THE ATTITUDE OF THE NEW CRITICS TOWARDS SHELLEY

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THE ATTITUDE OF THE NEW CRITICS TOWARDS SHELLEY

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

PREFACE

The aim of this thesis is simple; it is to illustrate the attitude of the so-called New Critics towards Shelley. It is to show that among the ultramoderns Shelley is not admired because Shelley pays no attention to the aspects and functions of poetry favored by the New Critics. The thesis points out what these aspects and functions are. And it aims to show that, by the standards held by the New Critics, Shelley is a bad poet.

The method of this thesis is also simple; it is to give a few general statements in the introduction concerning the critical and the poetical standards of the New Critics and why Shelley falls short of their standards. Then, the method is to devote a special chapter to each of the thirteen New Critics that I have chosen to write about in the thesis. I will show why each of these men object to Shelley. I will quote specific passages about Shelley from their own works. Sometimes I will quote from personal letters that the New Critics have recently written to me concerning their present attitude towards Shelley. The conclusion summarizes the over-all opinion of the New Critics towards Shelley.

My sincere thanks go out to Dr. Carson C. Hamilton, who patiently directed this work, to Doctors Anders Orbeck and Claude M. Newlin, who helped with it, to all the New Critics that contributed personal letters to it, to my husband, who typed it, and to Mother Laura Keeler of San Francisco College for Women, who inspired it and prayed for it.

Nancy Jane Burke

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Through T. E. Hulme's writing prior to 1914,[1] T. S. Eliot's Sacred Wood of 1920, and I. A. Richards' critical approach, our age has established a radical revision of the whole history of English poetry. Its criticism has, in our age, accomplished a critical revaluation, as Cleanth Brooks contends, of the order of the Romantic revolt.[2] T. S. Eliot's criticism is the first full revaluation of poetry since Arnold's "Essays in Criticism" of 1865.[3] His revolt against the conception of poetry and criticism as defined by the Romantics continues in the criticism of F. R. Leavis (whose approach also owes much to I. A. Richards), in that of Allen Tate (who is indebted to Hulme), in that of John Crowe Ransom (whose critical ideas are close to those of Allen Tate), and in that of Cleanth Brooks (who is indebted not only to T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards but to Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and others). Their criticism resurrects the metaphysicals and thoroughly repudiates the romantics. Donne becomes their favorite poet; Shelley,

because he represents most fully the vices of romanticism, becomes the most adversely criticized poet of the nineteenth century. Also, in the general attack on Shelley by the New Critics, there has been almost a solid front of agreement.

These ultramoderns cannot admire Shelley. They are interested in aspects and functions of poetry to which Shelley pays no attention. What are these aspects and functions? The key phrase that answers that question is modern sensibility.

When modern sensibility demands that poetry shall deal with the actual world, the phrase means something very different from what it meant one hundred and fifty years ago. To men now it means the world as it presents itself to average perception in a culture that has been thoroughly imbued with the positivistic temper. Modern sensibility meets the problem of belief by using a positivistic view of the world to adumbrate nonpositivistic values. It is skeptical of all large syntheses based on faith, indeed of all large syntheses whatsoever. It shuns commitments; if it makes them, it wants to know thoroughly what it is letting itself in for. It is suspicious of pronounced rhythms in verse. It wants its poetry developed, not by explicit statement, and not by a flood of images each relevant

at only one point, but by the developed image, a large image firmly held, displaying point after point of relevancy. It dislikes metaphors within metaphors. Above all, it wants no simplification or purification of experience in the interests of alleged beauty or of an alleged higher truth. It insists that since the experience of the actual world is always a complex of the pleasant and the disgusting, of the beautiful and the ugly, of the attractive and the repulsive, poetry must hold the discordant elements together, not allow them to separate. Poetry must operate through Irony, Paradox, and Understatement.

Modern criticism maintains that by these standards Shelley is a bad poet. He is sentimental; that is, he calls for a greater display of emotion than the modern reader feels to be warranted by the occasion. He employs pronounced, intoxicating, hypnotic rhythms that seem to be trying to sweep the reader into hasty emotional commitments. He seldom uses a firmly-held developed image but pours out a flood of images which one must grasp momentarily in one aspect and then release. He is fond of figures within figures. He imposes his will on the object of experience: He does not explore reality; he flies away from it. He seldom takes a gross, palpable,

near-at-hand object from the world of ordinary perception and holds it for contemplation: His eye goes up to the sky, he starts with objects that are just on the verge of becoming invisible or inaudible or intangible and he strains away even from these. He exhibits dissociation of sensibility: though he is even too much aware of the disgusting, the ugly, the painful, and the horrible, he puts all the beauty into one poem and all the ugliness into another, or he sorts them out in different portions of the same poem. He luxuriates in emotion. He embarrasses the reader by representing himself as weak, frail, bowed, bleeding, fainting and dying.

Such is the general critical attitude of the New Critics towards Shelley. Now let us turn to the critic T. E. Hulme first because Hulme is the unacknowledged Father of the New Critics.

CHAPTER II

T. E. HULME

> I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy. And in this I imply the superiority of fancy--not superior generally or absolutely for that would be obvious nonsense, but superior in the sense that we use the word good in empirical ethics--good for something, superior for something.[1]

Those were the words of T. E. Hulme around 1914; and his prediction that there would be a "swing to the classical tradition in literature" proved true.

Hulme regarded romanticism as "an awful disease from which France had just recovered."[2] Romanticism made the revolution. He thought that if one hates the revolution, he must hate romanticism. Then Hulme defined the romantic, or romanticism:

> People of all classes, people who stood to lose by it were in a positive ferment about the idea of liberty. There must have been some idea which enabled them [the romantics] that something positive could come out of so essentially negative a thing. There was, and here I get my definition of romanticism. They had been taught by Rousseau that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all of these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder, this is what created religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.[3]

Put shortly, according to T. E. Hulme, the romantic and the classical are two views then. And they are opposite views. One view is that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To

the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, he called romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, Hulme called the classical.[5]

Shelley, Hulme wrote, is a romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite; and as there is always the bitter contrast between what you think you ought to be able to do and what man actually can, it always tends, in its later stages to be gloomy.

Hulme gave this as his reason for the return to classicism: Art, like organic life, after a definite period of life, grows old and decays and dies. The writers and readers are wearied by the old poetical forms; and now they look for a different poetical form to play with--namely dry hard classical verse from which the infinite is excluded. They, the readers and writers, look for fancy instead of imagination, wit instead of idle imagery, sense instead of emotion.

He admitted the greatness in some of the works of the romantics but in general he said: "I object even to the best of the romantics. I object still more to the receptive attitude. I

object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something."[7] Shelley fits in here.

CHAPTER III

T. S. ELIOT

T. S. Eliot, along with T. E. Hulme, writes against much of the romantic poetry, and Eliot writes much of the adverse criticism directed against Shelley in particular.

Some of the things that Eliot objects to in Shelley are the childish and feeble beliefs that were held by Shelley and that Shelley put into his poetry. According to Eliot, Shelley's view of life is not coherent, mature, and well-founded on the facts of experience. To give an exaggerated example of this, Shelley was inclined to put a belief like "All that glitters is gold" into his poems. This childish, unsound conception of life, says Eliot, is apparent in most of Shelley's poetry. Besides that, says Eliot, Shelley's beliefs are irrelevant to the poem as a whole.

Yet, Eliot enjoys a poem that expresses a doctrine or belief (1) if that doctrine or belief is sensible, and (2) if that doctrine or belief is an intrinsic part of the poem and not just

an added thought that the poet (Shelley in this case) wanted to put into the poem to propagate a belief or doctrine.

Eliot says that a work of art is autotelic. It possesses a life of its own which is distinct from the biography of the poet and also from any beliefs he expresses. A poem is supposed to be an impersonal thing. The reader is not supposed merely to extract the ideas of a poem, but he is supposed to read and enjoy the poem as a whole--not just for its theology, morals, or philosophy. The reader is not supposed to be thinking of whether or not he believes what a poet is saying in a poem. If the question of belief arises, says Eliot, then, "We have ceased to be readers and have become astronomers, theologians or moralists [or, as Cleanth Brooks adds, economists], persons engaged in quite a different type of activity."[1] When we read Shelley, though, says Eliot, his ideas are so insipid that the reader is distracted from the poem as a whole; therefore, the reader's enjoyment is hampered, and the poet's work is not a piece of art.

Dante and Lucretius, continues Eliot, used their poetic gifts to propagate a doctrine, but their beliefs were sensible; he does not admit that he accepts the doctrines of the ancient

poets, but he grants that he enjoys their poems. He enjoys their poems or works of art because they are autotelic; that is, all of the parts of their poems are necessary parts of the whole poem. This is not the case when he reads Shelley.

The following quotations from Eliot's various critical works illustrate his attitude towards Shelley:

> I suggest that the position is somewhat as follows. When the doctrine, theory, belief or "view of life" presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he can accept, or deny, approve or deprecate. When it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may for the reader set up an almost complete check.[2]

> The ideas of Shelley seem to me to be ideas of adolescence . . . as there is every reason why they should be. And an enthusiasm for Shelley seems to me also to be an affair of adolescence: for most of us, Shelley has marked an intense period before maturity, but for how many does Shelley remain the companion of age?

I find his ideas repellent; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth.[3]

Shelley borrowed ideas, which is perfectly legitimate . . . but he borrowed shabby ones, and when he got them he muddled them up with his own intuitions.[4]

It is not that Shelley is deliberately making use of his poetic gifts to propagate a doctrine; for Dante and Lucretius did the same thing. Our distaste for Shelley's poetry is not attributable to irrelevant prejudices or to a simple blind spot, but is due to a peculiarity in the poetry and not in the reader.[5]

But some of Shelley's views I positively dislike, and that hampers my enjoyment of the poems in which they occur.[6]

Dante and Lucretius propagate doctrines, but their doctrines do not stand in the way of critical sensibility. They do not place an illegitimate dependence on the possible scientific truth of their doctrine. To the beliefs of Dante or Lucretius the critic is able to give, if not his philosophical <u>belief</u>, at least his poetic <u>assent</u>.[7]

The critic's concern is not with the beliefs as held but with the beliefs as felt. Shelley's beliefs are not felt as an integral part of the whole poem, consequently they get in the way. They are so repellent to T. S. Eliot that he finds Shelley's poetry to be "almost unreadable."

Shelley's rejection by all the New Critics is not only on the grounds of his illegitimate assertions of "scientific truths," his untenable beliefs (beliefs which are foolish and therefore make his poetry foolish),[8] his escapist sentimentalism and "romantic irony," his didactic or Platonic heresy; Shelley is rejected, and similarly Milton, because he is a bad influence, and could only be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever.[9]

Eliot objects again to Shelley because Shelley has only a vague grasp of the world of common perceptions.[10] Shelley's poetry presents no object; there is nothing grasped at its core. "Shelley at his best and worst offers the emotion in itself, unattached in the void."[11] Eliot has said the same thing about Swinburne: "When you take to pieces any verse of Swinburne, you find always that the object was not there . . . only the word." Eliot adds:

> In Swinburne the meaning and the sound are one thing; in Shelley content and music are separate. The dictum that "The bad poet dwells partly in a world of objects and partly in a world of words, and he never can get them to fit," can be applied to Shelley.[12]

Eliot rejects Shelley again in his essay on Crashaw, where he destroys the analogy between Crashaw and Shelley. Shelley, he says, "keeps his images on one side and his meanings on the other."[13] The critic struggles to grasp something real in The Triumph of Life. However, in a letter to me Carlos Baker states that T. S. Eliot's opinion is quite positive towards The Triumph of Life. Baker writes:

> The attitude of the "New Critics" on Shelley is chiefly derogatory and chiefly directed against a few of the lyrics. You might want to know thought, that T. S. Eliot, when I talked to him briefly on the matter about 1947 (and whose essay on Shelley and Keats has been very influential in modern criticism directed against these two) said he thought The Triumph of Life a very great poem.[14]

The mechanism of sensibility Eliot discovers in the seventeenth century metaphysicals could devour all kinds of

experience, intellectual as well as emotional. Emotion is the single quality Eliot isolates in Shelley's poetry. He thinks that Shelley thought and felt by starts. Except for one or two passages in The Triumph of Life, wherein Eliot finds "traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility," Eliot regards Shelley's The Triumph of Life, his last and unfinished poem, as his greatest. There is evidence, says Eliot, not only of better writing than in any previous long poem, but of greater wisdom. There is precision of image and an economy here that is new to Shelley.[16]

Nevertheless, Eliot's theory of poetry is the basis of F. R. Leavis' attack: "feeling in Shelley's poetry is divorced from thought."[17] Eliot's theory of poetry, like Santayana's theory of poetry, differs from the Romantic-Symbolist Theory of Art: Art as the expression of feeling.

The New Critics think that it is largely owing to the Shelleyan conception of poetry that such poets as Dryden are depreciated or neglected; it is due to a prejudice that Dryden's material, the feeling out of which he built, is not poetic. (The prejudice was also Arnold's.) Eliot takes Dryden's side in

this controversy. He asks what is unpoetic in the following passage by Dryden:

> All, all of a piece throughout!
> Thy Chase had a beast in View;
> Thy Wars brought nothing about;
> 'Tis well Old Age is out,
> And time to begin a New.

