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## Affective Criticism: Theories of Emotion and Synaesthesia In the Experience of Literature

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AFFECTIVE CRITICISM: THEORIES OF EMOTION AND SYNAESTHESIS  
IN THE EXPERIENCE OF LITERATURE

BY

Edward Jayne

A dissertation submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of State  
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Dissertation Abstract:

Affective Criticism: Theories of Emotion and Synaesthesia  
in the Experience of Literature.

by Edward Jayne

The "Affective Fallacy" labeled by Wimsatt and Beardsley and denigrated by an entire generation of critics must be restored to legitimacy as probably the most fundamental principle of literature. The effect of a text takes precedence over the objectivity of its "intra-referential" content since this content is meaningful only to the extent that it produces this effect. The concerted effort of formalists to deny or somehow bypass this self-evident axiom has been unique in the history of criticism and may be traced to a variety of causes, not the least of which has been a conservative isolation of literature from its social context. But the exclusion of politics from criticism has been itself a political act, protecting literary "value" by refining it almost beyond human experience.

The outlook of I. A. Richards has been of particular interest because he sought to justify this escapism within affective theory. First employing an "impulse" theory of psychology and then a "projective" theory derived from Coleridge he defined literary response as synaesthesia, the refined balance of emotions which is self-sufficient and exclusive of overt behavior. "Intra-referential" content was thus removed one degree from the text to our "incipient response," a bundle of mutually energized impulses inhibiting both

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praxis and the stock response. However, Richards also investigated the "sign situation," the total matrix of experience signified by language, and he proposed that literary response involves the "choice of the whole personality." Both these concepts may be invoked to restore praxis, ethics, and even propaganda to the domain of literary response. Unfortunately, Richards has shifted to a more clearly formalist perspective in his later criticism. He has truncated the paradigm of information theory to exclude "speaker" and "hearer" except as the abstractions "source" and "destination," bringing him right back, again, really, to the "incipient response," though now mathematically formulated.

It is my contention that "speaker" and "hearer" are both vitally important to the "act" of literature, and that their relationship must be established within a dynamic theory of affective criticism. Richards' "choice of the whole personality" is a useful first principle, but properly interpreted it involves unconscious displacement, archetypal embodiment, social responsibility, and other human dimensions requiring at least ancillary concern with "reductionist" critical approaches (Psychoanalytic, Marxist, etc.) I additionally propose that the paradigm of information theory may be stratificationally rearranged to establish a hierarchy from (1) "objective immediacy" to (2) our pre-verbal organization of experience, (3) its symbolization in language, and (4) its further refinement in the literary act. All these levels must be activated for literature to be meaningful,

contrary to the formalist hypothesis bestowing "objective immediacy" upon the text, bypassing our fullest resources of experience, often even of language.

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24 Sept 1970

Dear Mr Jayne

I am just back from 3 months in South America to find your Chapter awaiting me. Thanks for the two copies.

I hope my long failure to reply has not seemed discouraging. Perhaps you guessed that I would be likely to be away somewhere.

Anyway, I want to be most encouraging. Yours seems to me by far the best of any of the attempts to unravel my writings that I have so far seen. I have not as yet had time to do more than broadly take in what you are doing. But I will take the earliest opportunity (in the next week or so) to jot down comments - using one of the two copies.

I am in a bit of a spin at the moment taking in 3 months of slack - have not as yet managed even to find some uncrumpled Notepaper with best wishes.

Sincerely

J.A. Richards

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Chapter One:

A Polemic Introduction

"Let us restrict our inquiry to the text itself," the questioning student of literature has too often been admonished. His professor has then discreetly shifted the topic of discussion back to the business of close textual explication, and he himself has sunk ashamed with the recognition that his contribution once again transgressed the discipline of criticism. This has been our common misfortune in English classes for the last twenty-five years; and though the search has begun for alternatives, rigid tenets of textual explication survive in many conservative departments, where they have even been regarded a sacred professional responsibility. The professor must expertly steer his class discussion from one end of a text to the other, a sequence usually coincidental with the fifty minute hour, and all must end on the tonic with a four or five minute coda of broad thematic appeal. The same sequence must occur, more or less, in the articles he publishes, and his professional style must epitomize his method, an unsettled mixture of timidity and authoritarianism, irony and scientific detachment. He seems a twentieth century counterpart to Trollope's vicar seeking preferment, but his ambition is now tenure, with academia, not art (as Malraux claimed) having replaced religion. Exegesis has shifted from the Bible to approved secular texts of respected modern poets and critics. When undisciplined students have been diverted from this



enlightenment, then fallacies and heresies have been invoked as if they were sacred commandments.

These fallacies and heresies compose a formidable list of prohibitions. Poe's "didactic heresy" (the flaw of the too-obvious message) and Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy" (the flaw of the excessive use of personification) are relatively simple holdovers from the nineteenth century. To these have been added an impressive list of new flaws to be avoided. The "paraphrastic heresy" proposed by A.C. Bradley is the principle that good poetry may not be adequately paraphrased, and (its corollary) that which can be is not good poetry.<sup>1</sup> This fallacy was substantially adapted by Cleanth Brooks as the "heresy of paraphrase" in The Well Wrought Urn,<sup>2</sup> while the "formalist heresy" also proposed by Bradley, signifying the mistaken emphasis upon art for its own sake, has been conveniently neglected. I.A. Richards proposed a number of fallacies in The Meaning of Meaning, including the "Ultraquistic subterfuge," using the same word but with different meanings, the "Phonetic subterfuge," the confusion of pattern in meaning with that in sound, the "Hypostatic subterfuge," the concretization of such abstractions as virtue, peace, love, and democracy as if they actually exist, and "psittacism," the response to an idea invariably in a fixed sequence or context. He also labeled words commonly misused as "mendicants," those not fully understood, and "nomads," those with a vague meaning that may fit any context.<sup>3</sup> Richards later proposed the "fallacy of vulgar

packaging," the simplistic affective notion that the experience of the poet is delivered in toto via poetry into the experience of his readers.<sup>4</sup> Allen Tate proposed the "fallacy of communication," the arousal of an affective state resulting from an "irresponsible" denotation of words, as well as the "fallacy of mere denotation," the neglect of connotations in poetry.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Yvor Winters proposed among many problems of modern poetry the "fallacy of imitative form," the mistaken belief that the form of poetry must (or even can) reflect the pattern of events it describes.<sup>6</sup> With this many fallacies in the offing (and more), narrow has been the way for both poets and critics to good poetry.

But by far the two most important prohibitions for New Criticism have been the Intentional and Affective Fallacies proposed by Wimsatt and Beardsley.<sup>7</sup> If we heed the Intentional Fallacy, we must isolate the interpreted poem from its original act of creation. The poet has failed if our attention is diverted from the text itself to extraneous biographical information about his life and experience. His poem should be self-sufficient with independent formal validity after it has been perfected and launched into the public realm. In this very limited sense it is a public act because it is an artefact of language, the universal currency of society. The biographical element may be acceptably brought under control in the role of the dramatic speaker, the poet's persona, or in his obtrusive (but controlled) identity as a narrator. It may be even further purified in the cultivation

of his and his readers' sensitivity to tone; but the "gross body of life," which Wimsatt reluctantly admits lies behind every poem, can and should be ignored, so claim the conventional proponents of textual explication.

Likewise, the Affective Fallacy is the emphasis upon one's response to poetry rather than the poem itself independent of this response. This fallacy may involve simply the shivers that Emily Dickinson claimed to feel upon reading good poetry or the complex integration of experience defined by I.A. Richards. The proper response must be our appreciative recognition of formal self-sufficiency, not the spurious and usually excessive emotions we might mistakenly confuse with this recognition. Aesthetic pleasure is a matter of interpretation, or to invoke Ransom's position, of cognition, our intellectual grasp of a poem's meaning with our pleasure in the gratification of having understood it. Avoiding both fallacies, the basic concern of the critic should be neither the poet nor his readers, but the technique of poetry in its relationship with content as experience wrought in language. Poetry is indeed a human act--this Wimsatt concedes--but it is an act which should be removed from, (1) those who perform it (poets), and (2) those upon whom it is performed (critics and readers). We are asked to shake off our personalities to attune our minds more perfectly to the New Critical job of explication.

Needless to say, critics such as Tate, Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, usually identified as New Critical apologists,

have avoided trapping themselves in this dogma. They have been far too flexible to have advocated such a formal reductionism. Instead they have acknowledged the human factor in literature, but with an emphasis as much as possible upon the objective text and its dispassionate explication. Allen Tate's theory of "tension" in which "extension" complements "intension" to give poetry its external reference at least provides an aesthetic category for experience, however deemphasized.<sup>8</sup> Robert Stallman has claimed that Tate's theory "squares" with Middleton Murry's pronouncement: "Art is autonomous, and to be pursued for its own sake, precisely because it comprehends the whole of human life; because it has reference to a more perfect human morality than any other activity of man."<sup>9</sup> Formalism is thus transcended (for Murry, if not Tate) with the paradox that art is autonomous because of its perfection in not being autonomous, an argument with perhaps more aesthetic appeal than consistency.

Cleanth Brooks would seem to have more clearly committed himself to a formalist position, especially in his 1951 article, "The Formalist Critic," in which he proclaimed a manifesto of three principles for criticism: (1) that in a successful work, form and content cannot be separated, (2) that form is meaning, and (3) that literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic.<sup>10</sup> All of these principles combined would seem to reduce literary experience to form, with rhetorical figuration exclusively representing the dynamics of consciousness.

But he conceded in a later article that values (which do have his approval in literature) are "rooted in" or at least "accompanied by, the expression of emotion," though of course he preferred "to stress the aspect of value." He also admitted that there is a grain of truth in Winter's argument that every poem makes a moral judgment, though asserting that there seems to be "no need of collapsing the ethical and aesthetic realms."<sup>11</sup> Ethics and aesthetics may be "collapsed," Brooks reluctantly acknowledged, but he chose not to do so himself. Having made these concessions, he can hardly be pinned down to a rigid formalism despite his more doctrinaire pronouncements earlier.

W.K. Wimsatt made the same accommodation with human experience using an ingenious metaphysical argument: "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."<sup>12</sup>

In other words, formal coherence in literature refers to experience because it correctly duplicates the coherence we find in life, a fairly convincing explanation, though somewhat reminiscent of that quoted above by Middleton Murry.

In Literary Criticism: A Short History, by both Brooks and Wimsatt, the two seem to have mellowed even further. They propose, "One of the main lessons of critical history would seem, indeed, to be that the stress of literary theory must fall on the experience (subjective and emotive) rather than

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on the what, the object of value so far as that is outside any experiencing subject." This is a remarkable concession to the affective fallacy invented and labeled by Wimsatt himself. Their conversion is blandly explained with the argument: "Poetry is a kind of reality refracted through subjective responses. This refraction itself is an area of reality."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the reality of poetry is its "refraction," an interpretation of the reality that constitutes our experience. This acknowledgement brings Brooks and Wimsatt a considerable distance from their earlier formalist purity, if indeed their theories were ever "purely" formulated.

The problem is with their zealous followers, the converts and epigones who have simplified their ambivalences and ingenious concessions to rigid guidelines that entirely abolish whatever transgresses the Intentional and Affective Fallacies. These critics (and their following among classroom practitioners) have distilled content to become "value" complementing form, and reduced doctrine, affirmation, and all shades of experience to manageable objectifications such as irony, ambiguity, tension, texture, and internal consistency. They have atomized, reified, and rarified experience so it might lend itself more clearly to formal explication. They have also involuted reference in literature (what the poet shares with his readers on an equalitarian basis) to become "intra-referential," the formal interaction of components exclusively referring to each other, a context the poet may autocratically dictate upon his readers. Eliseo

Vivas has approvingly described this authoritarian "intra-referential" function in strictly mathematical language as "a discreet and closed system of mutually interrelated terms."<sup>14</sup> Murray Krieger has likewise demanded an "autonomy of poetic language," to prevent a poem from functioning referentially: "To allow the poem to function referentially is to break the context. It is to allow the poem to point outside itself and thus to lead me into the world of what meaning had been for me before I came to the poem; which is to say that I would be released from the control of the poetic context and, unhappy parolee, I would be returned to the uninspiring familiarities of the workaday world . . ." <sup>15</sup> The poem must be interpreted as a unique, non-referential context which "controls" us from above, an artistic imposition safe from ordinary "workaday" experience. Its unavoidable referential content, the chaff of poetry, must be disregarded as much as possible.

Joseph Frank has proposed another ingenious argument to justify this emphasis upon literary context. He claimed that the language of poetry is "reflexive" in its "meaning relationships" so we must suspend the processes of individual references in their temporal sequence that they might be grasped in a simultaneous spatial context. This spatialization emphasizes the "intra-referential" function of language to the deemphasis (though not exclusion) of its ordinary references."<sup>16</sup> Roman Jakobson uses virtually the same argument in his proposal of two axes, of contiguity (sequential

and similarity (referential), with poetry imposing one on the other, an argument we shall take up in more detail in Chapter Six. Though these arguments might be valid as a matter of degree, the dimension of space obviously cannot entirely replace that of time, especially in poetry, as Lessing convincingly demonstrated two hundred years ago. In the terms proposed by Joseph Frank, though, this has been exactly the purpose of formalists such as Vivas and Krieger, who have wanted to replace process with "context," a substitute excluding the human experience commonly shared by all.

For dedicated New Critics, literature thus becomes objective in the sense that it itself is the proper object of our interpretation, rather than mediating an interpretation of human experience for us. This bias not only tells us how to submit ourselves to the authority of a text, but also selects for us the texts to which we most profitably might pay this allegiance. Poetry has been preferred to fiction because of its tighter formal coherence, while poets and novelists with a formal bias have been preferred to those who emphasized a realistic (or surrealist) depiction of life. Donne and Keats have been preferred to Spenser and Shelley, Austen and James to Dickens and Dreiser. Whatever texts depended upon exterior contexts for their interpretation, whether biography, psychology, history, or politics, have been rejected for their "ulterior purpose," a "separable content" which might be an invitation to non-literary "reductionism," for example psychoanalysis and Marxism. Any critical



epistemology has accordingly been rejected (or, more likely, has languished unexamined) which might demonstrate that all content of literature is "separable," first displaced (with modifications) from the context of the poet's ideas, values, and experience to the poem itself, and then (again with modifications) to a relatively new context in the reader, who must actively recreate the poem from the fund of his own experience. Any critical epistemology has also been ignored that might show all experience of literature to be necessarily reductionist, imposing the reader's re-creation upon the poet's creativity to arrive at a matrix of insight, an intersection of experience involving a necessarily unique response.<sup>18</sup> Instead, the unexamined common assumption has been that a text constitutes an immutable objective truth accessible to textual explication and approaching absolute identity in its competent interpretation. Unique and idiosyncratic interpretations have been considered deviations from this ideal, usually vulgar excursions into irrelevant issues.

By about 1950 this New Critical objective to reduce literature to questions of formal coherence ceased being exclusively the preoccupation of independent critics and became codified and then, inevitably, institutionalized. This transition was accomplished, as Cleanth Brooks proposed in his Foreword to Stallman's anthology, by books such as The Armed Vision, by Stanley Edgar Hyman (1948), The Importance of Scrutiny, by Eric Bentley (1948), and Stallman's

anthology itself, Critiques and Essays in Criticism (1949).<sup>19</sup> The Well Wrought Urn, published by Brooks in 1947 must be added to this list as well as his immensely influential text written earlier in collaboration with Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (1938), and the college anthology, Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, edited by Schorer, Miles, and McKenzie, published in 1948. These histories and anthologies brought a variety of critical perspectives, earlier considered random and occasional, into a coherent aesthetic outlook. Moreover, they made this outlook available to every college sophomore in the country. Formalism (justified as classicism) had been first proposed by T.E. Hulme, Pound, and Eliot as an elitest aesthetics, but now it became democratized, taught in every college English course.

A new objective emerged beyond the wildest ambitions of Ransom, Tate, and Brooks (or even of Hyman and Stallman), to make criticism a science. If a foundation for criticism could be established in objective, verifiable principles of textual explication, the argument ran, then criticism could become a genuine discipline instead of an amateurish pastime. The text would be treated as an empirical body of facts, and criticism an assortment of hypotheses tested by these facts. The art of criticism would become scientific and, who knows, perhaps as influential as other sciences have been upon modern values. Most critics and scholars of this persuasion would have avoided so blatant a suggestion of positivism,

whose scepticism and mathematical rigour generally offended them, but, more than they would have admitted, they shared its concern with precision, testable validity, objectification of data, close observation, and standardization of language. In effect they wanted to establish a "discipline" in the realm of human experience free from subjective bias. Richards had proposed these objectives throughout his career, even as late as 1935, when he said in Coleridge on Imagination, " . . .that the theory of literary analysis is at an extremely interesting point in its development, on the point of making, through experiment, those contacts with actuality that would transform it into a science, and a science from which very important practical utilities may be expected to result."<sup>20</sup> He claimed in the same context that good theories at least protect us from worse. Though rejecting the "scientism" of Richards, Murray Krieger shared his views upon the scientific purpose of criticism:

. . .the dedicated literary man is cursed with a rather curious and, he may like to think, old-fashioned empiricism. It is one which is dull and dogged. It requires that theoretical statements about poetics, if he is to appreciate them as relevant to his interests, must have immediate reference to the facts of his experience with poetry. It may be expressive of an unscientific bias in him that he feels constitutionally obliged to ignore more general investigations into such realms as those of psychology and semantic analysis unless, as they rarely are, they

are centered about what he feels to be the peculiar powers of poetry in his constant experiencing of it. This fact of his poetic experience is for him the inescapable starting point of all theorizing; he clings to it as surely and as relentlessly as does the scientist to his laboratory-controlled facts.<sup>21</sup>

Here Krieger himself seems to have fallen victim to the affective fallacy, but he paid little more than lip service to his axiom of experience. He was trying to establish the experience of poetry as an empirical basis for the objective and systematic study of its form.

Perhaps the most remarkable manifesto for scientific objectivity was the "Polemical Introduction" to Anatomy of Criticism, by Northrop Frye, first published as an article in 1949.<sup>22</sup> Frye proposed making criticism into what amounts to a humanistic positivism, if this does not seem a contradiction of terms. To reaffirm the necessity of eliminating the roles of the poet and his readers, Frye extended the theory of fallacies by attacking the conception of literature as communication rather than artefact. He also assigned a new fallacy, of "determinism," to all supposedly "rhetorical" efforts to find a causal relationship between criticism and modes of inquiry proper to other fields and without direct bearing upon textual interpretation. He emphatically rejected reductionist approaches which are internally consistent, synthetic, and based upon a model of some kind, for example the Freudian and Marxist approaches, since they

were to be regarded as "extra-literary schematism." He similarly discouraged value judgments and questions of taste that could not be objectively verified. None of these could be fitted in a systematic theory with the authority of science and structure and permanence of what might seem a modern counterpart to scholastic philosophy.

What Frye advocated was establishing a discipline devoted to literary interpretation alone within a uniquely critical taxonomy. Toward this end he proposed the search for a central hypothesis in criticism, one of "total coherence," presumably in both poetry and its criticism. He advocated bringing as much of the currently disorganized body of criticism as possible into the scope and symmetry of this coherence, but recommended eliminating that which would not fit except in external taxonomies such as those mentioned above. In other words, he proposed establishing a consistent frame of reference for literary criticism with the definable limits of science. To do so, he rejected the intentional and affective fallacies, eliminated the dynamics of communication from literature, and banished intellectual inquiry of other fields from the proper domain of criticism. A science he might have had, but unnecessarily stunted, with few of its advantages and most of its disadvantages. He fortunately did not practice what he preached in his archetypal criticism.

But what Richards and Frye iconoclastically proposed became an unthinking orthodoxy by the early sixties. The

thematic explication of poetry and fiction according to New Critical guidelines became commonplace in English journals; special bibliographies such as Kuntz's Poetry Explication and Bell and Knight's The English Novel were compiled to catalogue much of this criticism. One particular journal, The Explicator, was devoted exclusively to this approach, mostly with exegetical snippets supplementing previous explications. Some scholars extended the tenets of formal criticism to stylistics, while others gingerly applied themselves to a sanitized historical approach to sources and analogues. Their assumptions were codified in T.S. Eliot's early essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and brought to the brink of parody by F.R. Leavis in forcing the artist to strive toward the extinction of his personality in order to gain admittance to literary tradition. Any significant contribution to literature was considered a product of its tradition rather than an expression of private experience or one's sense of identity and relationship with those around him. The anti-historical bias of this supposedly historical approach has been correctly attacked by Edmund Wilson because it extracted literature from the real history of society--history manque was proposed to abolish real history from literature.<sup>23</sup>

It was further a common New Critical belief that authors are primarily influenced by other authors and not their personal experience, environment, or intellectual milieu. This enabled the literary historian to connect texts otherwise

free from history on the basis of stylistic and thematic congruence, with some attention paid to chronology in order to distinguish sources from analogues. For example, he could trace Vaughan's "The Water-Fall" through Herbert to the prototype of metaphysical poetry in Donne without concerning himself with the social turmoil in the Commonwealth or Vaughan's enormous sense of isolation resulting from this turmoil. In the rare circumstance that history had to be assigned a little more "body" beyond the sum of its texts, he could invoke the "Spirit of the Age," distilled from the "History of Ideas" approach earlier proposed by Lovejoy, Tillyard, and others, though he usually watered down this approach to explain a text tautologically as the consequence of its own themes.<sup>24</sup> Historical importance was also accorded those authors and poets whose works easily lend themselves to thematic historical analysis, while those whose works eluded explication were deemphasized and often banished to obscurity. A "vital" poetic tradition often skipped from Shakespeare to Donne and Pope and then to Keats and Eliot, while the novel was shown to really begin with Jane Austen, sink to George Eliot, and rise again to Henry James, James Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence. Meanwhile, Spenser, Milton, Shelley, Tennyson, Richardson, Scott, Dickens, and myriad others were conveniently discarded from serious consideration as flawed eccentrics or typically formless British writers outside the "essential" tradition. Efforts to revive them emphasized their "irony" in formlessness or their hidden

form to be divulged with a more thorough explication. Textual criticism revived a few figures from history but downgraded most; what was left, a radically attenuated history of English literature, was universally taught in American colleges to illustrate this critical approach, and of course the approach was employed to explore this history. The circle narrowed, and literary criticism found itself begging the question.

