account the forward progress of literary experience as a felt response. But of course neither axis can be completely isolated, hence the remarkable polar interplay between Frye and Richards' critical approaches. Moreover, the dialectic advance one to the other brought New Criticism to its culmination, after which there has been little to be added. Of course important books and articles continue to be written relevant to New Criticism, but these are academic and retrospective, marginal to its essential history except as scholarly assessments.

On a strictly pedagogical basis, Frye's archetypal emphasis turned out to be a qualified disappointment in the classroom for most English professors, since too much knowledge needed to be digested compared to what could be said. Once a text can be located in Frye's schema and all of its relevant traits examined on this basis in front of a class, at least forty minutes are left in the fifty-minute hour, and the topic necessarily reverts to verbal action from sentence to sentence in the text under consideration. For experienced English professors, the task is simple enough--to make an elegant transition from Frye to old-fashioned New Criticism's textual specificity, or, vice versa, to top off forty-five minutes of specificity with a five-minute archetypal kicker giving universal significance to everything already said. So even the classroom experience may be said to have shared in the dialectic transaction already described relevant to the approaches of Frye and Richards.

## 7. Trends and Future Possibilities

This external history tells much of the story, but not all of it, regarding the dialectic advancement of New Criticism from process to structure. Nineteen years elapsed between Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* and Ransom's *New Criticism*, published in 1941, and then another eight years before the contributions of Brooks, Wimsatt, and Wellek were featured, and another five or six years for Frye to emerge as the predominant influence of the fifties and early sixties. There was no clear tempo to this sporadic historic development, yet it persisted, hibernating during periods of intense social consciousness, picking up momentum when somehow stirred the right way by external concerns. It seldom backtracked upon itself, and finally, once its process had been completed, settled into academic orthodoxy whose explicative scholarship still dominates bibliographies today. Anabolic thrust initiated by Richards'

generation of iconoclasts had finally delivered itself up to catabolic decrepitude in the institutionalization of both literature and criticism. In effect, energy had converted itself to mass, thought to habit, essay to dissertation, *parole* to *langue*, and modest Dionysian sensibility to modest Apollonian exegesis, the hash and rehash of categories appropriate to the taxonomic validity of New Critical Scholarship. Yet each stage has been essential to the total process. The archetypal formalism of the fifties and early sixties could not have emerged except through a prolonged reaction against affective confusion. Likewise, the critical breakthrough of Eliot and Richards could only have supported a mainstream tradition that would fulfill itself by subverting their genius through its formalization, more or less as Christ had prefigured Saint Thomas Aquinas, Hegel Stalinism, and Jefferson our present corporate oligarchy inclusive of the American university system. For academia now reigns, long live the dead king.

It would be a mistake to treat this dialectic advancement from Richards to Frye as having occurred in a strictly linear fashion with each and every stage the natural outcome of the last. There were many exceptions to its incremental pattern of growth, most notably in critics like Richards who defended and extended their theories throughout their careers, or like Eliot whose attitudes toward poetry softened with maturity as opposed to the overall trend toward reductive explication. There were other critics whose holistic strategies of interpretation had little to do with this dialectic, most notably Kenneth Burke, R. P. Blackmur, and F.R. Leavis, all three of whom have made a worthy contribution to the history of literary criticism. Successful poets at the time, most notably Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams, also played an important, if peripheral role, in the critical dialogue at the time, just as many of the most successful critics also wrote substantial poetry, most notably Pound, Eliot, Ransom, and Warren. Journals such as the *Kenyan Review*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Southern Review* in the United States as well as *The Criterion* and *Scrutiny* in England published poets and academic critics concerned with relevant issues pertaining to New Criticism. Literary theory itself had become a kind of politics, and both private and public rivalries are everywhere to be found. Much has gone on, so it becomes an act of radical simplification to reduce the entire movement to a linear sequence with a beginning, middle, and end. Nevertheless, there has been shared motion forward, and in retrospect this can be discerned to have advanced with a shared singularity of purpose susceptible to dialectic analysis.

