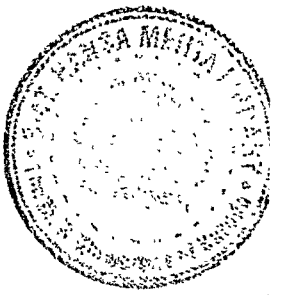

Chapter V

The Aesthetics of Form and New Criticism

The New Criticism as a literary theory and criticism began roughly with the work of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot and was developed and continued by American critics like John Crowe Ransom, W. K. Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate from the 1940s to the 1960s. The affinities of the New Criticism with Russian Formalism and the Prague School are really striking and surprisingly so despite the fact that the New Critics apparently knew nothing of the Formalist school. This is evident from Wimsatt and Brooks's *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957) which makes no reference to this school.

The New Critical theories are similar to the tenets of the Formalist thought in their association that a literary work is distinct from a non-literary text and is defined in terms of these distinctions. Both significantly emphasised the importance of structure in a literary work and organic relationships between the various components of a text and between the parts to the whole. Both look upon a text as independent of its author and socio-historical context

The New Criticism, despite its many conceptual drawbacks and orthodox ideology, still continues to be a major contribution to literary theory Anglo-American community, particularly among men who are in the teaching profession in the universities and colleges. Though their

assumptions about literature and literary study seem somewhat irrelevant in the context of contemporary theories, their influence in the academics cannot be ignored. These assumptions are still considered as an alternative for those who like to see literature more concerned with life than with a rigid formalistic structure. The New Critics believed that literature is related with reality/"real" world in many ways and helps one coping with life, whereas Formalism was least interested in connecting literature with the world outside. In this sense the New Critical approach was empiricist and humanistic.

I. A. Richards', *The Principles of Literary Criticism,* published in 1924, *The Meaning of Meaning* (written collectively with C.K. Ogden) and *Practical Criticism* exercised a dominant influence on the New Criticism and consequently on the way literature was taught in British and American universities for five decades. He had an enormous impact on literary theory, criticism, teaching of literature and university curriculum.

Richards' theories are important for several reasons. They tried to explain the significance of poetry in terms of the meanings of words. Richards' analytical thoroughness and comprehensiveness resulted from his experiments in the classroom. Words, according to Richards, have no fixed meaning; their sense is enriched by "neighbour words" and also by the contexts in which they have previously occurred. This is the full implication of what he calls the "interinanimation" of words. The significance of a word, he implies, can be gathered by what is called "an attitude of alert irrelevance."

He also suggests that the significance of a sentence is not realized by adding together the fixed meanings of words; rather words get their value from their togetherness and enter into infinitely subtler and more manifold relations among themselves. A sentence, to him "being the act of an organism, is itself an organism." Ambiguity, thus, is not a stylistic fault but an inevitable consequence of the powers of language and an indispensable means of poetic utterance. The poetic experience is more highly and delicately organized than ordinary experience.

William Empson, Richards' student, chose to highlight one aspect of poetry that is definable in terms of the medium. The poetic language is differentiated from the other languages by a certain attribute which Richards had first called "ambiguity." Empson occupied himself with exhibiting the complexities of response which ambiguity engenders in his daringly ingenious study *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Philip Wheelwright suggests that instead of "ambiguity," the better word would be "plurisignation," which is perhaps a more positive term to suggest the richness of meaning contained within a word.[1]

In *Seven Types of Ambiguity* Empson attempts to define the "difficulty" in arriving at the meaning of poetry, as "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions," has in it conditions for "ambiguity." This notion helped to characterise the terms like "irony," "tension," etc employed by the New Critics as tools for understanding the complex nature of poetic structure.

Irony, for the New Critics, is a term which brings together the tension between different intellectual or emotional forces existing within a verbal structure. It balances heterogeneous impulses within the text. For Cleanth Brooks it is a necessary condition of good poetry. The meaning of a poetic statement is "charged" or qualified by the context in which it appears, everything in the poem providing context for every other thing. Brooks calls this mutual constitution irony. In evaluating a poem, then, Richards says, "we are forced to raise the question as to whether the statement grows properly out of a context; whether it is 'ironical' – or merely shallow, glib, sentimental."[2]

Yvor Winters, another critic connected with the New Criticism distinguishes between the two basic ways in which the poet might represent his hero's emotions: by "motivating" the emotion after detailing the events which produced it; by defining the emotion through a symbol or series of analogies. In fact, Winters clearly adapts T. S. Eliot's useful distinction between emotive and objective correlative.