But the question needing most to be answered is how this particular orthodoxy ever got started, how it flourished despite our national disapproval of orthodoxies. Religion was slain, it seems, and like dragon's teeth exegesis came up from the soil. Matthew Arnold had wanted poetry to replace religion--instead we got its stepbrother, formalist criticism. How did it happen? There are several possible explanations, a couple of which may be proposed here. We can first of all appreciate how professionalism in the field of English might have jealously guarded its autonomy as a "science" and thus sought to dissociate itself from lines of inquiry more adequately treated by the advanced technical research in other fields, for example psychology, sociology, history, and even aesthetics. Every field understandably seeks its own Lebensraum, and critical scholarship, with more than its share of insecurity, would seem no exception. We can also understand how explication might have seemed a proper escape from the techniques of German philology perhaps exhausted in the research of Kittredge, Tatlock,



Lowes, and others. Their work was a pinnacle of scholarship which left little room for further inquiry except to belabor the methods they had defined and thoroughly applied. Newer modes of historical inquiry likewise must have seemed useless, whether the doctrinaire Marxist formulas of Calverton and Hicks or the bland, popularized vagaries of the later Van Wyck Brooks which were banalized in the teaching of literature through the thirties and early forties. These must have seemed as unproductive then as New Criticism does now.

We can also recognize that critical explication has been a useful methodology while the profession of English letters has rapidly and cancerously grown over the last three or four decades to include practitioners with necessarily less encyclopedic backgrounds than Kittredge or Lowes. If the main task at hand could be agreed upon to be textual interpretation, then most of the tools of philology might be properly set aside as redundant pedantry. The scholar-critic could actually pride himself upon his ignorance of special knowledge in properly evaluating a text. An expert reader, he could insist, is the educated "normal" reader, not the overeducated scholar distracted by irrelevant information. Ignorance thus conveniently found its vindication at exactly the time when the profession of letters increased so rapidly as to suffer an unavoidable decline in competence. American manhood returning from World War II and Korea had to be educated, and their hastily recruited young educators,

also from the wars, had to find a raison d'etre for their inadequacies. Whatever was lost in philological breadth was supposedly regained in technical competence and critical sensitivity.

There is also a political explanation of New Critical scholarship. A studiously myopic concentration upon textual criticism has conveniently protected the innocence of its practitioners from the uncertainties of politics and history. If our ultimate authority is the sacrosanct literary context, we might justifiably turn with gratitude from difficult social issues to an intensive investigation of this context and its profound ramifications. This was of course an unspoken response, omnipresent though never directly acknowledged, except perhaps vaguely as a "loss of spiritual order." Nevertheless, it seems more than a peculiar historical coincidence that the advancement of textual explication has been closely parallel to the development of the Cold War. The origin of New Criticism is usually fixed at the publication of The Sacred Wood by T.S. Eliot in 1920 and Principles of Literary Criticism by I.A. Richards in 1924, roughly three and seven years after the Russian Revolution and during the era when conservatism was shaken to its roots by the imminent possibility of Bolshevik revolution across Europe. This was the period when Russian formalism emerged, a parallel movement which candidly acknowledged its reaction against the intrusion of politics in criticism. New Criticism was next brought to our country by the "Southern Regionalists" at

Vanderbilt during the depression years of the thirties when America itself seemed threatened by the spectre of Bolshevism. Finally, New Critical methods were institutionalized as the dominant orthodoxy of our English departments in the late forties and early fifties, when our country was in the throes of McCarthyism, again panicked by the spectre of communism. It was then clearly prudent to lapse into impenetrable silence about political issues, busily engaged in the more serious and scholarly responsibility of "objective" textual explication. During this era in France, where intellectual trends have traditionally been better articulated (and as a result more confused), this silence was acknowledged and even proclaimed by such figures as Camus, Merleau Ponty, and Robbe-Grillet. It happened here too, but even the issue was left unspoken, except perhaps in the editorial controversies of the Partisan Review, which had fruitlessly sought an accommodation between politics and criticism for twenty years.<sup>25</sup> Only with the decline of the Cold War in the middle sixties did the stranglehold of New Criticism begin to be loosened.

Not accidentally, then, have New Critical methods had the most appeal through these years to critics of a conservative inclination: T.S. Eliot repeatedly avowed his support for Action Francaise, a conservative French group advocating theocracy, and dangerously approached endorsing Italian fascism in his Criterion editorials of 1928 and 1929. I.A. Richards generally avoided political issues, but he did attack

collectivism several times and seemed to advocate a nineteenth century brand of individualism in his concept of synaesthesia. The Southern Regionalists collectively proposed a return to the "agrarian" virtues of the Old South in I'll Take My Stand (1930) as did Ransom in God without Thunder (1930) and Tate in Reactionary Essays on Poetry (1936). Brooks and Wimsatt are said to have come out in open support of McCarthy, and they, as well as Wellek and Krieger, seem to have reserved their most trenchant disdain for social criticism with progressive implications, particularly of the Marxist school.

Likewise, the opposition to New Criticism seems to have found its most strident voices on the Left, whether on the pages of New Masses in the thirties or by ambivalent renegades of the fifties such as Trilling and Fiedler, inspired by the example of Edmund Wilson. Fiedler's articles, "Archetype and Signature," and "My Credo," spelled out the absurdity of New Critical assumptions with crushing insight as early as 1950-52, at the heyday of critical explication.<sup>25</sup> An underground of opposition has persisted since then, and "old leftists" such as Weimann of East Germany and Sidney Finkelstein in the United States have continued to express this opposition. With the political upheaval of the sixties, however, the attack has been renewed with vigour by Frederick Crews, Lewis Kampf, and their "Emersonian" New Left faction in the MLA. Louis Kampf has declared, "The function of poetry, Matthew Arnold once said, is to criticize life. Surely criticism should do

no less," and, "By its very nature, in spite of our academic merchants, literature is not a commodity, but the sign of a creative act which expresses personal, social, and historical needs. As such it constantly undermines the status quo."<sup>26</sup>

This point need not be considered an empty slogan if "need" ipso facto represents the inadequacy of the status quo, in contrast to fulfillment, its accomplishment. In a recent PMLA diatribe, "Do Literary Studies have an Ideology,"

Frederick Crews has proposed that the ideology of literary studies currently does have an ideology, but "less in what they say than in what they refuse to consider," which, we may presume, would be of the needs of society and their representation in literature. Crews attacks the "escapism" of "capitalist scholarship" and questions, "whether a good political anguish may not be essential to good criticism."<sup>27</sup>

Apart from these attacks, New Criticism gives the appearance of declining of its own weight, perhaps like water slowly receding from the bathtub--its decline seems to have caused these attacks more than they did its decline. New Criticism does not seem pertinent to the malaise of the sixties and impending seventies, while our country seems tottering at the brink of latter day Weimar uncertainties. So everybody is vigorously searching out alternatives, but without fresh critical issues having arisen to help lead us to a different promised land. Our transition seems to be occurring without visible signs or any definable efficient cause beyond the obnoxious war in Vietnam.

Nevertheless, we can define our intentions to a certain extent as a reaction against the proscriptions of New Criticism. We can deny that man is "limited and imperfect" as T.E. Hulme maintained, since human experience is almost infinitely complex. No standards of perfection exist against which we may validly measure ourselves without diminishing this complexity. We are paradoxically both more and less than perfection. There is a multi-dimensional breadth of human experience, and it is the proper function of literature to explore these dimensions without exacerbating our puritanical anxieties. We paradoxically want to declare Fallacies fallacious (Fallacy, thou art Fallacious) in order to express ourselves once again as we please, with approval reserved for whatever seems successful without necessarily fitting particular guidelines. A tentative manifesto to this effect might be proposed:

1. Literature is pleasure: there is gratification in representation and vicarious identification. The withdrawal from raw experience to its surrogate fulfilled by dynamic acquiescence is pleasurable to most who are able to project reality into language.

2. Literature is assessment: we shape and structure our experience in literature; our sense of purpose and coherence is bodied forth in literature, in which we compare what we see with the artefact we further want to impose.

3. Literature is expression: our experience is shaped by the effort to express it. The stream of language along the dimension of time and our exertion to keep even with its

progress gives coherence to what we say and projects meaning upon the random universe about us.

4. Literature is communication: we use language to get our ideas and experience across, primarily that they might effect changes in emotions, attitudes and behavior. In this sense literature is propaganda, as Sartre proposed in What is Literature? Overtly propagandistic literature (Christian, Marxist, social-realistic, etc.) cannot be rejected except to the extent that it fails as propaganda.

5. Literature is competence: competence is not the only criterion, as formalists often try to make it, but it remains an important one--without formal skills, the other values of literature might be lost. But competence alone is also inadequate, as may be seen in the novels of Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet, French authors who escaped the Cold War by articulating silence. Competence is pleasure, assessment, and expression adequately wrought in form to be shared with readers.

New Criticism has neglected the first, third, and fourth of these dimensions in its emphasis upon the second and fifth, assessment and competence. We must reject these inhibitions, but without abandoning its formal discoveries. Leon Trotsky conceded the usefulness of formalism as a methodology in the context of social criticism, and we must do the same with New Criticism, but in a context more comprehensive than either formal or social approaches.<sup>28</sup> New Criticism has brought us a wealth of critical insights, in fact a renaissance

in explication unmatched in the entire history of criticism. However circumscribed their views, figures such as Richards, Eliot, Empson, and Leavis in England, and Ransom, Tate, Brooks, and Blackmur in America have made a brilliant contribution to the "job" of criticism that we cannot ignore. The techniques of explication they have given us are the first task of criticism, the preliminary spade work to be done before we launch into the questions they have evaded. Our job is to sift the good they offer from their inhibitions, the valid insights from their Procrustean negativism. We must salvage what we can from the cul de sac of their orthodoxy, the welter of Fallacies they have invoked to justify their evasions. In a word, we must bring our concern with breadth to bear upon their intensively defined methods to find a new synthesis meaningful for criticism. But in this effort we must also recognize that New Criticism might be the best that this country can offer: its demise might very well end our modern renaissance of criticism, a mortification occurring in two stages, first in its institutionalization since 1950, and then in its aggressive but equally uninspired academic rejection since perhaps 1964 (to set an arbitrary date, the year Susan Sontag published "Against Interpretation"). We can see its faults well enough--the question remains whether we can come up with something better for ourselves. Our inspiration has to be more than the recognition of their faults.



Footnotes, Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>A.C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1909; New York, 1965), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn (New York, 1947), pp. 176-96.

<sup>3</sup>I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (1923; London, 1956), pp. 127, 133-37.

<sup>4</sup>I.A. Richards, "The Future of Poetry," in The Screens and Other Poems (New York, 1960), p. 124.

<sup>5</sup>Allen Tate, "Tension in Poetry," in Essays of Four Decades (Chicago, 1968), pp. 63-64.

<sup>6</sup>Yvor Winters, "The Experimental School in American Poetry," (1938) included in In Defense of Reason (Denver, 1947), p. 41.

<sup>7</sup>W.K. Wimsatt and M. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," Sewanee Review, 54 (summer, 1946); "The Affective Fallacy," Sewanee Review, 56 (winter, 1949). Both are included in The Verbal Icon, by W.K. Wimsatt (Kentucky, 1954), pp. 3-39.

<sup>8</sup>Tate, pp. 61, 63.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Stallman, "The New Critics," (1947); included in Critiques and Essays in Criticism (New York, 1949), p. 495.

<sup>10</sup>Cleanth Brooks, "The Formalist Critic," Kenyon Review, 1951; reprinted in The Modern Critical Spectrum, edited by Gerald J. Goldberg and Nancy M. Goldberg (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), pp. 1-6.

<sup>11</sup>Cleanth Brooks, "Implications of an Organic Theory of

Poetry." Literature and Belief, English Institute Essays (New York, 1957), pp. 69-70.

<sup>12</sup>The Verbal Icon, p. 241

<sup>13</sup>William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York, 1957), pp. 737-38.

<sup>14</sup>Eliseo Vivas, Creation and Discovery (Chicago, 1966), p. 117.

<sup>15</sup>Murray Krieger, The New Apologists for Poetry (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Sewanee Review, 1945; reprinted in Criticism: The Foundations of Literary Judgment, ed. by Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie (New York, 1948), p. 383.

<sup>17</sup>The expression "ulterior purpose" is borrowed from the influential article, "The Critic's Job of Work," by R.P. Blackmur, in The Double Agent (New York, 1935).

<sup>18</sup>This "transactional" theory of poetry, proposed by Marie Rosenblatt, is treated at more length in Chapter Four.

<sup>19</sup>Stallman, p. xv.

<sup>20</sup>I.A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination (New York, 1935), p. 20.

<sup>21</sup>Krieger, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>Northrop Frye, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," University of Toronto Quarterly (October, 1949); included as the "Polemical Introduction" to Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, 1957), pp. 3-29.

<sup>23</sup>Edmund Wilson, "Historical Criticism," a Princeton

lecture in 1940, included in Stallman, pp. 449-59.

<sup>24</sup>Stallman himself uses the expression, p. 495.

<sup>25</sup>"My Credo," Kenyon Review, XII, 4 (autumn, 1950), pp. 561-74; "Archetype and Signature: A study of the Relationship between Biography and Poetry," Sewanee Review, LX (spring, 1952), pp. 253-73.

<sup>26</sup>Louis Kampf, "The Scandal of Literary Scholarship," in The Dissenting Academy, edited by Theodore Roszac (New York, 1967), pp. 53, 61.

<sup>27</sup>Frederick Crews, "Do Literary Studies have an Ideology," PMLA, vol. 85 no. 3 (May, 1970), pp. 424, 427-28.

<sup>28</sup>Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, Chapter V, "The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism." (1924).

## Chapter Two:

### I.A. Richards and some of his Critics

The most influential figure in the history of New Criticism has undoubtedly been I.A. Richards. His books established an aesthetic model against which others of the movement measured their own theories. They usually disagreed with his ideas but almost always proposed their own as a response, a more satisfactory answer, presumably, to the questions he raised. John Crowe Ransom acknowledged in The New Criticism (1941) that, "Discussion of the new criticism must start with Mr. Richards. The new criticism very nearly began with him."<sup>1</sup> Allen Tate likewise acknowledged his own debt to Richards in his Preface to Essays of Four Decades: "Nobody who read I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism when it appeared in 1929 could read any poem as he had read it before. From that time on one had to read poetry with all the brains one had and with one's arms and legs, as well as what may be inside the rib cage."<sup>2</sup> Finally, from many examples, Stanley Edgar Hyman broadly declared in The Armed Vision that, "What we have been calling modern criticism began in 1924, with the publication of Principles of Literary Criticism."<sup>3</sup> But none accepted his theories at their face value. Their response was a reaction first to his "impulse" theory of affect proposed in the twenties, though accepting his call for a specific critical apparatus interpreting poetry, and then to his projective theory of the imagination proposed in the thirties, though accepting his proposal that a theory of

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knowledge is fundamental to the problems of critical explanation. Unlike the cautious, universally admired criticism of Eliot, much, if not most, of his theory was rejected, but he raised a broad variety of questions to which other answers became tenets of New Critical orthodoxy. Without this negative encouragement, Eliot would very likely have settled into the role of a latter day Matthew Arnold, and American figures such as Ransom and Tate would probably have devoted more time to poetry and less to criticism, which, it may be speculated, would have become less explicative and less theoretical in emphasis.

But there is a paradox in the influence of Richards. Almost all have successfully defined themselves relative to his theories, but nobody has yet been able to deal adequately with these theories in their own rather elaborate context. Whatever fragment of his scaffolding critics have chosen to explore, other and often more important parts have been excluded from consideration that would seem to bring their conclusions into doubt. Logicians like Max Black and Manuel Bilsky have vigorously assailed his theory of knowledge from a positivistic approach, overlooking the organicism in even his earliest books which successfully complements his affinity to behaviorism. D.G. James, a Kantian idealist, reasonably questioned his affective principles in general terms, but neglected the many passages in which he seems to have qualified himself sufficiently to avert such a broad refutation.<sup>4</sup> Ransom and Tate adopted his frame of reference by

somewhat simplifying it and denying its basis in psychology (Tate freely admitting that he had little understanding of psychology), though the absence of psychology led to a sterile formalism which Richards understandably wanted to avoid. Finally, epigones of the New Critical faith such as Stallman and Krieger more drastically simplified Richards' theory to make of it a parody they could easily refute. Of critics more positively indebted to the influence of Richards, Empson and Cleanth Brooks took particular branches of his theory, respectively his concern with ambiguity and irony, to propose formal theories apparently outside the context of affective criticism, and his two most devoted apologists today, W.H.M. Hotopf and Jerome Schiller, seem to have floundered somewhat in the effort to find a synthesis they could defend. Hotopf has laboriously emphasized questions of epistemology at the expense of aesthetics, the heart of Richards' theory, while Schiller is both thin and obscure in what is obviously his first book.<sup>5</sup> Even Wellek's thoroughly documented assessment in a recent article seems to have excessively simplified the essential theories of Richards.<sup>6</sup>

The responsibility for this history of misconceptions must ultimately be laid upon Richards himself. He complains in one of his late essays that his critics apparently do not read his books,<sup>7</sup> and this might be partly true, but the major problem lies, I think in his tantalizing suggestion of organization which never quite becomes fulfilled. In his early books, each chapter exudes clarity and structure upon its

particular topic, but the relationship among chapters is often almost random and their topics seem to cut across each other without sufficient explanation. In Principles of Literary Criticism, which most obviously exemplifies this inadequacy, though a brilliant contribution to modern criticism, thirty-five chapters average eight pages apiece, and there often seems little explanation for their sequence. As Hotopf has proposed, Richards must have gathered all his insights in notes organized according to categories, without having tried very hard to organize these categories into a sequence with a beginning, middle, and end. In his later books and essays, his lack of organization unfortunately creeps into his style, hitherto a model of lucidity, which has become almost impossibly elliptical and discursive, a peculiar contradiction to his insistence upon clarity and simplicity in Basic English. Really the best analogy for the organization of his theories would be the image clusters in Shakespeare's plays. Theory incessantly erupts in vital new metaphors to be integrated with what went before, but often obscurely and in unpredictable transformations. Organization is insisted upon, for example in the Preface to the second edition of The Meaning of Meaning, where he proposed a credible explanation of the relationship among his early books, but this organization is superficial, usually the enumeration of topics or perspectives, and often barely in control of its material. The reader is spurred on by the profusion of insights but denied a comprehensive understanding.

He has only the assurance that even a partial understanding is fertile soil for explorations of his own.

Our own approach, likewise necessarily limited, will be to explore and hopefully justify his theory of affect rejected by the New Critics and unacceptable even to Hotopf and Schiller. The former mostly ignores the issue and the latter proposes that Richards came of age in turning from his "impulse" theory to Coleridge's concept of the projective imagination, a metaphysical application of this theory which Richards has earnestly (and correctly) declared to be a consistent extension of his earlier views: "I changed my vocabulary and my metaphors somewhat. . . to present much the same views again."<sup>8</sup> It should be noticed in this remark that Richards himself is willing to discuss his theories as metaphors, models proposed to define the experience of reading poetry. It is our contention that the rejected affective principle underlying these metaphors justifies and integrates the technical concepts he proposed that have been more acceptable to New Critical theory. As useful as these concepts have been, this affective principle is more important, particularly as the basis (perhaps the only correct basis) for establishing a synthesis among the wide variety of critical approaches advocated today. Our affective response to literature may easily be established as the valid common denominator for all of these approaches, upon which their differentiae may be explored in mutually applicable terms. But more of this later. In this chapter his books will be



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treated more or less in their original sequence frankly as our concession to the usefulness of enumeration in grappling with his ideas. His affective principles fairly clearly defined in his early books will first be explored, and then their extension during the thirties. We shall finally attempt to refute a few of the New Critical misconceptions about his theories. His later articles collected in Speculative Instruments (1955) and So Much Nearer (1968) will be touched upon in the next chapter.

The Foundation of Aesthetics, co-authored by Richards in 1922 with C.K. Ogden and James Wood, was his first book, a slender ninety-two page comparative study of current theories of beauty. It has been neglected by critics of Richards,<sup>9</sup> though it first presented in relatively lucid fashion the essential theories he later expanded, especially the concept of synaesthesia. Richards typically began his inquiry with a multiple definition, a list of sixteen possible definitions for beauty compiled in three groups progressively more affective in emphasis. The first was composed of purely objective theories, the second of pragmatic and functional theories, and the third of psychological theories, the most sophisticated of which being of synaesthesia:

- A. { I. Anything is beautiful which possesses the simple quality of beauty.  
II. Anything is beautiful which has a specified form.

- B. {
- III. Anything is beautiful which is an imitation of nature.
  - IV. Anything is beautiful which results from successful exploitation of a medium.
  - V. Anything is beautiful which is the work of genius.
  - VI. Anything is beautiful which reveals (1) truth, (2) the spirit of nature, (3) the ideal, (4) the universal, (5) the typical.
  - VII. Anything is beautiful which produces illusion.
  - VIII. Anything is beautiful which leads to desirable social effects.
  - IX. Anything is beautiful which is an expression.
- C. {
- X. Anything is beautiful which causes pleasure.
  - XI. Anything is beautiful which excites emotions.
  - XII. Anything is beautiful which promotes a specific emotion.
  - XIII. Anything is beautiful which involves the processes of empathy.
  - XIV. Anything is beautiful which heightens vitality.
  - XV. Anything is beautiful which brings us into touch with exceptional personalities.
  - XVI. Anything is beautiful which conduces to synaesthesia.<sup>1</sup>

We would argue that theories VI through IX belong to part C, while XV properly belongs to part B since contact with "exceptional personalities" does not necessarily imply a profound effect upon consciousness. But the point is probably not

worth debating.