He asks what is superior on intrinsically poetic merit about the following lines from Shelley:

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faith's empires gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream

Eliot continues:

> It is easy to see why the second should appeal more readily to the nineteenth, and what is left of the nineteenth under the name of the twentieth century. It is not so easy to see propriety in an image which divests a snake of "winter weeds"; and this is a sort of blemish which would have

been noticed more quickly by a contemporary of Dryden than by a contemporary of Shelley.[18]

A poet's emotion, according to Eliot, must have objectification in a "correlative."[19] The correlative of Shelley's emotion is not objective. Shelley's emotion, the New Critics agree, exists in a void; he presents no object to which his emotion attaches; consequently his poems do not possess a structural unity. For a poem possesses full structural unity only when the poet achieves "objective correlatives" of his emotion. This is Eliot's criterion of structure.

In spite of the numerous quotations gathered together here from critical articles by T. S. Eliot, Eliot states in a letter to me that he is afraid that there is nothing of his in print which gives a fair presentation of his views about Shelley.[20]

CHAPTER IV

F. R. LEAVIS

T. S. Eliot's revolt against the flaws in Shelley's poetry continues in the criticism of F. R. Leavis.

Shelley comes off rather badly with Leavis too. Shelley was an inferior poet, according to Leavis, because he did not qualify his dogma with observation, his political poetry divorces principles from particulars, his poetry fails through oversimplification. It is Platonic poetry; its Platonic world of ideas fails to coincide with the original world of perception. Physical properties in Shelley's discourses are translatable at every point into ideas; ideas in turn are general and abstract. Things in Shelley's discourse have no substance.[1]

Leavis thinks that Shelley's poetry makes no sense. He thinks that there is nothing grasped in Shelley's poetry; that is, Shelley's poetry is abstract and there is never any object offered for contemplation.

Leavis has written an attack against Shelley in his Revaluation. I shall summarize the case he makes against Shelley

in that critical essay. (1) Shelley represents preeminently the divorce between thought and feeling, intelligence and sensibility, that is characteristic of the nineteenth century. (2) Shelley has only a vague grasp of the world of common perceptions.[2]

This second point has been sufficiently established by the New Critics. Leavis notes that the objects Shelley presents in his poetry are not realized as objects in their own natures and their own right. Therefore, Shelley's poetry is just plain emotional.[3] This final charge echoes Eliot.[4]

Leavis does not think as highly of The Triumph of Life as Eliot does. Leavis says:

> But in spite of the earnest struggle to grasp something real, the sincere revulsion from personal dreams and fantasies, the poem itself [The Triumph of Life] is a drifting phantasmagoria--bewildering and bewildered. Vision opens into vision, dream unfolds within dream, and the visionary perspectives, like those of the imagery in the passage of Mont Blanc, shift elusively and are lost; and the failure to place the various phases or levels of visionary drift with reference to any grasped reality is the more significant because of palpable effort. Nevertheless, The

> Triumph of Life is among the few things one can still read and go back to in Shelley when he has become, generally, "almost unreadable."[5] [In the last sentence Leavis is quoting Eliot.]

Leavis does not think much of the intelligence of the reader that enjoys Shelley; Shelley's imagery, he asserts, derives directly from sensory experience. The antipathy of his sensibility to any play of critical mind, writes Leavis, results in cheap surrenders to inspiration. The critic gives That Time is Dead Forever, Child as an example of this. Shelley, says Leavis, has a capacity for momentary self deception and insincerities; he luxuriates in sentimentality, in emotion for emotion's sake, in a pathos of self-regarding, and in directing attention to his idealized self. Leavis gives Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills as an example of this. (The self-pity Leavis detects in Shelley, John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate define as "romantic irony.") Shelley, continues Leavis, like Swinburne, depends for his effects upon a suspension in the reader of the critical intelligence. "His imagery feels right, the associations work appropriately . . . one accepts the immediate feeling and does not slow down to think."[6] In the poetic surge of the Ode

To The West Wind, for example, writes Leavis, we let ourselves be swept along without scrutinizing the elusive imagery, the high-pitched emotions, the confusion between the metaphorical and the actual, and the real and imagined, the inner and the outer.[7] Thinking in Shelley's creative act was at a minimum. His critical intelligence was switched off. The Cloud and To a Skylark are products of switching poetry on. The latter Leavis calls,

> a mere tumbled out spate (spontaneous overflow) of poeticalities, the place of each one of which Shelley could have filled with another without the least difficulty and without making any essential difference. They are held together by the pervasive "lyrical emotion," and that this should be capable of holding them together is comment enough on the nature of its strength.[8]

His emotional intensity though it may make Shelley intoxicating at fifteen, makes him almost unreadable, except in very small quantities of his best, to the mature.[9] (Again Leavis has repeated Eliot.) Leavis continues:

> Even when he is in his own way unmistakably a distinguished poet, as in Prometheus Unbound, it is

> impossible to go on reading him at any length with pleasure . . .[9]

Leavis and Eliot agree in many places over the flaws in Shelley's poetry. Their positive criticism towards Shelley amounts to very little.[10] I believe that they would primarily agree on the point that Shelley did not think before he sang.[11]

Leavis also believes that Shelley counts for a great deal in what is perhaps still the prevailing idea of "the poetical"--the ideas that had their latest notable statement, as Leavis remarks, in Professor Housman's address, The Name and Nature of Poetry.[12] If we honor Shelley we depreciate Dryden.

I have dealt with Leavis' attitude in general towards Shelley. Now I will give a specific statement of Leavis' dealing with one of Shelley's most popular poems, The Ode to the West Wind. Leavis is especially acute in his criticism about this poem. The following quotation will also illustrate the Leavis critical method:

> It will be well to start in fact by examining the working of Shelley's poetry--his characteristic modes of expression--as exemplified in one of his best poems.

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's
commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves
are shed,
Shook from the tangled bough of Heaven
and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are
spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the
dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height
The locks of the approaching storm.

The sweeping movement of the verse, with the accompanying plangency, is so potent that, as many can testify, it is possible to have been for years familiar with the Ode--to know it by heart--without asking the obvious questions. In what respects are "loose clouds" like "decaying leaves"? The correspondence is certainly not in shape, colour or

way of moving. It is only the vague general sense of windy tumult that associates the clouds and the leaves; and, accordingly, the appropriateness of the metaphor "stream" in the first line is not that it suggests a surface on which, like leaves, the clouds might be "shed," but that it contributes to the general "streaming" effect in which the inappropriateness of "shed" passes unnoticed. What again, are those "tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean"? They stand for nothing that Shelley could have pointed to in the scene before him; the "boughts," it is plain, have grown out of the "leaves" in the previous line, and we are not to ask what the tree is. Nor are we to scrutinize closely the stream metaphor as developed: that "blue surface" must be the concave of the sky, an oddly smooth surface for a "surge"--if we consider for a moment. But in this poetic "surge," while we let ourselves be swept along, there is no considering, the image doesn't challenge any inconvenient degree of realization, and the oddness is lost. Then again, in what ways does the approach of a storm ("loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves," "like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing") suggest streaming hair?

> The appropriateness of Maenad, clearly, lies in the pervasive suggestion of frenzied onset, and we are not to ask whether her bright hair is to be seen as streaming out in front of her (as, there is no need to assure ourselves, it might be doing if she were running before a still swifter gale: in the kind of reading that got so far as proposing to itself this particular reassurance no general satisfaction could be exacted from Shelley's imagery).[13]

This is the kind of criticism we get from F. R. Leavis. He shows us the Shelleyan "weak grasp upon the actual," the "idealism" and "Platonism." Leavis thinks Santayana rates Shelley's poetry too highly. Shelley's poetry is peculiarly emotional. The point may be best made, perhaps, by continuing the previous observation, "that one may have been long familiar with the Ode to the West Wind without ever having asked the obvious questions"; questions that propose themselves at the first critical inspection. This poetry induces--depends for its success on inducing--a kind of attention that does not bring the critical intelligence into play: the imagery feels right, but only a nonthinking reader can accept imagery such as that![14]

Leavis expressed his attitude towards Shelley in terms of a representative analysis in Revaluation in 1936, and there is nothing he wants to change or to add to that opinion today.[15]

Shelley, according to Leavis, lacked another gift which a good poet must possess. He lacked the ability to blend the comic and the tragic within the same poem. (Dryden, says Leavis, possessed the talent that was absent in Shelley.)[16] Then, the critic concluded that, because of this lack, Shelley's sensibility was immature.

Leavis calls W. B. Yeats "naively romantic" because Yeats admired parts of Shelley. Leavis also stated that some of Yeats' poetry has "a fresh unliterary spontaneity comparable to that of Shelley's."[17]

Students should study poets like Donne and others of the seventeenth century, Leavis recommends. He is weary of the time-honored way of telling a student to write an essay on "Shelley the Poet of the Revolutionary Creed." This, he says, is an enormous waste of time and spirit. The student should be taught to make critical analyses of poems, such as, Keatsian verse compared to Shelleyan verse.[18] (Keats, remember, to the New Critics, is a "paradox" of the nineteenth century.)

Leavis has one positive thing to say for Shelley. He says: It is at any rate universally agreed that (to shift tactfully to positive terms) Shelley's genius was essentially lyrical.[19]

CHAPTER V

RENE WELLEK

Rene Wellek can be called one of the New Critics; he has not written so much of the anti-Shelleyan analytical criticism; but he does go along with Leavis and Eliot in their attitude towards Shelley.

About fifteen years ago Wellek wrote a letter to Leavis. One of his reasons for writing the letter was to tell Leavis he thought him a little too harsh towards Shelley in his Revaluation.

It is important to remind the present reader of this, that Wellek's words of fifteen years ago to Leavis do not represent his present opinion. Wellek continues to hold to this opinion, but by no means does he believe today all that is included in the letter.

It is salient to my thesis to include what Wellek said in that letter so that the reader may understand clearly why Leavis answered and what Leavis answered. Leavis' answer to the letter I am about to discuss will appear in the following chapter.

Wellek, in his letter, argued that Leavis ignored the poetic thought or philosophy of Shelley and the other romantics. He also stressed some doubts on some of Leavis' individual points. Wellek writes:

> Your analysis on the second stanza of the Ode to the West Wind presses, I think, some of the metaphors too hard. The comparison of loose clouds with the earth's decaying leaves does not seem to me merely vague and general. A defense could suggest that the parallel can be made plausible by imagining Shelley dying in his boat and seeing the loose clouds the counterpart of the leaves swimming in the stream or even seeing clouds mirrored in the water together with the leaves. These are the "tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean," which I don't think could have been suggested merely by the leaves, but rather allude to the old mystical conception of two trees of Heaven and Earth interwinding.[1]

He continued that Leavis' stress on abundance of inspiration on the part of Shelley seemed to be exaggerated. Wellek said neither he nor anyone else can deny that a certain share of the "unconscious" and "sudden inspiration" must be more

prominent in a writer of songs such as Shelley. But, Wellek agrees, Shelley overstressed the inspiration in the obvious reaction the eighteenth-century ideas on composing poetry and in answering Peacock's essay, which is written from a completely rational point of view.[2]

In reply to Leavis' statement that the opening paragraph of Mont Blanc is confusing, Wellek objects: "I cannot see the slightest confusion in the opening paragraph of Mont Blanc. It states an epistemological proposition quite clearly."

Wellek agrees with Leavis for the most part in a later section of the letter:

> Characteristically: that is, Shelley's characteristic pathos is self regarding, directed upon an idealized self in the way suggested . . . This is patently so in some of his best poetry; for instance, in Ode to the West Wind. Even there perhaps, one may find something too like an element of luxury in the poignancy (at any rate one's limiting criticism of the Ode would move towards such a judgement); and that in general there must be dangers and weakness attending such a habit will hardly be denied. The poem just examined (When the Lamp is Shattered) shows how

gross may be in Shelley, the corruptions that are incident. He can make self-pity a luxury at such a level that the conventional pathos of album poeticizing, not excluding the banalities about (it is plainly so in the third stanza) the sad lot of woman, can come in to gratify the appetite.

The abeyance of thought exhibited by the first three stanzas now takes on a more sinister aspect. The switching off of intelligence that is necessary if the sentiments of the third stanza are to be accepted has now to be invoked in the explanation of a graver matter--Shelley's ability to accept the grosser, the truly corrupt, gratifications that have just been indicated. The antipathy of his sensibility to any play of the critical mind, the uncongeniality of intelligence to inspiration, these clearly go in Shelley, not merely with a capacity for momentary self deceptions and insincerities, but with a radical lack of self-knowledge. He could say of Wordsworth, implying the opposite of himself that

> . . . . . he never could
>
> Fancy another situation

From which to dart his contemplation

Than that wherein he stood.

But, for all his altruistic fervers and his fancied capacity for projecting his sympathies, Shelley is habitually--it is no new observation--his own hero: Alastor, Laon, The Sensitive Plant.