It would also be a mistake to suggest that the dialectic advancement of New Criticism occurred independent of social and political history over the four decades of its development, since its most intense periods of activity seem to have happened when conservative values were particularly threatened by crises of one kind or another. Not accidentally, Richards, Eliot and Pound were caught up in the widespread anxiety about the Bolshevik threat to western civilization during the decade that followed World War I. A conservative viewpoint was often explicit in Pound's poetry and criticism, culminating in his embarrassing role as an Italian version of "Tokyo Rose" who broadcast fascist propaganda in English during World War II. Similarly, Eliot's despair with modern social anarchy (translate: Bolshevism) suffused "The Waste Land," and his sympathy with the views of Irving Babbitt and Charles Maurras of Action Française, a fascist group dominant in France, was reflected in his unsigned *Criterion* editorials, peaking in the year 1928, when he ventured to express his tentative admiration for Mussolini. His conservatism was also evident in *After Strange Gods*, published in 1934, and later, if appropriately muted, in his *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, published in 1949. I.A.

Richards' political conservatism was evident in *Science and Poetry*, published in 1926 and revised in 1935, in which he advocated constructing a viable Hindenburg Line in order to defend our traditions "from a moral chaos such as man has never experienced."<sup>42</sup> He did not try to clarify exactly who represented this chaos at the time, leaving Soviet Marxism just as much a suspect as German nationalism.

Later New Critics were also for the most part conservative. The movement was imported to the United States by the "Fugitive" critics of the thirties, including Ransom, Tate, Warren, and other, who asserted an uncompromising agrarian conservatism in their collective manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, edited by Ransom and published in 1930. The maturation of this perspective over the next twenty-five years is illustrated the brief testament, *Democracy and Poetry*, published in 1975 by Robert Penn Warren, in which conservatism, genuine wisdom, and a watered down defense of Richards' version of New Criticism commingle on every page. Finally, Northrop Frye's distaste for Marxism is evident in *The Critical Path*, published in 1971. . Significantly, New Criticism flourished during the Cold War that followed World War II, when the United States was rocked by McCarthyite repercussions at home. Not that the issue was commonly discussed among the votaries and acolytes of the movement. For most there was instead an unspoken aura of conservatism, usually on the assumption that one's superiority to politics need not involve any commitment to the status quo. When Cold War mentality dissipated beginning in the late fifties, New Criticism lost its popularity. The rise of the protest movement in the early sixties was its death knell. At the time, however, there was no sense of any connection between these two trends. Their coexistence seemed nothing more than a happy coincidence.

Also symptomatic of this unspoken connection was the disdain of New Critics for social criticism. Parrington and Van Wyck Brooks, both of whom enjoyed enormous popularity during the twenties, were ignored, as was the so-called New York School of criticism beginning with the Zhadanovite "social optimism" of Michael Gold and Granville Hicks, followed by a Trotskyist reaction, a Shachtmanite rejection of Trotskyism for indigenous socialism, and, after World War II, a fairly rapid depoliticization among the so-called *Partisan Review* "crowd." This was led by Phillip Rahv as well as Irving Howe and Lionel Trilling, the latter two with somewhat independent viewpoints. Others more loosely associated with the movement included Max Eastman, Dwight McDonald, Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, Malcolm Cowley, Lionel Abel, and Leslie Fiedler.<sup>43</sup> All of these turned away from politics during the fifties, but they continued to be tainted by earlier connections in the opinion of New Critics, who preferred to avoid concerning themselves with the matter. A few New Critics were themselves leftists, most notably Burke and Empson, but New Criticism's "essential" tradition was conservative to the core, and it seems to have been spurred to its most intensive formalist speculation during periods when reactionary insecurity was aroused by political conflict. Whenever Cold War issues became distasteful and perhaps even dangerous, it seems to have made good sense to withdraw to a presumably non-ideological profession that increasingly tightened its focus upon the formal explication of literature. It also helped that U.S. colleges and universities were far more willing to hire a literature faculty with this particular bias rather than its opposite.