Richards fairly quickly dismissed the theories of beauty in groups A and B, often without seriously considering their implications, and moved to the psychological theories in group C for closer examination. He associated the doctrine of pleasure, category X, with Santayana's principle that beauty is "pleasure regarded as a quality of a thing," and criticized it only because it provides too restricted a critical vocabulary. He later proposed an explanation essentially similar when arguing against the obverse position that beauty is "inherent in physical objects, not a character of some of our responses to objects."<sup>11</sup> Here he likewise criticized Clive Bell's theory of "significant form," pattern in art which produces a unique aesthetic emotion, since he could not accept the view that our response to art is a qualitatively singular experience. He expressed a great deal more interest in the empathy (or Einfühlung) theories of Lipps and Lotze, nineteenth century German aestheticians, especially in their treatment of aesthetic experience as the interaction of impulses when we project our feelings beyond ourselves to eliminate the antithesis between self and object. It is interesting to note that he discussed the concepts of both impulse and projection in this context, long before he supposedly discovered Coleridge's projective theory. He has been widely praised for abandoning his behaviorism for a projective theory with the publication of Coleridge on

Imagination in 1935, as if he shifted his choice between these mutually exclusive concepts. Actually, both concepts had been initially found by Richards in the scientific and metaphysical theory of Einfühlung developed in Germany. The best that might be said is that he later shifted his emphasis from one aspect of this theory (impulse) to another (projection), but without abandoning behaviorism for organicism, neither alone adequately describing his views at any phase in his career. In Foundations of Aesthetics he did express reservations about the empathy theory, especially in its extreme view of a mystic union with the objective world, but acknowledged its importance "when correctly described."<sup>12</sup>

Richards proposed that the most successfully inclusive theory of beauty (and the principle of inclusion also excludes non-aesthetic modes of experience) must be that of synaesthesia, the equilibrium and harmony of impulses bringing the whole of the personality into play. In the early, presumably primitive stages of aesthetic response, these impulses combine to produce emotions, but with increased equilibrium we become impersonal and disinterested, aware of our differentiation and isolation from things around us. With a partial ordering of impulses, the resulting disequilibrium is stimulative and leads to either irresolution or action, as proposed for example by Marxist critics in the propagandistic value of art; but with our equilibrium approaching perfection, we achieve an Apollonian synaesthesia, the aloof and remote experience of beauty. Richards claimed this principle

ultimately derives from the Chung Yung of Confucius: "Having no leanings is called Chung, admitting of no change is called Yung. By Chung is denoted Equilibrium; Yung is the fixed principle regulating everything under heaven." (p. 13) But his concept of synaesthesia had other sources as well.

Wellek discloses that the word "coenaesthesia" might have been acquired from Psychological Principles, by James Ward, a Cambridge professor during Richards' undergraduate years,<sup>13</sup> and Richards himself acknowledged the importance of Friedrich Schiller's theory of equipoise between life and shape in art. Richards dutifully reported Schiller's denial that purely aesthetic experience is possible as well as his inclusion of dispositions toward action among proper aesthetic responses, but without exploring these concepts very thoroughly. He obviously preferred Ethel Puffer's explanation of a passive response, which he quoted at length:

The only aesthetic response is that in which stimulation resulting in impulse or movement is checked by its antagonistic impulse, combined with heightening of tone. But this is tension, equilibrium, or balance of forces, which is thus seen to be a general condition of all aesthetic experience.<sup>14</sup> (italics in original)

According to Richards, agreeing with both Miss Puffer and W.M. Urban, another contemporary, synaesthesia involves the perfect equilibrium among our greatest number of impulses, an aesthetic balance preventing us from breaking forth into action. The effect of beauty is the accomplishment of

equilibrium, the catalysis of the entire personality into stasis, the opposite of praxis. Intentionality, the Hegelian "for-itself," is metamorphized into what James Joyce currently found in the epiphany, the "of-itself," the satisfaction of a perfect moment which would be vitiated by additions or pragmatic applications. Neurotic gratification, politics, religion, and any other mode of belief and its implementation must be excluded from the proper domain of aesthetic response. We are left with what F.R. Leavis described in another context as "naive Marxism inverted," the radical individualism of balanced sensibilities.<sup>15</sup>

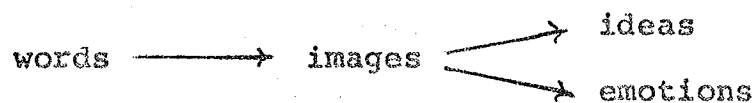
The fourth book of Richards, Science and Poetry, published in 1926, four years later, may be profitably examined next since he simplified his ideas to address himself to a general audience. We find here the clearest extension of his "impulse" theory of synaesthesia. The political context of his aesthetics was also clarified in his warning of economic, social and political "dangers," presumably of an impending twentieth century upheaval. Apocalypse had undoubtedly been suggested, as proposed last chapter, by the Russian Revolution as well as World War I, labor conflicts, and a general malaise throughout the early part of the twentieth century. The root of these social problems, Richards said, lay in the psychological inadequacy of the individual which is ultimately, he felt, a "biological crisis." Man's willingness to countenance and even participate in regressively barbaric collectivization lay in his inability

as an individual to organize his personality toward satisfactory ends. His impulses have become disorganized, randomly scattered, and unproductively pitted in conflict with each other, a conflict entirely different from the salutary balance between Chung and Yung. Their disbalance has encouraged destructive modes of behavior to such an extent as to be recognized the "greatest evil which afflicts mankind."<sup>16</sup>

The central importance and responsibility of critics in the twentieth century, Richards felt, is consequently to make the adjustment and reconciliation of impulses in literature available to our alienated public so they might bring their dissonant impulses into greater harmony. The static equipoise to be gained would be neither an ill considered praxis nor torpid inactivity, but, most appropriately, an "incipient preparedness," a readiness for action that would substitute for actual behavior.<sup>17</sup> If this sustained condition of alertness were regained, most other problems, both social and individual, would be easily resolved. Poetry would serve as a "perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos," in fact a new Hindenburg Line defending our traditions from the onslaught of barbarism (p. 82). This social objective seems to have provided the basis for Richards' later investigation of multiple meanings, his ardent concern with education, and even his efforts to establish a Basic English. He was vitally concerned with the preservation of the sentient individual as a benign unit of a similarly benign

culture. He felt the individual primarily (but not exclusively) gains his equilibrium through a heightened responsiveness acquired from the experience of literature.

To explain our response to literature more specifically, Richards proposed a hierarchic theory of aesthetic consciousness interconnecting the impulse, a unit of experience, with the text of poetry, the raw data uniquely appropriate to the science of criticism. He suggested a sequential process in our response from words to images and then ideas and emotions (composed of impulses):



This sequence would occur simultaneously in our experience and understanding of words. For this reason a word could be understood in one of two senses, either as a sensory stimulus, the recognized sign, spoken or printed, or in its "full body" involving the entire process through images, ideas, and emotions. (p. 11) In the second and more comprehensive sense, the sign becomes a word when it resonates with implications through the impulses it stirs and gratifies. Its association with intricate patterns of impulses enables the adult using it to stimulate these patterns and newly integrate them within the creative matrix of language. The word begins as a sign, the Pavlovian response induced by experience, but in its complexity it soon becomes "the key" to experience, "a mere welter of disconnected impulses." In



poetry, with its additional resources, the word finally becomes "a means of ordering, controlling and consolidating the whole experience." (p. 26) Images, second in the above diagram, between words and ideas and emotions, were only suggested by Richards and in fact never thoroughly investigated.<sup>18</sup> At the right end of his paradigm, then, Richards divided the poetic response into two components, ideas and emotions, establishing a dualism which led to most of the controversy about his theories.<sup>19</sup> Ideas were described as an "intellectual stream" or "realm of thought" which primarily functions as a "means" to direct and excite the emotions: "Our thoughts are the servants of our interests, and even when they seem to rebel it is usually our interests that are in disorder." (p. 11) In contrast, emotions were made the active branch of consciousness, the seat of our interests and source of energy in consciousness. Here lies the realm of impulses to be structured by ideas, eidetically bodied forth in images, and consolidated in language. Man's quest for assurance in a homeostatic balance of impulses leads him to language and poetry for outlets of emotional fulfillment in experience. Language, imagery, and themes are objective modes of organization integrated in poetry to create an equilibrium among the unsettled impulses in his mind.

Chapter VI, "Poetry and Beliefs," was the most controversial (even notorious) in Science and Poetry and, for that matter, in Richards' entire corpus of criticism. Here he used the dichotomy of emotions and ideas to distinguish

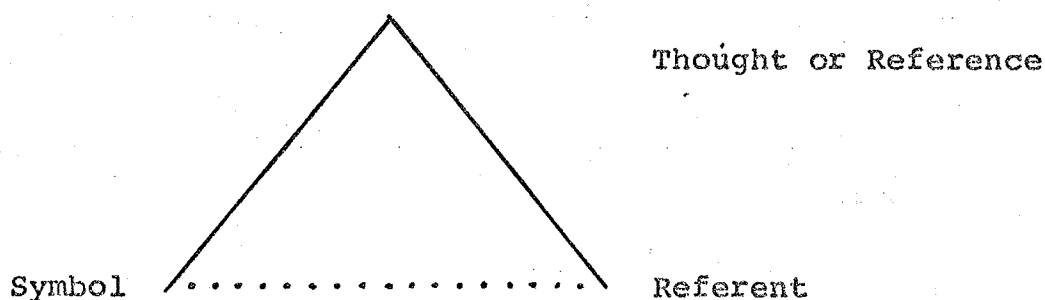
between statements and "pseudo-statements." Statements, he claimed, are the proper concern of science in their reference to facts which may be verified; but fiction, religion, metaphysics, and most human beliefs have consisted of pseudo-statements, expressions arousing feelings and attitudes rather than stating verifiable truth. The word "pseudo-statement" has been a pejorative term devised by logical empiricists such as Ayer and Carnap to describe statements lacking objective validity because of tautological self-sufficiency, emotional gratification, or, most commonly, the combination of the two.<sup>20</sup> Richards tried to adopt the term without these implications in order to show how pseudo-statements in literature serve the emotional needs of religion without its defects in unsubstantiated belief. By concentrating upon the primary function of literature, the creation of a static equipoise of impulses, he felt, we abandon verifiable truth to science, and in doing so establish a clear, valid foundation for the job of criticism. Belief, the confusion of pseudo-statement with fact, has been removed from literature, replaced by "suspended disbelief," an "experimental submission" we grant the poet to benefit from his organization of experience.

Richards had first proposed this radical distinction between the referential and emotive aspects of language in The Meaning of Meaning, published 1923, again in joint authorship with C.K. Ogden. He there claimed that the symbolic use of words, what he called "statement," is "the recording, the support, the organization and the communication of

references," while the emotive use, "probably more primitive," expresses feelings and attitudes. Poetry exclusively concerns the latter, he said, because its emphasis is not verification, but the arrangement of language "for the sake of attitudes which their acceptance will evoke."<sup>21</sup> This second use, the "evocative function" of words, has dominated human communication in religion, art, and ordinary social intercourse since the prehistoric origins of language. It is only recently that the "symbolic function" has been sifted out, isolated, and purified to divest empirical science of human motivation. It would be similarly useful, he suggested, to purify the evocative function of poetry in order to improve the "range and delicacy" of human experience. (p. 159) As the empirical methods of isolation and quantification emancipated science from belief and religion to bring it of age, so might criticism be brought to comparable levels of sophistication. Aesthetic experience would become concentrated perceptual activity freeing the memory "to widen and amplify sensitiveness" and evoking emotions presumably to be balanced and refined through heightened perception and memory.<sup>22</sup>

Though it has been generally overlooked, Richards acknowledged in The Meaning of Meaning that the symbolic and evocative functions of language cannot be entirely separated. He ridiculed the comparable antithesis between Intuition and Logic (p. 241) and approvingly quoted Vendryes, a contemporary linguist, to the effect that "the logical element and affective element mingle constantly in language." (p. 152)

He even declared, "Not even mathematics is free as a whole from emotive complications." (p. 153) He consciously accepted the paradox of trying to separate the inseparable as an intrinsic, unavoidable problem of the "sign situation," as he indicated in his diagram in the first chapter:



With this triangulation of the "sign situation," he sought to demonstrate that thought or experience, the triangle's apex, mediates the relationship between a symbol and its referent, respectively the two legs of the triangle. Their tripartite relationship represents our association of a symbol with a particular context of experience--we learn to remove it from this context to be combined with others in the context of language. (p. 53) The symbol thus becomes an act of reference, a partly separated component of experience (the left leg of the triangle generated with its apex the fulcrum) which vitalizes the recollection of the remainder.<sup>23</sup> We are required to respond once again to our earlier response, while the objective referent, whatever caused this experience, remains one degree removed to be described in its recollection. An inductive gap exists here (represented by the dotted base line), and to close this gap, science must minimize the capricious behavior of thought

or reference, the triangle's apex, through the careful verification of meaning. Consciousness must be standardized in its capacity as mediator so the inductive leap between symbol and referent (the base of the triangle) can be made. What Richards defined as the "Utraquistic Subterfuge," the confusion between qualities of things and their emotional effect, must be reduced and, if possible, eliminated.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, poetry and the arts must make a virtue of this subterfuge by emphasizing the wealth of human experience impinging upon the sign situation, including the speaker's attitude toward the referent and whomever he is addressing, his intention, and even his response to the ease or difficulty of whatever he is saying. (pp. 223-27) Emotion and intuition would be properly involved as effects competently managed in the context of poetry. But this process emanating from the triangle's apex should be distinguished from the horizontal inductive equation at its base. These essentially different uses of the identical sign situation should not be abortively combined either through belief or its institutionalization in religion and the state: both science and poetry must reject this fallacious confusion of purposes. Science emphasizes the relationship between symbol and referent with the act of reference restricted in its capacity as an empty, lucid mediator. Literature properly emphasizes this act, the regnant process of human consciousness suffusing communication (radiating down both legs of the triangle) but not making the inductive leap (its base), with

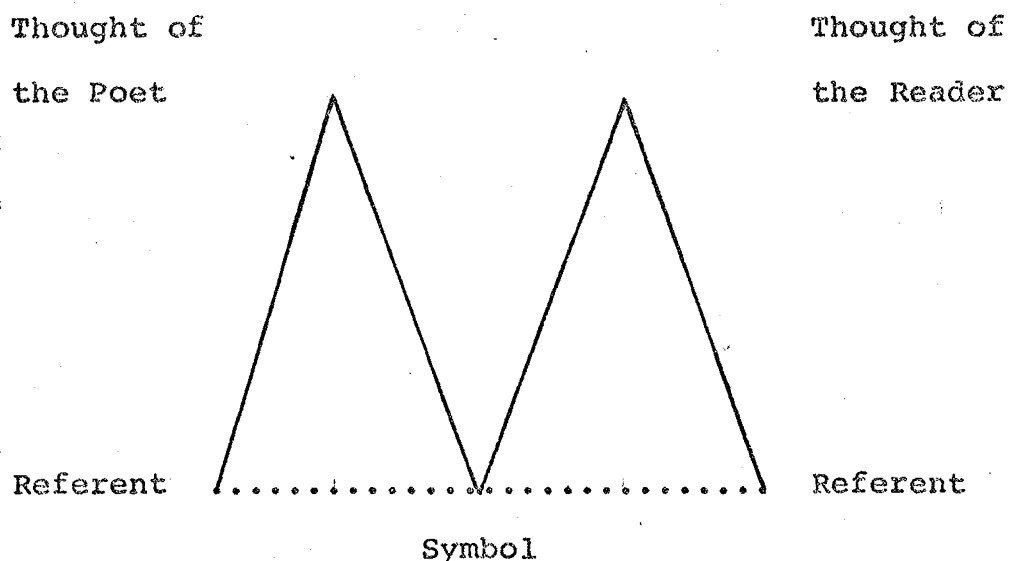
the stringent canons of verification it obliges. Belief, the misguided effort to propose inductive validity for intuitive processes, can only lead us dangerously astray. As Richards later declared, "We need a spell of purer science and purer poetry before the two can be again mixed, if indeed this will even become once more desirable."<sup>25</sup>

In Principles of Literary Criticism, published a year later in 1924, Richards sought to expand this concept of aesthetics with an "impulse" theory of value bringing current psychological investigation to bear upon the task of criticism. His broad purpose was to find a synthesis among psychology, ethics, and aesthetics that might justify beauty, the pleasurable experience of art, as a moral act, the more finely attenuated organization of the personality. Here as before he uncritically accepted the theory of the impulse (according to Brooks and Wimsatt, reducing all experience to "stimulus and response")<sup>26</sup> as a useful reification of aesthetics, the unit of conscious experience whether for pleasure, pain, conation, memory, insight, etc. The impulse was not considered as small as the either-or response of the single neuron nor as comprehensive as a motive or attitude, but loosely an aggregate of nervous activity whose combination with others composes our conscious experience. Richards occasionally fell prey to this reification, for example when he warned against the "distorted" impulse,<sup>27</sup> but he nevertheless used it to erect the superstructure of his theory with remarkable success. He proposed that man is

a congeries of impulses to be integrated and balanced for intelligence, sensitivity, and good taste. Maturity and fulfillment maximize their gratification, and whatever personality frustrates the fewest is qualitatively superior because it is least wasteful of human potential. Sacrifice is conversely the frustration of some impulses in order to gratify others, and both the debauchee and victim of conscience must sacrifice too many. Most of us make a "muddle" of enough conflicting impulses to fall short of creative potential. Our inadequacy results from disequilibrium, the exclusion of impulses we cannot manage, and manifests itself in overt behavior (praxis) and "assertion," the vulgar simplification of ideas because we otherwise lack the skill to justify our experience.<sup>28</sup> The poet is indeed our "unacknowledged legislator" because he possesses the genius to liberate and justify his most fugitive impulses in the context of his expression. He possesses the normalcy and equilibrium to orchestrate these impulses to the subtlest extent of human experience, but his appeal may also universally gratify relatively crude impulses.<sup>29</sup>

The crucial question for Richards, then, became the problem of communication between the normal, highly organized poet and his properly receptive readers. The poet must be able to capture the subtlety and profundity of his experience in communicated form, and the reader must be entirely alert, or "vigilant" (a term borrowed from Dr. Head), to be adequately responsive to this organization of experience. The

problem the two must surmount is the gap between their minds preventing an actual transference of this experience. This gap is similar to the inductive leap between a symbol and its referent, but it exists between interpretations of the same symbol within two "sign situations" (of the poet and reader) and thus supplements the inductive gaps both must respectively surmount. This "multiplied" symmetrical relationship may be diagrammed with two adjacent triangles on the same base:



The intersection "symbol" represents the point of contact in communication, while the entire base line represents three inductive gaps in poetry, the "sign situations" of the poet and reader as well as the leap in communication from one to the other. To bridge the third of these gaps (and in doing so, the others as well), the poet must voice his own experience well enough to induce the effect of comparable experience in the minds of his readers.<sup>30</sup> The experience of



the poet and his readers cannot be identical, even in the poet reading his own lines, so the ideal reader is an unattainable perfection and we are left with the distinction between a "qualified" reading and the range of actual responses mostly inadequate for one reason or another.<sup>31</sup> But failure of the poorly equipped reader is matched more often than not by the shortcomings of the artist in either his organization of his experience (for example in the popular poet, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, whom Richards unmercifully dissected) or his inability to communicate this experience. To overcome these inadequacies, Richards proposed a qualified acceptance of Tolstoy's "infectious" theory of art:

1. Poetry is "infectious" in consequence of a greater or lesser peculiarity of the sensation conveyed.
2. In consequence of a greater or lesser clearness of the transmission of this sensation.
3. In consequence of the sincerity of the artist, that is, of the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself experiences the sensations which he is conveying. (p. 186)

The second and third principles clearly embodied Richards' theories of communication and the normal organization of impulses, and in fact the word "sincerity" was later adopted in Practical Criticism to define the personality with balanced impulses. Richards found the first principle unacceptable, however, because unusual experience may be expected to

detract from the probability of art originally advocated by Aristotle. But if "peculiarity" were identified as originality in the expression of common experience, "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed," I suspect Richards would have accepted it as an important complement to the third principle.

Finally, Richards was concerned with the importance of form as a mode of communication between the poet and his readers. Form involved "technical" questions complementary to the "critical" component of aesthetic judgment, but these questions were of considerable importance in the interpretation of poetry. He had recognized this importance as early as The Foundations of Aesthetics, when he proposed that the "psychological story of the organization of our impulses" must be balanced against the study of form, "a physico-physiological account of the work of art as a stimulus."<sup>32</sup> He later speculated in Practical Criticism that perhaps half the feeling of poetry comes from form.<sup>33</sup> Here, in Principles of Literary Criticism, he defined form as objective pattern in art that facilitates the stimulation of coenesthesia: "As it [form] varies, so do our further or deeper responses of feeling and attitude vary."<sup>34</sup> He thus more or less treated form as a stimulus evoking our response, and emphatically rejected its autonomous objective context having independent validity. He found this to be an artificial imposition of Lockean secondary qualities upon the primary qualities of the described experience. Form is not, he said, a "simple,

unanalyzable virtue of objects," (p. 167) and to think this is to fall victim to the fallacy of "projecting an effect and making it a quality of its cause," (p. 21) what might be labeled the "Projective Fallacy." Instead, he defined form in terms of the pattern of response it induces, the "interplay of effects" aroused in the reader. (p. 173) Formal elements are the features of poetry creating the effect of pattern, "the stimuli, simple or complex, which can be most depended upon to produce uniform responses." (p. 193) Rhythm and meter were explained as a subtle interaction between expectation and surprises, and metaphor as a "semi-surreptitious method by which a greater variety of elements can be wrought into the fabric of the experience."<sup>35</sup> The genre of tragedy was similarly explained as a radical expansion of consciousness totally releasing suppressed experience through the reconciliation of pity, the impulse to approach, and fear, the impulse to retreat. (pp. 245-45) In short, all form was interpreted as the use of objective pattern (a sequence of expectations and surprises, as was explicitly said of rhythm) to maximize and harmonize the impulses of the reader.

In Practical Criticism, published in 1929, five years later, Richards shifted from theory to applications, the study of typical problems of inadequacy in the interpretation of poetry. He reinterpreted Tolstoy's theory of sincerity according to the Chung Yung of Confucian philosophy (also, incidentally, repeating the strange epigraph from the Bubishi of Fernando Po already cited in The Meaning of Meaning:

"Let us go closer to the fire and see what we are saying.") to define good taste as a matter of sincerity, the greater complexity and finer differentiation of responses in the creative individual. Sincerity was found to be expanded consciousness, the delicate inclusiveness enabling us to be true to our judgment and intuition. Instead of rejecting our fugitive and tangential flights of imagination, we gain the freedom to explore unafraid whatever occurs to us, with the paradoxical result that we become "more appropriately responsive to the outer world." Our subjective confidence gives us objective insight different from that of science, but in a sense more valid through the additional resources of intuition. We have somehow, almost mystically, bridged the inductive gap to "effect a union of the external and internal," a feat which science may accomplish only through the most rigid procedures. (pp. 284-89) Contrary to the frequent accusation of his critics, Richards here proposed that poetry as well as science enables us to escape the solipsistic dilemma of subjectivism. Sincerity and good taste enable us to merge the subjective and objective aspects of experience as well as combining refinement and breadth of consciousness: "Being more at one within itself the mind thereby becomes more appropriately responsive to the outer world." (p. 287) Inner harmony enables us to find harmony with our environment as well.