(It loves, even like Love, its deep heart

is full,

It desires what it has not, the Beautiful)

And Prometheus. It is characteristic that he should say to the West Wind

A heavy weight of hours has chained and

bowed

One too like thee: tameless, swift and

proud,

and conclude:

Be thou, Spirit fierce

My Spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one![3]

Wellek would not like to defend When the Lamp is Shattered either. It seems to him a very poor poem in any case.

However, he thought Leavis makes the poem out worse than it is. He makes a few corrections of Leavis' faulty understanding of the poem.

The main point of Wellek's letter to Leavis was to prove that Shelley's philosophy was unified and perfectly coherent. Shelley, says Wellek, was an idealist in the truest sense of the word: Shelley's conception of the world as a phenomenal flux behind which the unreachable absolute ("the white radiance of eternity") is only dimly perceived pervades also his imagery and such symbols as the veils and streams, boats, caverns, the gnostic eagles and serpents. Wellek continues:

> Another characteristic of this idealism is one pervading characteristic of his style, which psychologists call synaesthesia; i.e., the seeing of sounds and the hearing of colors, which is not a mere idiosyncracy but is based on a psychological type and appears in the poetry of many ages, especially in the Baroque and Romantic ages.[4]

Wellek maintained also that Coleridge's romantic view of the world is found in Shelley's poetry. He concluded his letter to Leavis with these words:

> Your book, or rather the very limited part I have been discussing, raises anew the question of the poet's belief and how far sympathy with this belief and comprehension of it are necessary for an appreciation of the poetry.[5]

In a letter to me, Wellek wrote:

> I still hold the same opinions [as in his letter to Leavis]: i.e., I would try to defend the coherence of Shelley's thought and would reject what I would consider misinterpretations of his text.[7]

In that letter to me Wellek rates Shelley thusly:

> . . . As to ranking Shelley as a poet I would today take a middle position: I would put Shelley below Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats, but above Byron and Scott. I admire several small lyrics very highly as well as some Odes such as Ode to the West Wind which is well designed and perfectly coherent but I would have to make only a small selection from his longer poems and consider The Cenci a mere pastiche of Shakespeare. All this would have to be argued at length . . .[7]

Such an attitude towards Shelley establishes Rene Wellek as a New Critic.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVIS AGAIN

Leavis objects to Wellek's criticisms of the "Shelley" section of Revaluation. He objects on these grounds: Wellek is a philosopher, and Leavis is a literary critic. According to Leavis, Wellek sees things in the light of philosophy while Leavis sees things in the light of the aesthetic. Furthermore, Leavis contends that there is a weakness in seeing such poets as Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley as products of "The Romantic View of the World." These three poets, claims Leavis, are so different from each other that they can hardly be established as products of a similar philosophy.

When Wellek comes to Shelley he hardly makes any serious show of sustaining his case against me, writes Leavis, and the weakness of his own approach is clearly exposed. He is so interested in philosophy that he pays no real attention to my analysis of poetry. Then Leavis continues:

> Take, for instance, his suggested interpretations of points in the Ode to the West Wind: it is not merely that

> they are it seems to me, quite unacceptable; even if they were otherwise, they would make no analysis of the way in which Shelley's poetry works. And why should Dr. Wellek suppose that he is defending Shelley in arguing that "the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean" may allude to the "old mystical conception of the two trees of Heaven and Earth interwinding"? Not that I attack the Ode to the West Wind; I merely illustrate from it the characteristic working of Shelley's poetry.[1]

In the Reply to Wellek, Leavis still maintains the opening paragraph of Mont Blanc evokes with great vividness a state of excited bewilderment and wonder.

Leavis writes Wellek's attention is elsewhere than on Shelley's poetry and his analysis. Leavis is concerned with poetry--not philosophy "coherent" or otherwise. He states:

> If in reply to my charge that Shelley's poetry is repetitive, vaporous, monotonously self-regarding, and often emotionally cheap, and so, in no very long run, boring, Dr. Wellek tells me Shelley was an idealist, I can only wonder whether some unfavorable presumption has not been set up about idealism.[2]

Therefore, all that Leavis wrote about Shelley in his Revaluation still stands solidly as his attitude towards Shelley.

CHAPTER VII

MARTIN TURNELL

The work of Martin Turnell--the leading associate of Leavis' Scrutiny school, is likewise both technical and historical criticism--he and Leavis represent the two most important critics in England today.[1] Since Turnell is reputed to be so closely associated with Leavis and Leavis' school, I shall now discuss his attitude towards Shelley.

Turnell admires "impersonality" in poetry. But, he says, only the best can achieve this: Rimbaud, for example, gives us the emotion and the situation from which it springs; that is to say, there is an organic, and objective relation between the poem and the events which produced it. The emotion is generated by the contemplation of the problem and it therefore possesses that impersonality which only belongs to the greatest poetry. But, continues Turnell, Shelley's poetry gives us the emotion unattached to the object or events which produced it. His poetry does not possess the impersonality that Rimbaud's achieves.[2]

Martin Turnell wrote an enlightening and interesting letter to me. I believe that he establishes his position clearly as to his attitude towards Shelley in this letter, which is quoted entire:

> Thank you for your letter of July 17th. I am afraid that I cannot be of great help to you over Shelley, as my field is French literature. The only time I have mentioned him recently was in a lecture on Crashaw given to a body called the Newman Association in January 1950. Here are the relevant bits which have not been published, though the rest of the lecture has. It was in a series called "The Spiritual Order in English Poetry" which explains the opening attack!
>
> "Twenty years ago the French critic, Charles Du Bos, published the first part of a long study called Du spirituel dans l'ordre littéraire. He explained that he had used the word 'spiritual' in preference to 'spirituality' because 'spirituality' is a state whereas the 'spiritual' is 'an element which cannot be grasped in itself, but which can only be identified, apprehended in its manifestations.' He then went on to distinguish between the 'sublime' and

the 'spiritual.' The sublime, he said, was a 'climate' which the writer had to maintain by a constant effort of style. The spiritual was a 'breath,' and all the writer had to do was to remain open on all sides to give it passage. Milton was sublime; Shelley spiritual: Corneille a combination of the two.

"It is an ingenious and engaging theory--a theory which could only have been formulated by a deeply religious man and which is well calculated to impress other devout minds who are more interested in a poet's message than in the quality of his poetry. We must therefore ask ourselves two questions. We must ask ourselves whether these careful distinctions between the 'sublime' and the 'spiritual' really add anything to our appreciation of poetry as poetry. And we must ask ourselves whether there really is anything in poetry which corresponds to Du Bos's 'spiritual' or whether it is not after all a pious illusion.

"I confess that I have never greatly enjoyed Milton's poetry. The statement that he is 'sublime,' that he always remains in the same 'climate'--a fact of which I am sometimes only too keenly aware--does nothing to

increase my enjoyment or to overcome my dislike of the heavy, Latinised vocabulary and of the monotonous rhythms. If Shelley is an example of the 'spiritual,' I can only say that I find his spirit intolerably garrulous and vague, and could wish his away . . .

"I turn now to the second question. Poetry is a human activity and is a record of human experience. The poet's experience is naturally moulded by his beliefs, but this is a very different thing from changing him into a visionary who transmits to the reader a mysterious wind blowing from another world. And when I am told that the wind which blows through Shelley's Ode to the West Wind is a manifestation of the 'spiritual,' I suspect that the critic is imposing a personal interpretation on the poet's experience and investing it with a religious quality which it does not in fact possess. In other words, he is writing a fresh poem which is decidedly different from the one Shelley wrote."

I hope this will be of some help to you and you can certainly quote me.

Needless to say, I do not like Shelley and have seldom opened him since my days of study were over. I particularly dislike his vague religiosity which seems to have been largely responsible for his being greatly over-rated, and I hate his verbiage.[3]

CHAPTER VIII

I. A. RICHARDS

The eminence of I. A. Richards has been achieved mainly by his critical approach. The achievement of Practical Criticism (1930) is such that it can hardly be canceled out by any subsequent defections. It was the beginning of objective criticism, the first organized attempt to stop theorizing about what people get when they read a poem and find out. Its ultimate aim is no less lofty a one than the general improvement of literary appreciation.

I. A. Richards judges Shelley by his own standards. The following is a summary of Richards' critical standards. He believes that the one and only goal of all critical endeavors, of all interpretation, appreciation, exhortation, praise or abuse, is improvement in communication. This may seem an exaggeration, says Richards; but it is true. The whole apparatus of critical rules and principles is a means to the attainment of finer, more precise, more discriminating communication. There is, it is true, a valuation side to criticism. When we

have solved, completely, the communication problem, when we have got, perfectly, the experience, the mental condition relevant to the poem, we have still to judge it, still to decide upon its worth. But the latter question nearly always settles itself. Our prime endeavor must be to get the relevant mental condition and see what happens.

Immature readers, says I. A. Richards, accept Shelley merely because Shelley is a tradition in the anthologies. Students think because Shelley is famous he is good--the same is thought about Milton. But this is not true. There cannot be much doubt that when we know we are reading Milton or Shelley, a great deal of our approval and admiration is being accorded not to the poetry but to an idol.[1]

I. A. Richards' idea about the Problem of Belief is close to T. S. Eliot's. For instance, Richards states that Shelley in Prometheus Unbound has built his poem about definite beliefs concerning the world. Ordinarily a reader can read and can enjoy a poem without accepting the poet's beliefs. There is some doubt whether one can enjoy Shelley as much as Dante on this basis.[2]

Richards stresses another opinion in his Practical Criticism: that is, Shelley often forgot his readers. Shelley had a sense or feeling about something but he did not communicate it to the readers. Therefore, says Richards, Shelley had atrocious manners.[3] For instance, "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit, Bird thou never wert," has little emotional effect upon the reader.[4]

When Richards discusses the metaphor he writes that the Elizabethans were far more widely skilled in the use of the metaphor--both in utterance and in interpretation--than we are, a fact which made Shakespeare possible. The eighteenth century narrowed its skill down, defensively, to certain modes only. The early nineteenth century, writers like Shelley, revolted against this and specialized in other modes. The later nineteenth century and Richards' generation, he says, have been recovering from these two specializations. That, Richards suggests, is a way of reformulating the Classic-Romantic antithesis which it would be interesting to try out.[5]

Richards writes: Throughout the history of Rhetoric (we find it in Shelley), the metaphor has been treated as a sort of happy extra trick with words, an opportunity to exploit the accidents with their versatility, something in place occasionally

but requiring unusual skill or caution. In brief, a grace or ornament or added power of language, not in its constitutive form. Sometimes, it is true, a writer will venture on speculations that go deeper.[6]

In Principles of Literary Criticism (1928) Richards comes to grips with Shelley's sensibility. Richards writes that Shelley misunderstood the function of poetry. Shelley thought it useful to convey his beliefs, his morality. The greatest critics over the ages grant that poetry like all other arts is written to delight and instruct. For instance, Richards quotes a review that he says explains his opinion about Shelley's sensibility excellently for him:

> "It had been better had Shelley's Cenci remained forever banned. It represents three hours of unrelieved, agonising misery . . . What excuse is there for depicting horrors such as these? There must be some, for a house packed with literary celebrities fiercely applauded. If the function of the theater is to amuse, then in the presentation of the Cenci it has missed its aim. If it is to instruct, what moral can be pointed for the better conduct

of our lives by a tragedy such as this? If Art be the answer, the Art may well be sacrificed."[7]

Again Richards states that Shelley misunderstood the function of poetry:

> We cannot read Shelley adequately while believing all his views are moonshine. Read Prometheus Unbound while holding that "the perfectibility of man is an undesirable ideal" and that "hangmen are excellent things."[8]

Shelley writes so well sometimes that one can hardly know it is Shelley, explains Richards. This occurs when Shelley is musical. Richards continues this point:

> In the second chorus of Hellas in the middle of the second stanza the rhythm, tune and handling, though not the meter, becomes uncharacteristic of Shelley. A fullness of tone, a queer, gentle cadence, and a leisurely ease of movement belong to the fifth and following lines:
>
> A mortal shape to him
> Was like the vapour dim
> Which the orient planet animates with light;
> Hell, Sin and Slavery came,
> Like bloodhounds mild and tame,

Nor preyed, until their lord had taken

flight . . .

And this tone and movement are in clear contrast with the fever, the impetuosity, the shrillness and rapidity of the second stanza, or of the closing lines of the second:

The moon of Mahomet

Arose and it shall set:

While blazoned as on heaven's immortal

noon,

The Cross leads generations on.[9]

Richards is derogatory about several of Shelley's greatest and most popular poems: The Skylark, he says, is in bad eminence in the textbooks;[10] the same is true of the Ode to The Nightingale;[11] and, when we are through reading Adonais, writes Richards, we are left with a strong emotional attitude to accept Shelley's beliefs of immortality or survival.[12]

Shelley's whole theory that "a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth," is inferior because Shelley fills us up with too much belief and too little poetry--or as Richards puts it--too much sack and too little bread.[13] Poetry to Shelley, according to the New Critic, becomes the

necessary channel for the reconstitution of order. Richards writes:

> Eras that have produced no poetry that is remembered have been as disorderly as ours. There are better reasons, in the work of modern poets, to hope that a creative movement is beginning and that poetry, freed from a mistaken conception of its limitations and read more discerningly than heretofore, will remake our minds and with them our world. Such an extravagant estimate of power was Shelley's. It has been the opinion of others with whom we need not be ashamed to agree.[14]

But Shelley was lacking in all the fundamentals of modern sensibility, and Richards condemns him for it. He also condemns all of the academics who give Shelley unwarranted attention in the classrooms. Such is the attitude held towards Shelley by one of the most important of the New Critics.