Now what is needed for criticism is another renaissance, a fresh effort to grasp the vital connection between literature and both its social and psychological roots. The affective fallacy

needs to be recognized to be itself a fallacy, as Stanley Fish has argued, since the objective text is inevitably the outgrowth of experience, the product of its author's creativity that must be experienced by its readers on the basis of their own feelings and intentions.<sup>44</sup> This is true whether consciousness is explained according to a catalogue of relatively simple principles, for example norm, cognition and concrete universal, or is expanded to take into account additional considerations such as affect, memory, emotion, conation, and motility, as well as figure and background according to gestalt psychology, symbolic representation according to Piaget's theory of sensori-motor adaptation, schema and correction to Gombrich's theory of art history, locutionary and illocutionary acts according to J.L. Austin's speech-act theory, intersecting matrices according to Koestler's theory of creativity, the projective function of imagery according to the aesthetic phenomenologies of Bachelard and Poulet, or the effects of anxiety according to the ego psychology of Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, and many others of their school. The domain of psychology can also be profitably extended once again to take into account the Freudian Ego as dominated by a compromise formation that engages both cathexis and counter-cathexis as well as various primary process displacement patterns that do in fact recur in literary experience far more than most critics are willing to admit. The commonplace argument against the excesses of depth psychology that the unconscious is an empty reification since it lacks any measurable objective existence remains irrelevant to criticism so long as repressed drives and feelings can be adduced to explain the symptoms and surface inconsistencies expressed in literature, often with even more resonance than can be observed in the behavior of severely neurotic individuals. If recurring patterns of conscious indirection can be accepted as the product of an "unconscious," the presumably non-scientific insights of psychoanalysis become important *bricolage* (or hands-on equipment) in explicating literature, as has been amply demonstrated by Kris, Lesser, Holland, and Crews among many others.

Similarly, the boundaries of criticism must extend outward from consciousness to the social circumstances of both authors and their readers, inclusive of their living standards and means of support to the extent that have any bearing upon the gratification they find in literature. Rightly or not, Marxist theory has staked its claim upon this dimension of aesthetic expression, and it seems entirely valid in having posited culture and, more specifically, literature as a "superstructure" inevitably influenced by economic history. How can this connection be denied? How can Marx's inclusive humanistic definition be ignored of history as "the activity of man pursuing his own ends"--or Marx's more specific study of alienation as man's separation from himself through the burden imposed by the pursuit of these ends? Like Freud's theory of the unconscious, Marxist alienation involves dialectic tension, in its instance between the essential identity of individuals and their relatively artificial role resulting from their effort to cope with social demands. Freud emphasized conscious and unconscious interaction, while Marx located a comparable dialectic further outwards, more simply emphasizing the division that occurs when one tries to make a living in the society of others. The Marxist "self" nevertheless experiences needs and feelings more or less defined by Freud's pleasure and reality principles, while the role it adopts reflects an economic and social milieu conceded by Freud's reality principle. At least to this extent the two approaches overlap in their relevance to human behavior, and consequently, I would claim, to literature and its criticism.<sup>45</sup> Richards' theory of reading experience as the judgment of the whole personality can as a result be profitably extended in both directions. Individuals engrossed in fiction or poetry somehow mix social adjustment with unconscious displacement, both of which help to determine their interest and participation as

authors and readers. The key to Richards' affective theory, his emphasis upon total consciousness, accordingly necessitates a more inclusive critical perspective that integrates the most basic assumptions of psychoanalysis and Marxism, the two theories the most distasteful to orthodox proponents of New Criticism--including Richards himself.

Not that I recommend the abandonment of formal insights by Winters, Brooks, and the rest of their three-generation movement, for they have provided an enormous contribution to explicative methodology--one, in fact, that probably could not have occurred unless they brought the original concepts of Richards into manageable proportions. Moreover, they have been successful in their approach to criticism because they have reduced its analysis to a collocation of axioms and postulates specifically useful to textual interpretation. By isolating the context of literature to be investigated under what amount to antiseptic laboratory conditions (a major positivist accomplishment), they have revolutionized the composition of poetry, the manner in which it is taught in the classroom, and even, by diffusion, the American public's general sensitivity to the uses of language. Moreover, by steering their insights over at least two generations of participating critics toward what seemed an acceptable formalist choice, New Critics have paradoxically given focus one step at a time to the entire transaction essential to one's reading experience. Exactly as the reader's expectations are gratified by means of a poem or story's formal resolution, they have brought their movement to its culmination through a comparable transition in emphasis from affect to formal context, in effect from impulse to norm. By denying psychological involvement, they have incrementally carried out its slow-motion phylogenetic equivalent, their collective attainment of form consciousness divorced from human experience except as felt satisfaction in the literary artifact. In other words, by rejecting this transition in their experience of literature, they have replicated its fulfillment on a more inclusive scale. But there the process has ended--the only thing it could do. They carried New Criticism from one extreme to its opposite and then lost their sense of obligation to advance their theories any further, having attained their perhaps unrecognized objective, the self-consuming renunciation of needs and feelings by means of literary sublimation, very likely the essence of literary achievement. But of course this is the stuff of Freud.