Another critic who has left a distinct impact upon the New Criticism is Kenneth Burke. He is concerned with right meanings. Burke's concept of language as dramatised rhetoric takes him to investigate language, which resulted in strange results harmonizing the sublime with the common place. He has shown the ways the mind works in the written word. He seems to agree with Richards that form is basic to the analysis of poetry and not merely a literary adjunct; information is a means and not an end; science is interested in facts whereas poetry is interested in aesthetic effects. While

generally agreeing on the nature of the distinctive properties of literature, Richards and the Formalists differed significantly in deciding on these properties. The Formalists believed that the properties are the inherent characteristics of literature; for Richards these properties are related to the human experience and value. The literary form was not important for Richards; what he was genuinely concerned with was analyzing the process of reading, reader's response to literary texts and evaluating the experience and responses of the readers. Criticism, then, for Richards is finding out "What gives the experience of reading a certain poem its value ? How is the experience better than another ?" [3]

Since art is concerned with the personal and the social aspect of our lives, critics of art/literature should have a theory of communication and theory of valuation. Richards has developed such a theoretical framework. In his *Principles of Literary Criticism* and *The Meaning of Meaning* Richards has provided a theoretical framework on the function of language. Language, according to him, functions in two different ways. The symbolic or referential function, the best example of which is the scientific texts, addresses the objective world without any display of emotion. The emotive function of language, on the other hand, evokes emotions and feelings through words which we associate with emotions. The emotive function of language is evident in literature, the shorthand of which, is poetry. Poetry, then, Richards says, is a "pseudo-statement" because, in it "the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense never arises." [4]

Richards feels that while reading poetry we don't usually see the word with the things it represents in an objective sense, poetry leads us

intuitively to areas which can only be felt. Poetry is therefore special because it has an aesthetic value brought out by the emotive use of language. In this way, Richards comes closer to the views of the Formalists so far as the aesthetic appeal of poetry is concerned, but he differs from them in his emphasis on the emotive use of language. Jakobson, however, associates the emotive with the "conative," which is different from the poetic use of language. Richards, unlike the Formalists, does not stress the distinction between the poetic and the ordinary discourse. He is more concerned with the difference between the poetic and referential language and stresses the emotive aspect of poetic language which, he says, differs in degree and not in kind from other emotive experiences. He says, "Man is not in any sense primarily an intelligence; he is a system of interests."[5] Our interests and impulses as social beings and as individuals contradict each other. Morality becomes a question of organising these contradictory desires to harmony and satisfaction because goodness, writes Richards, "is the exercise of impulses and the satisfaction of their appentencies."[6] "Appentency" is conscious or unconscious desires and these desires, Richards would say, are valuable in the degree in which they tend to reduce waste and frustrations."[7]

What makes the poetic experience different from other emotive experiences is that it organizes and orders contradicting emotions and impulses into a harmonious whole to the highest level. In our everyday life we tend to suppress some of our conflicting feelings, but poetry, Richards suggests, perpetuates "hours in the lives of exceptional people, when their control and command of experience is at its highest."[8] He says again, "Nearly all good poetry, is disconcerting."[9] This may sound contradictory, but

when we look at these two statements closely we find that Richards comes closer to the Formalist notion of defamiliarization without thinking in terms of the form but with experience because he is basically a humanist with a theory of value which is essentially a materialist one. He tries to see the relevance of poetry in terms of life. Poetry, he writes in *Science and Poetry,* is "capable of saving us."[10] Poetry tells us, "what to feel" and "what to do." Poetry, therefore, becomes a substitute for religion and philosophy.

Richards views the author-text-reader relationship in a broad theoretical framework. He gives a lot of importance to readers because of his strong conviction on the *experience* that art produces. The reader has to bring in the "relevant mental condition" corresponding to that of the author while reading a particular text. The activity of the reader and of the critic is then the same. Richards defines a poem as "the experience of the right kind a reader has when he peruses the verses."[11] The right kind of reader according to him, is the one who has the same emotional experience within him as does the poet while writing the poem. As Richards says, the right kind of the reader gathers "the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition."[12]

The literary text is simply a medium for conveying the experience of the author to his readers. The reader/critics should approach the text with the right attention. Richards believes that the right attention may be difficult to have, but it is not impossible. Richards' emphasis on the "reader" and the text as a medium for conveying the author's experience to the reader may seem quite old-fashioned in the context of contemporary literary theory's

emphasis on the independent existence of the text, but it is not a surprising idea while taking into account the entire context in which this idea is formulated.