CHAPTER IX

WILLIAM EMPSON

William Empson has been called the student of I. A. Richards by John Crowe Ransom, a critic of critics. Richards, according to Ransom, is a psychological critic, and Empson has followed, almost exactly, the critical approach of Richards.

In Seven Types of Ambiguity, Empson treats of the ambiguity in Shelley. An ambiguity, according to Empson, in ordinary speech, means something very pronounced, and as a rule witty or deceitful.[1] But Empson uses the word in an extended sense in his book.

An ambiguity of the fifth type occurs when the author (Shelley in this instance), says Empson, is discovering his idea in the act of writing, or not holding it all in his mind at once, so that, for instance, there is a simile which applies to nothing exactly, but lies half-way between two things when the author is moving from one to another. This is at least ambiguous in the sense that the reader is puzzled by it; but the definition does not assert that there would be alternative reactions

to the passage when completely grasped, or that the effect necessarily marks a complex but integral state of mind in the author.[2]

This form of ambiguity was fairly common in the nineteenth century, states Empson; and there is an example in the Shelley Skylark, about which Eliot started a discussion. Empson agrees with Eliot when he summarizes quite neatly Eliot's ideas towards Shelley's ambiguity. Empson illustrates:

> The pale purple even
> Melts around thy flight;
> Like a star of Heaven
> In the broad daylight
> Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill
> delight,
>
> Keen as are the arrows
> Of that silver sphere,
> Whose intense lamp narrows
> In the write dawn clear,
> Until we hardly see, we feel that it is
> there.

All the earth and air

With thy voice is loud,

As, when night is bare,

From one lonely cloud

The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven

is overflowed.

Eliot wrote he did not know what the sphere was; one would take it to be a star, as a matter of grammar. But the simile goes tumbling on to the next verse; the bad rhyme clear--there--air may serve as evidence of this. This sphere is then the moon; both moon and star are made fainter by the morning. There are two syntaxes for the verse: "Your delight is as keen as are the arrows of the sphere," and "though the arrows of the sphere are so keen (as to carry a long way) yet even when we are so far off as to be out of shot we still feel the presence of beauty." The last line may mean: "we feel that your delight is there for a long time, until, in fact, we can hardly see you," or "whose lamp narrows till we can scarcely be said to see it, till we can more truly be said to feel that it is there." All these are well enough suited

to the first simile, in which the lark out of sight but still audible as a series of silvery notes is compared to a star, which is spherical and whose light is silvery, out of sight in the daytime but still faintly sounding the music of the spheres . . . etc. . . .[3]

Although Empson agrees with much of Eliot's criticism, nowadays Empson thinks "There is no need to be so puzzled about Shelley."[4]

Empson believes Shelley perhaps does not strike one as keeping so sharp a distinction between the world he considered real and the world from which he wrote poetry.[5] The Skylark is a series of images--irrelated images says Empson; however, he sees the poem as something more. Empson writes:

> The poem was probably written under the influence of Keats' Nightingale Ode, and for it to seem straight forward one must hold the main tenets of the Romantics. The Skylark is a precise symbol of Shelley's view of the poet; it rises higher and higher, straight upwards, alone, always singing, always in effort, till becoming exhausted somewhere out of sight of the normal world it tumbles back in silence, and resumes a humble, isolated, and invisible existence

somewhere in the middle of a field. But on to this view of the bird as the symbol of spiritual life, which thinks of it struggling and dying, is grafted another view which thinks of it as outside human limitations; as free from pain and the satiety which follows mortal ecstasy, and indeed, like a nightingale, as immortal. From this point of view the rising of the skylark is an apotheosis of nature and unquestioned animal satisfaction (as at once more and less than human, and so in either case free from our inadequacy), which is shown either rising to Heaven, because nature is superior to the complex and disorderly human processes which apprehend it (the natural is divine), or near it, that is, rising to the stars or the moon, and so to one of the crystalline spheres (the natural is perfect). Its song, therefore, becomes something absolute, fundamental, outside time, and underlying all terrestrial harmony. (Surely it was unappreciative of Mr. Eliot to call that extremely packed line "shabby.")[6]

Another point Eliot has raised against Shelley is susceptible to the same sort of explanation, writes Empson. Here

Empson quotes Shelley's Hellas, and he echoes Eliot in the lines following the poetry.

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires
> gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

When Eliot said snakes do not renew their cast skins, and do not cast them at the end of winter; and weeds are supposed to mean garments of widows, or winter vegetation that would rot in the spring, Empson agrees with him. He states he agrees with what Eliot was saying at the time, and certainly these meanings are not so much united as hurried on top of each other, but it is, after all a pun, almost a conceit at the same time the thought seems excessively confused; this muddle of ideas clogging an apparently simple lyrical flow may be explained but not justified.[7]

Shelley, according to Empson, was excited when he wrote poems like the Skylark; he was trying to translate his elated joy

in lyrical terms. He tried to hold and use the various ideas that were in his mind. One might regard as an extreme case of the transitional simile that "self woven" simile employed by Shelley. When not being able to think of a comparison fast enough he compares the thing to a vaguer or more abstract notion of itself, or points out that it is its own nature, or that it sustains by supporting itself. Again, Shelley seldom perceived profitable relations between the two things, he was too helplessly excited by one thing at a time, and that one thing was often a mere notion not conceived in action or in an environment.[8]

Empson believes that Shelley was a politically tragic character. And he still is. It is not that he was just a poetically tragic character. Says Empson:

It is clear that the view of the poet as outcast and unacknowledged legislator, equally strong in Byron and Shelley, puts him exactly in the position of the mythical tragic hero. There is a subtler and less assertive version of the myth in the favorite theme of Shelley and Keats, that the poet obtains a vision of external extra-human beauty

for an instant, by magic, at great cost, and then faints back to the normal life of the world.[9]

An interesting letter from William Empson notes this same view, i.e., the controversy over Shelley is due to Shelley's politics--not just his poetry. I quote part of Empson's letter:

> . . . I think Eliot was wrong though convincing at the time in saying that Shelley's opinions are nasty; I do not see anything to object against them, and his hopes of rapid improvement in the world were no sillier than hopes felt at his time by solider characters. His ideas are not difficult and muddled; they are the standard Enlightenment ideas fizzed up very elegantly, and to call them necessarily wrong seems to me a malignant view of world politics. That they were absurdly remote when he thought they weren't must now be agreed by all parties. What I do feel (agreeing with Eliot though disagreeing with his implied politics) is that Shelley simply sounds very ugly; he uses the short "i" which dogs the English language to the point of gabble. It isn't my habit to damn a poet on such an unintelligent ground, but I have been struck by it in my casual reading

recently; Saintsbury or some such fiftyyearago critic was discussing the **WONDERFUL BEAUTY OF SOUND** in the line

Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar

from the imbecile poem which begins O WORLD O LIFE O TIME, and it struck me there must have been an important change of sensibility of some kind; how could anybody ever have thought that the slobbery bit of oral acrobatics **FRESH SPRING** (of course teaching the language abroad forces home on you the ugliness of what they have to learn) could be thought beautiful sound? He squeaks and squeals; and that went deep into his character too; but I don't think there was anything else the matter with him. He has become a queer field for off-scene politics; I remember in Tokyo in 1932 or so, with fierce police persecution of "liberal" students, recommending someone to a job teaching English literature, and my Japanese opposite number, and intelligent practical mind, said "He may be a bit too advanced for us here, you know; we have to look out for that." I gather he doesn't like Shelley. If he had liked Shelley he would have been a reliable type and might even have liked

Pearl Harbour . . . I promise you it (the anecdote) does fit in somehow, it is what they call the "background" about poor Shelley, and maybe he deserved it and maybe he didn't. You get the same note a bit earlier in Shaw's John Bull's Other Island when the British businessman says he completely sympathizes with idealists because he used to read Shelley when he was a boy. This recurrent kind of incident is the real trouble about Shelley.

Yours sincerely
William Empson (s)

Not that a good deal of Shelley isn't very beautiful indeed; if I was allowed to go ski-ing I would start reciting Shelley about the snow automatically. I feel these remarks now I look them over have a small-minded crosspatch quality but I was trying to say shortly what I think the real quarrel is about. Politics are very complicated.[10]

CHAPTER X

CLEANTH BROOKS

Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom are four of the New Critics that belong to a group called the Southern Critics. They all object to Shelley for rather similar reasons. Cleanth Brooks will be dealt with in this chapter, with slight attention to Warren, while Tate and Ransom and other Southern Critics will be taken up in the two succeeding chapters.

One of the reasons for Cleanth Brooks' rejection of Shelley is his untenable beliefs (beliefs which are foolish and therefore make his poetry foolish), and those same beliefs which give rise to his escapist sentimentalism and "romantic irony," and his didactic or Platonic heresy. Shelley was a revolutionary propagandist more than a poet, according to Brooks. Some of the Marxist poets (though not all) have revived the old allegorical didactic, or utilitarian, conception of the function of poetry, whereby the truth of the poet's doctrine has everything to do with the value of his poetry. Poetry which functions at

this level must be true or false, and any poet who refuses to speak in these terms is forced into the isolation of the Ivory Tower. But the dilemma of propaganda art on the one hand and the Ivory Tower on the other, as Brooks points out, is a false one. The dilemma which the Marxist critic and the poet offer is rejected by Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and I. A. Richards' account of the relationship of poetry to science.[1]

Horace Gregory defends Shelley's propaganda art. He says that Shelley's failures are not traceable to his use of propaganda. But, answers Brooks, the characteristic fault of Shelley's poetry is that it excludes on principle all but the primary impulses--that it cannot bear an ironical contemplation. (Brooks' criterion is always Donne.) The same fault as Shelley makes is seen today in the Anthology of Proletarian Literature. The fault of such verse is its sentimentality and, however revolutionary their economics, the aesthetic theory of Marxist poets and critics is not revolutionary at all.[2]

Brooks continues: But measured even by the principles of a Marxist poet, Shelley comes off rather badly; he did not qualify his dogmas with observation.

In his Preface to Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Brooks goes so far as to assert that one cannot participate fully in the poetry of John Crowe Ransom, for example, and continue to enjoy Shelley on the old basis. In an essay in this volume, "Yeats: the Poet as Myth-Maker," Brooks compares the poetry of Yeats and Shelley. He writes:

> If Yeats may appear to the reader to have fallen into a mechanical determinism quite as rigid as the scientific determinism which he tried to escape, and one which is fantastic to boot, one should notice that Yeats allows a considerable amount of free will. For each man of every phase, there is a False Mask as well as a True Mask--a course of action which is fatal for him to pursue as well as a course he should pursue. Shelley, for example (like Yeats, a man of phase 17 and "partisan propagandist, and gregarious"), too often sought his False Mask and wrote "phamphlets, and dreamed of converting the world."[3]

Brooks says that his view of Shelley is not too far from the view held by W. B. Yeats, not a New Critic, and a poet frequently thought of as a romantic.[4] Brooks is referring especially to the attitude towards Shelley expressed in Yeats'

Autobiography. However, in an essay, Yeats says (and Brooks agrees) that Shelley must have expected to receive thoughts and images from beyond his own mind, just in so far as that mind transcended its preoccupation with particular time and place, for he believed inspiration a kind of death; and he could hardly have helped perceiving that an image that has transcended particular time and place becomes a symbol, passes beyond death as it were, and becomes a living soul. But, adds Brooks, one notices Yeats' symbols form more than an exposition of the esoteric (like Shelley's): Yeats' symbols dramatize the emotional relationships (not like Shelley's).[5]

In the New Critics' revised interpretation of English literature the romantic movement obviously is to be classed as an antiscientific revulsion, explains Brooks. It retreated from the rationalistic, the ordered and the classified. But it did not have the capacity to undo the damage done by Hobbes. In a sense it understood that the issue was science, but its reaction was confused. Hence we have on one hand Wordsworth's drivel about the botanist who would peek and botanize on his mother's grave, and on the other, Shelley's attempt to found a poetry of wonder and more of humanitarianism in the

latest findings of science.[6] The movement was much centered in the personal and the lyrical. It was a subjective thing--it lacked wit and the dramatic.