Now the time has come to restore their wriggling laboratory specimen, literature, to its original environment and to acknowledge its primary value as heightened communication between author and reader rather than an aesthetic artifact that somehow transcends this relationship. Cleanth Brooks' seductive analogy of the well-wrought urn has to be rejected for the more awkward but accurate one of a telephone conversation between two individuals, one entirely the talker and the other (alas) struggling to be a close listener. Each is responsive to his/her own inner resources of consciousness as well as the mutual circumstances they share at both ends of the line relevant to what is being said. Of course literature can still be appreciated as if sitting on a pedestal awaiting the judgment of its most sophisticated connoisseurs, but it also conveys new ideas, emotions, and descriptions of experience to all who are able to share in its achievement. What is consequently needed in criticism right now is the renewed pursuit of a unified theory to integrate the enormous variety of evidence already available that can be of any use in studying how this "transaction" occurs. Currently fashionable in the academic world, both structuralism (an expanded formalism) and its complementary antithesis obliged by deconstructionism seem almost entirely irrelevant to the task.<sup>46</sup> More useful would be recent writings of I.A. Richards and Louise Rosenblatt in communication theory explained according to

the “instrumentalist” aesthetics of John Dewey and Sidney Hook in *Art as Experience* (Minton Balch, 1934). But other approaches can also be brought into the combination. An integrated dynamic model is needed, one that puts eclecticism at the service of dialectics in the explanation of literary experience. To its credit, New Criticism did just this without any clear understanding of its accomplishment--and this was perhaps its genius.

June 4, 1976

**© 2005 by Edward Jayne. This document may be reproduced in any non-profit form without permission of the author; however, for-profit reproduction requires written permission.**

**<http://www.edwardjayne.com>**

---

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The principle argued here expands B.F. Skinner’s position in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York, 1971), p. 18, that “behavior is shaped and maintained by its consequences” with the corollary that all behavior, including literature, pursues consequences that involve its termination. In effect, it seeks out its own demise as the principal outcome of its effort. Northrop Frye takes this position in *The Critical Path* (Bloomington, 1971), in which he discusses how the myth of freedom is too often transitional to the myth of responsibility. My difference with Frye’s position stems from my belief that mythology itself mediates the advancement from freedom to structured typologies as does New Criticism’s development strictly in the realm of critical theory from Richards’ affective emphasis to the archetypal approach advocated by Frye himself. For what it is worth, something comparable apparently takes place in cosmology, with the universe having burst into existence with an explosion of sheer energy (the so-called big bang) perhaps thirteen billion years ago, after which it has steadily cooled down, converting energy to mass (hydrogen in the core of stars transformed into helium, carbon, then metals, etc.) and finally brought to an end after a total life span of perhaps eighty billion years in black holes consisting of sheer mass. This might be treated as just another example, the most expansive of all, whereby process resolves itself in structure on a dialectical basis. Everything we know of participates in the dance from energy to mass--also *between* energy and mass--inclusive of earth, life, human intelligence, even poetry and criticism. What I haven’t figured out yet is whether all of this slows down entropy or speeds it up.

<sup>2</sup> “Romanticism and Classicism,” in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Herbert Read (London, 1924), pp. 113-40. Murray Krieger correctly points out the contradiction of Hulme’s position in *The New Apologists for Poetry* (Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 31-45, but he does so to demonstrate its theoretical inferiority to later New Critical doctrine. The position I am advancing is that the substance of Hulme’s theory lies exactly in the romantic

---

contradiction of his argument and that its subsequent correction by Krieger and others is expressive of the ultimate disintegration of the New Critical movement.