It may be mentioned here that Richards' theory of communication has striking parallels with the Indian theory of *Sādhāraṇikaraṇa*. *Sādhāraṇikaraṇa* (transpersonalization) implies that the responsive reader has within him latent impressions of emotions experienced previously. These are known as *Purvavāsanā* (latent emotions). The *sthāyibhāvas* (emotions) lie dormant in the form of *vāsana* in his memory. When he reads or witnesses a clear representation of appropriate *vibhavas* (determinants), *anubhāvas* (physical effects) and *sancaribhāvas* (transitory mental state), these latent impressions are evoked and developed to such a pitch that they are realized in their universal form, devoid of personal or individual emotions. In this impersonalized state, the feelings are always pleasurable, and are enjoyed in the form of rasa, through an exuberance of *sattva-guṇa*.

Eliot was opposed to Richards's view of the emotive function of poetic language. He also dismissed the notion that poetry is a medium of communicating the poet's emotive experience to his readers. According to him, poetry is an escape from personality. "Poetry," he says, "is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."[13] It is through the "*objective correlative*," i.e., objectifying feelings and emotion indirectly through the description of things the poetic effect of a work of art is expressed.

The Sanskrit poeticians call this effect *rasa-dhvani*; *rasa* strikes the readers through the organized and patterned form of the poem. Poetry does not merely express emotions in their rawness. If it were so, a painful experience or tragedy would not have been enjoyed in the theatre. The process which transforms emotions into aesthetic pleasure (rasa) involves universalization and impersonalization.

Eliot admired the Metaphysical poets because they "incorporated their erudition into their sensibility."[14] So unlike Richards, Eliot believes that the experience of the reader and that of the author must be different. He says, "...what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author."[15]

Influenced by the humanistic, empiricist and organicist theory of I.A. Richards, the New Criticism began to focus on description and analysis in critical reading. Though quite close to the Formalist thought, the New Criticism seemed more influenced by T. S. Eliot. Eliot's essay "The Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) breaks a new ground in literary criticism and paves the way for the New Critical emphasis on close reading.

John Crowe Ransom in his book entitled *The New Criticism,* published in 1941, coined the "New Criticism" for literary theory and inaugurated a new trend in critical method. Two of the major writers of the movement, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, published jointly essays titled "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy" in the *Sewanee Review* in 1946 and 1949 respectively laying foundation for a theoretical

basis of criticism dealing with the specifically literary aspects of the text and expounding an alternative to the positivistic and biographical criticism.

Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that a literary text is an object of the public domain and not the private creation of an individual. So the criticism should be concerned with only what the text reveals. The historical context is important only to the extent it is intrinsic to the text. In this aspect theirs are similar to Richards' views regarding the restrictive nature of history. But these two New Critics are against Richards' view of poetry as a means of conveying experience of the author to his readers. They are more interested in studying the object with its features rather than focussing their attention on the effect of the object on the reader. To them, studying the effect of literature on the readers is a subjective thing, it is more important to distinguish between the effect and the "cognitive structure" of the poem. The aim of criticism should, therefore, be the study of meaning which gives it its objectivity.

Wimsatt begins his theory with Richards' principle of reconciling the opposites but moves on to a different direction in which the reconciliation does not take the reader's or author's mind into consideration. This reconciliation takes place within the intrinsic structure of the text. Like Wimsatt, Brooks is concerned with the structure of the poem as poem[16] and the difference between poetic discourse and ordinary discourse in terms their internal organisation. The poetic discourse, according to him, is coherent, in harmonizing the contradictory impulses, whereas in the ordinary discourse such a process does not occur. As Wimsatt puts it, the objective feature of poetry is characterized by "a wholeness of meaning established

through internally differentiated form, the reconciliation of diverse parts."[17] Coherence and complexity, according to Wimsatt, are two distinctive features of the poetic language. The meaning of poetry depends on how best the integration of the whole with its parts on one hand, and the integration of the different elements of the parts on the other hand, take place.

The New Critics agreed with the Russian Formalists and the Prague School critics in maintaining an objective perspective in criticism, including the notion of the author and the reader from the text and the importance of structure and inter-relatedness. But the New Critics' notion of structure and inter-relatedness was limited to the meaning only and did not include the various syntactic and semantic levels of the text which the Formalists had taken into consideration. Moreover, the New Critics were not much interested in the Formalist theory of defamiliarization, deviance etc. considered to be the yardstick for differentiating the poetic discourse from ordinary discourse. For the New Critics convergence within a text was more important than divergence or deviance from other texts.