Cleanth Brooks thinks Keats is a far better poet than Shelley. Brooks argues:

> One of the most striking evidences of the inaccuracy of the traditional account of English poetry is seen in the case with which Shelley and Keats are paired. I do not mean to say that critics have not always been aware of differences of poetic caliber. The traditional historian hardly sees Shelley as a very unsatisfactory poet greatly inferior to Keats, a more considered view must surely hold him so.
>
> Shelley is not merely guilty of poor craftsmanship --slovenly riming, loosely decorative and sometimes too gaudy metaphor. Consideration of the two poets on the basis of tone and attitude will reveal more important differences. Keats is rarely sentimental, Shelley frequently so. Keats is too much the artist to risk Shelley's sometimes embarrassing declarations--"I die, I faint, I fail," or "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" Keats even

in his apprentice stage attempts to give his a restraining form; he maintains his objectivity as in To Autumn; he attempts a qualifying self-irony as in the Ode to a Nightingale.[7]

Shelley, measured by Brooks' favored poetry (the symbolist-metaphysical poetry of Donne), is a bad poet. Brooks charges that Shelley is sentimental, that he lacks proportion, confuses the abstract generalization with the symbol, confuses propaganda with imaginative insight.

Brooks, along with the other New Critics, cannot excuse Shelley for his multitude of poetic sins. Keats, says Brooks, loves beauty for its own sake; whereas, Shelley loves and dictates the moral and adorns it with beauty. Brooks cannot bear the saccharine, lush imagery followed by the abstract--"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

In the Well Wrought Urn by Brooks, once again we have the critic dealing with the problem of belief and the problem of cognition in the works of Shelley. Brooks restates Eliot's testimony concerning the difficulty with Shelley's beliefs: in reading Shelley's poetry, certain statements, writes Brooks, explicit or implied, because they are not properly assimilated to a total

context, wrench themselves free from the context, and demand to be judged on ethical or religious grounds. The fault may, of course, lie either with the poet or the reader: the poet may fail by not dramatizing the statement; the reader may fail by ignoring the context and considering the statement out of the context.[8]

Brooks mentions a second misapprehension in the Well Wrought Urn: Because the poet uses the language of a particular time (and with the language, the idealogy and the valuations of a particular time), we may easily come to feel that only in so far as we agree with the idealogy and valuations of the time can we accept the poem. But this again is to misconceive the functions of the various elements in a poem. It is true, says Brooks, that we must know and understand the ideas or beliefs in a poem; but, when we are forced by the poet to accept the beliefs (as we are with Shelley), for our own; then, we cannot only object to those ideas but we also must object to the poet. In short, if we see that any item in a poem is to be judged only in terms of its relation to the total effect of the poem, we shall readily grant the importance for criticism of the work of the linguist and the literary

historian, but we shall deny the heresy which reduces literature to cultural history and this begets a critical relativism.[9]

Brooks dislikes many of Shelley's poems; for instance, he says, since a poem is to be judged by its coherence, sensitivity, depth, richness, and tough-mindedness, one would condemn Shelley's Indian Serenade as sentimental in the propositions about love which it implies.[10]

In a college textbook entitled Understanding Poetry by Brooks and Warren, the introduction contains the following statement:

> There is real danger that the suggestion to the student to look for beautiful objects in the poem will tend to make him confuse the mention of beautiful or agreeable objects in poetry with poetic excellence.
>
> Some of the same confusions reappear in another book. "These lyrics (Ode to the West Wind and To a Skylark) are characterized by a freshness and spontaneity, beautiful figures of speech in abundance, melody, and an unusually skillful adaptation of the form and movement of the verse to the word and the idea. Their melodiousness is sometimes compared with that of Shubert's music."

> But in what, for example, does a beautiful comparison consist? The implication is that the beautiful comparison is one which makes use of beautiful objects. Again, when a student has been given no concrete exposition of the "adaptation of form and movement . . . to the word and the idea" of a poem; and has received no inkling of what the "idea" of a particular poem is, what is such a statement expected to mean to him?[11]

Brooks and Warren there criticize the ambiguous explication preceding Shelley's poems in some of the past and present textbooks. They say that that sort of praise means nothing to the student.

In the same textbook Brooks and Warren have more to say about Shelley's poetry, about Death, for instance, especially the first two stanzas, which are used to illustrate the choice of a wrong type of rhythm for a chosen subject. The coauthors quote part of the poem:

> Death is here, and death is there,
> Death is busy everywhere,
> All around, within, beneath
> Above is death--and we are death.

Here, in Death, then, the authors state, we have a case in which the specific feeling stimulated by the jigging rhythm tends to contradict the response suggested by the ideas, images, etc., of the poem. The poem is an unsuccessful poem because the parts do not work together--they are not properly related.[12]

In this textbook Brooks and Warren also call Indian Serenade a failure. Brooks' attitude today about that lyric is the same as when he collaborated on Understanding Poetry.[13] After giving considerable explication of the Indian Serenade in the textbook, Brooks writes: The poet tells us outright that his love is so intense that he is dying of it. But, continues Brooks, some people die very easily--they are always dying over this or that--always thinking they are dying.[14] Shelley, to Brooks, is "amusing," "disgusting," and juvenile when he makes such statements as "I die!" We learn nothing about the poet excepting he lacks self-control, says Brooks. Any normal person that reads the Indian Serenade does not get the emotion expressed in the poem. Shelley merely tries to give an exotic and remote atmosphere to the scene by assembling the conventional exhibits of a "prettified" love affair, and by removing it to a far-off romantic scene. Brooks illustrates his point further:

> The student should notice that the question at issue here is not whether Shelley felt "sincere" when he wrote the poem, or whether Shelley ever had such an experience. Even if Shelley had had such an experience just described in real life, that fact would have no relevance for the problem before us here. For what we have to determine is this question: are the statements made by the lover in this poem convincing to the reader? They are unconvincing and the poem, for the mature reader, is a sentimental one. Sentimentality we may define as the display of more emotion than the situation warrants. The poet has not in this case properly prepared for the outburst of emotion.[15]

This opinion about the Indian Serenade is consistent with Brooks' other opinions about Shelley's poetry. Brooks believes the Indian Serenade to be, however, a complete failure.[16]

CHAPTER XI

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

John Crowe Ransom (whose critical ideas are close to those of Allen Tate) holds opinions about Shelley similar to those of the other New Critics.

Of all modern literary critics Ransom sets the strictest bounds on literary criticism; criticism is limited to aesthetic and philosophical, not psychological, moral, or social considerations. His standards are aesthetic and metaphysical. Like Allen Tate, he sets out in systematic philosophical speculations a conception of the essence of art. Like Leavis, he looks for a body of trained literati having the authority of a system of critical doctrine. Ransom is searching for the ontological critic. He points out:

> The work of art in respect to its logical structure is a formulation closely analogous to a scientific discourse . . . But in respect to its texture, which is an incessant and ubiquitous affair, it encourages its objects to resume

their actual character as solids, and escape from the flat state within the plane.[1]

The crux of Ransom's position centers in the opposition of science and poetry. Scientific poetry, poetry of the will, didactic, moral, and Platonic poetry, is inferior poetry. Ransom rejects Shelley not only on the grounds of his illegitimate assertion of "scientific truths" but also for his untenable beliefs (beliefs which are foolish and therefore make his poetry foolish).[2] For instance, Dante's beliefs are bold speculations at which the accusing finger has pointed steadily for a long time now, but substantively are better grounded, and methodologically far more consistent, than Shelley's beliefs. That consideration would enter into Ransom's preference of Dante over Shelley. Shelley, Ransom says, serves actually as a text for the really authoritative study of ideas.[3]

Ransom calls Shelley's poetry Platonic poetry: Its Platonic world of ideas fails to coincide with the original world of perception. Physical properties in Shelley's discourses are translatable at every point into ideas; ideas in turn are ornamented with physical properties. Things in Shelley have no substance.[4] Shelley writes the worst kind of Platonic poetry.

He is always feeling sorry for himself. Ransom summarizes and repeats Tate's ideas:

> Platonic Poetry is allegory, a discourse in things, but on the understanding that they are translatable at every point into ideas. (The usual ideas are those which constitute the popular causes, patriotic, religious, moral or social.) Or Platonic Poetry is the elaboration of ideas as such, but in proceeding introduces for ornament some physical properties after the style of Physical Poetry; which is rhetoric. It is positive when the poet believes in the efficacy of the ideas. It is negative when he despairs of their efficacy, because they have conspicuously failed to take care of him, and utters his personal wail
>
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
>
> This is "Romantic Irony," which comes at occasional periods to interrupt the march of scientific optimism. But it still falls under the category of Platonism; it generally proposes some other ideas to take the place of those which are in vogue.[5]

Shelley is a sentimentalist. He seeks his own image in nature, or the misguided moralist who seeks moral

enlightenment in nature; that is what nature is not capable of giving him.

Then Ransom continues, Shelley's writing is an imitation of Physical poetry, and not really a poetry. Platonists practice their bogus poetry in order to show that an image will prove an idea, but the literature which succeeds this delicate mission does not contain real images but illustrations.[6]

Shelley is compared to the metaphysicals by Ransom:

> Clearly the seventeenth century had the courage of its metaphors, and imposed them imperially on the nearest things, and just as clearly the nineteenth century lacked this courage, and was half-heartedly metaphorical, or content with similes. The difference between the literary qualities of the two periods is the difference between the metaphor and the simile (it must not be admitted that this like other generalizations will not hold without its exceptions). One period was pithy and original in its poetic utterance, the other was prolix and predictable. It would not quite commit itself to the metaphor even if it came upon one. Shelley is about as vigorous as usual when he says in Adonais:

> thou young Dawn
>
> Turn all thy dew to splendour . . .
>
> But the splendor is not the correlative of dew, it has the flat tone of a Platonic idea, while physically it scarcely means more than dew with sunshine upon it. The seventeenth century would have said: "Turn thy dew, which is water, into fire, and accomplish the transmutation of the elements."[7]

In spite of the fact that Ransom rejects Shelley's escapist sentimentalism and romantic irony, his didactic or Platonic heresy, Ransom still grants that Shelley is a great lyric poet. As a matter of fact Ransom believes Shelley to be the greatest musician in the English language. He writes:

> If it will help at all I am ready to say that I think of Shelley as the best musician of all the English poets, and one with a wonderful flow of poetic language, and I mean presently to study him. He is not popular with this generation but I'd like to look into that for myself when I can.[8]

CHAPTER XII

ALLEN TATE

Allen Tate not only objects to Shelley; but he also objects to much of the positive criticism written on Shelley by some of the scholars.

A. N. Whitehead, one of Shelley's most generous defenders, evaluates Shelley's poetry on the basis of its idealistic, Platonic philosophy of nature. Shelley's aesthetic intuitions have the same validity as the abstract materialistic concepts of orthodox scientific doctrine.[1] Whitehead's conception of poetry is precisely the conception Allen Tate opposes. Their critical position centers in the opposition of science and poetry.

Tate calls Shelley's poetry (a poetry of humanitarianism founded on the latest findings of science) a poetry of the will.[2] A poetry of the will competes with science, falsifying their real relationship. The poetry of the will is Platonic; it is written in the interest of scientific, moral, or social ideas apart from which it has neither existence nor significance. The whole of the experience is ignored for one special aspect of

experience that is put to practical use. It is a one-sided poetry, because its primary direction is toward an oversimplification of life. Shelley's "didactic" poetry is a direct descendant of Spencer's allegorical mentality, the latest expression of which is to be found in modern revolutionary propaganda works. The will of the moral, or scientific, or social allegorist is fundamentally of the same origin and purpose as the will of the scientist. Poetry of the allegorical will, Tate contends, is inferior both as science and as poetry.

Whitehead's conception of poetry attributes to poetry functions of practical volition. He is under the illusion, according to Tate and the New Critics, that Shelley's ideas are what the scientist calls "truth." But such a poetics gives the case away to the scientist; for, given the assumption that the will of poetry and the will of science are the same will, it is impossible not to believe in the superiority of the scientific method: For the physical imagination of science is perfect, Tate points out, whereas the physical imagination of poetry is necessarily compacted of futile and incredible fictions, and these fictions we rightly reject as inferior instruments of the will. When the will tries to do the work of the imagination,

it fails, and only succeeds in doing badly the work of science.[3] The poet's will, because his instrument is not adequate to his real purpose, becomes frustrated. The result is rhetoric, or "the pseudo-explanation of unimagined material." (The real explanation is that of explanatory science.) Shelley revolts from Science, from Truth, from a cruel and Naturalistic world that is indifferent to his desires. He defies the world of science to break him if it can. This moral situation, transferred to the plane of the lyric, becomes "romantic irony": The poet's self-pity upon the rack of science. "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" Shelley's will is broken, frustrated by inhospitable Truth, continues Tate.[4] The weakness of such poetry is its sentimentality; its emotions are undisciplined by the structure of events or ideas of which they are a part. Its perceptions are, according to Tate, predigested and "truths" are attached to them--truths that are instructions to the reader to "respond" in a certain way to the poetical object, which is the "stimulus." And in the great body of nineteenth century lyrical poetry--whose worst ancestor was verse of the type of Shelley's "I arise from dreams of thee"--the poet's personal emotions became the "poetic stimulus."[5] Contrary to Whitehead,

who believes that Shelley had a surer grasp of reality than the scientists themselves, Tate argues that there is but a vague grasp of the "real" world in Shelley and most nineteenth century romantic verse. Their difference is their point of view, Tate's being aesthetic. Tate explains:

> There is a surer grasp of the totality of the experience in Wyat's To His Lute than in Shelley's Adonais. This is the center of the problem of poetry. We must understand that the lines
>
> Life like a dome of many-colored glass
>
> Stains the white radiance of eternity
>
> are not poetry: They express the frustrated will trying to compete with science. The will asserts a rhetorical proposition about the whole of life, but the imagination has not seized upon the materials of a poem and made them into a whole. Shelley's simile is imposed upon the material from above; it does not grow out of the material. It exists only as explanation external to the subject . . . as explanation it necessarily looks towards possible action, and it is there that we know that the statement is meaningless . . . If the simile of the same dome were an

integral part of a genuine poem, the question of its specific merit as truth or falsehood would not arise.[6]

This is an exciting passage of modern literary criticism. It takes us to the center of the problem of the revaluation of Shelley's poetry, for at the center is the issue of Shelley's poetic beliefs.