These questions of taste, sincerity, and intuition led Richards to formulate one of the most radical principles of

affective criticism, that poetry is too complex to be judged entirely with objective criteria. Instead, he proposed, we must read it carefully, with understanding and feeling, and then judge it by evaluating our experience: "Value in poetry turns nearly always upon differences and connections too minute and unobtrusive to be directly perceived. We recognize them only in their effects." (p. 302) But these feelings and attitudes to be consulted must also involve the entire personality: "The choice of our whole personality may be the only instrument we possess delicate enough to effect the discrimination." (p. 302) Santayana had defined beauty as our subjective response, and now Richards extended this principle to its logical corollaries, (1) that criticism must be the study of this response and (2) that this study would involve the "choice" of our entire personality since no part may be compartmentalized from the rest. There was also a paradox Richards was fully willing to accept, that the entirety of our subjective experience must be consulted to make the most subtly refined objective distinctions in judging poetry. Narrowly cultivated analytic skills and simplistic criteria, for example of irony, tone, or texture, result in crude interpretation because they lack this refinement. In fact, Richards said, any fruitful critical principle of this sort is more likely to be misused than not because it will probably be hypostatized as a supposedly infallible criterion independent of conscious choice, the genuine act of critical judgment. Richards also pro-

posed a third corollary of his affective principle, that any presumed lapse in poetic technique breaking a particular rule (for example he mentioned nonsense, vagueness, mixed metaphor, and the pathetic fallacy) is justified if it produces a satisfactory effect in the sensitive reader.<sup>36</sup> The ultimate question of formal technique for Richards was its effect, the subtlety and human appropriateness of the response it evokes. Technique was subordinated to human response, defined by the effect it produces.

Richards proposed that the effect of poetry has four aspects: sense, feeling, tone and intention. Our failure in the interpretation of poetry is a consequence, he said, of our inability to respond properly to one or more of these aspects. Sense is the thought in poetry, the intellectual content which is necessary to control our feelings. (pp. 191, 274) Feeling is the attitude we have toward what we describe, our usually fugitive emotional response which we try to anchor defined by sense. (pp. 181, 210-11, 217) Tone (as rediscovered by Richards) is our attitude toward those whom we address, which in poetry is that of the poet toward his readers. Richards suggested that tone is the most difficult part of poetry to define since it is thoroughly intermingled with the other aspects of meaning, but he emphasized that it is probably the most important ingredient of style, and, unfortunately, the most common source of failure through faults such as over-insistence and condescension. (pp. 182, 207-9) Finally, intention is the aim of the poet, the "effect

he is endeavoring to promote," outside and yet controlling the relationship among the other three aspects. It is the purpose to be accomplished through their instrumentality. (pp. 182, 356) Richards believed that all four of these aspects must successfully interact in good poetry and that the competent reader in a high state of vigilance must be sensitive to this interaction.

The shocking disclosure of Practical Criticism was that the great majority of readers fall grotesquely short of this ideal. Misinterpretation is not only commonplace, but much more frequent than good or even adequate interpretation. In fact, Richards proposed, "We must cease to regard a misinterpretation as a mere unlucky accident. We must treat it as a normal and probable event." (p. 336) Richards established ten primary difficulties leading to misinterpretation, each posing a separate problem though he found they usually "depend upon one another like a cluster of monkeys":

1. The difficulty making out the plain sense of poetry, its overt meaning.
2. The difficulty of sensuous apprehension, of experiencing the form and movement of poetry.
3. The difficulty in visualizing imagery.
4. The intrusive influence of mnemonic irrelevances.
5. The intrusive influence of stock responses, "views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind."

6. A proneness to sentimentality, the "over-facility in certain emotional directions."
7. Inhibition, the fear of acknowledging a particular experience.
8. Doctrinal adhesions, the intrusiveness of irrelevant beliefs.
9. Technical presuppositions, the acceptance or rejection of a style because of its technical qualities, usually through identification with the styles of other poets.
10. General critical preconceptions, the judgment of poetry according to a particular critical theory. (pp. 13-17, 180)

Perhaps the most basic item for Richards in this catalogue of temptations was the fifth, the stock response, the crutch of average intelligence in modern civilization. Richards conceded that the stock response is convenient and even necessary in our daily behavior: if we cannot rely upon the habitual certitude of the stock response our lives would be troubled by a plethora of Hamlet-like indecisions and unresolved sensitivities, and we would be unable to act. (pp. 240-41) In poetry, however, he maintained, the stock response thrives at the expense of genuine experience. It encourages extreme impersonality (except in false echoes of other poets), unexamined habits and a general withdrawal from experience for one reason or another. It is a "premature fixation"



leading to facile conclusions the very antithesis of poetry, though too often proposed as its virtue, gaining credence in external conventions and expectations. Examples would be the metrical regularity and archaic diction of nineteenth century poetasters and Eliotesque juxtapositions in modern academic verse. In contrast, Richards said, "Nearly all good poetry is disconcerting, for a moment at least, when we first see it for what it is. Some dear habit has to be abandoned if we are to follow it." (p. 254) Good poetry disrupts our expectations to expand our potential for experience, just as this potential must be expanded that we might respond to the unique validity of poetry. There is mutual feedback, a reciprocal interaction with nothing to gain but sincerity and, collectively, civilization itself.

In Mencius on the Mind, published in 1932, Richards shifted his concern from criticism to the problems of multiple definition, but in 1935 he returned to criticism in Coleridge on Imagination with a modification in his views which has been treated as a recantation of his earlier radical distinction between science and poetry and his "impulse" theory upon which this distinction had been based.<sup>37</sup> In a passage quoted earlier, Richards himself insisted upon the continuity in his ideas, with a change merely in their "metaphors," and this would seem to have been the case. If anything, he was shifting his emphasis from the discreet "sign situation" to the metadynamics of consciousness, in psychology to the gestalt and in semantics to the total

projected meaning. He was clearly rejecting simple behaviorism (which he had always avoided though sometimes dangerously approaching it) for a more sophisticated materialistic theory of effect in poetry.

What most intrigued Richards in Coleridge's criticism, vast repository of undifferentiated insights, was his theory of the imagination. He found the integrative capacity of the imagination explained by Coleridge to combine the objective and subjective realms in a unity of experience: "The subject is what it is through the objects it has been."

(p. 57) A new possibility thus offered itself, extending the principle of sincerity to bridge (or bypass) the inductive gap of the "sign situation" without resorting to scientific verification, this time through unity in the coadunated and "esemplastic" act of experience. According to Richards, this unity would settle the rivalry between the "regulative" and "constitutive" epistemologies extending back as far as Plato and Aristotle with a synthesis in the equation between our statements "I am" and "there are things."

(pp. 65, 184) Consciousness would be entirely a matter of projection according to A.E. Powell's theory of romantic imagination, the mind an "active, self-forming, self-realizing system" which both generates and discovers reality in its projection of meaning beyond itself. (pp. 69, 146) In its synthesis of subject and object, the mind would also integrate experience according to an "all in each" principle that the units of meaning surrender their independence to

their cooperative purpose. (pp. 81, 97) An isolated object and its subjective counterpart in the "unit" of experience would be abstractions we project according our interests into the realm of "things." (pp. 144-46) Richards proposed that our projections of nature may be divided into four basic kinds often confused with each other: (1) all influences on the mind, (2) all the images of "things" we take to be the world we live in, (3) the images of "things" confirmed by the universal experience of mankind, and (4) the images of "things" verified by scientific procedures. He found us to be presently embroiled in a futile conflict between false empiricism, the confusion of Nature in the third sense with its first sense, and an equally false intuitiveness, an inadequate projection of nature in the second sense. What we need, he said, is a rigid scrutiny of nature projected in the fourth sense, of science, in order to establish the proper relationship among the other three. (pp. 157-58, 170)

Richards proposed a theory of "mythology" to explain the coherence of experience we project upon nature, even in science. He defined mythology as "the utterance of the whole soul of man and, as such, inexhaustible to meditation." What we get from a myth, he said, is what we put into it, the unity that explains and justifies our experience. Myth transforms us from beasts to men and actually gives us what may be construed as soul in the value and purpose we find in our lives. (pp. 171-74, 181) It is the pattern, embodiment, and humanization of our projected world of experience. Richards

not surprisingly claimed that poetry is the most satisfactory vehicle for myths, "the myth-making which most bring "the whole soul of man into activity," but without evoking action, desire, will, or intellectual assent, the inadequacies he had combated in his earlier "impulse" theory.<sup>38</sup> Like synaesthesia, poetic myth transcends a Lockean "regulative" meaning which is vulgarly didactic and an unjustified incursion upon the methods of science. Instead, it is projection epitomized, not entirely understood or translatable into prose, a journey which is its own end with no destination beyond itself. (pp. 173, 213-14) We, its willing readers, must exert ourselves to integrate it with our repository of commonplace myths. In a restricted sense, of projection distilled and purified, belief may be accepted as the credibility we vest in our myths, though this concept yet excludes belief as a commitment toward simplified goals and ideals. These are mythic, but not of poetry.

An ancillary concern of Richards in Coleridge on Imagination was the relationship between words and experience. He challenged popular linguistic assumptions by claiming that a word is not a unit of meaning, but an "abstraction from an utterance" which of itself, artificially isolated, has too many possible meanings to be useful for communication. He repeated his position in The Meaning of Meaning that the most important factor in the speech act is meaning, the context of experience, not the symbol transferred to the context of syntax which has been only one component of the

"sign situation": "Apart from the speech act," he said, "there are no words." (pp. 101, 104, 107) He was primarily interested in the organic interanimation of words as symbols of experience, and even went so far as to claim that the absence of syntax is often favorable to the imagination. (p. 91) He did find in the single word at least a modicum of projected imagination ("The projection of its meaning into a word is an instance of Imagination"),<sup>39</sup> but the cluster of such projections in the speech act obviously seemed the key to the fullest resources of the imagination.

In The Philosophy of Rhetoric, published a year later in 1936, the last of Richards' books to be treated in this chapter,<sup>40</sup> he explored more thoroughly this relationship between language and the imagination. He attacked what he labeled the "Usage Doctrine," a prevalent attitude of the thirties that words are "fixed factors" combined in a sentence as a mosaic might be put together "of discreet independent tesserae." Instead, he proposed, words and their meanings result from the wide "interplay of the interpretive possibilities of the whole utterance." (p. 55) Meaning organically shifts and flows to adapt itself to any particular context of this utterance, and the definition of particular words is part of this process in a synthesis of experience through the interpenetration of meanings: ". . . language, well used, is a completion and does what the intuitions of sensation by themselves cannot do. Words are the meeting points at which regions of

experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition, come together. They are the occasion and the means of that growth which is the mind's endless endeavor to order itself. That is why we have language. It is no mere signalling system."<sup>41</sup> Words may not be separated from experience, what we might call the "images" of words, but they do bring meaning to these images through their interaction (not necessarily visual) afforded by the context of language. Words cannot be separated from their context of experience in the "sign situation," but they bring meaning to the experience they symbolize. Metaphor particularly interested Richards in The Philosophy of Rhetoric and should be briefly mentioned in this connection. He proposed that thought itself is metaphor because it "proceeds by comparisons," the mind primarily acting as a "connecting organ." (pp. 94, 125) For this reason the figurative device of metaphor in poetry may be understood as the superimposition of metaphor upon metaphor. (pp. 108-9) The combination of two senses or images, "tenor" and "vehicle" (their names here proposed by Richards and now generally accepted), in a single word or phrase leaves each sense individually metaphoric as an act of consciousness, but in their interanimation creates an unusual new experience, an image exceeding and yet controlled by the language evoking it. Through metaphor poetry becomes the consummate embodiment of human experience, for the control and definition of experience is experience itself.

## II.

As I proposed earlier (and this brief survey has undoubtedly shown), the wealth of theories proposed by Richards in all their modifications and metaphoric transformations have made it difficult for his critics with rival theories to defend. His total corpus of ideas in nine books of criticism looms like an enormous elephant whose shape is to be judged, according to the parable, by the touch of blind men, each led to a different part of its anatomy. And, to be expected, the results have been less than satisfactory. The more restricted the view, the more likely the assailant has committed errors in interpretation, and his only protection (but a good one) has been the relative ignorance of others. "The Golden Rule of Scholarship" quoted by Richards from Bosanquet in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, "Never to quote or comment on anything in a book which you have not read from cover to cover,"<sup>42</sup> would seem to apply in his own case to his entire output of books, a formidable task indeed. And for those who have read and studied his books remains the even more formidable task of unravelling critical metaphors as superimpositions reinforcing each other where they might seem inadequate by themselves. The task is difficult and perhaps best undertaken first in a sympathetic light to gain a sufficient understanding for its later critical evaluation.

Those who have not taken this arduous route but leapt to define their broad differences too hastily have unneces-

sarily brought their own critical competence into question. For example an attack by Montgomery Belgion was scathingly refuted in detail by Richards simply through Belgion's evident inability to understand Richards' ideas: he proposed an interpretation which Richards ironically suggested had been itself "a contribution towards the study of interpretation."<sup>43</sup> It seems doubly remarkable that Robert Stallman later quoted Belgion approvingly in one of his more flagrant misinterpretations of Richards, that he "equates poetry with life," an explanation so vague and meaningless as to be safely ignored.<sup>44</sup> More recently, to turn to a typical formalist assessment, Murray Krieger has zealously attacked the "vitalism" of Richards' theories compared with a "contextualist" position generally advocated by the second generation of New Critical apologists, including Vivas, Wellek, Heilman, and Unger, among others acknowledged by Krieger as mentors and teachers.<sup>45</sup> In defense of their views, Krieger resorted to simplifications and categorical generalizations to such an extent that one asks why Richards might not have recognized the patent absurdity of his views. The answer is quite simple: they have not been the views of Richards, but of Krieger's conception of Richards, an altogether different matter. For example, Krieger claimed, "For Richards the end of all experience is the arousal of attitudes, the success of the experience depending upon the extent of complexity in the cluster of attitudes."<sup>46</sup> (*italics added*) In this thoroughly misleading simplification, Krieger



neglected to mention that the admittedly quantitative difference proposed by Richards between art and common experience usually leads to qualitative distinctions, for example in the "stock response" acceptable to Richards in our daily behavior but decidedly not in poetry. Different "attitudes" would thus be involved in the experience of poetry and that of daily living. But what did Krieger mean by the word "attitude"? If he was referring to synaesthesia, sincerity, or myth in poetry, as proposed by Richards at one point or another in his career, there might be a grain of truth in this explanation, though Richards himself severely criticized Max Eastman for exactly this undifferentiated enthusiasm for experience.<sup>47</sup> But if Krieger is referring to "attitude" as an opinion or belief, as the common usage of the word would imply, then he is attributing to Richards a position exactly the opposite of what he has held. Throughout his career Richards has consistently sought to define and encourage the experience of poetry that cannot be boiled down to attitudes.

Krieger also claimed that Richards' obsession with the relationship between a poem and its experience "forced" him "to deny" the relationship between a poem and reality.<sup>48</sup> Krieger here repeated the common argument against Richards with somewhat more than the usual exaggeration, but ignored (as have the others) that Richards proposed the inductive gap in the "sign situation" fully conscious that the emotive and referential functions of language cannot be entirely

isolated from each other. Furthermore, also ignored by Krieger, Richards subsequently proposed a number of possibilities for bridging (or bypassing) this gap, including his theories of mythic projection and Confucian sincerity, both of which have been mentioned in this chapter. If Richards correctly extended this fundamental problem of epistemology to aesthetics, he was hardly victimized by his awareness. In fact, with his theory of the "sign situation" he proposed exactly the subject-object relationship Krieger says he denied, but with full recognition of the problems compelling its thorough investigation. His effort to grapple with these problems has been far more successful than that of formalists with their simplistic, unexplored epistemology of a perfect equation between experience and reality.

Krieger additionally claimed that Richards has fallaciously presented us with an absolute choice between mechanistic psychological analysis, his own approach, and no approach at all, the absence of analysis through a "self-willed mute" idealism."<sup>49</sup> His implication was that Richards would not accept the value of formal analysis, what he considered the fruitless pursuit of fictive Platonic forms. But Richards has imposed no such absolute choice. Throughout his career he has treated "technical" analysis as a necessary supplement to affective criticism, and in fact his approach to explication as well as his theories of metaphor, tone, ambiguity, and irony have been readily

adopted for the uses of formal criticism. He emphasized their importance in the context of affective criticism, but he certainly did not proscribe their use in a strictly formal (or "technical") approach to criticism. If an absolute choice has been established between formal and affective criticism, it has been imposed by others, not Richards himself, who tried to maintain a "dualist" critical outlook. Our last example from Krieger's imposing supply of misinformation is his claim that Richards' affective approach prevented him from finding any norm for the experience of poetry except a class of responses relatively close to an author's, which, Krieger claimed, is "merely the regulator of the lowest denominators ranged about it."<sup>50</sup> In other words, the only standard Richards could find to judge the validity of poetry's explication was its common experience "relatively close" to that of the poet, too imprecise a standard to be useful to the critic. Again Richards seems to have been attacked for defining a problem of criticism that would otherwise have been overlooked. Richards was of course quite concerned with finding a "norm," or at least a range of adequate responses that might be considered normative, and he devoted an entire book, Practical Criticism, to this question. He proposed a choice of four possible norms, of the artist himself, the perfect reader, the qualified reader, and our actual flawed experience (too often) in the explication of poetry. He recognized that the second, of the ideal reader, provides the best norm, but also an

impossible one; he also recognized the advantages of the first, the artist himself, but also its unavailability to the public at large. He therefore chose the third as a practical goal and began grappling with the fourth to bring our inadequate reading habits up to the level of competence. His presentation of a choice did not mean that he lacked a suitable norm; quite the contrary, he had a thoroughly sophisticated theory of norms that forced him to reject that of the "perfect" reader apparently required by Krieger's contextualism. These manifold errors of Krieger would not be so irritating but for his condescension toward presumed errors in Richards and the fairly widespread circulation of his views.

Krieger seems to have owed his attitude toward Richards primarily to Eliseo Vivas, whose 1935 article, "Four Notes on I.A. Richards' Aesthetic Theory,"<sup>51</sup> first represented this formalist position, fully as erroneous but with a good deal more sophistication. Besides the several arguments he furnished Krieger, Vivas additionally proposed that Richards' theory of aesthetic response is Apollonian in the Nietzschean sense and excludes the entire range of Dionysian response. He insisted that art is important as "stimulus to the yearning qualities of existence,"<sup>52</sup> in other words as the arousal of belief and encouragement to action. We would concur with this "vitalist" position but must postpone the question until next chapter. Vivas also claimed, however, that a delicate reconciliation of impulses in literature does

not necessarily reproduce itself in the minds of its readers, nor, for that matter, does it necessarily have a salutary effect, as would be indicated by the many neurotics and criminals in the craft of letters.<sup>53</sup> His point cannot be entirely denied, though Richards would reply (ignoring Lukacs' excellent arguments about decadence) that normative value in literature cannot be judged by the exceptions inevitably to be found. The reader benefits from exposure to a variety of poets so idiosyncrasies may cancel each other in his accumulated experience. As for reproduction of sensitivity in the act of reading, Richards would insist that reproduction is sine qua non since the "input" of experience necessitates conscious duplication, however inefficient and subordinate to the projective imagination, and this duplication at least somewhat modifies the structure of personality in which it has been received. Only the computer perfectly isolates its operations from the modifications of information so this input may be entirely erased. If this premise is accepted, and to deny it is tantamount to solipsism, precisely the radical "subjectivism" of which Richards has been accused, then the question of sensitivity evoked by poetry is a matter of degree, exactly the point he has repeatedly tried to make.<sup>54</sup>

The angriest and most hostile early assessment of Richards, also written in 1935, was the review of Coleridge on Imagination by F.R. Leavis, "Dr. Richards, Bentham and Coleridge."<sup>55</sup> It was probably this review more than any other single critical evaluation that put the stamp of orthodoxy

upon the New Critical disparagement of Richards' theories. Once Leavis opened the attack, it became fashionable to treat Richards as a beneficial early influence whose flaws were nevertheless too egregious for his theories to be taken seriously. Leavis devoted a good deal of his argument to Richards' presentation of his theory (his philosophical predisposition, exclusions, abstractness, and lack of clarity and concrete evidence) rather than the theory itself. Instead of treating Richards' views as a proposal or prolegomenon to a theory, he attacked their organization and presentation with the rigours of explication usually reserved for poetry itself. Many of his arguments may be granted, for example upon Richards' utter neglect of the social, conventional, and historical backgrounds of literature, but the question remains, "So what? Wasn't Richards nevertheless correct upon the topic he dealt with?" Questions raised by Leavis upon the epistemology of aesthetics were relatively few, and seem to have mostly involved the concept of myth. He challenged the usefulness of a theory of myths so "generously" inclusive as to embrace both poetry and science, and lacking the specificity to differentiate even myths of different magnitudes. But in doing so, he apparently failed to recognize exactly this purpose in the four projective theories of nature proposed by Richards. His attack also provides us with a fine example of our difficulty with Richards' overlapping critical metaphors. There is "not even a beginning in the serious critical analysis of poetry," as Leavis

claimed, simply because Richards had exhaustively presented this part of his theory in Practical Criticism, the book which introduced the "serious critical analysis" pursued today. In Coleridge on Imagination, Richards did not repudiate his earlier specificity, but shifted to the projective concept of myth to define the epistemological basis of his theory. Leavis thus seems to have been pitting Richards against himself, employing earlier standards of specificity against later abstractions intended to be complementary. Richards' earlier books had often been criticized for being too behavioristic; ironically, now that he proposed an organic theory to defend himself from these charges, he was immediately pounced upon for being too broad and abstract.

The critical assessments by D.W. Harding and Max Black were a good deal more balanced and included a point or two upon Richards' technical competence that may be mentioned in passing.<sup>56</sup> Harding principally objected to the confidence of Richards' psychological amateurishness, particularly in his theory of the "impulse," a hypothetical entity of dubious value for criticism. However, granting this shortcoming, no critic except Aristotle has yet transcended the limitations of amateur psychology with greater success than Richards. He was expertly familiar with current trends in psychology and managed quite successfully to simplify them for his layman audience. It is true he did not adequately define many of his technical concepts (most obviously the

"impulse"), but here his ambition merely exceeded what he accomplished, which remains vastly more thorough and consistent than the Platonic vagaries most critics have confused with aesthetic response. Max Black similarly attacked the amateurish nominalism of Richards' early theory of meaning, claiming that Richards had relied upon too narrow a definition of "referent" as a thing to be signified with a name.<sup>57</sup> But in the "sign situation" defined by Ogden and Richards, the referent is a total body of experience stimulated by myriad "things" in the physical universe, and the symbol is merely one component which is given the independence to interact in the context of language. This hardly seems a narrow definition, or the naive behaviorism assailed by Black elsewhere in the same article. As Ransom had correctly maintained earlier, the nominalism of Richards was actually his emphasis upon the psychological context of a symbol being its "referent" rather than the "things" experienced that might have caused or stimulated this context, and this seems an entirely different matter. With much more justification, Black also criticized Richards' neglect of syntax, the full "assertion" of an idea in contrast to the sense of particular words which is merely "presented." Black showed Richards to have treated "presented" symbols as if they were "asserted," prematurely imposing syntactic standards of truth in order to include a greater number of assertions in the category of emotive, non-referential discourse.<sup>58</sup> And indeed it seems true that Richards' general



neglect of syntax might have led to this difficulty, though it had little direct bearing upon Richards' theory of affective criticism. Black himself fell into a comparable trap, however, when he declared that the resolution of ethical issues with a theory of the "interplay of generated emotive influence" is almost "mischievous."<sup>59</sup> The attempt to eliminate emotion from ethical judgment seems the same kind of premature categorizing, and in fact an impossibility hypocritical to maintain. The standards of verification might be two-fold and more elaborate than Richards had calculated, but the affective phenomenon is equally impervious to the effort to simplify and eliminate it.