Unlike the Formalists, New Critics were not much interested in literary innovation; hence they were not obsessed with the fetishization of the form as such. They were more concerned with the aspect of "meaning," which they had inherited from Richards. But while Richards' approach was materialistic, Wimsatt and Brooks' were mentalistic. Richards had seen meaning in terms of the words evoking feelings. Poetry, according to him, does not merely reflect / refer to things; it refers and relates to emotions. Wimsatt and Brooks addressed this issue differently. They agreed that poetic

language does not merely refer to things directly like scientific language, but it also does not relate to emotion, it has more to do with knowledge.

According to the New Critics, the characteristic feature of poetry consists in its organization of meaning as belonging to the public domain which the readers sharing the same cultural background can associate with. They emphasized more the public than the private domain of meaning. Wimsatt's and Brooks' idea of meaning seems to be "an uncomfortable mixture" of Richards' and Saussure's definition of meaning. While they agree with Saussure even without having read his work that meaning is a social convention which is arbitrarily fixed, they delimit this notion by relating the meaning to the poem's "reality." In this sense, they are closer to Richards. Coherence or associating meaning with the words of the text can be a mental activity. But ultimately the words are employed to enrich and enhance the reader's perspective and experience of the world. The coherence of literature takes us to the reality of the world. For Wimsatt and Brooks who are more like Richards, language / structure is not a prison-house, which is a closed system and takes us away from reality, but has a humanizing function. As Wimsatt says, "Poetry is a complex kind of verbal construction in which the dimension of coherence is by various techniques of implication greatly enhanced and thus generates an extra dimension of correspondence to reality, the symbolic or analogical."[18] The relation of art to life and reality is again reinforced in their jointly written *Literary Criticism: A Short History,* in which they say that art "ought to have the concreteness which comes from recognizing reality and including it."[19]

Wimsatt's and Brooks' views on poetry can be stated in this way: specific property of poetry is the reconciliation of opposite and conflicting impulses. Poetry harmonizes contradictory impulses by organizing the meanings in a coherent and objective way, which other types of discourse do not succeed in achieving. This organisation makes the poetic language different from other types of languages because of its metaphoricity. Wimsatt emphasizes metaphor because it is in metaphor, as he puts it, that "two clearly and substantially named objects... are brought into such a context that they face each other with fullest relevance and illumination..."[20] In spite of their insistence on "objectivity" of meaning, the New Critics did not look for the denotative meaning. It is only through connotative meanings that, they believed, the complexity of the poem is brought to the fore.

Wimsatt quotes a passage from Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" as an example of metaphor.[21] Though the comparison of the separation of the two lovers and the hammering of gold into a leaf-form is quite distinct, yet a series of connections can be established through this metaphor. Wimsatt believes that such connections are equally valid and justifiable in our real life experiences. As he puts it, "Poetry is that type of verbal structure where truth of reference or correspondence reaches a maximum degree of fusion with truth of coherence – or where external and internal relation are intimately mutual reflections."[22] In fact, Wimsatt believes, not only the isolated images in a poem can be seen as an example of metaphor, but even the whole narrative can act as metaphoric of a psychological process.[23] Wimsatt considers that good poetry is characterized

by 'iconic' properties of the verbal medium. By using the term 'iconic,' which he derives from the semeiotic theory of C.W. Morris, Wimsatt tries to identify the special quality of poetry from the different features of poetic language. Morris talks of two types of the sign, the iconic and the symbolic, and characterizes the iconic sign as "exhibiting in itself the properties of an object."[24]

Pictures or portraits are examples of iconic signs. Symbolic signs, on the other hand, are of purely conventional nature, like words standing for something predictable. For Wimsatt, poetry adds a new dimension to the "iconic or directly imitative powers of language."[25] So a disrupted sequence of words is an iconic representation of a disrupted / disturbed mind or emotional disorder. More significantly, "the metrical, syntactic, phonetic and semantic parallelism in poetic language iconically indicates a connection of meaning between the terms involved."[26] This reinforces the interlacing of disparate elements, creating the desired effect of synthesis.

Irony is an important concept in the New Critical scheme of work. For Wimsatt, irony is a "cognitive principle which shades off through paradox into the general principle of metaphor."[27] Brooks defines it as the "most general term that we have for the kind of qualification which the various elements in a context receive from the 'context'."[28] Thus in both the definitions the term "irony" is used in a broader sense than we usually associate its meaning with. Like Richards, the two critics use the term "irony" to refer to the reconciliation of opposites as part of the harmonizing process.