Tate believes with Eliot and Richards that a work of art is autotelic. It possesses a life of its own. Therefore, Tate believes a poem should be judged as a poem, not for its doctrines. If it is judged for morals or theology then this judgment is Platonic judgment of "Platonic poetry."

Shelley's poetry is not to be valued (as Whitehead values it, for its doctrines of nature) for the truth or falsehood of its ideas. Tate and the New Critics think that the trouble with Shelley's poetry is that his assertions are not a quality of the whole poem--they are wilfully asserted for the purpose of heightening a subject the poet has not implicitly imagined.[7]

Tate also thinks that Shelley is a bad model for a contemporary poet. Except for Hart Crane and Robinson Jeffers, Shelley's disillusioned, romantic irony has almost vanished from modernist poetry. It is the other, the positive type of

Platonism which partakes of the optimism of science, the escape of a Tennyson or a Stephen Spender into the Golden Age of the future which survives today in the political and social propaganda of revolutionary poets[8] (the didactic, allegorical, propaganda poets).

Tate treats specific works and specific passages written by Shelley. Three examples of his method as well as his Shelleyan criticism are in the essays "Tension in Poetry," "Understanding Modern Poetry," and "A Reading of Keats."

In "Tension in Poetry" Tate says he believes the reader and the poet should share the same emotions over a poem: But if one does not share those feelings, as Tate happens not to share them in the images of desiccated nature, the lines and even the entire poem are impenetrably obscure. Tate continues:

> I am attacking here the fallacy of communication in poetry. (I am not attacking social justice.) It is no less a fallacy in the writing of poetry than of critical theory. The critical doctrine fares ill the further back you apply it; I suppose one may say--if one wants a landmark--that it began to prosper after 1798; for on the whole nineteenth century English verse is a poetry of communication. The

> poets were trying to use verse to convey ideas and feeling that they secretly thought could be better conveyed by science (consult Shelley's Defense), or by what we today call, in a significantly bad poetic phrase, the Social Sciences. Yet possibly because the poets believe the scientists to be tough and the poets joined the scientists in thinking the poets tender, the poets stuck to verse. It may scarcely be said that we change this tradition of poetic futility by giving it a new name, Social Poetry. May a poet hope to deal more adequately with sociology than with physics? If he seizes upon either at the level of scientific procedure, has he not abdicated his position as poet?[9]

In "Understanding Modern Poetry," Tate thinks the reader should not have merely the "emotional experience"; but he should also have the "intellectual experience." That is, the reader should not just be "moved" by a poem but he should be using his intellect. If by an "intellectual" experience we mean that we are using our minds on the relations of words to the images, all the relations together--and if, moreover, we succeed in reducing all these things to the complete determination of logic, so that there is nothing left over, then this intellectual

experience is a tautology similar to that of the emotional experience: we are intellectually using our intellects, whereas before we were emotionally being moved. For instance, writes Tate, note the confused and vague and emotional imagery in Shelley's When the Lamp is Shattered; I quote the last stanza:

> Its (Love's) passions will rack thee,
> As the storms rack the ravens on high:
> Bright reason will mock thee,
> Like the sun from a wintry sky.
> From the nest every rafter
> Will rot, and thine eagle home
> Leave thee naked to laughter,
> When leaves fall and cold winds come.

The general "argument" is that the passing of spiritual communion from lovers leaves them sad and, in the last stanza, the prey of lust and self-mockery, and even of the world ("naked to laughter"). The first line sets the tone and the "response" that the reader is to maintain to the end: we are told in advance what the following lines will mean: an abstraction that will relieve us of the trouble of examining the particular instances. Indeed, when these

appear the development of their imagery is confused and vague. The ravens in the second line are eagles in the sixth; but after all, they are only generically birds, greater particularity in them would have compromised their poeticism as objects, or interfered with the response we are instructed to make them. I pass over "Bright reason," the self-mockery, for the mockery of the world. Are we to suppose that other birds come by and mock the raven (eagle), or are we to shift the field of imagery and see "thee" as woman? Now in the finest poetry we cannot have it both ways. We have a multiple meaning through ambiguity, but we cannot have an incoherent structure of images. Shelley, in confusion, or carelessness, or haste could not sustain the nest-bird metaphor and say all that he wished to say; so, in order to say it, he changed the figure and ruined the poem. The more we track down the implications of the imagery of Donne, Marvel, Raleigh, Milton, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Ransom, Stevens, the richer the meaning of the poem. Shelley's poem is confused. Are we to conclude that therefore it offers an emotional experience?[10]

Finally, in "A Reading of Keats," where Tate praises Keats as the only romantic poet to achieve greatness, the critic is again derogative of Shelley, who, he says, conceals more traps to catch scholars.[11] In this essay Tate cannot sympathize with a more or less modern trend: For the past fifteen years, he says, the direction of Anglo-American poetry has been rather towards Shelley than Keats, and towards Godwin--towards perfectibility and social consciousness rather than towards a dramatic-symbolic style. Tate hopes he shall not sound like Margaret Fuller if he says that he is not indifferent to the utmost capacity of men for social and individual perfection for he simply does not think that poetry should be limited to exhorting these goods.[12] But Tate continues to say that if Keats had kept on with his successions of plastic scenes such as in Hyperion, then Keats would have remained a "youthful experimenter of genius" not so impressive as Shelley.

When Tate analyzes a stanza of Keats' Ode to a Nightingale he says: This stanza is bad; the best that one ought to say of it perhaps is that there are worse things in Shelley. It is bad in the same way as the passages in Adonais which exhibit troops of mourners are bad.[13]

Keats and Shelley were alike in more than one respect, Tate explains:

> In Keats' mind there was, as I have said (why it should have had, even in so young a man, an exclusive dominance I do not know)--there was, to put it in the simplest language, a strong compulsion towards the realization of physical love, but he could not reconcile it with his idealization of the beloved. So we get what has been supposed to be a characteristically romantic attitude--that is to <u>die</u> at the greatest intensity of love is to achieve that intensity without diminution. If this is the romantic attitude--and there is no reason to believe that Wordsworth's domestic pieties and evasions, or Shelley's rhetorically Godwinism and watered-down Platonism, ever achieved <u>as experience</u> a higher realization of the central human problem as Keats did--if this is romanticism, then romanticism (or romantic poetry) represents a decline in insight and in imaginative and moral power.[14]

In spite of the somewhat sweeping statements quoted from Tate, Tate asserts his criticism is not so much on Shelley as on specific passages in Shelley. In a letter to me, he says:

I have never tried to formulate a rounded estimate of Shelley: My works contain criticisms of specific passages. Short of long and careful reading I cannot give a general opinion. I simply have no opinions of Shelley's poetry as a whole.[15]

CHAPTER XIII

ELDER OLSEN

Elder Olsen is not a New Critic in the strictest sense. As a matter of fact he has never written anything on Shelley. However, he shares the opinions of the New Critics towards Shelley, and for that reason he is mentioned here. Olsen belongs to a special group of critics that is gathered in and around Chicago. This group has its own theories and it judges a poem on the basis of those theories. Shelley does not come off well with them at all. In a letter to me, Olsen remarks:

> Shelley is undoubtedly a great poet, if by "great poet" one means a poet who achieved extraordinary excellence within given literary forms, rather than poems,--and this is the case with most modern depreciators of Shelley, e.g., Eliot, Leavis, et al.--one's judgement is likely to be unfavorable. Shelley wrote poems of emotion; moreover, his statement of emotion is direct, and the emotion itself is at high pitch; and the transition from image to image, thought to thought, line to line; stanza to stanza

is an emotional rather than intellectual transition; the moderns tend to object to all these things. I have not read any attacks upon Shelley (in the present day) which seem to me to proceed from sound and comprehensive criticism.[1]

CHAPTER XIV

ROBERT STALLMAN

No one can appreciate or enjoy Shelley on the old basis . . . Nor can any critic any longer evaluate Shelley without having fully participated in the problems of modern criticism . . . In modern criticism Shelley fares far worse than Milton.[1] Those opinions were written to me by Robert Stallman, another who can be called a New Critic although his main works tend to give him the title, "The Critic of the New Critics." He agrees with the New Critics--especially in their attitude towards Shelley.

Stallman agrees with Leavis. Shelley is a bad poet, overrated too. He agrees especially with Leavis' essay on Shelley in Revaluation.[2] Stallman's attitude and his method of criticism are much like those of the Southern Critics. (He judges a poem as a poem, not for its doctrines.) He echoes Tate, Ransom and Brooks.

In his Critiques, while Stallman is discussing forms of the theme popularly called "the dissociation of sensibility," he

calls one variation of that theme, the loss of world order, a world order which can be assimilated to the poetic vision. Stallman writes:

> . . . Without moral and intellectual standards the poet has no means for measuring and testing his personal experience. Our age lacks what Shelley called the "fixed point of reference" for the poet's sensibility. The assumption a fallacy common to contemporary poets--that order or adequate form can be created simply by the poet's act of self expression by his imitation of the world disorder in what Winters has labeled as Expressive or Imitative Form--fails the poet as a solution for the problem of poetic structure. For Winters, Tate, F. R. Leavis, John Crowe Ransom, or R. P. Blackmur--a poem for these critics must have a rational structure, a core of meaning, a scheme of objective reference which orders and gives meaning to the poet's emotions. "Shelley, at his best and worst, offers emotion in itself, unattached in the void."[3]

The intellect is not working when one reads Shelley and enjoys him: Stallman goes along with Eliot and Tate's objections to Shelley that, so many times, Shelley forgot about the poem

itself and worked some of his doctrines or beliefs into his poems. It is not the beliefs the critics affirm or deny. It is their absolute irrelevance to the poem, says Stallman. That makes the New Critics automatically reject the whole poem. Stallman writes:

> The poet-poem-reader relationship is again illustrated by the Problem of Belief: the question whether it is necessary for the reader to share the poet's beliefs in order to enjoy fully his poetry. The problem of the poem as related to the poet's or the reader's beliefs is resolved by Eliot thus: "When the doctrine, theory, belief, or view of life, presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment . . ." With this interpretation, which Eliot makes in The Use of Poetry (1933), all later critics concur. The question of specific merit of poetic statement as ordered into an intrinsic whole. It is on this ground that Tate rejects Shelley's poetry, not because Shelley's ideas are immature but because his statements are not an integral part of a genuine poem. As Eliot notes: "Both in

creation and enjoyment much always enters which is, from the point of view of 'art', irrelevant. One irrelevance is the truth or falsity of the belief expressed in a poem (as) poem.[4]

In a detailed critique of C. S. Lewis' Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot, Stallman objects to Lewis' defense of Shelley, contesting Lewis' argument point by point, his conception of poetic structure, his principle of decorum and greatness of subject, and his criterion of intention. Lewis' buttoned-up version of Shelley and unfrocking of Dryden is an academic tintype, argues Stallman.[5]

C. S. Lewis defends Shelley, not on the old basis, but on Eliot's own grounds. Lewis writes:

> I am a classicist, of the same order as T. S. Eliot, and I maintain that Shelley is to be regarded, on grounds Mr. Eliot himself will allow, as a more masterly, a more sufficient, and indeed a more classical poet than Dryden.[6]

Implied in Lewis' argument are three principles; Stallman brings them together to form Lewis' so-called "classical" canon:

(1) the principle of structure;

(2) the principle of decorum;

(3) the principle of greatness of subject.

This last principle, according to Stallman, immediately raises the suspicion that Lewis' canon is partly victorian, derivative of Arnold, not truly "classical" at all. Lewis' demand that poets choose a grandiose subject and execute it in the most striking manner puts him, not on Eliot's ground, but on Arnold's. Lewis is neither consistent with Eliot's position nor consistent with his own "classical" one, argues Stallman.[7]

Stallman continues to answer Lewis, point by point. When Lewis objects to Dryden's mixing of the comic and the tragic, this amounts to a demand for the Poetry of Exclusion, Stallman answers and continues:

> Shelley's poetry is a poetry of sharp exclusion. His sensibility is crude, his structure simple, his tone monotonous; his poetry offers us uniformity, but uniformity without heterogeneity of material. It is precisely Shelley's oversimplification that critics like Messrs. Eliot, Tate, Ransom and Brooks reject. But Mr. Lewis has not read the critics. He is not aware that the critics have been insisting for two decades on the Poetry of Inclusion:--the poetry of

> synthesis of conflicts, of inclusion of opposites, of reconciliation of disparate experience, of fusion of levity with seriousness (in Wit), of complex structures of variety as well as uniformity. Shelley cannot stand up against Mr. Eliot's criterion of Donne and the Metaphysicals. Dryden and Pope come off much better.[8]

Stallman agrees with Leavis that the suggestion of the ludicrous within his serious poetic effect is a qualifying element that is absent in Shelley.