The most important theoretical response to Richards seems to have been the long first chapter (131 pages) in New Criticism by John Crowe Ransom, published in 1941. Ransom was not so interested in refuting or discrediting Richards as in reassessing his ideas in order to incorporate what he found of value in a more acceptable theory of aesthetic response. He disliked the "nominalism" of Richards in frankly preferring the affective response to poetry to its objective interpretation. It seemed an unnecessary repetition to devote our analysis first to a description of the text and then to that of its duplication in the mind of the competent reader. Since our affective response beyond this duplication becomes murky and inchoate, introducing dangerous temptations and uncertainties, he proposed replacing affective theory with a new approach, "cognitive" criticism, emphasizing our inter-

pretive understanding and thus the text itself as directly understood. Our total response, the "choice of our whole personality," would be left to occur spontaneously and appropriately if the cognitive problems have been adequately dealt with. This neglect is thoroughly justified, he insisted, because the experience of art is in fact primarily cognitive and its cognitive interpretation gains for us the acumen to differentiate among our emotional responses. Emotions-in-themselves are fictions and "all but unintelligible for us in their supposed independent purity." Without cognition to attach themselves to, they would dissipate and very likely vanish.<sup>60</sup> Ransom's shift in emphasis from affect (not denied but clearly subordinated) to cognition apparently solved the plethora of difficulties Richards brought upon criticism. Truth, logic, and belief were reinstated as qualified virtues of poetry, and formal interpretation was given its freedom since the cognitive response merely replicates the formal properties of a text in the mind of its ideal reader.

Ransom's proposal has considerable appeal and not surprisingly furnished the basis for a "New Criticism," as he proposed it to do, a methodology benefiting from Richards' insights but liberated from the muddle of subjectivism imposed by his affective framework. Others like Wellek and Wimsatt seem to have merely elaborated and justified in scholarship these foundations proposed by Ransom. However, there are dangerous pitfalls in the theory of cognitive

criticism. Affect is indeed consolidated and differentiated in its cognitive embodiment, but, as I later try to show in Chapter Five, it also activates and directs our cognition. A dialectical interpenetration exists between the two that prevents one from being artificially isolated from the other. Richards cannot investigate affect isolated from cognition, as in fact he does not try to do, but Ransom and others have the same impediment that they cannot treat cognition independent of affect. Such a compartmentalization does not occur in consciousness, and to propose it in theory invites error. Ransom himself has avoided serious mistakes, but his theory has encouraged the formalist reductionism articulated by Cleanth Brooks, its most respectable practitioner, and generally pursued in academic scholarship. Formal questions were pursued to the exclusion of personality and even history (the collective interaction of interests and personalities), supposedly "reductionist" byways from the essential responsibility of contextual interpretation. However, we must agree with Richards that the objective text itself is not of primary importance since it is a meaningless clutter of hieroglyphics if we do not share the language and experience to understand it. Nor is our strictly cognitive response of primary importance since it is, in fact, a feat of radical abstraction impossible in human behavior. What is of primary importance is our cognitive-affective response, and here, whether we like it or not, all the subjective difficulties proposed by Richards arise

as if from Pandora's box. They cannot be brushed aside and arbitrarily excluded from criticism, nor need they be, for Richards has shown how at least some of them may be quantified, sorted, and brought into a little more order.

Poetry involves our total response to the text of poetry, so its study must be ipso facto the study of this response. Any theory diverting us from this essential task is (I respectfully submit) thoroughly misleading. The "Affective Fallacy" labeled and delivered by Wimsatt is hardly a fallacy, but in fact the first principle to be taken into account. The real fallacy beguiling us from the job of criticism might be labeled, as I earlier proposed, the "Projective Fallacy," what Richards explained in Principles of Literary Criticism to be "projecting an effect to make it a quality of its cause."<sup>61</sup> Or we might reconsider (as Richards asked in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 116) what William James called the "Psychologist's Fallacy," the confusion of our methodology with the material investigated. The objectification involved in both fallacies is perfectly acceptable and even desirable for the experience of beauty, as Santayana insightfully explained in his principle that beauty is pleasure regarded as a quality of a thing. But it is not acceptable unrecognized in the study of this experience. Here is exactly where the unexplored assumptions of formal (or "contextualist") criticism arise, in the "projective" confusion of a formal methodology with the objective text it supposedly explains. Whereas affective criticism tries to define the complexity

of this relationship, formal criticism treats a subjective need, the analytic (and authoritarian) quest for shape, as if it were simply an intrinsic and self-sufficient feature of the text. Not so--the teleology of form is experience: form is imparted by the poet to be recognized by his readers for effects surpassing whatever gratification lies in pattern itself, as Richards cleverly demonstrated in his Jabberwocky parody of "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."<sup>62</sup> Without the experience of meaning, form tumbles into an empty chaos of hieroglyphic iterations.

The ignorance of New Criticism ultimately lies in a dubious theory of psychology, more erroneous than the "impulse" theory of Richards, that cognition may be isolated from affect. Its arrogance lies in the thoroughly misguided belief that its methodology justifies this ignorance and the unexamined reductionism it encourages. To the contrary, the experience of poetry is multi-dimensional, requiring considerably more breadth in its interpretation. Many realms of experience may be profitably brought to bear upon poetry, beyond even the limits of interpretation imposed by Richards. We may conditionally explore the unconscious response emphasized by psychoanalytic and archetypal approaches as well as the social response emphasized by the Marxist, and, most recently, Structuralist approaches. All of these are involved, however ancillary, in the experience of poetry, and thus may be properly brought into account. The particular contribution of Richards, aside from having provided the

initial inspiration for much of the valuable theory in New Criticism, has been in giving us a means to escape the cul de sac into which this theory has led us. The "choice of our whole personality" raises questions beyond any abstract theory of cognition and whatever formal guidelines of explication it serves. This "choice," our affective response, is properly the common denominator of all critical approaches (including the formalist), affording the basis by which their differentiae may be synthetically explored.

## Footnotes, Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>John Crowe Ransom, The New Criticism (Norfolk, 1941), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Allen Tate, Essays of Four Decades (Chicago, 1968), p. xi.

<sup>3</sup>Stanley Edgar Hyman, The Armed Vision (New York, 1955, Vintage edition), p. 278.

<sup>4</sup>D.G. James, Scepticism and Poetry (London, 1937); chapter two, upon Richards, is reprinted in Critiques and Essays in Criticism, ed. by Robert Stallman (New York, 1949), pp. 472-87.

<sup>5</sup>W.H.N. Hotopf, Language, Thought and Comprehension (Bloomington, 1965). Jerome Schiller, I.A. Richards' Theory of Literature (New Haven, 1969).

<sup>6</sup>Rene Wellek, "On Rereading I.A. Richards," The Southern Review, Vol. III, no. 3 (July, 1967), pp. 533-54. This seems to be the best and most accurate recent assessment of Richards, though unnecessarily critical. It was apparently offered as a preliminary statement of Wellek's approach to Richards in his forthcoming History of Modern Criticism, Vol. 5. A few of Wellek's fundamental arguments are discussed in this chapter, but it is beyond the scope of this essay to answer Wellek with the thoroughness his article deserves.

<sup>7</sup>Speculative Instruments (Chicago, 1955), p. 44.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, fn. p. 53. The remark was made by Richards with particular regard to his shift in the perspectives of Practical Criticism (1929) and Interpretation on Teaching (1938).

<sup>9</sup>In New Criticism Ransom mistakenly said The Meaning

of Meaning was his first book. Hotopf mentions The Foundations of Aesthetics but claims the ideas presented there may be better treated in the context of his later books, thus neglecting the advantage of coherence and lucidity in Richards' first enunciation of his views. Schiller peculiarly omits referring to the book at all except in his bibliography, and Stanley Edgar Hyman devotes a brief though fair paragraph to its views. Finally, it should be mentioned that Wellek's article seems disingenuous in presenting as unconscious and undifferentiated sources of Richards the now obscure aestheticians such as Vernon Lee, Ethel D. Puffer, and Wilbur Urban, without mentioning that Richards thoroughly discussed these figures himself in The Foundations of Aesthetics, where he carefully defined his own position in contrast to theirs. The Foundations of Aesthetics is the only book of Richards' criticism not mentioned in Wellek's article.

<sup>10</sup>The Foundations of Aesthetics (London, 1922).

<sup>11</sup>Principles of Literary Criticism (New York, 1924).

<sup>12</sup>Foundations of Aesthetics, pp. 65-71.

<sup>13</sup>The different spelling probably accounts for the oversight of Wimsatt and Brooks in Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York, 1957), p. 618, when they declare that Richards abandoned the concept of synaesthesia in Principles of Literary Criticism. Actually, Chapter XIII, "Emotion and Coenaesthesia," treats the concept somewhat thoroughly, though in terms of the James-Lange theory of affect with its emphasis upon somatic impulses. More about this in Chapter Five.



<sup>14</sup>Foundations of Aesthetics, p. 86. The theory of Friedrich Schiller is discussed on pp. 81-82.

<sup>15</sup>F.R. Leavis, "Dr. Richards, Bentham and Coleridge," Scrutiny, 3 (1935), p. 393.

<sup>16</sup>Science and Poetry (New York, 1926; second edition, London, 1935), p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 20. Richards repeated this point in Coleridge on Imagination (New York, 1935), p. 229, nine years later.

<sup>18</sup>His later theory of the metaphor somewhat bears upon imagery but not directly. What he left unexplored may be indicated by the discoveries of French thematic critics such as Bachelard and Poulet.

<sup>19</sup>This dichotomy was first proposed in The Meaning of Meaning (London, 1923). Hotopf (p. 164) cites a 1925 review by Ramsey applauding Ogden and Richards for their introduction of the distinction between emotive and referential uses of language.

<sup>20</sup>A useful explanation of the concept may be found in the article, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," by Rudolph Carnap, in Logical Positivism, edited by A.J. Ayer (Glencoe, 1959), pp. 60-81.

<sup>21</sup>The Meaning of Meaning, pp. 149-50.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 155-57. Emotion was only briefly mentioned here with regard to the primitive evocation of experience, but its involvement in evocative language (at least short of synaesthesia) seems to have been clearly implied.

<sup>23</sup>Much the same emphasis upon the active character of the sign situation was reiterated by Richards in Practical Criticism, fn. p. 363, where he defended his views from Bertrand Russell's criticism that a distinction should be made between active and passive meanings.

<sup>24</sup>In Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment (London, 1929), pp. 357-59, Richards treated this problem in "projectile adjectives," those which suggest the effect of an object to be its intrinsic quality, for example in the remark, "He is a horrible man." But we must again stress that this confusion is obviously akin to Santayana's definition of beauty and not to be proscribed in literature itself.

<sup>25</sup>Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup>Brooks and Wimsatt, p. 624.

<sup>27</sup>Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 263--cited by Wellek, pp. 539-40.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 276, 251.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 184-85, 243-44, 213.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 177-78. I have taken the liberty to extend Richards' theory here, though my proposal seems entirely in accordance with his approach to information theory in "The Future of Poetry," (1960), included in So Much Nearer (New York, 1968), pp. 150-82. This question is treated at greater length in the next chapter.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 225-27. The question is treated more thoroughly in Practical Criticism.

<sup>32</sup>The Foundations of Aesthetics, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup>Practical Criticism, p. 225.

<sup>34</sup>Principles of Literary Criticism, pp. 98-100, 166-67.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40, 240. This interpretation of meter as experience was used again in Coleridge on Imagination, p. 117.

<sup>36</sup>Practical Criticism, pp. 195-96, 204, 354.

<sup>37</sup>Tate, Brooks, Black, and Schiller (among others) have praised Richards for making this revision, while Leavis indicated a shift to attack both the earlier and later positions. I would emphatically agree with both Wellek and Richards that there was much less of a change than the others have supposed.

<sup>38</sup>Coleridge on Imagination, p. 228; Richards quotes Biographia Literaria, II, 12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>40</sup>Four of Richards remaining six books (excluding those upon Basic English and two collections of poetry), Mencius on the Mind (1932), Basic Rules of Reason (1933), How to Read a Page (1942), and Nations and Peace (1947), are not directly relevant to the problems of affective criticism. His two later collections of essays, Speculative Instruments (1955) and So Much Nearer (1968), will be briefly treated next chapter.

<sup>41</sup>The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York, 1936), pp. 130-31. Other remarks bearing upon this idea are on pp. 48, 72-73.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>43</sup>Montgomery Belgion, "What is Criticism?" Criterion, 10 (1930), pp. 118-39. Reply by Richards, "Notes on the

Practice of Interpretation," Criterion 10 (1930), pp. 412-20.

<sup>44</sup>Stallman, p. 494.

<sup>45</sup>Murray Krieger, The New Apologists for Poetry (Minneapolis, 1956), p. ix.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>47</sup>The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 124.

<sup>48</sup>Krieger, p. 126.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>51</sup>Eliseo Vivas, "Four Notes of I.A. Richards' Aesthetic Theory," Philosophical Review, 44 (1935), pp. 354-67; included in Creation and Discovery (New York, 1955), pp. 209-221.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-13.

<sup>54</sup>Wellek makes the same point (p. 543) regarding the complexity of the organization of impulses somehow communicated. The reply remains essentially the same, that poetry necessarily causes changes, and in doing so sensitizes the reader, so the kind and magnitude of these changes as well as the degree of sensitivity evoked become important factors in the judgment of quality. In denying this process, both Vivas and Krieger fall prey to the solipsism of which Richards has been wrongly accused.

<sup>55</sup>Op. cit., fn. 15.

<sup>56</sup>D.W. Harding, "I.A. Richards," Scrutiny, I (1933), pp. 327-38. Max Black, "Some Questions about Emotive Meaning," Philosophical Review, 57 (1948), pp. 111-26.

<sup>57</sup>Black, p. 113.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>60</sup>Ransom, pp. 21-22, 28.

<sup>61</sup>Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 21.

<sup>62</sup>Practical Criticism, p. 232. Richards refers to the  
"Psychologist's Fallacy" in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 116.

## Chapter Three:

## Richards' Later Criticism and a Stratificational Alternative

The inadequacies of Richards' early theories that concerned the New Critics were his pseudo-scientific reliance upon the concept of the "impulse" and his dichotomy of affect and cognition--they accepted the dichotomy but rejected his choice in affect to explain aesthetic experience. Instead, they emphasized poetry as a refinement of knowledge and shifted their sights to the "facts" known to criticism--the objective text as a composition to be explicated. Here we claim they were in error, for in this dichotomy neither of the two components, affect and cognition, may be extracted and purified to the exclusion of the other.<sup>1</sup> Richards had first proposed the dichotomy, but throughout his career tried to find a suitable harmony between the two, successively in the concepts of Chung Yung, Tolstoyan sincerity, and mythic projection, whereas the New Critics uncritically accepted its compartmentalization, leading to a naive epistemological equation that what we empirically observe in a text must (and can) be duplicated by a mirror-like aesthetic response.<sup>2</sup> They wanted this response to be devoid of affect so our interpretive skills would not be distorted by subjective bias, and with a passive intensity so the text would be duplicated accurately. However, this ideal is beyond human capabilities and, for this reason, extraneous to aesthetic experience. To his credit, Richards conceded this "perfect" response to be an unattainable one, though he has

apparently encouraged our effort to approach its perfection.

But there is a more fundamental problem in Richards' affective theory ignored by New Critics, who in fact have been even less equipped than he to rectify it. Richards proposed a poetic response more dynamic than theirs, but by no means dynamic enough and without involving enough of the personality in this response. Richards did propose an "active" theory of meaning, one which he could defend from Bertrand Russell's distinction between active and passive meanings, respectively "that of man uttering a word" and "of man hearing the word." The active meaning, he said, is the more fundamental of the two for it "explains much" in the passive meaning of our response.<sup>3</sup> This we must entirely agree with, but we have to go further to declare that the so-called "passive" meaning of the reader is both as active and creative as the "active" processes of composition by the poet. The reader is initially a passive respondent to the "speech utterance" as an "interanimating" collection of words, but all of these compose a "sign situation" which he must then recreate as well as possible in the context of his own experience. This necessitates his active involvement, his maximum freedom to move about both in the context of poetry and his own background of experience to find whatever might seem of value in his "transaction" with poetry.<sup>4</sup> Richards has apparently rejected this degree of freedom, as would be indicated by such remarks as, "The identity of the addressee is irrelevant to the poetry as

poetry."<sup>5</sup> But we must reply that this freedom of identity is essential, even crucial to poetry; the "choice of the whole personality" proposed by Richards himself necessitates total involvement, not the distillation of attention he proposes.<sup>6</sup> Richards' dynamic principle conflicts with his static limitations excluding personality, for our identity is ultimately what we do, the choice we make.

It should be added here that our choice-making activity involves enormous realms of experience Richards wanted excluded from our response to poetry. The unconscious is involved in this "choice," particularly with its dynamics of repression and displacement, as well as our sense of social identity, the values and aspirations we share with those around us. Both realms influence language and poetry: "Words, said Bukharin, "are the depository of the whole previous life of mankind." "Within the microcosm of the word," he claimed, "is embedded the macrocosm of history. The word, like the concept, is abridged history, an 'abreviature,' or epitome, of social-historical life."<sup>7</sup> Norman Holland has also pointed out the "defensive" nature of words, their counter-cathartic value in protecting us from an unacceptable oral passivity.<sup>8</sup> Both these concepts of language, respectively Marxist and Freudian, are relevant to the choice we make in the language of poetry, and thus deserve serious consideration in the context of affective criticism, as do other, comparable reductionist approaches, whether thematic, archetypal, existential, or structuralist. An eclectic



working hypothesis may be proposed, in fact, that each of these approaches is valid to the extent that it defines a particular area of human experience involved in this choice-making activity. They may be more or less listed on a scale ranging from conscious particularity to unconscious universality:

1. Thematic                    our discovery of signification in themes and patterns.
2. Structuralist            pattern synchronically imposed upon literature in our futile struggle against entropy.
3. Existential              personal commitment and fulfillment tested by literature.
4. Marxist                    the contradictions of our role in history expressed in literature.
5. Psychoanalytic        the unconscious dynamics of fantasies in literature.
6. Archetypal              our expectations of character and story-outcome shared with others.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and this list is certainly not exhaustive, for other reductionist approaches may easily be added, for example Christian exegesis, currently of waning popularity. But each of these approaches occupies territory in mapping our "whole personality," and thus helps explain the dynamics in our experience of poetry. Its topographical particularity suggests a

model to help define our aesthetic response. It cannot be pre-emptively rejected as reductionism precisely because it is proposed as a model, not an inclusive "objective" assessment. If poetry were a static collocation of aesthetic properties, then we could make our choice among these reductionist approaches as fiefdoms of inquiry, or, more likely, we could reject them all for formal reductionism, one more fiefdom, of the "intra-referential" context. However, poetry is dynamic, not static; and to the extent that any approach might seem objectively sufficient without involving the others, it is indeed reductionist, a misleading reification. When acknowledged, nevertheless, the taxonomy in any of these approaches may be highly useful, qualified by the understanding that no model thoroughly defines experience or excludes the use of other models. To make either claim exceeds the benefits of reductionism. Each critical approach is thus a "tool," an activity defined by Levi-Strauss as "bricolage," our pre-scientific craftsmanship, in this case to "build" a definition of aesthetic response.<sup>9</sup> Our aesthetic response of course remains a mental process independent of its model, and should not be confused with any of these reductionist approaches, as has often occurred, particularly with formalism. This confusion is precisely the Psychologist's Fallacy mentioned last chapter. Every critical approach, however impressive, also has paradigmatic limitations essential to be recognized. The most important of these is that our aesthetic response doesn't abide

by reductionist boundaries, but sweeps across them all. These boundaries are only useful to the extent that they help chart its movement.

In What is Literature?, published in 1948, Jean Paul Sartre proposed a dynamic theory of language which dramatically contrasts with the exclusionary passiveness proposed by Richards. Sartre claimed simply, "To speak is to act," and, without contradicting himself, "To write is to give." He also said, "By speaking, I reveal the situation by my very intention of changing it," suggesting the extent to which language involves purpose. "The engaged writer," he added, "knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change."<sup>10</sup> He proposed the writer's engagement, his commitment to this change in a social (and specifically Marxist) context, but the principle applies to other dimensions of experience as well. He claimed that each word is "a wager--a risk assumed," and he personified and projected this "risk" in our dynamic relationship with language, giving it almost superhuman proportions:

Thus, regarding language, it is our shell and our antennae; it protects us against others and informs us about them; it is a prolongation of our senses, a third eye which is going to look into our neighbor's heart. We are within language as within our body. We feel it spontaneously while going beyond it toward other ends, as we feel our hands and our feet; we perceive it when

it is the other who is using it, as we perceive the limbs of others. There is the word which is lived and the word which is met. But in both cases it is in the course of an undertaking, either of the acting upon others, or the other upon me.<sup>11</sup>

For Sartre language asserts purpose, behavior, assessment, and our entire identity. It is not the distillation of sensitivity in a speech utterance, but an "expressive cosmology," the world defined in its projection by the speaker.