In such a broad definition, irony can include analogical and even paradoxical relationship, paradox involving conflicting elements in the statement. According to Brooks, irony is, "a unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude."[29] The use of irony in its overwhelming sense is a great contribution made by the New Critics for analysing poetry. It is a strategic term to explain that "the capacity of poetry is to resist or elude the attempts to reduce poetry to the form of a conventional prosaic statement." Brooks' essay "The Heresy of the Paraphrase"[30] highlights the problem of reducing poetry to a paraphrase, which is not the proper way of studying poetry as it ignores the ironic/ paradoxical potential in the language employed.

I. A. Richards was the first among the modern critics to take a serious view of the use of language in poetry by examining its comprehensiveness. This comprehensiveness includes an interest in the behaviour of language in an aesthetic situation. He discriminates between two uses of language: the language of the propositional discourse; and the language of emotive discourse. He views the poetic language as a vehicle for transferring emotional states from the poet to the reader.

Ransom conceives of poetry as a verbal artifact which is restructured in the syntax of images. In speaking of image as the language of poetry, Ransom frees himself from Richards' conception of poetic language as mere referent, emphasising the cognitive value of figurative language. Here Ransom obviously hints at the element of texture which he believes constitutes the poem's aesthetic aspects. Texture is a pattern of images.

Ransom has not, of course, developed a specific concept of the image. But in speaking of the historical order of experience culminating in cognition through images, he at least frees himself from the kind of confusion implied in Eliot's phrase "objective correlative."

As Ransom developed as a critic, he enlarged his concept of language in order to come to grips with the complex nature of the poetic act and form. One of the indispensable technical devices in poetry, Ransom says, is the use of "figurative language for its definitive sort of utterance."[31] Among the multitude of such tropes that the poets take recourse to metaphor is the most important one. He continues, "Metaphor is the equation of the human action to that of some natural object; the object really is extraneous to the human action, but it is made to involve in that action any way, which in effect is to humanize."[32]

The image, in addition to involving itself in the reconstitution of experience as metaphor, suggests "that the object is perceptually or physically remarkable, and we had better attend to it."[33] Metaphor is not merely an object of analogy with the sensory perception possible; it is conceived as more than a mere analogy in Ransom's scheme of tropes. The New Critical position pleads for metaphor a status that envisages a complete integration of perception into the object.

I. A. Richards' exalted notion of metaphor challenges the Aristotelian implication that "metaphor is something special and exceptional in the use of language, a deviation from its normal mode of working, instead of the omnipresent principle of all its free action."[34] Richards points out that the

"processes of metaphor in language, the exchanges between the meanings of words which we study in explicit verbal metaphors, are super-imposed upon a perceived world which is itself a product of earlier or unwitting metaphor."[35]

Richards defines metaphor in terms of tenor and vehicle; the tenor is the "underlying idea or principal subject which the vehicle or figure means."[36] The tenor is that which is illuminated; the vehicle is that which illuminates tenor. Tenor is an abstraction while vehicle is concrete in its elucidation. Moreover, in Richards' understanding of the relation between word, concept, and thing the concept or "reference" lies between word and thing in a complex cluster of associations. Thus a metaphor is not simply a substitution of words or comparison of qualities but "a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts."[37]

As an important constitutive element in poetry, metaphor is a manner of speech that entitles the poet to realize the particularity, the contingent aspect, of an experience in terms of an identity between the human perception and the objective reality, by endowing "the natural object with a human sentence."

Metaphor is a middle term between the story at the expanded end and the symbol at the compressed end. In a strict dictionary definition, metaphor is one of the four tropes, the others being synecdoche, metonymy and irony. It is defined as the use of a word or a phrase denoting one kind of object or idea in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them. A metaphor is different from a simile in the sense

that a metaphor is a compressed simile. The distinction is not merely fixed in terms words used but lies in the fact that similes isolate the likeness in virtue of the things compared whereas metaphors are open-ended and depend on the readers for isolating the likeness. Metaphor is like a nucleus to which indeterminate numbers of particles are attached: a tone to which a not quite random series of overtones responded; a sound that echoed from some surfaces but not from others. A metaphor, in this sense, is more implicit, more multivalent, less selective and less abstract. It awaits the reader's participation for its fulfilment. So it is more philosophical, leisurely, contemplative rather than being related to action.