<sup>3</sup> *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (Norfolk, 1954), p. 162, where Pound claims this formula provided Hulme with the nucleus of his theory of poetics.

<sup>4</sup> “A Retrospect,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T.S. Eliot (New Directions, 1954), p. 4. The “blurry, messy” reference may be found on p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> . *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Lane, 1916; rev. ed. New Directions, 1970), p. 92; “How to Read,” in *Literary Essays*, pp. 22, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *ABC of Reading* (New Directions), 1934, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28. The reference to “debunking by lucidity,” is the third item in Pound’s “Cleaners’ Manifesto,” a copy of which he sent me from St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in approximately 1954-55, after I had the audacity to send him a couple of poems I had written for his assessment. His response in toto: “You *might* be useful to your generation.” The other two items in this manifesto, enclosed with his letter, can be listed here: (1) We must understand what is really happening; and (2) If the verse-makers of our time are to improve on their immediate precursors, we must be vitally aware of the duration of syllables, of melodic coherence, and of the tone leading of vowels.

<sup>9</sup> “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *Selected Essays* (New York, 1960), pp. 7-11. Poe’s distinction between aesthetic response and the gratification afforded by craftsmanship, advanced in “The Philosophy of Composition,” bears unmistakable resemblance to Eliot’s argument, suggesting that the unusual line of descent between the two by means of Baudelaire and the French symbolist movement might have involved theory as well as poetic technique.

<sup>10</sup> *On Poetry and Poets* (New York, 1961), p. 8. Eliot also maintained in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933), pp. 17-18, that the experience of poetry is “only partially translatable into words,” implying that the poem’s existence primarily depends on its conscious experience.

<sup>11</sup> *Selected Essays of T.S. Eliot* (Harcourt, Brace, 1960), pp. 7-8, 124.

<sup>12</sup> Richards’ impulse theory of art is presented in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1924), esp. chap. 7; he discusses the sign situation in *The Meaning of Meaning*, co-authored with C.K. Ogden (London, 1923), esp. chaps I and III; he discusses tone in *Practical Criticism* (London, 1929), p. 182, and metaphor in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, 1935). He offers a projective theory of the imagination in *Coleridge on Imagination* (New York, 1935), and his feedback theory of communication in three articles, “Toward a Theory of Comprehending,” in *Speculative Instruments* (New York, 1955), pp. 17-38, and “The Future of Poetry” and

---

“Variant Readings and Misreadings,” in *So Much Nearer: Essays toward a World English* (New York, 1960), pp. 150-200. His central arguments regarding sincerity and the judgment of the entire personality may be found in *Practical Criticism*, ed. cit., pp. 280-91 and 302. I summarize this entire sequence in far greater detail in the first chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation, included in this web site preceding this paper.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 22, p. 551. Cognitions would include perception and ideas; feelings include affect and emotion, and conations any kind of motivation. Ward taught at Cambridge University when Richards studied there as an undergraduate.

<sup>14</sup> See George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (Scribners, 1896--repr. by Dover, 1955), pp. 48-49.

<sup>15</sup> William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Chatto and Windus, 1930--repr. 1963), pp. 1, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Allen Tate, “Tension in Poetry,” *The Language of Poetry* (Princeton, 1942)--repr. in *Essays of Four Decades* (Swallow Press, 1959), pp. 56-71. See pp. 56, 63-64, 67-68.

<sup>17</sup> “Pure and Impure Poetry,” delivered as the lecture, “Pure Poetry and the Structure of Poems,” at Princeton in spring, 1942; first published in *The Kenyon Review*, Spring, 1943--included in *New and Selected Essays* (Random House, 1989), p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> I still recall my chagrin in a graduate seminar back in 1961 when I suggested that Shakespeare’s knowledge of horticulture expressed in one of his metaphors was misguided by contemporary standards. This was greeted with prolonged hilarity by the professor and most of my fellow classmates.