This dynamic conception of language proposed by Sartre was rooted in a theory of communication. He considered language a social act, a "collaboration" between the writer and his readers,<sup>12</sup> the "appeal" made by the writer to the reader's freedom, uniting the two toward a social goal, "the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution."<sup>13</sup> The writer "mediates" this revolution in the self-awareness he instills in his readers: "If you name the behavior of an individual, you reveal it to him; he sees himself. And since you are at the same time naming it to all the others, he knows that he is seen at the moment he sees himself."<sup>14</sup> The reader is thus both a victim and accomplice of the writer; his act of reading is a "dialectical correlative" of that of writing in their "co-joint" experience. Reading is an activity making itself passive in order to recreate the experience of the writer, but in this re-creation, paradoxically, "passivity becomes an act." The writer "takes advantage" of what the reader knows "in order to teach him

what he does not know": the reader passively acquiesces to their sharing of knowledge, but must actively make his own further discoveries catalyzed (or "mediated") by the writer.<sup>15</sup> Any alternative to this communication of discovery is an evasion, exis rather than praxis.<sup>16</sup> In Search for a Method he later defined the particular evasion of formalism as being fetishist: ". . .we simply make a fetish out of the book (which often happens) just as one may do with a piece of merchandise by considering it as a thing that speaks for itself and not as the reality of a man objectified through his work."<sup>17</sup> This reality must be "objectified" through its shared act of communication, and if communication breaks down or is discarded for false objectivity in formalism, then art becomes neurotic--a fetish.

It is not necessary to agree entirely with Sartre to recognize the comparatively static (and fetishistic) limitations in Richards' theory of communication. Richards deemphasized the factors of collaboration and of the reader's active assimilation of aesthetic experience. In the paradigm of information theory commonly used,

Speaker -- encoding -- message -- decoding -- Hearer,

he emphasized "message-decoding," an improvement over the formalist reliance upon "message" alone, but in doing so he comparatively reduced the role of the "hearer" to the abstract process of "making a choice," a relatively passive experience compared with the "Dionysian" response defined by Sartre.

Richards also deemphasized the total process of communication represented by the entire paradigm, which would open criticism to the variety of approaches mentioned above. With his "message-decoding" truncation, he was able to ignore them.

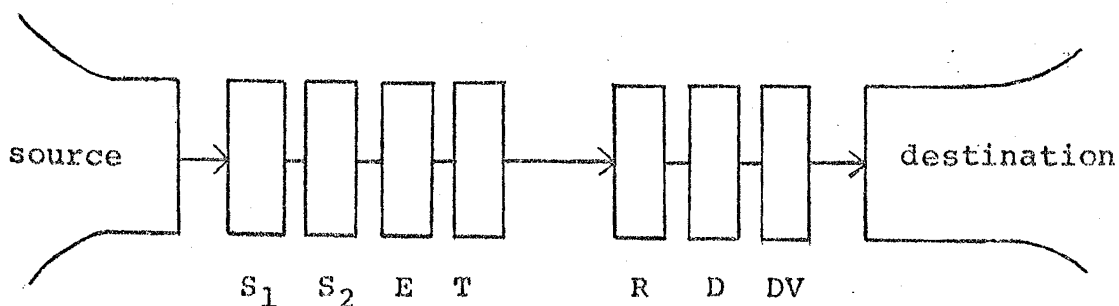
In his criticism published since World War II, Richards himself has been profoundly concerned with information theory, and in fact has proposed a new theory of literature elaborating the paradigm represented above to emphasize even further the "message-decoding" truncation. His views have become more static and exclusionary than before, dangerously flirting the temptations of formalism, while he has increasingly neglected the question of affect, but without necessarily denying its importance. In his article, "Emotive Meaning Again," (1948) he took pains to concur with Max Black that, "The bandying about of 'emotive' has done more harm than good," and, in fact, confessed that his own use of the word "emotive" had been a useful reification "encapsulating" its topic.<sup>18</sup> He proposed that metaphor is a more useful vehicle for the study of our affective response than emotion, and that the essential polarity in language might more profitably be considered referential-metaphoric rather than referential-emotive.<sup>19</sup> But since no idea is strictly referential, he said, even theory must be partly metaphoric, a principle certainly true of his own, as shown in the last chapter. Thus the presumably "referential" explanation of aesthetics is metaphor (as theory) about metaphor (as poetic figuration) of metaphor (thought itself, as proposed

in Coleridge on Imagination). Richards did not exactly abandon emotion, though, as may be more clearly seen in "Emotive Language Still," an article published the next year (1949). Here he acknowledged, as mentioned above, that language does not usefully sort into emotive and referential components since they are combined in speech, and a purely emotive or referential utterance does not exist. The difference between the two may only be usefully applied to determining their balance. A predominantly emotive expression would tend more to recall prior occurrences of the words, with less sorting, combining, and economizing characteristic of the processes of abstract thought.<sup>20</sup> Emotive language would also resist paraphrase, its effect depending to a greater degree upon the evocation of experience. Richards thus continued to support the affective theory of literature, but with two modifications favoring more of a cognitive approach: (1) he abandoned the popular idea of emotion for its embodiment in metaphor, a rhetorical concept easier to handle in criticism, and (2) he clearly recognized that emotion and reference (or cognition) are inseparable, but apparently had concluded that predominantly emotive utterances are both phylogenetically and ontogenetically primitive, falling short of poetry.

In "The Future of Poetry," (1960) Richards went even further on the road to formalism. He took pains to acknowledge his respect for Rene Wellek and particularly Roman Jakobson and tried to incorporate Saussure's concept of

signifier and signified into his explanation of aesthetic communication, in marked contrast to his earlier attack upon this dichotomy in The Meaning of Meaning, when he objected to making "things" the unmediated object of signification.<sup>21</sup>

He retained vestiges of his earlier affective theory, though, in several important respects. He emphasized the importance of a threefold Bloomfieldian hierarchy in the study of meaning, of the phonologic, morphologic, and semantic levels, all of which must be adequately combined in the "poetic plaiting" of expression.<sup>22</sup> The semantic level obviously would include affective questions beyond formalist inquiry, but again mostly as a matter of rhetoric, which in modern linguistics too often reduces to a vacant semiology such as those proposed by Barthes or Fodor and Katz.<sup>23</sup> Richards also attacked the Structuralist obsession with opposition ("mutual preclusiveness") in analyzing the "limitless variety" of potential interanimations in language, and similarly attacked their emphasis upon the interrelationship among words alone, to the neglect of their initial acquisition in childhood.<sup>24</sup> Finally, he expanded the paradigm of information theory to introduce several affective complications:





In this schematization, he multiplied the processes of encoding and decoding to include respectively four and three phases: selecting (in two stages-- $S_1$  and  $S_2$ ), encoding (E), and transmitting (T), and then receiving (R), decoding (D), and developing (DV).<sup>25</sup> This expansion was necessary, he claimed, since the selection of words is a complex process involving several stages of feed-back and feed-forward (or "eddying"). Each word affects the probability of choice among the others, and many words desirable in every sense but one must often be irrevocably rejected for that one reason. Similarly, words first selected must later be rejected because they somehow conflict with other words selected. He included both  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , disbalancing the symmetry of the paradigm, to indicate the cyclic interdependence of the selective process, a choice-making activity the reader might experience only in the closest examination of a text. These stages all seem to have been profitably sorted out by Richards to represent the generation of words, what he called "cajoling an unembodied something into its incarnation."<sup>26</sup>

Where Richards seems to have become more formalist was in his depersonification of "speaker" and "hearer" to be "source" and "destination," and thus deemphasized compared with the expanded processes of "encoding" and "decoding." This abstract nomenclature was not accidental, but intended to eliminate the human being from these categories, for, he said, one cannot actually send or receive an idea: such a

transaction involves a mystical or Vedantist idea of transubstantiation.<sup>27</sup> But we must emphatically disagree! By resorting to this formalist equivocation, Richards was undermining the whole purpose of information theory represented by its paradigm, the axiom that communication between real people indeed does take place, though modifications (what we might call a process of "refraction") occur at each stage of its progress. But real sound waves do convey real symbols which really do involve comparable "sign situations" for the speaker and his listeners. Without our faith in this transmission, nominalism becomes a solipsistic extravagance. Richards apparently made a straw man of mysticism to establish the independence and self-sufficiency of language in poetry, a typically formalist preoccupation:

The over-all point, however, is that a poem is responsible to the resources of the language as regards its task--not to any public (except a public in command of these resources). The independence of language from poet or from reader (or critic) is remarkable. No one can wish anything into, or wish anything out of, a composition--though we authors and critics may differ indeed upon what it admits or excludes. In the end, however, it decides for or against us.<sup>28</sup>

Richards accordingly proposed an emendation of Shelley's principle, from poets being our "unacknowledged legislators" to the formalist creed: "Poems are the unacknowledged legislation of the world."<sup>29</sup> He likewise claimed, ". . .

behind a line of verse may stand, not the mere experience of the poet, but the immense reserves, the accumulated potentials of language, due to the equivalences, the oppositions, reinforcements, resistances, and so on of phrase to phrase within it."<sup>30</sup> (italics added) These words might just as well have been spoken by a Structuralist such as Barthes or Jakobson, the latter of whom seems to have had an enormous influence upon this and similar articles by Richards.

Finally, Richards ridiculed the "Fallacy of Vulgar Packaging," the commonplace notion that the poet has a "poetic experience," wraps it up in a "verbal package," and delivers it to his readers so they can unwrap it to enjoy for themselves. Richards denied both the artificial notion of "poetic experience" (which he found in both Wordsworth and Shelley, though not Coleridge--perhaps overlooking his "conversational poems" influenced by Wordsworth) and the idea of its communication in toto as a gift from the poet to his readers. "Poetic experience" thus misunderstood implies, he said, "a sort of catching a nonverbal butterfly in a verbal butterfly net," and then releasing it in the reader's act of comprehension. This would be a patent absurdity because words remain in our experience with their various interdependencies, not to be caught and released, transferred from one repository to another.

Again we must vigorously disagree, though with certain qualifications. The "sign situation" defined by Richards in The Meaning of Meaning involves a relationship between thought

and language that transcends the butterfly net parody and yet involves the "capturing" of non-verbal experience in verbal structures, a process shared by the poet and his readers. The logic here seems impeccable: there is more in our experience than language--in fact our most creative experience seems visual and intuitive, particularly in our youth. Even Jakobson has somewhat conceded this point: ". . .but internal thought especially when creative, willingly uses other systems of signs which are more flexible, less standardized than language and leave more liberty, more dynamism to creative thought."<sup>31</sup> But if our thought is different from language and yet language has the metaphoric flexibility to express almost all we think (gaining in sentential coherence what it loses in eidetic vividness), then a process of "coupling" seems necessarily involved, and the impression we have of searching or groping for words (and they waiting passively to be taken up) might justify the use of the expression "catch" or "capture." Indeed, this expression seems to describe more adequately our process of speech than the idea of words coupling and locking together spontaneously according to their own rules--without our assistance and with only our consent. Returning to Richards' analogy, then, we claim that butterflies are there to be caught, but the lepidopterist perpetually tying and untying the webbing of his net is not likely to gather much of a collection. One further point: the "mere experience" of the poet and his readers prejudicially represented by the ephemeral butterfly

exceeds the "accumulated potential" of language to the extent that behavior exceeds its explanation, history its chronicle, and novels such as The Brothers Karamazov and Ulysses their resources in the dictionary.<sup>31</sup> In its symbolic function, language is as much a tool as a finished product, and, as a tool, it is less than its experience conveyed. To the extent that it is referential, it is no more to be confused with this experience than a carpenter's equipment with the house he builds. Its emotive (or metaphoric) dimension likewise involves a pre-lingual process of affect and conation erupting into language, obviously with a matrix outside its structures.<sup>32</sup> To explain these "extraneous" influences upon our choice of words, Richards would have to return to his earlier and more promising critical apparatus. By dropping his interest in psychology and concentrating on communication theory, and then further truncating that, he has unfortunately drifted from potentially synthetic critical metaphors to a paradigm which is formalist and exclusionary.

## II.

It would seem profitable to return to the rudiments of information theory, avoiding as best we can the "fallacy of vulgar packaging," a genuine mistake to which affective theory has been as vulnerable as stylistic analysis has been to the "formalist heresy" proposed by Bradley. A more creative use of the paradigm in information theory can be proposed not only to restore affect to aesthetic response but

also to establish a "stratificational" relationship between experience and poetry. The text of a poem may be simply defined as an instrument to a certain extent recreating its creator's experience in the consciousness of readers having comparable language skills and a somewhat comparable body of experience. The paradigm,

Speaker -- encoding -- message -- decoding -- Hearer,

applies equally to poetry as other acts of communication, for though its "message" might seem more objectively self-sufficient, it is also (for this reason) a more efficient mode of communication. But the entire circuit must be completed, for without it the printed page becomes a jumble of hieroglyphics and its recitation a phatic babbling. The integrity of the "message" is valueless unless it stimulates a similar integrity in the response of the reader. Though the poet cannot perfectly communicate his feelings to the reader, there must be a percentage of accuracy in its replication of meaning for communication to occur, and we may assume that this percentage increases by employing rhetorical techniques known since classical civilization. Whether this proportion is high or not, however, exactly the same processes are involved in both the poet and his reader, though in an inverse order: the poet selects words to represent experience, while his reader selects experience to "body forth" the meaning of the words. In fact the S<sub>1</sub>-S<sub>2</sub> feedback proposed by Richards in the poet's selection of words should

be counterbalanced by a  $DV_1$ - $DV_2$  in the reader's comparable selection of experience. As Joseph Frank suggested in his theory of "spatialization," the reader must keep utterances in mind to test them out against each other before arriving at a definite thematic interpretation.

For our purposes, then, the five stages of this paradigm may be profitably divided into two phases, (1) speaker -- encoding -- message, and (2) message -- decoding -- hearer, respectively the composition and experience of poetry:

message	message
encoding	decoding
speaker	hearer

The second phase is an inversion of the first, supposedly the passive response of understanding, though the reader actually proposes his own meaning, duplicating the first phase in order to compare his experience with the poet's, just as the poet resorts to the second phase while composing poetry in order to judge and control his expression. The first phase is generally emphasized by the poet and the second by the reader, but both are involved in both acts of creating and responding to poetry. Each phase has three components, a human being, his search for words, and his completed expression. For poetry these may easily be restated as "stratificational" obligations: (1) the poet and his readers must experience life, (2) they must be able to translate this experience into language, and (3) they must

cooperate in organizing this language as poetry. The first and second stages are clearly shared by all society, while the third involves a discrepancy favoring the particular gifts of the poet in degree if not kind, justifying his poetry as "unacknowledged legislation" to the extent that he meaningfully experiences life, fruitfully expresses his experience in language, and successfully combines experience and language in poetry. Even here, though, he must somewhat defer to the consent of the governed, his readers, for the circuit to be completed. These three phases may also be stratificationally interpreted as levels of regression from objective immediacy.<sup>33</sup> In art this immediacy lies in the art object, the objective painting, as well as other experience of the viewer. In poetry, however, it is the text, the meaningless hieroglyphics mentioned above. None of the three phases in this stratificational regression from immediacy (experience, language, and the "message" of poetry) may be eliminated from poetry without apparently reducing it to meaninglessness.

Roman Ingarden has proposed virtually the same "stratificational" explanation of aesthetic experience in the context of phenomenology.<sup>34</sup> He distinguished between cognition and what we perceive, and then, at a new level, between cognition and aesthetic response. In each stage of this advancement, from "objective immediacy" to cognition and then to aesthetic response, he indicated a new and qualitatively unique process of selection. Cognition sifts out the random



and chaotic aspects of experience to give it a degree of shape and pattern. Then our aesthetic response, likewise an active process eliminating the inessential, gives enough symmetry and harmony to our experience to make it pleasing in itself rather than a commonplace manifestation of experience. We interrupt our normal pattern of response at the "conviction moment," when we discover that our experience can become even further refined to be "aesthetic," and a transition occurs as we seek a new, more refined harmony of qualities. This activity involves a "narrowing of our field of consciousness," and, to a certain extent, withdrawal and quasi-oblivion of the real world. The experience becomes a matter of essence, a "secluded whole," though we gain a heightened conviction of its real existence. Its qualities "crystalize" in their interaction, and it becomes transfigured as an aesthetic object through their selection and intensification.<sup>35</sup> Unconscious "projection" is involved in this choice, and there is likewise a "community of experience," since we all are predisposed to make roughly similar aesthetic selections of experience, though obviously benefiting from the better selection of the artist.

Ingarden proposed a complicated theory, much of which need not be explored in this context, but its basis lay in a threefold stratification of objects, their cognition, and their aesthetic embodiment, the latter two stages occurring through the elimination of inharmonious elements. His theory agrees with ours in every respect except its exclusion of

language. Ingarden emphasized the visual arts, thus combining "encoding" and "message" in aesthetic experience, whereas our model separates the two, first in language and then poetry, a final stage comparable to that of art but following the intermediate process of symbolization. Both theories are "stratificational," however, and may be accounted for in information theory. They agree upon an "objective immediacy" and cognitive and aesthetic transformations in the speaker and hearer.

The New Critical quest for textual objectivity has bypassed these intermediate stages by equating "message" with "objective immediacy," and this has led to disastrous consequences in both poetry and criticism. Aesthetic interpretation has been reduced to textual explication, excluding the multifarious dimensions of language and consciousness underlying the text. The inclusion of language (the "utterance act") by Richards helps rectify this inadequacy, yet excludes the role of consciousness. The formal critic must reject the option to digress from the poem in order to return with a larger, more adequate frame of reference justified by the common experience of the poet and his readers. For example, he must usually ignore the social implications of a text, at best subordinating them to "themes" apparently more significant, though these implications may be extrapolated to establish a social vision often of vital importance in understanding the text. The pseudo-objective quest for internal consistency may thus lead to the neglect of larger

though nebulous patterns of consistency in our consciousness-- to which poetry almost always makes its appeal. Apparent textual "flaws" (contradictions and irrelevancies) have been deplored by formal critics, though they may be treated more often than not as shortcuts, conscious or unconscious, which may easily be bridged in our response. Shelley has been castigated for his "mere tumbled out spate of poeticalities" barely held together by his "pervasive lyrical emotion,"<sup>36</sup> though he obviously did not seek the textual unity demanded by formal criticism. The narrative prose of Defoe has likewise been criticized for its incoherent point of view, that of Scott for its inconsistent romanticism, that of Dickens for its episodic structure and lack of credible character development, and that of Dreiser for its unwieldy naturalism. These have been rejected because their communication de-emphasized the "message" (formal coherence) and "decoding" (our aesthetic sensitivity advocated by Richards), and instead concentrated upon the collaboration between "Speaker" and "Hearer" in their feelings and values, their identity and membership in a community. These additional questions frighten the proponent of textual explication, who prefers truncation to the "risk" of creativity.

To explain the communication of creativity, we must understand the poem to function as a catalyst (much as Eliot proposed) to help the reader sort once again through his own fund of experience. He largely shares with the poet the first two stages toward the creation of poetry (experience

and language) since they both live in the same world and speak the same language. The more they share, the more likely he understands the insights of the poet. However, much of his experience and vocabulary lies dormant and relatively unsatisfactorily integrated until he recognizes a better organization of language and experience in the poem and responds with a comparable adjustment. Even if the poet's organization is not clearly better, its differences usually encourage comparison with the result that some adjustment occurs. If not, the poem may be considered worthless for this particular reader. This act of adjustment might seem a passive response, except that it is an act of recognition, not simply an implantation or evoked sensitivity. What we see we largely know already, but it gains a new light that obliges us to modify our understanding. The poem functions as a "mediator" in its capacity as "go between of artist and perceiver,"<sup>37</sup> a record of the poet's act of discovery which leads the reader into making a comparable discovery of his own. It mediates discovery in the sense of shaping and perfecting one act, the poet's, in order to encourage a comparable act similarly to be shaped and perfected by the reader: the poet works out a satisfactory meaning for himself in order to encourage the reader to do likewise. But there is a second and less obvious sense in which a poem functions as mediator. It breaks down compartments in the mind of the reader and vitalizes separate, relatively dormant ideas by bringing them to the threshold of

insight in their combination. We may see this process most clearly in the effect of metaphor, which evokes a fresh understanding of both tenor and vehicle through an unusual but apt comparison. The same effect is produced by other modes of figuration, by dramatic effects, even by language in its usual combination of words. At all levels the poem spearheads the reader's challenge to his own static frame of reference, initiating a liberation of "potential energy" in him through his active response. But we must recognize that poetry merely provides the efficient cause of this act; the final cause lies in the intelligence, sensitivity, and doggedness of the reader. In a simultaneous effort he takes what he can from the poem to do what he can with his own feelings.

Contrary to the view of New Criticism, we find little in poetry beyond what we are already conditioned and willing to see. This is the way it is, and the way it should be. The exact replication of a text, neither more nor less, would be a useless, abortive experience, itself a compartmentalization. It would be squeezing ourselves into a strip of film in order to peer one-dimensionally through lense and aperture with total recognition but no particular insight. Instead, we should and do treat poetry with the freedom we do sculpture, viewing it from several angles and distances, squinting at it, touching it, sizing it up as a presence, and taking stock of its flaws as well as its attractions. We must similarly make our own use of poetry,

recombining whatever seems meaningful in our own synthesis similar to, but also necessarily different from that of the poet. There is no primary virtue in exactly duplicating the text not even in approaching this exactitude. The best reader is not the perfect reader, if such a paragon exists or can exist. What we should encourage is the exploratory reader, whose alertness and wealth of relevant associations lead him in and out of poetry at will. He takes what he presently needs, building his own vision somewhat comparable to that of the poet. Discovering the way he does this and the way the poem helps him do it are what I consider to be the more useful and even the more ambitious task of criticism. This job is made difficult by confusion, vagueness, and enormous variety among our responses (even in ourselves at different readings) to a particular text, most of which (as Richards has proven) are entirely inadequate from a professional viewpoint. But the most inept reader undeniably experiences poetry. The rejection of his experience from the purview of criticism, as well, often enough, as the full range of responses between his and the "professional" interpretation, seems just one more example of "expertism," isolating the domain of literary criticism to justify its existence, even, perhaps, to make it a career.

To illustrate the difficulties of a dynamic, stratificational approach to affective criticism, it seems fruitful to investigate in detail the effect of a particular passage of poetry. For this purpose, the third stanza from

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" may be used because of its deceptive simplicity which eliminates extraneous critical implications, disclosing the matrix of poetry with particular success. In its prose explanation, the stanza tells of a sleigh horse's impatient behavior questioning the poet's judgment in pulling him to a halt during a snowstorm late at night in a desolate part of the woods:

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

Reverting once again to our paradigm, we can see that the reader largely shares Frost's background of experience and language in this stanza. The vocabulary is commonplace (76% monosyllabic and almost entirely Anglo Saxon) and the events described arouse a wealth of at least indirect associations in most readers. Those who have directly observed horses impatiently shaking their harnesses might enjoy more rapport with Frost than others, but the behavior of horses is widely known in the cinema, particularly westerns, and in children's stories and eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction. Likewise, even the lifetime citizen of Los Angeles or Phoenix has at least received snow scene Christmas cards from conventional relatives, played with crystal balls that simulate falling snow, and watched television reports of major snowfalls elsewhere in the country. Perhaps a native Panamanian or Congolese has not assimilated this indirect

experience, but his ignorance must be considered deleterious to his appreciation of this stanza. The words sweep, easy, and downy would arouse irrelevant exotic associations not connected with an experience of snow to anchor their use. For the American audience, however, the language and experience of the stanza are commonplace.