Poetry works through the unique principle of suggestion, implicit in a metaphor. The importance of suggestion (vyañjanā) in poetry has been widely recognized. The aim of poetry is to capture reality, whether metaphysical or empirical, through its semantic multiplicity-in-unity, and also through its various lines of association. In poetic language, the possibilities of the metaphoric use of language are exploited to the maximum. Properly controlled, metaphor achieves its distinctive, unique value in poetry. Richards distinguishes between metaphor as equivalent to language in general and metaphor as defined in a more limited sense. All languages are metaphorical in a broad sense because to speak referentially at all there is the need to "sort."

Metaphor is closely linked with the symbol. The New Critics redefined the symbol and accorded it a major role in poetry. Some regarded the symbol as a strong form of metaphor. Symbolic imagination, they suggested, mediates between the concept and the object and helps in

obtaining the fullness of meaning. This faculty therefore is an agent that aids in resolving the antimonies in a poem by bringing the state of tension into a balance. Tate suggests that symbolic imagination is reminiscent of the Coleridgean notion of primary imagination. Roland Bartel has, however, brought out the difference between symbol and metaphor in clear terms: "A symbol expands language by substitution, a metaphor by comparison and interaction. A symbol does not ask a reader to merge two concepts but rather to let one thing suggest another."[38]

Paul Ricoeur employs symbol to designate signs, whose intentional texture calls for a reading of another meaning in the first, literal and immediate meaning. The absence of a definite second term tends to produce an element of ambiguity in the symbol which the New Critics have cited as a source of additional richness.

Much of the French New Criticism is symbolist. Roland Barthes pleads for a complete liberty of symbolist interpretation. Edgar Allan Poe drew on Coleridge and seemed very closely to anticipate Baudelaire's views. Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry all shared their distrust of inspiration and of nature. They preserved the cognitive and magical powers of language which seems to have been completely lost in the avant-grade movements like futurism, surrealism, expressionism etc.

In relation to the French symbolist poetry and thought, an image with the power of evoking particular emotions, moods, or synaesthetic relations is known as a symbol. It is an image which suggests an indefinite and

ambiguous idea or thing. Todorov places all indirect discursive meaning under the term "verbal symbolism." In this sense, all forms of indirection like allegory and tropes are instances of symbolism.

The symbol is usually distinguished both from metaphor and allegory. The distinction between symbolism from allegory is of recent origin. The distinction, says Goethe, is judgemental. He says that "there is a great difference whether the poet seeks the particular for the universal or sees the universal in the particular. Out of the first method arises allegory, where the particular serves only as an example of the universal; the latter procedure, however, is really the nature of poetry; it speaks forth a particular, without thinking of the universal or pointing to it."[39]

In a more restricted sense, symbolism is understood to be a use of signs that points beyond routine or literal senses or meanings. Philip Wheelwright sums up the use of symbol in this sense in *The Burning Fountain*: "...it is enough for our purposes that we understand a symbol as that which means or stands for something more than (not necessarily separate from) itself, which invites consideration rather than over action, and which characteristically (although not perhaps universally) involves an intention to communicate."[40] An alternative formulation is that of Paul Ricoeur: "I define 'symbol' as any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first."[41] Coleridge's division of allegory and symbolism is similar to that of Ricoeur's:

> Now an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from the objects of the senses... On the other hand a Symbol... is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General; above all by the translucence of the Eternal through the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.[42]

Coleridge, as we know, had influenced the New Critics in many ways. By emphasizing the importance of symbolism, he suggests that the language of poetry is always charged with the force of symbolism. By according the importance of symbol to the text's structure, the New Critics seemed to ignore that the text was a "living tissue" of its manifold contexts. Everything that went into it — "the mind that composed it, the language that articulated it, the literature that preceded it, the social moment that conditioned it, the generations that had put their mark on it, the minds that received it — was flickering, prismatic, and unstable."[43] This is a major criticism against the New Critical over-indulgence in the text's symbolic structure at the expense of its spatial and temporal contexts.

The analogy between a poem and the growth of a plant is central to the New Critics which was the consequence of Richards' influence. Cleanth Brooks' and R. P. Warren's Introduction to *Understanding Poetry* elucidates this analogy: "The relationship among the elements in a poem is... all important, and it is not a mechanical relationship but one which is far more

intimate and fundamental. If we should compare a poem to the make-up of some physical object it ought not to a wall but to something organic like a plant."[44] Wimsatt argues that the organic metaphor is frequently carried too far when it is asserted that everything in a poem is organically related to everything else.