<sup>19</sup> I have a vivid memory worth recounting of the extreme devotion to *Understanding Poetry* among many in the field of English as late as the turn of the sixties. Leaving a party in my third-floor apartment, one of my fellow students at U.C., Berkeley, at the time a TA for Thomas Parkinson in the English Department, shouted up two flights of staircases that “everything” was in Brooks and Warren--that this was the book that said all one needs to know about poetry. I never saw him again. A few weeks later he was gunned down by a crazed fellow student who was trying to kill Professor Parkinson, as he explained to the police, because he was a commie. In fact Parkinson specialized in beat poetry and was appropriately apolitical, certainly in all the classes I attended. The patriotic fellow student put one shotgun blast through the side of Parkinson’s face, fortunately without killing him, and when my friend (whose name I now forget) lifted an arm to restrain him, he turned and put a second blast directly into his chest, killing him instantly. And so much for formalism. Just a couple of years later everybody in Berkeley was marching. Few of my fellow marchers took inspiration from the incident, but I certainly did. My response as a professor in later years? Bravado perhaps.

<sup>20</sup> Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn* ((Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), pp. 3, 5, 8, 186, 189.

<sup>21</sup> The unrelenting attack upon Richards by subsequent proponents of New Criticism, mostly in reaction to his “impulse” theory of aesthetic response as well as his argument in chap. 6 of *Science and Poetry*, that literature primarily depends on “pseudo-statements” (i.e. outright deception in many instances) as opposed to the strictest demands for veracity in science, may be traced through the following authors: Montgomery Belgion, “What is Criticism?” *Criterion*, 10 (1930), pp. 118-39; D.W. Harding, “I.A. Richards,” *Scrutiny*, 1 (1933), pp. 327-38; F.R. Leavis, “Dr. Richards, Bentham, and Coleridge,” *Scrutiny* 3 (1935); Eliseo Vivas, “Four Notes on I.A. Richards’ Aesthetic Theory,” *Philosophical Review* 44 (1935), pp. 354-67; D.G. James, *Scepticism and Poetry* (London, 1937), chap. 2; John Crowe Ransom, *New Criticism* (Norfolk, Conn., 1941), chap. 1; Max Black, “Some Objections to Ogden and Richards’ Theory of Interpretation,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 39 (1942), pp. 281-90, and “Some Questions about Emotive Meaning,” *Philosophical Review*, 57 (1948), pp. 111-26; Murray Krieger, *The New Apologists for Poetry* (cf. n. 2 above), chaps. 3, 7, 8, and 12; and René Wellek, “On Rereading I.A. Richards,” *The Southern Review*, 533-54. More recent sympathetic treatments of Richards include the following: W.H.N. Hotopf, *Language, Thought and Comprehension* (Bloomington, 1954); Jerome Schiller, *I.A. Richards Theory of Literature* (New Haven, 1969), Herbert Grabes, “Close Reading and ‘The Meaning of Meaning,’” *Anglia*, 86 (1968), pp. 321-38; and *I.R. Richards: Essays in his Honor*, ed. by Reuben Brower, Helen Vendler, and John Hollander (Oxford, 1973), including praise by such critics as Wimsatt, Brooks, and Warren. At this point all of these assessments, both friendly and hostile, can be treated as useful primary sources in grasping the history of New Criticism, whatever the validity of their arguments.

<sup>22</sup> Murray Krieger, *The New Apologists for Poetry* (Minnesota, 1956), pp. 22, 123, 129, and 26.

<sup>23</sup> *Primitivism and Decadence* (1937), included in *In Defense of Reason* (Denver, 1947), p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 503. Also ref. pp. 11, 353, and 533 regarding his attitude toward emotion in poetry.

<sup>25</sup> *The New Criticism*, ed. cit., p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 285.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 281-83.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 293, 299 ff., and 330.

<sup>29</sup> *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1954), pp. 21 ff., 77 ff.

<sup>30</sup> “The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon* (Kentucky, 1954), pp. 9, 4.

<sup>31</sup> “The Affective Fallacy,” in *The Verbal Icon*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>32</sup> Cleanth Brooks, “The Formalist Critic,” *Kenyon Review*, 13, (Winter, 1951), pp. 72-81. Significantly, Brooks did not include this essay in his later collection, *A Shaping Joy: Studies in the Writer’s Craft* (Harcourt Brace, 1971).