It is largely in the composition of the stanza as poetry, at the third phase from objective immediacy, where crucial differences emerge between Frost's and his reader's accomplishment which make the poem an aesthetic experience for the reader. Here we may begin with versification, conditionally accepting the simple tetrameter and heavy rhyme because they reinforce the quiet, acquiescent tone of the stanza. The rhythm makes old men of those who can suspend disbelief and it at least brings out qualities of patient maturity in the rest of us. The voice moralizing this scene with a sing-song rhythm echoing in ourselves is probably the true subject of the poem, for the scene described, a tableau, merely locates and embodies its stoicism. We might not entirely appreciate this voice, but it is genuine human experience fit to be put to poetry. On the other hand we are pleasantly alerted to the personification of a horse which communicates with its driver by shaking its harness. A dialogue thus occurs between two simple natures, the resignation of the poet wanting to watch and perhaps join the peaceful lifelessness about him and the pragmatic impatience of his horse wanting to resume their journey homeward. The



pragmatic and pastoral roles are reversed here, though the poet later reluctantly agrees with the horse, but of course for more profound reasons. In another sense, the narrator (whom we presume to be Frost) seems a modern Everyman wearily making his choice between the horse's impatience and the beckoning woods, also personified as an advocate. In a silent dialogue suggesting the Aristotelian dynamics of discovery and peripety, Frost prepares to resign himself to one of these personified choices but without being certain which, immediate communion with death in the peaceful scene before him or a long journey through life with "miles to go before I sleep." In the context of poetry each possibility is expressed beyond words, the retaining visual sweep of the scene debating the auditory impatience of the horse ringing his harness bells. Both advocates express their views with restraint and moderation, a quiet, sober projection of conflicting feelings harbored by the aging poet and also presumably by ourselves. The horse does not demand, insist, or impatiently rear its head, but makes a brief motion of its head "to ask if there is some mistake," really an indulgent and sympathetic act. Likewise, the wind is "easy" as might be expected during snowfall and the falling snow "downy," suggesting the quiet descent of snowflakes and eidetically reinforcing the effect of deliberation in the advancement of age. The juxtaposition of "easy wind" and "downy flake" might slightly bother us because of its heavy repetition, but its simple conjunction more likely reinforces the tone

of quiet resignation mentioned above. In this particular stanza the horse is a respectful minority, but the issue is really debated elsewhere, in the mind of the driver, beyond him (let us take this inductive leap) in Frost himself, and, most important, in ourselves, his fallible, striving readers, for the question concerns our lives. We must later regretfully concur with Frost and his persona, the driver, to continue the journey through life. But we recognize Frost's projection of this question into a scene of wordless dialogue; we abide by his decision to reject immediate suicide in order to persevere, though we are not exactly certain why.

Our literary experience at the third phase from objective immediacy, the poem, thus liberates a profusion of implications which seem to create an immediacy of their own, for example in the synaesthesia implied by the word "sweep" or the debate, a non-verbal psychomachia, between two beckoning alternatives. We would not be able to understand or appreciate Frost without having (1) a preliminary fund of comparable experience, including our ambivalent attitudes about aging, direct and indirect contact with horses and snowfall, and (2) a similar basic facility with the connotations of language used to describe this experience. These shared realms of consciousness, rudimentary and thus too often neglected in criticism, may be compared with the underwater part of an iceberg--the stratum of literary experience at top mostly concerns us, but it rests upon a vast bulk of common experience essential to its support. Without this

shared background, communication breaks down in literature. Frost's stanza (and poem) presumably stimulates sufficient common experience to gain universality, but if and when his poetry ceases to yield "underwater" meaning to readers (as Longfellow's already has, though he confidently addressed himself to posterity), no matter how excellent its formal virtues, it shall rightly fall into oblivion. Though the critic must primarily concern himself with literary experience, his too common neglect of language and shared experience as the foundation of literary expression encourages formalist extravagance in the explication of poetry, for example the late theories of Richards or, to a greater extent, those of Jakobson and Barthes treated in Chapter Six. All three phases (or strata) are crucial in the communication of poetry-- otherwise it ceases to be read meaningfully and pleasurably, and instead becomes historic document exclusively the concern of literary scholarship.

Richards would not particularly disagree with this view. Our departure from his theory lies in the recognition that there are a large variety of valid approaches to poetry beyond its rudimentary explication. Everybody has a different fund of experience, for example regarding horses, and a different repository of associations for any particular word, for example "sweep." The context of the poem somewhat anchors these associations within a specific combination, for example in Frost's putting the horse in a halter to pull the sleigh and having it nod its head impatiently, but for each reader a great many

associations remain free and untied. These are not an extraneous nuisance, an irrelevancy, but give body and vividness to the experience of the poem. For example, my far-fetched reference above to the "psychomachia" suggested that the horse's behavior makes it seem an allegorical representation engaged in debate as had been common in Medieval morality plays. This specific comparison strikes my own attention though Frost undoubtedly had no idea of its applicability when he wrote the poem. But who is to command by edict and prevent my free exploration of this possibly useful connection in my own experience--I doubt Frost would have. As John Dewey correctly maintained in Art as Experience, the wealth of associations I relate to my understanding of a poem are necessary to particularize and individualize my interpretation:

But experience is a matter of the interaction of the artistic product with the self. It is not therefore twice alike for different persons even today. It changes with the same person at different times as he brings something different to a work. But there is no reason why, in order to be esthetic, these experiences should be identical.<sup>38</sup>

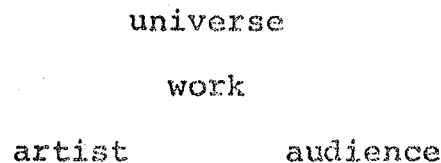
There is an enormous range of possible interpretations for any poem to be fruitfully explored, and the two standards of choice among them are the text itself and the total scope of human experience relative to this text.

The reader should not vainly exhaust himself searching for an ultimately "correct" textual meaning, an ignis fatuus

bearing scant productive results accompanied by too much anguish and arrogance. Instead he should insist upon parity, that he is a somewhat normal human being with somewhat normal responses in a somewhat better than usual state of order while reading poetry. As Aristotle maintained in the Nicomachean Ethics, his human condition is his major responsibility, and, we might add, his strength and limitation, before, after, and during his experience with poetry, though we may share Richard's hope and expectation that his normalcy will improve as a result of his reading experience. He should recognize that the responsibility of his interpretation is his own, that its ultimate validity lies in himself, not the text, which is merely a catalyst, however impressive its results. The poet composed his poem largely by a process of autoscopy, judging his expression in the progress of its effect upon himself. It is incumbent upon the reader to respond in a similar spirit, with a kind of inverted or doubled autoscopic response. His benefit might simply be in expanding his imagination or attaining greater resources of vocabulary, for example (among a thousand) in using the word "sweep" as a noun to describe the fullness of a scene as a synaesthetic response. But with a modicum of effort he might also expect to find the voice of the poet to be addressing him as an equal in the act of mutual discovery and even deferring to his final judgment, a democratic gesture necessitated by feedback in autoscopy. To put himself in this good company at its better moments, the reader

must indeed sharpen his sensibilities, but he need not sacrifice his identity or supinely abandon his own resources of experience. This would be sycophantish and neither pleasurable nor useful. Feedback, the mingling of voices, his own and the poet's, will profit him the most.

One cannot help noticing here the applicability of M.H. Abram's paradigm in The Mirror and the Lamp comparing fundamental approaches to criticism. He divides the total aesthetic experience into four distinct components--work, artist, audience, and universe, arranged as follows:



He then distinguishes four basic critical approaches, each of which emphasizes one of these components. The "mimetic" theories of Plato, Hurd, and Lessing emphasized the accurate representation of the experienced universe; the "pragmatic" theories of Sidney and Hobbes emphasized the effect upon the audience both in pleasure and utility; the "expressive" theories of Longinus, Wordsworth, and Coleridge emphasized the expression of the artist; and the supposedly "objective" theories of Ransom, the New Critics and European formalists emphasized the composition of the work itself. The word "formalist" might more appropriately designate this last component rather than "objective" because the hypothetical objectivity of these theories is two degrees removed from objective immediacy, separated by intermediate levels of

meaning in experience and language. According to Abrams, the transition from eighteenth century classicism to romanticism involved a shift from the Lockean perspective combining mimetic and pragmatic emphases to the expressive emphasis upon the identity of the poet in the romantic movement. But this paradigm may be applied equally well to current trends in criticism to help explain our defense of affective criticism from New Critical attacks. The pragmatic emphasis of Victorians, first preferring "utile" in Browning and Tennyson and then "dulce" with the fin de siècle reaction of Pater, Wilde, and their coterie, was challenged by Richards in his proposal for a combined pragmatic and objective (or "formalist") approach in affective criticism. Then Ransom's cognitive approach with subsequent New Critical modifications almost totally eliminated the pragmatic component, bringing criticism into a strictly formalist realm apparently for the first time in the history of English literature. The pragmatic and expressive approaches have been denounced respectively as the affective and intentional fallacies, and the mimetic theory has been all but forgotten, an eccentric obsession in figures like Auerbach and Lukacs. Composition and technique have removed aesthetics a safe distance from experience.<sup>39</sup> Without minimizing the importance of the expressive or mimetic theories, though, it seems time to return to a more balanced critical outlook by restoring the pragmatic approach in affective criticism. This time, however, we should emphasize the active response of the

reader. The passivity recommended by Richards paved the way to formalism, "contextualism," New Criticism, or whatever we want to call it. Our purpose is to retain as many of Richards' productive insights as possible, but within a broader and more dynamic frame of reference.



## Footnotes, Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Richards emphasized this point in "Emotive Language Still," Yale Review, (1949), p. 110: ". . .to urge that language does not usefully sort into distinct kinds, emotive and referential." Recent psychological and psychoanalytic theories upon this question are surveyed in Chapter Five.

<sup>2</sup>Their naïveté parallels that of eighteenth century critics who wanted poetry to be a mirror-like representation of nature, as Abrams discloses in The Mirror and the Lamp. The New Critical assumption that our response to poetry should approach exactly duplicating it is no more sophisticated than the earlier assumption that nature should be duplicated in its depiction.

<sup>3</sup>Practical Criticism, p. 363.

<sup>4</sup>The "transactional" theory of Marie Rosenblatt explaining this process is summarized in Chapter Four.

<sup>5</sup>Practical Criticism, p. 355.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>7</sup>Nikolai Bukharin, "Poetry and Society," in The Problems of Aesthetics, edited by Vivas and Krieger (New York, 1953), p. 504.

<sup>8</sup>Norman Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York, 1968), p. 240.

<sup>9</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago, 1966), pp. 16-36; translated from the French, La Pensée sauvage (1962, Librairie Plon). Our point is simply that the criticism of homo faber is one more of his tools--to build

a satisfactory explanation of literature.

<sup>10</sup>Jean-paul Sartre, What is Literature? (New York, 1965), pp. 16-17, 102; translated from the French, Qu'est-ce que la littérature (Gallimard, 1949).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. The reference to risk is on p. 31.

<sup>12</sup>R. G. Collingwood's similar theory of collaboration is discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>13</sup>Sartre, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup>Sartre, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>Sartre, pp. 37, 45, 63.

<sup>16</sup>Sartre, pp. 117, 233.

<sup>17</sup>Jean-paul Sartre, Search for a Method (New York, 1963), p. 161; translated from the French, "Question de Méthode," the prefatory essay in Critique de la Raison Dialectique, vol. I (Gallimard, 1960).

<sup>18</sup>Speculative Instruments (Chicago, 1955), p. 40; in this article Richards acknowledged the "intrusive and pervasive dissolution of structure" Max Black found in his later theories supposedly resulting from his effort to escape the "rigid" nominalism of his earlier views, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup>"Emotive Language Still," p. 112. Richards' neglect of psychoanalytic criticism here led him to overlook the similarity between referential "economizing" and the condensation in fantasies which would be an emotive process

of economizing.

<sup>21</sup>"The Future of Poetry," The Screens and Other Poems (New York, 1960), p. 120. Also appears in So Much Nearer (New York, 1968), pp. 181-97. Richards' attack upon Saussure had been in The Meaning of Meaning, p. 5. Chapter Six has a fuller account of the formalist implications in Saussure's theory.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>23</sup>Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology (New York, 1968); translated from the French, Éléments de Sémiologie (Editions du Seuil, 1964)--the formalism in Barthes' theory of planes of signification is treated in Chapter Six. The most influential current theory of semantics is presented in "The Structure of a Semantic Theory," by Jerrold J. Katz and Jerry A. Fodor, included in The Structure of Language, ed. by Fodor and Katz (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), pp. 479-518. Their theory was expanded in An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions, by Jerrold J. Katz and Paul M. Postal (Cambridge, 1964).

<sup>24</sup>"The Future of Poetry," pp. 121-22.

<sup>25</sup>My representation is simplified to exclude the depiction of "noise" as well as circular lines to represent feed-back and feed-forward involving all stages except T. I also skip the unnecessary vertical representation of Saussure's dichotomy, which should be depicted horizontally in this diagram.

<sup>26</sup>"The Future of Poetry," p. 122.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted by Arthur Koestler in The Creative Act (New York, 1964), p. 174; Chapter VII, "Thinking Aside," pp. 145-77, treats the question of pre-verbal thinking at length. Francis Bacon had much earlier challenged the adequacy of language in his concept of the Idols of the Market-place: "Now words, being commonly framed and applied according to the capacity of the vulgar, follow those lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding. And whenever an understanding of greater acuteness or a more diligent observation would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change."

<sup>32</sup>Here a vivid example might be useful: the common Anglo-Saxon profanity "fuck you" says a great deal more than its structure alone would signify: it may be phonetically defined as an alternation of fricatives and long vowels, rhythmically defined as a spondee of two syllables having a slight drop in stress matched by an increase in duration, syntactically defined as an imperative sentence with the subject "you" implied, and semantically defined as transitive action abruptly becoming reflexive--but its situational, referential, affective, and conative implications elude the most ingenious formalist interpretation.

<sup>33</sup>This three stage stratification I propose as regression from "objective immediacy" is somewhat influenced by Hegel's

Preface to The Phenomenology of Mind, particularly pp. 80-83 in the Muirhead Edition (translated by Sir James Baillie), though I am not trying to fit my proposal into a strictly Hegelian context. "Objective immediacy" is here proposed as raw experience undifferentiated by pattern (or gestalt). I obviously cannot define poetry, the final stratum removed from objective immediacy, as Absolute Idea, which would be necessary in a strictly Hegelian sense, and would be somewhat justified in Ingarden's theory. My own proposal is actually much closer to Plato's conception of poetry in The Republic, as explained in Chapter Four.

<sup>34</sup>Roman Ingarden, "Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Object," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. XXI, no. 3 (March, 1961).

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 312, 294-300.

<sup>36</sup>F.R. Leavis, "Shelley," included in Critiques and Essays in Criticism, edited by Robert Stallman (New York, 1949), p. 169.

<sup>37</sup>John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York, 1934), Capricorn Edition, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup>Dewey, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>As I proposed in Chapter One, this trend has at least its partial explanation in the qualms of timid artists and critics, "faithful to their ambivalences" (as Leslie Fiedler proposes) but unwilling to admit it, who have tried to escape the ideological struggle dominating our century. I believe Lukacs to be essentially correct, though, in his oft-repeated

premise that nineteenth century bourgeoisie novelists like Balzac and Tolstoy could afford to be realistic, while their counterparts in our century must divert their attention from the real world about them to symbolism, expressionism, and other exotic approaches in order to escape unpleasant social and political conclusions. Those who have kept at least a measure of realism have either arrived at a Leftist or apocalyptic understanding, or, like Ayn Rand, they have escaped this dilemma through an ignorance that vitiates their art.

## Chapter Four:

## A Brief General History of Affective Criticism

The history of affective criticism before I.A. Richards is piecemeal. Most critics accepted its rudimentary tenets, particularly upon catharsis in tragedy, but they mixed the cathartic hypothesis with mimetic, expressive, and formal theories to such an extent that few useful insights were explored very thoroughly. More often than not, even those as eminent as Sydney and Dryden were mouthing principles they found in earlier theories, all of which may be traced to Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus, when affective criticism was first proposed. The only modern periods of innovation have been the eighteenth century, when Addison, Hume, Burke, Alexander Gerard and others were influenced by the philosophy of Descartes, Hobbes, and Shaftesbury, and the twentieth century, when Santayana, Dewey, Richards and others fell under the comparable influence of modern psychology. The interlude of the nineteenth century seems to have been generally dominated by metaphysics and expressive theories of art. These may certainly be integrated with affective theories of criticism, as Richards tried with a measure of success in Coleridge on the Imagination, but they raise entirely new questions beyond the scope of our present inquiry.

Plato and Aristotle began the history of affective criticism with what amounted to a dialogue upon the effect of literature, suggesting important questions yet to be

satisfactorily explained. In the Ion Plato briefly proposed the "inspirational" theory of poetry that the poet sings not by art "but by power divine," and in fact that his mind is the minister of God (or the power of one). The poet rapturously communicates divine wisdom that he himself does not entirely understand, and we respond in kind likewise without necessarily understanding his meaning. Poetry is a communication from the gods (might we not call them archetypes or fixations?) with the poet addressing us as an inspired, uncomprehending intermediary.<sup>1</sup> Here Plato seems to have been sympathetic with the presumed ignorance of poets, but in a celebrated portion of Book X in The Republic he shifted his position (anticipating Tolstoy) to advocate the abolition of poetry from the ideal state except for "hymns to the gods and praises of famous men."<sup>2</sup> Ironically, his argument may easily be adopted for the defense of political censorship replacing the gods with the state, particularly the censorship which has been imposed in China and the Soviet Union. But his logic is difficult to refute either regarding propaganda or the modern tenets of affective criticism, upon which it bears important implications. He disdained poets as imitators of imitators three degrees removed from reality. He claimed that God (or "one-ness") creates the prototype of the chair, the artisan imitates this prototype, and then the poet, a poor third, imitates the artisan.<sup>3</sup> His theory was not as absurd as it first might seem, and to adapt it to our



purposes, we need only eliminate God to establish experience (objective immediacy) as perceived one-ness at the first level, then introduce language as the finished product of our entire culture at the second level, collectively "fabricated" in a manner comparable to the artisan's chair, and finally treat the mimetic principle in poetry as the third level:

<u>Plato</u>	<u>Translated</u>
idea of chair	physical things and events
1. created by God	imminently experienced
2. imitated by the artisan	expressed in language
3. imitated (once removed) by the poet	composed in poetry

Thus reinterpreted, this hierarchy is exactly the stratificational rearrangement of the paradigm from information theory we proposed last chapter. Poetry is an imitation of an imitation in the sense that it formally rearranges language, which itself is a rearrangement of experience. Metaphor defined by Richards similarly fits this hierarchy because it combines experience which itself is a metaphoric combination. Plato claimed this many degrees of remove from reality makes poetry useless in the discovery of truth, an opinion we cannot accept because the intermediate levels add more than they detract from the truth of the final product. Language and art eliminate the apparently inessential in order to give more coherence and expression to

this product, so we may accept Plato's premises though rejecting his conclusion.

In the second part of his argument, more difficult to refute, Plato maintained that poetry should be abolished because the "rebellious principle" is encouraged rather than a "wise and calm temperament" which is "not easy to imitate or to appreciate when imitated." Wisdom and virtue are more difficult to evoke than the "passionate and fitful temper" and do not arouse as much interest, particularly among average readers. Literature appeals to our baser emotions and accordingly diminishes our ability to reason competently. Moreover, Plato claimed, it incites and intensifies these emotions, undermining our ability to control them: ". . . poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue."<sup>4</sup> As a result, speaking an "inferior degree of truth" (the imitation of imitation) to an "inferior part of the soul," poetry is more harmful than not and should be abolished from the ideal state. Plato's conclusion seems validly derived from his premises and is corroborated by the success of censorship in modern totalitarian societies. But with our Anglo-American respect for the freedom of speech, we are almost universally repelled by Plato's argument, unable to judge its merits even with regard to the particular question of affective criticism.

We gladly turn to Aristotle's concept of catharsis in

Poetics which was undoubtedly proposed to defend emotional release in poetry from the criticism by Plato.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps anticipating Freud, Aristotle suggested an allopathic explanation of catharsis, that the pure vicarious experience of tragedy harmonizes and then releases our jumble of pent-up emotions. We scapegoat a tragic figure by identifying with him, projecting our confusion upon his pure, single-minded quest, and then by reveling in his destruction. The result is supposedly the control and reduction of our feelings in a socially acceptable manner. Whereas Plato had charged that poetry incites our emotions and is therefore bad, Aristotle implied that tragedy, one mode of poetry, controls emotions through their channeled release and therefore serves a useful purpose. Both concurred in advocating the control of emotion and recognizing its importance in poetry, but poetry's effect was seen to be primarily excitatory by one and cathartic by the other. As indicated above, we cannot easily make a final decision which view is correct. The truth probably lies in the middle, with literature both intensifying and releasing emotions, though Plato's theory of intensification would seem dominant. A useful indication of the difficulty in making this choice would be the current rivalry between conventional psychotherapy and so-called "behavior therapy" techniques to eliminate obsessions and comparable problems through the Pavlovian inculcation of new habit patterns. Psychotherapy is cathartic (Aristotelian) in its strategy to release repressed

feelings, while behavior therapy is excitatory (Platonic) in its strategy to replace destructive channels of expression by others supposedly healthier. Again, I would stress that a compromise seems necessary, though none has been convincingly proposed since Plato and Aristotle, with the possible exception of Collingwood's theory treated later in this chapter.