Murray Krieger, while working within the New Critical methodology, underscores the practical difficulties of trying to remain totally within the world of the poem in this way. He observes in his *The New Apologists* that "on the one hand there is the need to maintain the context as self-contained; that is, the need to keep out any meaning not necessiated by the organic and closed system of mutual interrelations among the terms which make up the context.... On the other hand, however, there is the difficulty – indeed, if language is considered primarily as referential, the impossibility – of consistently maintaining an unqualified organism."[45]

For all their lip service to a Coleridgean idea of organic form, the practice of the New Critics betrayed surprisingly a mechanical notion of form. Paradox and ambiguity serve not as elements of internal drama, diversity and self-contradiction but as elements of a transcendental unity, a conservative principle of order, which cannot be explained in terms of organicism.

One of the major weaknesses in modern literary criticism is either to consider poetry as affective in terms of emotions and feelings, or in terms of socio-scientific ideals. Both these approaches are equally reductive and therefore hostile to the very spirit of poetry, which is both formal and affective in a dynamic relationship.

It is apparent that Richards' original interests were aesthetics and psychology; therefore, his most influential contributions to criticism have been attempts to define the validity of literary value-judgements and to assess the reading process itself in the quasi-scientific terms of communication theory. But, as Tate comments, Richards was unduly pre-occupied with "the fallacy of communication." But other critics were following the findings of Freud and Jung to explain the phenomenon of art. Kate Fordon declared in his book *Esthetic* that all aesthetic speculations as a part of advanced psychology proposed a view of art as expression of emotion. The New Critics have revolted against this whole tradition of psychologistic criticism because this tradition has not considered a poem as an autonomous being or a form of verbal reality.

For the New Critics form is a timeless reality. They not only consider form as the poem's identity, but also think of this identity as possessing a cognitive value distinct from the norms of other kinds of knowledge. Philosophers like John Dewey, while making emphatic assertion about the inseparability of form from content, finally values a poem in terms of non-aesthetic standards. The New Critics, on the other hand, declare that the value of poetry is inherent in its form.

A poem has no ambitions to provide remedies to the human problems. It, as Cleanth Brooks suggests, "diagnoses rather than remedies··· a remedy involves an overt action whereas a diagnosis is still close to pure contemplation, which is the proper realm of art."[46] Thus the value of a poem does not lie in its social function but in its self-defining totality.

The notion of structure in Ransom conforms to the New Critical emphasis on the totality as a closure. Ransom uses a number of inter-changeable terms to describe what Tate calls "literal statement" and "intensive meaning." His idea of "structure" suggests that in every poem there is an aspect which can be stated in prose, an element which any prose reader can discover by an immediate paraphrase.[47] Texture, on the other hand, is described variously as increment, superfluity and residue. Texture provides a "private character" to the poem. His notions of *structure* and *texture* are developed in the following statement:

> A poem is a *logical structure* having a *local texture*. These terms have been actually though not systematically employed in literary criticism. To my imagination, they are architectural. The walls of my room are obviously structural; the beams and boards have a function; so does the plaster, which is the visible aspect of the final wall. The plaster might have remained naked, aspiring to no characters, and purely functional. But actually it has been painted, receiving colour; or it has been papered, receiving colour and design, though these have no structural value; or perhaps it has been hung with tapestry, or with paintings, for "decoration". The paint, the paper, the tapestry are texture. It is logically unrelated to structure.[48]

Ransom evidently considers texture as the aesthetic aspect of the poem having no functional role in providing utility or moral principles. But he does not explain satisfactorily how the two elements, structure and texture, are integrated into the single unity of a poem. He remarks: "The

poem actually continues to contain its ostensible substance which is not fatally diminished from its prose state that is its logical core or paraphrase. The rest of the poem is an *x*, which we are to find."[49] This statement implies that structure and texture are two separable entities, that texture is super-added, "an increment," to the other, the two being "logically unrelated." It is this unresolved dualism in Ransom's concept of poetic form that leads Murray Krieger to conclude that the concept falls short of an organic view of form. Krieger suggests that if the structure is the logical core, it is a pre-determined presence which is given an "increment" or decorated with "logical detail." Ransom seems to ignore the functional role of texture in providing particularity of context and individual significance to an experience.