---

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," the *Sewanee Review* (Spring, 1945)--repr. in Robert Stallman, *Critiques and Essays in Criticism: 120-1948* (Ronald Press, 1948), p. 321.

<sup>34</sup> R.S. Crane, "Toward a More Adequate Criticism of Poetic Structure," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (Toronto, 1953), pp. 150, 153-54.

<sup>35</sup> Rene Wellek, *Theory of Literature* (Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. 155 ff.

<sup>36</sup> . Cf. Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. by Lee T. Lemon and Marion Reis (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965), pp. 3-24.

<sup>37</sup> I still remember one freshman instructor at the University of California back in 1953 smoking a cigarette in front of a class while explaining the need to limit the analysis of poetry strictly and without exception to its successful achievement as an objective artifact. He smoked while lecturing, and now and again slowly blew smoke in the direction of the class to emphasize the sophistication of his argument.

<sup>38</sup> *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> Richards' diagram occurs in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 116. Frye explains the basis for his cycle of myths in *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 161-62. It should be mentioned that romance and comedy were in reverse sequence according to Frye's original explanation of his theory in "The Archetypes of Literature," *Kenyon Review*, 13 (1951), repr. in *Fables of Identity* (New York, 1963), pp. 15-16. It should also be mentioned that Frye later turned away from his model proposed in *Anatomy of Criticism*, for example by excluding any reference to it in his exhaustive bibliography of myth criticism in *Relations of Literary Study*, ed. by James Thorpe (New York, 1967), pp. 43-55.

<sup>40</sup> *Anatomy of Criticism*, ed. cit., pp. 58, 73, 86, and 105-9. These distinctions persist in his later criticism and eventually show up in *The Critical Path* (cf. n. 1, above), pp. 32-33, as the centrifugal and centripetal "fallacies," respectively the mimetic error of associating literary content with something non-literary and the affective error of thinking critics must necessarily impose their own values in their criticism of literature. However, both of these fallacies seem to be "centrifugal" according to Frye's original definition of the term and entirely defensible as particular uses of the so-called affective fallacy.

<sup>41</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans by Wade Baskin (1915; Philosophical Library, 1959--pb ed., McGraw Hill, 1966), pp. 79-81.

<sup>42</sup> *Science and Poetry*, republished as *Poetries and Sciences* (New York, 1970), p. 77-78.

<sup>43</sup> James Gilbert's *Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America* (Wiley, 1968) recounts this history of the New York situation with an emphasis on the *Partisan Review*. Norman Podhoretz describes the movement in chap. 4 of *Making It* (Random House, 1967), pp.

---

109-36. Lionel Abel, my Ph.D. advisor at S.U.N.Y. of Buffalo, spent six or eight afternoons over beer discussing the intricacies of literary criticism in New York City from the thirties into the fifties. It had nothing to do with my dissertation, so circumstances were entirely conversational, and I unfortunately forget most of the details.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," *New Literary History*, 2/1 (Autumn, 1970); repr. in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 400.

<sup>45</sup> Those who have tried to synthesize Freud and Marx include Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, Kenneth Burke, Christopher Caudwell, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, and Michael Schneider. The important job that remains to be done in my estimation is to bring this synthesis to bear upon formal theories of poetry, and it seems obvious, to me at least, that the affective approach of Richards can be expanded to offer the basis for doing so by means of dialectic analysis.

<sup>46</sup> This sentence was not included in the published draft of my article, but it reflects my viewpoint at the time, which I repeatedly expressed in heated arguments with a variety of individuals. I should add here that I try to limit my revisions to the discussion of texts and ideas I held at the time I first wrote this article. Not yet published were such excellent histories as Grant Webster's *The Republic of Letters: A History of Postwar American Literary Opinion* (Johns Hopkins, 1979); René Wellek's *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 6: *American Criticism, 1900-1950* (Yale, 1986); and Vincent Leitch's *American Literary Criticism from the Thirties to the Eighties* (Columbia, 1988).