When Lewis praises Shelley's poetic structure, his odes, elegies and lyrics because they are traditional and because they display a harmony between the poet's real and professed intention, Stallman brushes this praise off as academic. Lewis, according to Stallman, is praising Shelley for handing down traditional forms to which he adheres without any radical innovation. Tradition at this level, Stallman and Eliot agree, should be positively discouraged.[9]

When Lewis explained his praise of Shelley's intention he said he meant that Shelley did what he intended to do in a poem, and he wrote the poem he intended to write. Dryden, he said, did not have this capacity.

Stallman objects to that entire idea of intention pointed out by Lewis; for, writes Stallman, if Shelley succeeds in doing what he intended to do, his achievement is not to be praised--but condemned. The poem which most achieves its purpose, plan or intention, says Stallman, is invariably the bad poem. The poet's failure is in direct proportion to the success with which his original intention is achieved. For obviously if the total intention or the total meaning of the poem is entirely predictable in the original intention of the logical content, this original logical content is then the total meaning of the poem, which is to say that the poem's total meaning is nothing more than its prose or paraphrasable core. A poem at this rate, continues Stallman, is not a poetic discourse but a prose discourse and therefore not a poem. What engages our critical scrutiny is the work of art itself, its total intention, not its original intention--which is always a different thing.[10]

Stallman agrees with the New Critics that Shelley, in respect to his material, has ideas that are untenable and emotions that are not objectified. Shelley's failure to find an adequate "set of objects," situation, "chain of events," or "objective correlatives," of his emotion, and the consequent

confusion of purely personal feelings with those of his hero is precisely what leaves Shelley's Prometheus Unbound "so vague and vaporous."[11]

Again, in criticizing C. S. Lewis, Stallman writes:

> Mr. Lewis is not aware of the absurd consequences of his own theory, but these have already been pointed out. It is nonsense to praise Shelley for conquering material that was entirely conquerable before composition began. The victory that involves no struggle is no victory at all. I suggest the very theory Mr. Lewis rejects: The great poet comes to terms with experiences which offer great difficulties, not slight ones; and the value of his creation is in direct ratio to the difficulties involved. If a poem, insofar as it is good, represents the comprehension on an aesthetic plane of a given experience, then the poem will be most valuable, which, granted it achieves formal perfection, represents the most difficult victory.[12]

Stallman completes his case against Lewis and says Lewis is fifty years behind the times. He calls Lewis unclassical and inconsistent in his case for Shelley. The critic is supposed to give his poetic assent to a poem not his philosophical

belief. Stallman notes Lewis is not aware of the distinct terms.

Stallman aims to show that Lewis' argument, that Shelley is a superior poet and is to be preferred to Dryden, is wrong. His argument is wrong, according to the New Critic, because it is based on erroneous grounds. Lewis does not understand the way Eliot or the New Critics judge a poem. Therefore, Stallman writes, how can he attempt to judge a poem or a poet on the same grounds as Eliot judges it.

Stallman concludes his case against Lewis and against Shelley by saying that Lewis' conception of poetic structure, his principle of decorum and greatness of subject, and his criterion of the poet's intention are utterly alien to modern critical ideas and poles apart from Eliot's own critical canon. This is a disparity which Lewis shares with all the rest of his kind, remarks Stallman.[13]

I presented Robert Stallman's attitude towards Shelley in the form of a "Reply to C. S. Lewis." Since I am not aware of any published reply to Lewis, I thought these remarks I received from Stallman might prove interesting to the reader.

Perhaps Stallman was answering Lewis' defense of Shelley in the way all of the New Critics would answer Lewis.

CHAPTER XV

R. P. BLACKMUR

If we look at the dominant development in criticism in English during the last thirty years--all that Mr. Ransom means by the New Criticism--with its fineness of analysis, its expertness of elucidation, and its ramifying specialization of detail--we must see how natural, and at the bottom how facile, a thing it has been. It has been the critics' ways of being swept along, buoyed more by rush than the body of things. It is a criticism, that is, which has dealt almost exclusively either with the executive technique of poetry (and only with a part of that) or with the general verbal techniques of language. Most of its practitioners have been men gifted in penetrating the private symbolisms and elucidating the language of all of that part of modern poetry, we have come to call the school of Donne.[1]

These are words from the pen of R. P. Blackmur, respected not only by the New Critics but also by those critics

and scholars outside the realm of New Criticism. It is his method and his style that prompts all the praise. He is objective. He rarely makes abstract statements without backing them up by citing some example by some author; and, after he does that, he usually compares authors, the consequence being that the reader is generally satisfied with his criticism not only because he got the point but because he enjoyed the way the critic expressed the point.

For Blackmur, as for Eliot, scholarship is the basis for all other forms of criticism. Its business is to furnish the factual material for further investigation. The great critics are themselves either good scholars or know how to take great advantage of scholarship. Donne remains alive in us, the New Critics contend, to the extent that his statements of fact form a part of our scholarship. But Shelley has not a leg to stand on according to Blackmur's and the other New Critics' criterion of criticism.

Compared to Donne's sensible rhythms Shelley employs pronounced, intoxicating, hypnotic rhythms that seem to be trying to sweep the reader into hasty emotional commitments. Shelley seldom uses a firmly held developed image (as does

Donne), but he pours out a flood of images which one must grasp momentarily in one aspect and then release. Donne was a thinker; Shelley was a "mere dreamer." These are but two apparent criticisms arising out of the minds of Blackmur and the New Critics concerning Shelley.

The special distinction of R. P. Blackmur's criticism, it has been said, lies in its elucidation of verbal and stylistic properties as clues to the quality of thought and imagination. The reader has only to look at the criticism which shows intensive study of poems in The Double Agent (1935), and The Expense of Greatness (1940), and many succeeding essays.

After the thoroughness of his stylistic investigations, his rigorous study of words, patterns, and structures of the literary object, Blackmur cannot admit Shelley to be a good poet although he may admit him to be a fair poet in some aspects, especially the lyrical aspect. Blackmur wrote in a letter to me:

> I have never written more than a passing remark or so on Shelley, and furthermore have no very positive opinions about either him or his work. Like everybody I know the lyrics pretty well and know that they are a real

part of any canon of lyric poetry. Beyond that I really don't go. Of course I might add that Brooks and Warren don't kill the Indian Love Lyric; you can put it back together liver than ever on their own principles. I pretty well agree with Santayana's essay in Winds of Doctrine . . .[2]

In some notes on the language of E. E. Cummings, Blackmur tried to show how the poet, by relying on his private feelings and using words as if their meanings were spontaneous with use, succeeded mainly in turning his words into empty shells. This is a faulty characteristic Blackmur believes Cummings shares with Shelley. He says:

> Any poetry which does not consider itself as much of an art and having the same responsibilities to the consumer as the arts of silversmithing or cobbling shoes--any such poetry is likely to do little more than rehearse a waking dream . . . Hence, both picture and word, and then a little stretching of the fancy the substance of the dream itself, seem expressible just as they occur--as things created, as the very flux of life. Mr. Cummings' poems are often nothing more than the report of such

> dreams. He believes he knows what he knows, and no doubt he does. But he also believes, apparently, that the words which he encourages most vividly to mind are those most precisely fitted to put his poems on paper. He transfers the indubitable magic of his private musings from the cell of his mind, where it is honest incantation, to the realm of poetry. Here he forgets that poetry, so far as it takes permanent form, is written and meant to be read, and it cannot be a mere private musing. Merely because his private fancy furnishes his liveliest images, is the worst reason for assuming that this private fancy will be approximately experienced by the reader or even indicated on the printed page.[3]

This fault is not limited to Cummings according to Blackmur. Shelley is also guilty of it. Most of Shelley's works, according to Blackmur, are "tenuous and vague, private exercises or public playthings of a soul in verse."

Blackmur likens Shelley to Cummings in another sense, also:

> When Mr. Cummings resorts of language for the <u>thrill</u> that words may be made to give, when he allows his

> thrill to appear as an equivalent for concrete meaning, he is often more successful, than when he is engaged more ambitiously. This is true of poets like Swinburne and Poe, Shelley and the early Marlowe: where the first pair depended almost as much upon thrill as Mr. Cummings in those poems where they made use of it all, and where the second pair used their thrills more appropriately as ornament: where all four were most successful in their less ambitious works.[4]

Blackmur complained that the reader must, at times, supply the skepticism and the irony, the imagination and the drama while reading the poetry of Shelley. Furthermore, the reader has another stumbling block while reading Shelley: the reader has to flesh out the Platonic Ideas before he gets to the substance of Shelley's poetry.[5]

Shelley was a product of romanticism; and in Shelley, Blackmur criticizes, we see a great sensibility the victim of early stages of religious and philosophical decay in the nineteenth century.[6] But his sensibility was ruined. Thomas Hardy and Shelley are compared by the critic:

> The astonishing thing is--as with Shelley--that he (Hardy) was able to bring so much poetry with him into a pile of work that shows, like a brush heap, all the disadvantages of the nineteenth-century mind as it affected poetry, and yet shows almost none of the difficulties--whether overcome, come short of, or characteristic--belonging to the production or appreciation of poetry itself.[7]

Now Blackmur compares Shelley to another poet, D. H. Lawrence:

> As a poet, Lawrence belongs to the great race of English writers whose work totters precisely where it towers, collapses exactly in its strength: work written out of a tortured Protestant sensibility and upon the foundation of an incomplete, uncomposed mind: a mind without defences against the material with which it builds and therefore at every point of stress horribly succumbing to it . . . Shelley exemplified (in his particular ways) the deracinated, unsupported imagination, the mind for which, since it lacked rational structure sufficient to its burdens, experience was too much. Their magnitude was inviolate, and we must take account of it not only for its own sake but also to

> escape its fate; it is the magnitude of ruins--and the ruins for the most part of an intended life rather than an achieved art.[8]

In this final quotation from Blackmur, we see that he, too, like the New Critics, holds a consistently unfavorable opinion of Shelley.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

Shelley is thoroughly repudiated by the contemporary poet and critic. The case against him, according to the New Critics, is decisive: Illegitimate assertion of "scientific truths," untenable beliefs, escapist sentimentality and "romantic irony," didactic, Platonic poetry of the will, emotional intensity divorced from any critical intelligence, confusions between the metaphorical and the actual, the imagined and the real, elusive imagery and the decorative metaphor; in fine, poor craftsmanship and a false conception of the function of art. And, the New Critics assert, it is largely owing to this Shelleyan conception of poetry--from Shelley derives the prevailing idea of the "poetical," the idea that had its latest notable expression in A. E. Housman's The Name and Nature of Poetry (1933)--that Pope and Dryden and Donne have been depreciated and neglected. Shelley also could not combine the ludicrous and the serious poetic effect; therefore his poetry is practically a complete failure.

The New Critics teach that no modern practitioner should take Shelley as his model, for Shelley is a bad influence, and, like Milton, could only be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever. They object to the attention that Shelley is receiving in the colleges, and they frown upon the way in which the instructors are teaching Shelley. Finally, they universally agree that, in Shelley, a single isolated quality, emotion, is made into poetry.

According to some scholars, this attitude is not to be brushed away and treated as a passing phase. An instance is the point of a paper by Professor Frederic Pottle of Yale presented at the 1950 MLA meeting:

> It must be sufficiently apparent that I consider Shelley a great poet. I do not, however, share the confident belief of many of my colleagues that the anti-Shelleyanism of the New Critics is a mere fad or fashion that will pass away. I lecture to a large group of undergraduates each year on Shelley, and I read a good many of the critical papers they write on Shelley's poetry. It is clear to me that within fifty years practically everybody will be saying about Shelley what the New Critics are saying now. The

disesteem of Shelley is going to become general and it may continue for a century or more.[1]

NOTES

PREFACE

[1] Vide "The New Criticism," The American Scholar Forum, XX (Spring, 1951), pp. 219-229. This is a publication of an informal discussion between William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Gorham Davis, Allen Tate and Hiram Haydn in which these important modern critics discuss the terms the "New Criticism" and the "New Critics." They agree that the term the "New Criticism" is really empty of meaning insofar as it might be thought to convey some description of a specifically new technique in literary criticism. They agree that the term the "New Critics" is also empty of real meaning.

Mr. Cowley said: "Where Mr. Ransom and Mr. Tate, for example, are miles apart in many of their judgments, young Mr. X., who has listened to both of them and read both of them, seems to be a conglomeration or coagulation of Ransom and Tate. Young Mr. X. represents the school (New Critics), not Ransom, Tate or Blackmur."

Mr. Barrett said: "It was Mr. Cowley's particular point about the offspring of the New Criticism,--that [they, the offspring] have been the ones who have really made it a movement. The single point that I have been trying to bring up this evening is that there is no such thing as the New Criticism, yet there is a new criticism. And your point is that actually only as it appears in the various younger offspring of various people who have been called, and I think falsely, New Critics--people like Mr. Tate.