Ransom was aware of the confusion arising out of his structure-texture formulation of the poetic act and seemed to have realized that the structure-texture confusion was due to the inadequacy of the term "texture" which is a "flat and inadequate figure for the vivid and felt part of the poem which we associate peculiarly with poetic language."[50] Therefore, he chose the term "organism" which he saw as a composite product of three aspects — head, heart and feet. He maintained that the poem is a joint product of three individual languages spoken by three persistent speakers: the head speaking the intellectual language, the heart the affective language and feet the rhythmical language. Correspondingly, the poem consists of intellectual action, affective action and the rhythmic action. The language of affection and the rhythmical language can both be seen as a broadening of the concept of texture, while the intellectual language seems to correspond to the idea of structure.

The assumption of the literary critics has traditionally been that the language of poetry is the *language of feeling*, not the language of epistemology. Ransom conceives of texture in terms of the language of feeling which includes the two elements of affection and rhythm. Structure, which seemed passive, implies intellectual action signifying more assertive and positive presence in the poem.

While seeking new forms, the New Criticism elaborated a complete theory of literary ontology which, among other things, views the literary work as being a linguistic construct, using a special language that differentiates it from ordinary and scientific language. This special use has been termed as irony, paradox, texture etc. The New Critics have sought to explore the literary language in terms of such tropes as ambiguity, paradox, gesture or tension.

Their distinction of poetic language from scientific language is similar to the Indian theory of art which finds the essence of poetic language in *alaṁkāra* (figuration), *dhvani* (suggestion), *rasa* (emotive element), *vakrokti* (obliguity) etc.

The Romantic doctrine of Blake, Coleridge, Poe, Mallarmé and Yeats propounding the essence of poetic language in suggestion is similar to the one articulated by the Dhvani theorists. Both had adopted different methodologies but converged on this point. The Dhvani theorists lacked only the concept of the symbol, which is germane to the theory in the West.

Notes:

[1]. Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1954) 101.

[2]. I. A. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1967) 732.

[3]. I. A. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism.* 734.

[4]. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism.* (London: Kegan Paul, 1929) 277.

[5]. I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry.* (London: Kegan Paul, 1926) 21.

[6]. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism.* 44.

[7]. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism,* 45.

[8]. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism,* 22.

[9]. Richards, *Practical Criticism,* 254.

[10]. Richards, *Science and Poetry,* 82.

[11]. Richards, *Science and Poetry,* 10.

[12]. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism,* 178.

[13]. T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920) 52-3.

[14]. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972) : 286.

[15]. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1955) 130.

[16]. Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947) 108.

[17]. W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (New York: University of Kentucky Press, 1954) 236.

[18]. W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 241.

[19]. Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (London: Routledge, 1957) 743.

[20]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 149.

[21]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 147-8.

[22]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 14-9.

[23]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 85-6.

[24]. C. W. Morris, *Writings on the General Theory of Signs* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) 37.

[25]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 115.

[26]. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 86.

[27]. Wimsatt and Brooks, 747.

[28]. Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, 191.

[29]. Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, 189.

[30]. Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, 176-196.

[31]. Ransom, *The World's Body* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana StateUP, 1968) 132-33.

[32]. Ransom, "New Poets and Old Muses," *American Poetry at Mid-Century* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1958) 11.

[33]. Ransom, *The World's Body,* 142.

[34]. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford UP 1936) 90.

[35]. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 108-109.

[36]. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 97.

[37]. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* 94.

[38]. Roland Bartel, *Metaphors and Symbols: Forays into Language,* (Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English 1983) 61.

[39]. Hazard Adams, *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic.* (Tallahassee: Florida State UP 1983) 52-3. Qtd.

[40]. Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (Bloomington : Indiana UP 1954)24.

[41]. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations,* D. Ihde Evanston, ed., (Illinois: Northwestern UP 1974) 12-13.

[42]. Paul Ricoeur, 30.

[43]. Morris Dickstein, "The State of Criticism," *Partisan Review,* 48.1 (1983) 12.

[44]. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (New York: Henry Holt 1938) 19.

[45]. Murray Krieger, *The New Apologists for Poetry* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1956) 135.

[46]. Cleanth Brooks, "Implications of an Organic Theory of Poetry," *Literature and Belief*, ed., M. H. Abrams (New York: Columbia UP, 1958) 75.

[47]. Ransom, *The Intent of the Critic*, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1941) 89, 91.

[48]. Ransom, *The Intent of the Critic*, 91.

[49]. Ransom, *The Intent of the Critic*, 86.

[50]. Ransom, "The Concrete Universal: Observations on the Understanding of Poetry," *The Kenyon Review*, 16 (1954) 559.