"I feel that he is not a new critic at all. There is nothing new about him in the sense we're discussing. His criticism has been known for a long time.

"It seems to me that the movement is really there in terms of the younger people whom I meet, who are mostly graduate students. Most of these people do not appear in print at all, but in their conversation I find that their whole approach to literature is very limited. While I can't say, 'Well, this is the work of the New Criticism,' I do think that in this sense the New Criticism is a very real literary tendency of our period."

I have summarized the attitude that practically all of the New Critics hold concerning their being called the "New Critics" practicing the "New Criticism." In many of the letters that the New Critics wrote me, they objected to the terms. Nevertheless the terms are used popularly, and not only by graduate students, even amongst the New Critics themselves. That is why I call them the New Critics throughout this thesis; and I suspect that whether or not these men like the terms "New Critics" and "New Criticism," the terms are here to stay.

CHAPTER I

[1] T. E. Hulme, Speculations: ed. Herbert Read (New York: 1924).

[2] Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill: 1939), introd.

[3] F. O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T. S. Eliot (New York: Oxford UP, 1947), introd.

CHAPTER II

[1] Hulme, Speculations, p. 113.

[2] Ibid., p. 115.

[3] Ibid., p. 116.

[4] Ibid., p. 116.

[5] Ibid., p. 117.

[6] Ibid., p. 119.

[7] Ibid., p. 126.

CHAPTER III

[1] Eliot's main essays dealing with the Problem of Belief: "Dante," Selected Essays (London: 1932); "A Note on Poetry and Belief," The Enemy (London: Jan., 1927); "Shelley and Keats," The Use of Poetry (London: 1933).

[2] T. S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry, p. 87.

[3] Ibid., p. 80.

[4] Ibid., p. 90.

[5] Ibid., p. 87.

[6] Ibid., p. 82.

[7] Eliot, "Dante," Selected Essays, p. 218.

[8] John Crowe Ransom, The New Criticism, p. 208.

[9] Eliot, Essays and Studies, XXI (1936), p. 33.

[10] F. R. Leavis, Revaluation, p. 8.

[11] Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 258. In Marvell there is "explicit reference of emotion to object." In Marvell there is hard precision; in Morris, a mistiness of feeling and vagueness of its object.

[12] Eliot, Sacred Wood, p. 148.

[13] Eliot, "Poems on Richard Crashaw," The Dial, LXXXIV (March, 1928), pp. 246-250.

[14] Carlos Baker, private communication, 8/2/51.

[15] Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 248.

[16] The Use of Poetry, p. 81.

[17] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 211.

[18] "John Dryden," Selected Essays, p. 274.

[19] "Hamlet and His Problems," Selected Essays, p. 100. Eliot's ideas on the "objective correlative" are given here.

[20] Eliot, private communication, 7/26/51.

CHAPTER IV

[1] Vide John Crowe Ransom, "A Note on Ontology," The World's Body, 122 ff.

The Platonic poet is thus a scientist, interested in the general and abstract. The Metaphysical poet is not a scientist. He knows he is not competing with science but is dealing with another order of description.

Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 46.

Brooks points out that "the distinction between Tate's Platonic poetry and his poetry of the Imagination, or the distinction between Ransom's Platonic poetry and Metaphysical poetry, parallels the distinction of Richards' poetry of Exclusion and his poetry of Synthesis." There is a similar distinction in Eliot's theory of poetry, though the resemblances are not forced. In short, most all the New Critics think Shelley's ideas are (1) erroneous, (2) not presented concretely.

[2] F. R. Leavis, Revaluation, p. 8.

[3] Ibid., p. 214.

[4] Eliot, Sacred Wood, p. 138.

[5] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 231.

[6] Ibid., p. 207, f.

[7] Ibid., p. 215.

[8] Ibid., p. 231.

[9] Ibid., p. 211.

[10] Ibid., p. 231.

[11] Ibid., p. 211.

[12] Ibid., p. 208.

[13] Ibid., pp. 204-206.

[14] Ibid., p. 207, f.

[15] F. R. Leavis, private communication, 8/1/51.

[16] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 113.

[17] Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 37.

[18] Leavis, Education and the Universities, p. 84.

[19] Leavis, Revaluation, p. 206.

CHAPTER V

[1] Rene Wellek, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy," The Importance of Scrutiny, p. 26.

[2] Ibid., p. 27.

[3] Leavis, Revaluation, pp. 208-209.

[4] Wellek, The Importance of Scrutiny, pp. 28-29.

[5] Ibid., p. 29.

[6] Rene Wellek, private communication, 8/3/51.

CHAPTER VI

[1] Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy: A Reply," The Importance of Scrutiny, p. 38.

[2] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

CHAPTER VII

[1] Robert Stallman, Critiques and Essays in Criticism, p. 505.

Note: Scrutiny critics are like the Southern critics; i.e., they are concerned with resident values of a work of art --the purely formal aesthetic ones. They attend to the properties of poetry as a fine art.

[2] Martin Turnell, "The Poet of Revolution," Scrutiny, VII (Sept., 1938), p. 229 ff.

[3] Martin Turnell, private communication, 7/29/51.

CHAPTER VIII

[1] I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism, pp. 315-316.

[2] Ibid., p. 271.

[3] Ibid., p. 208.

[4] C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, p. 238.

[5] Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 94.

[6] Ibid., p. 90.

[7] Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 68.

[8] Ibid., p. 79.

[9] Ibid., pp. 215-216.

[10] Ibid., p. 220.

[11] Ibid., p. 250.

[12] Ibid., p. 279.

[13] Ibid., p. 274.

[14] Richards, Coleridge on Imagination, p. 229.

CHAPTER IX

[1] William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., p. 155.

[3] Ibid., p. 157.

[4] Ibid., introd.

[5] Ibid., p. 20.

[6] Ibid., p. 159.

[7] Ibid., p. 160.

[8] Ibid., p. 161.

[9] William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, p. 207.

[10] William Empson, private communication, 8/1/51.

CHAPTER X

[1] Cleanth Brooks, "Metaphysical Poetry and Propaganda Art," Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 47 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[3] Brooks, "Yeats: The Poet as Myth-Maker," Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 187.

[4] Cleanth Brooks, private communication, 8/22/51.

[5] Brooks, Modern Poetry, pp. 197-198.

[6] Ibid., pp. 216-217.

[7] Brooks, "Notes for a Revised History of English Poetry," Modern Poetry, p. 237.

[8] Cleanth Brooks, "The Problem of Belief and the Problem of Cognitio," The Well Wrought Urn, p. 227.

[9] Ibid., p. 227.

[10] Ibid., p. 229.

[11] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry, introd.

[12] Ibid., pp. 219-220.

[13] Cleanth Brooks, private communication, 8/22/51.

[14] Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 321.

[15] Ibid., p. 322.

[16] Cleanth Brooks, private communication, 8/22/51.

In a letter to me Cleanth Brooks states more of his present opinions. The letter is included here, in its entirety to avoid the misunderstanding of excerpts:

"I am sorry that I can take no more time than to write a brief note in answer to your good letter of the 12th which has been forwarded to me here.

"To write an adequate answer to your questions would require, however, among other things, a great deal of rereading of Shelley. For my judgment of Shelley's poetry is based upon the poetry--not upon changing fashions and trends and not upon notions about the man.

"I have written almost nothing about Shelley for years. I have found little reason to alter what I have written about the several poems which at one time or another I have discussed. In revising An Approach to Literature, we are cutting out our analysis of The Cloud, not because I have an appreciably

better opinion of that poem now than I had in 1936, but because we feel that the analysis is too condensed to deal adequately with some of the problems that are there dealt with--particularly problems of imagery. [For this reason stated by Brooks, I thought it best to omit the 1936 opinion of The Cloud in this thesis.]

"I am afraid that my opinion of a number of the famous lyrics like The Indian Serenade, To a Skylark, and Ode to the West Wind is substantially what it has been. I think the first is a failure, To a Skylark, a much overrated poem, and the last a brilliant poem with some bad flaws in it. But I am not sure that this kind of statement is of much help to you or--given so summarily--altogether fair to me.

"What I think is important is this: that the so-called and badly named New Critics are not a group of people who somehow have it in for Shelley. They have certainly challenged the conventional estimate of some of the admired showpieces. (Even if some of these are good poems, the conventional accounts of these poems are inadequate: they do not make the sort of case for them that needs to be made.) But I am not conscious of a prejudice against Shelley's poetry, and am quite

prepared to believe that when it can be shown that I have misread this or that poem or that I have failed to note other poems, I shall be willing to say so.

"I think that this is not an idle promise. I am conscious that my opinion of a number of poems by Keats and Wordsworth has in recent years risen a great deal. Compare, for example, the analysis of the Ode to a Nightingale in the revised Understanding Poetry with that in the first edition. This, I believe, is also true of the other New Critics. Look, for example, at Allen Tate's recent articles on Keats in the American Scholar --about two years ago. The view that the New Critics are on principle anti-Romantic simply doesn't square with the facts.

"You have probably noticed Richard Fogle's recent book on the imagery of the Romantic poets. I think that it is significant that he has tried to make the case for Shelley in terms of the New Criticism. He has not convinced me on Shelley, but it is conceivable that he--or someone else--could. And I hope that I should be willing to say 'yes, I see where I failed to understand that poem, or I failed to read properly this one. You are right. These are poems, and very fine poems.'

"One concluding observation: my view of Shelley is not too far from that of W. B. Yeats, not a New Critic, and a poet frequently thought of as 'Romantic.' Nor is it too far removed from the opinion held by some of his contemporaries Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats. At least, this is my opinion. The deification of Shelley was a later, a Victorian, phenomenon."

Sincerely,

Cleanth Brooks (s)

"P.S. I don't mind your quoting from this letter, if you will promise to print the whole letter in the thesis--perhaps as an appendix. Excerpts might be misleading as to the tone of the letter."

CHAPTER XI

[1] John Crowe Ransom, "T. S. Eliot," The New Criticism, p. 174.

[2] Ibid., p. 208.

[3] Ibid., p. 302.

[4] Vide John Crowe Ransom, "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," The World's Body, p. 122.

[5] Ibid., p. 122.

[6] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

[7] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[8] John Crowe Ransom, private communication, 7/18/51.

CHAPTER XII

[1] A. N. Whitehead, "The Romantic Reaction," Science and the Modern World, pp. 103-107.

[2] Allen Tate, "Three Types of Poetry," Reactionary Essays.

[3] Ibid., p. 87.

"For what is rhetoric," wrote W. B. Yeats nearly thirty years ago, "but the will trying to do the work of the imagination?"

[4] Ibid., p. 97.

[5] Tate, "Understanding Modern Poetry," Reason in Madness: Critical Essays, p. 143.

[6] Tate, "Three Types of Poetry," Reactionary Essays, pp. 84-86.

[7] Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 50.

Mr. Brooks quotes Tate.

[8] Tate, "Three Types of Poetry," p. 103.

[9] Tate, "Tension in Poetry," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 77.

[10] Tate, "Understanding Modern Poetry," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 126.

[11] Tate, "A Reading of Keats," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 166.

[12] Ibid., pp. 167-168.

[13] Ibid., p. 174.

[14] Ibid., p. 183.

[15] Allen Tate, private communication, 8/2/51.

CHAPTER XIII

[1] Elder Olsen, private communication, 8/25/51.

CHAPTER XIV

[1] Robert Stallman, Dryden in Modern Poetry and Criticism, p. 42.

[2] Robert Stallman, private communication, 7/20/51.

[3] Stallman, Critiques and Essays in Criticism, p. 498.

[4] Ibid., pp. 502-503.

[5] Stallman, Dryden in Modern Poetry and Criticism, introd.

[6] C. S. Lewis, Rehabilitations, p. 5.

[7] Stallman, Dryden in Modern Poetry and Criticism, p. 65.

[8] Ibid., pp. 65-66.

[9] Stallman here quotes Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Sacred Wood, pp. 48-49.

[10] Stallman, Dryden in Modern Poetry and Criticism, p. 71.

[11] Ibid., p. 73.

[12] Ibid., p. 75.

[13] Ibid., p. 77.

CHAPTER XV

[1] R. P. Blackmur, "A Burden for Critic," Lectures in Criticism, pp. 199-200.

[2] R. P. Blackmur, private communication, 8/21/51.

[3] Blackmur, "Notes on E. E. Cummings' Language," The Double Agent, pp. 10-12.

[4] Ibid., p. 22.

[5] Blackmur, "The Critic's Job of Work," The Double Agent, pp. 274-275.

[6] Blackmur, "Thomas Hardy," The Expense of Greatness, p. 37.

[7] Ibid., p. 38.

[8] R. P. Blackmur, "D. H. Lawrence and Expressive Form," The Double Agent, p. 103.

[9] John Crowe Ransom, The New Criticism, introd.

CHAPTER XVI

[1] Frederick A. Pottle, private communication, 8/31/51, "The Case of Shelley"; unpublished paper; Vide abstract, PMLA, LXVI (Feb., 1951), p. 137.

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