The contribution of Longinus to affective criticism was not as important as usually thought. His conception of the sublime was essentially rhetorical, of the power an orator exerts over his audience. Emotion (ekstasis, or enthusiasm) was relegated to being one of five sources of elevated language, and Longinus carefully emphasized the importance of avoiding "tasteless tumidity," the uncontrolled bombast of an excessively emotional delivery. Nevertheless, his brief explanation of the connection between emotion and imagery remains useful:

. . . the word [image] is predominantly used in cases where, carried away by enthusiasm and passion, you think you see what you describe, and you place it before the eyes of your hearers. Further, you will be aware of the fact that an image has one purpose with the orators and another with the poets, and that the design of the poetical image is enthrallment, of the rhetorical--vivid description. Both, however, seek to stir the passions and the emotions.<sup>6</sup>

His distinction between enthrallment in poetry and vividness

in rhetoric seems to have been academic since imagery would involve vividness to produce enthrallment, the usual effect of the sublime in literature. In this passage, however, Longinus did suggest the paradigm of information theory with a slight, though useful modification:

emotions--imagery--message--imagery--emotions

The static, computer-like "speaker--encoding" relationship is represented in a more human and poetic fashion by "emotions--imagery," which he properly inverted in the hearer's response. Longinus also stressed the importance of the relationship between the sublime and harmony of composition, whose "blending and variation" recreates the proper emotional effects in the hearers. He suggested that language expressed with emotion by a competent poet spontaneously creates the form to evoke comparable emotions ("the echo of a great soul") in his readers. This echo response seems an important principle, a valid extension of Plato's theory, but it was not really explored very thoroughly by Longinus, who emphasized questions of rhetoric in the communication of emotions.<sup>7</sup> Finally, among the ancients, Horace's contribution to affective criticism in Ars Poetica was his distinction between dulce and utile, pleasure and instruction in poetry. Both are "pragmatic," as Abrams claims, defining and polarizing our response to poetry into two basic kinds: with dulce, we have gratification both through the intensification

(Platonic) and release (Aristotelian) of emotions; with utile, we have the lesson learned, the "message" of poetry. The latter is what Plato sought but despaired of finding in sufficient amounts in poetry; though utile may be observed in the concluding stage of catharsis, and, more important, it is intrinsic to the synaesthetic response proposed by Richards. Though by now threadbare, this dichotomy thus continues to be useful--it has received lip service throughout the history of western criticism and seems likely to survive the twentieth century as well.

Since Horace and Longinus, little was added to the theory of affective criticism until Minturno, Scaliger, and others of the Italian Renaissance who returned to the controversy between Plato and Aristotle upon the balance between grief and aesthetic pleasure. With Hobbes and Descartes, though, a theory of psychology was proposed which stimulated a more profitable recrudescence of affective criticism. The Hobbesian emphasis upon appetites and self-gratification led such critics as Addison and Samuel Johnson to identify tragic pleasure as the assurance of the audience that it escapes the destruction of the hero. The Cartesian emphasis upon the stimulation of "animal spirits," propounded by Descartes in Treatise on the Passions of the Soul (1650), led such critics as Dennis, Akenside, and Edward Young to advocate the harmonious stimulation of the passions for their own sake, to want to increase them, not flush them out with catharsis. This

"stimulative" theory legitimized the Platonic conception of literature with the assurance that passionate "stirrings" have a salutary effect. With the prevalent Shaftesburian emphasis upon benevolence and sentimentalism in the eighteenth century, these stirrings were primarily of sympathy, or, in its extreme, pity, applying the stimulative theory to at least one part of the Aristotelian formula for tragedy.

Lord Kames and Hugh Blair advocated the pure intensification of pity alone in a "luxury of woe"; but in A Philosophical Enquiry concerning the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) Edmund Burke sought to find a balance among our passions, selfish (Hobbesian) and social (Shaftesburian), which mingle as pleasure and pain in our experience of tragedy. In a more organic vein, Hume ingeniously proposed in his essay "Of Tragedy" (1757) that our affective experience of literature, specifically of the pleasure and pain of tragedy, involves the absorption of subordinate emotions by those which are dominant, intensifying their effect even if the two are directly contrary. Thus the graveyard scene of Hamlet may be construed as intensifying its tragic effect, not in its contrast, as has been generally proposed, but through absorption, the assimilation of comic gratification by pity and fear, the dominant emotions of tragedy. Finally, the theory of the association of ideas by Locke and Hartley was introduced to criticism by such figures as Abraham Tucker and Alexander Gerard. Tucker's theory of the synthetic coalescence of ideas antic-

ipated Coleridge's theory of the imagination, while Gerard brought emotion into this explanation with his proposal that passion gives unity to related ideas by keeping the attention "fixt on the objects strictly connected with it." Gerard's insight anticipated the modern theory of affect, treated in Chapter Five, that it energizes and selects our interests, and, in fact unavoidably helps determine our cognitive processes, even in the act of perception itself.

In the early nineteenth century, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Shelley were somewhat concerned with the emotional effect of poetry, but entirely in the context of the expressive theory commonly associated with romanticism. As Abrams correctly shows in The Mirror and the Lamp, they considered the experience of the poet more significant than the recreated experience of his readers. They were slightly guilty in this respect of the formalist assumption that the "ideal" reader passively stereotypes exactly the impressions he receives, though for them these impressions were of the genius of the poet rather than the formal context of his poetry.<sup>9</sup> In the Victorian era affective criticism was revived with the popular Horatian concept of utile. The Longinian concept of the sublime was also revitalized in Ruskin's quest for "noble grounds for the noble emotions," while both Arnold and John Stuart Mill seem to have returned to the view of Gerard upon the binding force of emotions. Arnold suggested that poetry attaches emotion to the idea, while Mill proposed that poets are "those who are so



constituted that emotions are the links by which their ideas, both sensuous and spiritual, are associated together." Finally, the infectuous theory of art by Tolstoy (briefly treated in Chapter Two) revived Plato's ethical concern as well as influencing Richards' modern theory of affective criticism.

Of particular interest in the nineteenth century, though, was the unique affective theory of Edgar Allan Poe. Poe's obsession with creating bizarre and exotic effects led to his proposal of a dispassionate role for the poet as a technician of effects in others. He claimed in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) that the most intense effect to be produced in poetry is the experience of beauty. His composition of "The Raven" had accordingly been structured, he claimed, to create this effect of beauty in the common reader. He also claimed to have planned the poem, "step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem." He had accordingly chosen as "the most poetical topic in the world" the death of a beautiful woman, created a "close conscription of space" to frame the scene, and often repeated the refrain "nevermore" to intensify the reader's expectations. In his review, "Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales," he extended this theory to fiction, and in "The Poetic Principle" went so far as to limit the proper length of all literature to the length of time a single effect may be sustained. Poe thus placed an unprecedented emphasis upon the emotional

response induced by literature, but his theory was also uniquely artificial in his implication that the poet need not experience the emotion he stirs in his readers. The poet's feelings presumably derive from his creative struggle to fabricate this emotion, a dispassionate critical awareness radically conflicting with the theory of Longinus that the poet communicates emotions by expressing them, by responding to his own emotions. Paradoxically, according to Poe's theory, the poet may feel a pleasant sense of accomplishment as a craftsman when he successfully instils hatred, horror, or whatnot in his readers. Less radically formulated, though, this view has become commonplace in the twentieth century, for the poet is now conventionally understood to be engaged in the relatively dispassionate search for catylitic agents to produce an exact effect upon the reader.<sup>10</sup> Our objection to both Poe and his reluctant modern descendents would be in the artificiality of the creative act they propose. The most successful means of instilling particular feelings in a reader would yet seem to be the accurate response in language to one's own feelings. If the writer can competently and honestly express his feelings, it would seem inevitable that his choice of words will automatically induce a comparable response in his readers. One's impression of Uriah Heep in David Copperfield, for example, undoubtedly reproduces the initial attitude of Dickens himself as he stirred his own imagination to the threshold of eidetic realization.

In essence, what Poe had proposed is the truncation of our paradigm in information theory:

poet's effort--message--imagery--emotions

I would suggest that this is a dangerous limitation and perhaps accounts for the mediocrity of most of his works. It may be conceded that the poet exercises compositional impulses necessarily different from the feelings he is trying to evoke, but these impulses are supplementary, not a total substitution for these feelings. The complex emotions successfully communicated by a writer like Dickens are too integrally coherent to be easily fabricated by a writer immune to them. The fear and wonder he might think he arouses in a product like "The Raven" is more than likely to be flawed because of its mechanical gimmicks and, inevitably, its sentimentalism. Tone has become condescension, of the "craftsman" weaving a spell over his credulous audience. The sensitive reader feels maneuvered and thus deprived of rapport.

## II.

The twentieth century revival of affective criticism was largely initiated by I.A. Richards, with the result that most critics defined their views with respect to his, much as we indicated in Chapter Two. Most reacted against what they thought to be his behaviorism, but a few have proposed that his affective frame of reference need not be eliminated but

expanded or modified. These are the critics who now concern us, as well as the philosophers Santayana and Dewey, who proposed comparable aesthetic theories of affect.

In Scepticism and Poetry, published in 1937, D.G. James took Richards to task from a Kantian perspective with results comparable to our own. He attacked Richards' indiscriminate use of the concept "impulse" and its emphasis upon our reception of stimuli in literature rather than their imaginative recombination:

In the "impulse," which is the inclusive name for the entire process from stimulus to attitude, nothing is indicated to show the creative act which is present and fundamental to the rest. We hear a great deal about sensation, tied and free imagery, references, emotions, and attitudes; but nothing of the primary activity without which sensation, imagery, and reference are abstractions, and emotions and attitudes impossible. It is all Hamlet without the Prince. If we are to remedy this omission, we must cease to speak of the reception of "stimuli" which cause certain results which may be valuable, and speak instead of an "active agency" which creates its object and in that creation enjoys certain emotional and volitional accompaniments.<sup>11</sup>

James also insisted upon a central "act of apprehension" dominant in aesthetic experience, as in perception, which subordinates particular impulses to an imaginative synthesis:

. . . that the act of awareness is a creative act which

may require for its occurrence the presence of certain physical factors, but which cannot be reduced to them. The act of awareness is a unique and creative act, not susceptible of such a convenient reduction to neural events as Mr. Richards would have us believe. Hence the primary situation which we have to bear in mind is not our neural susceptibility to stimuli, but the imaginative synthesis of sensations which are presented to the mind on the occurrence of certain physical and neural processes.<sup>12</sup>

James thus pitted himself against Richards in a controversy that may be traced to the eighteenth century choice between Locke and Kant and later between Wordsworthian perception and Coleridgean imagination. James rejected the psychological theory of perception implied by Richards for a Whiteheadian concept of "prehension" and organic unity. He disconcertingly invoked religion in his argument, but his specific attack upon Richards was remarkably like our own. He emphasized that the active outgoing effort of the reader synthesizing experience is more important to aesthetic appreciation than the passive reception of effects. Effects are only part of the process which occurs through the effort of the imagination to reach beyond itself to experience.

Approximately the same time, R.G. Collingwood proposed an expressive theory of emotion that more specifically explained this active effort of the reader.<sup>13</sup> He proposed an important though overlooked distinction between the initial "perturbation" or excitement in emotion, an oppressive

experience because we do not yet recognize it, and its combined gratification and intensification once it is recognized, usually through its expression in language. Catharsis is the recognition of emotions and even their resulting exacerbation, not their release through gratification as has been usually supposed. Simply becoming aware of emotions is tantamount to their gratification, and this subtler cathartic response gives literature its purpose, both in the individual and collectively, to acquaint us with the full orchestration of our emotions.<sup>14</sup> The poet's gratification in his discovery of language is communicated to his readers, who are led to make a comparable discovery within their own experience. This process (or "transaction," as it will later be called) of aesthetic communication obliges the poet to be entirely candid about his own emotions, confident that they are shared by his public, and to recognize that his primary motivation is to communicate his feelings, to effect their similar recognition by his public. His relationship with his readers thus becomes integral to his aesthetic experience, for, "What he says will be something that his audience says through his mouth." He must accept his public as "collaborators" who have the same feelings and responsibilities as he, "for their function as audience is not passively to accept his work, but to do it over again for themselves."<sup>15</sup> His discovery of his emotions in poetry mediates their discovery (comparably dynamic) of theirs. Such had been implied by Shelley in his conception

of poets as our "unacknowledged legislators," and would later be proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre, in a strictly political sense, of using language to encourage engagement in one's public.

Max Eastman was another critic whose views extended the scope of affective criticism. Eastman has been aggressively attacked as a Trotskyist renegade whose principles were brought to the brink of absurdity when he became a Readers Digest editor, and by New Critics in particular for his supposedly "vulgar" enthusiasm for heightened experience to the neglect of quality in literature. Lately he has been perhaps mercifully overlooked, but his views deserve careful re-examination. In "A Note on I. A. Richards," (1932) his attack upon Richards' polarization of science and poetry anticipated Richards' later theory of projection. He showed that the semantic objectivity advocated in The Meaning of Meaning leads quite naturally to Richards' theory of poetry as "pseudo-statement." By divesting science of the subjective factor in intuition, Richards paved the way for similarly divesting poetry of its objective validity as truth or meaning which merits belief:

Indeed, once they [Ogden and Richards] had isolated science as a pure pointing to things without attitude and without reference to behavior, it was quite inevitable, I suppose, that Ogden and Richards should turn round and define poetry as a pure evoking of attitudes and organization of behavior without pointing to things,

and without reference to reality.<sup>16</sup>

Eastman found an ulterior purpose in this polarization: "The coup d'etat of Ogden and Richards consists of cutting off knowledge from life, and then declaring poetry once more the mistress of life." To the contrary, he claimed, knowledge and poetry cannot be easily compartmentalized; objectivity is a strictly subjective activity, he claimed, precisely the argument later adopted by Richards in

Coleridge on Imagination:

The world is not composed of "things." It would be as true to say that the world is organized into "things" by our thoughts. And this organization is carried out in the main, especially in its earlier phases, primarily with the view to establishing attitudes and patterns of behavior. It is rather more a classification of responses to what the world presents than of the material presented.<sup>17</sup>

Emotion helps determine even the shapes and patterns we find in the world about us, and a posteriori the description of "things" in language and poetry.

However, in "The History of English Poetry," first published under the title, "Division of Labor in Poetry," Eastman himself seems to have proposed the expanding polarization of knowledge and experience as an explanation of the history of English literature. He claimed this division culminating with the practice of modernists like Eliot and Cummings, justified by the epistemology of Ogden and Richards,



has reduced poetry to an obscure, meaningless impotence. Knowledge and experience had been synthesized in the Renaissance imagination, when poetry was stimulated by science's infancy but yet seemed the highest vehicle of knowledge. With the metaphysical poets there was "a transition from poetry as an assumption of knowledge to poetry as a serious playing with ideas,"<sup>18</sup> a slight but significant change initiating the separation of knowledge from experience. By the Restoration, poetry was assigned a distinct role of its own, providing a "refined intellectual pleasure," a major sacrifice of her former universality, altogether eliminating the pursuit of knowledge. This subordinate role was only briefly challenged in romantic criticism, and then a further division of labor occurred in the aestheticism of Poe and others and finally the modern "cult of unintelligibility." Eastman regretted this development and particularly deplored modern obscurity. He preferred the Renaissance synthesis, and optimistically assured his readers, "The division of labor we are discussing is, in short, not absolute, and never can be, either among people or among books." He appealed to the "very great poets of the future" to understand this problem and presumably to rectify it by somehow restoring harmony between knowledge and feeling. The ultimate harmony he sought is perhaps indicated in his brief article, "A Word with Lewis Mumford," in which he praised the Golden Age in Greece, when Empedocles, Parmenides, and others simultaneously

initiated both science and poetry.

Eastman's particular affective theory of poetry was most persuasively explained in his essay, "What Poetry Is," in which he proposed that the primary function of poetry is paradoxically to heighten consciousness by obstructing our response: "It seems then that consciousness is, arises out of, or depends upon, two things--a blockage of action, and an identification of one experience with another so that action may be resumed."<sup>19</sup> He used the example of putting on a coat--if our arm easily passes through its sleeve, then our action is entirely automatic; but if our arm gets stuck, perhaps caught in a torn lining, then our attention is stimulated, whereupon we search for a means to get our arm through. Once our arm is free and our action has begun again, consciousness lapses. The difficulty of the task, the problem posed, had briefly stimulated our attention, which ceased when we could carry through our response. This close relationship between consciousness and obstructed action impressed Eastman as the fundamental explanation of the effect of literature. In particular he cited the theory of Margaret Floy Washburn that, "A perception does not become conscious unless a responsive action is initiated, but it also does not become conscious unless the initiated response is obstructed."<sup>20</sup> (italics in original) An obstructive delay supposedly inhibits our automatic response, arousing our attention and directing it to the task of finding a solution. As long as we are at this

"brink of action," we engage in thinking, but if our action is either automatically carried out or entirely deferred, we lose consciousness in this particular area. This "brink of action" seems identical with Richards' "incipient response" and extends the principle in a useful fashion, though Eastman erred in overextending its application to criticism. He insisted upon the primary, unqualified importance of heightened response in our literary experience: "Any impractical identification that you can induce somebody to listen to is poetic, because it is the essence of an attentive consciousness. It is mind suspended on the brink of action." (italics included in the original) The impractical has a heightening effect, he claimed, because it creates a problem without an evident solution, apparently the ultimate single purpose of art: "To me it seems obvious that such realization, or heightened consciousness of life, is desired for its own sake."<sup>21</sup> Art for art's sake became art for heightened consciousness's sake, a principle perhaps unfairly ridiculed by Richards when he suggested that being tortured would fit Eastman's definition of art.<sup>22</sup> But the strength as well as weakness of Eastman's theory lies in its breadth of application. All modern art may be evaluated in terms of heightened consciousness, an asset few theories possess, though more explicit factors would obviously have to be brought into account regarding any particular aesthetic experience.

In his articles, "What is Poetry" and "Art and the Life

of Action," Eastman ingeniously applied his principle to poetry, particularly in his unique explanation of metaphor. He claimed that metaphor heightens consciousness through the obstruction of impractical comparisons: "The metaphor provokes the brain function with its truth-to-perception, but inhibits it with its untruth-to-action . . . A poetic metaphor is an impractical identification of two experiences, and its function is to arrest action and arouse consciousness."<sup>23</sup> He claimed his theory of metaphor to be dynamic and purposive in contrast to Richards', which is relatively static and descriptive, though it should be noted that he proposed his theory in 1932, four years before Richards explained himself in The Philosophy of Rhetoric. Eastman also extended this principle to form, claiming that the successful use of form requires a clash of impulses which arouses our attention and then gratifies us with its successful resolution:

The forms that elevate mere impulses of expression into works of art are interesting forms. That is, they are inhibitions of those impulses by others equally authentic, so that instead of being successfully expressed and lost, they are in-pressed and the feelings attending them brought into vivid being and sustained.<sup>24</sup>

But Eastman also shared with E.D. Snyder a belief in the hypnotic effect of poetry, a theory which would seem to conflict with that of heightened consciousness. Eastman explained the regularity of meter in terms of this effect,

claiming that a "lulling" rhythm produces a hypnoid condition which brings literary experience to the threshold of hallucination. To a certain extent he ascribed the same lulling effect to poetic diction, for example advocating the use of anachronistic locutions such as oh, lo, and alas (much to the consternation of those who otherwise respect his theories). One of his most useful insights explained how a similar momentum in emotions increases the sense of verisimilitude:

Those inward feelings [emotions, defined as aroused but inactive consciousness] are a part of experience, and so belong to his effort as ends. But they are also that part which he can really and not only imaginatively evoke with words, and so enter into his technique as means of giving intensity to the whole.<sup>25</sup>

We may paraphrase this important but obscure passage by saying that the reality of inward feelings or emotions evoked by literature (we actually laugh, cry, exult in triumph, etc.) gives the events described, however fictive, a sense of reality lived. A feedback occurs--these events which seem realistic generate emotions which are real, not a matter of verisimilitude. These in turn suffuse the entire experience to make it real and personally significant. The truth of emotions successfully evoked spreads to give certitude to the entire effect.

Thus a cleavage seems to have existed in Eastman's critical theory between his theories of heightened con-

sciousness and hypnotic effect. He advocated alertness and attention in reading, a matter of obstructed, heightened consciousness, but also the hypnoidal experience of reality transpiring, a matter of momentum, catharsis and eidetic certitude. These responses are respectively interruptive and inertial, perhaps an affective counterpart to the concepts of uniformity and variety or Ezra Pound's theory of the constant and variable elements in poetry. Actually, both would be essential ingredients of our aesthetic response, but Eastman overlooked their opposition and thus neglected to explain how they might be integrated.

Much earlier, in The Sense of Beauty, published in 1896, George Santayana had proposed an affective theory similar in many respects to Eastman's. Santayana defined beauty as value which exists in our act of perception projected upon whatever appeals to us in our environment. He explained this process with the simple formula, "Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing."<sup>26</sup> All experience, he claimed, anticipating theories of both Richards and Eastman, involves the hypostatized conception of "things" outside ourselves in our field of vision. We have learned to define and judge things by their few omnipresent qualities we experience, in effect the primary qualities proposed by Locke. Santayana deplored the success of science in making things thus abstracted seem to exist independent of our experience, in contrast to the aesthetic idea which, "retains the emotional reaction, the

pleasure of the perception, as an integral part of the conceived thing." With art, he proposed, the act of perception remains dynamic and has not yet been reified as the relationship between subject and surrounding objective entities. The "thing" perceived aesthetically is not a radically abstract reduction of supposedly inherent qualities to the fewest possible, but involves a projection of our pleasurable experience in a broad sympathetic response.

Santayana later claimed that the most important effect of art cannot be attributed to its materials, but to their formal arrangement, thus making a choice he previously denied. If "things" are an assumption about composite patterns of effect, as Santayana himself proposed, then the time-worn dichotomy must be abandoned between things and qualities, or, in literature, we might add, between form and content. Though form and symmetry seem to exist objectively in the world outside ourselves, all that matters in art is whether they arouse our response. Santayana tangentially suggested this almost solipsistic ultra-subjectivism in his insistence upon the integrity of our response: "Does the thing itself actually please? If it does, your taste is real; it may be different from that of others, but is equally justified and grounded in human nature."<sup>27</sup> Whatever affects us, including form, is what our human nature leads us to find appealing in our environment.

A more social approach to affective criticism was proposed by John Dewey in his book, Art as Experience,

published in 1934. Contrary to Santayana, Dewey emphasized the continuity between artistic and ordinary experience, asserting that art should be a refinement by degree, not kind, of what we do and see in our everyday lives. He found that capitalism has separated art from experience by putting it on a pedestal, in a frame, and in the museum. He claimed the result has been detrimental to both art and experience because the first has become esoteric, relinquishing much of the vitality acquired from living experience, while the second, isolated from aesthetic fulfillment, has become vulgar and mass produced. He proposed the most important step in the solution of this problem to be a new convergence of art and experience through the dynamic perception of art in which a "yielding of the self occurs," as Richards advocated, but with an active outgoing effort to "take in" the experience:

Perception is an act of going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to take in.<sup>28</sup>

Dewey suggested the reader must himself be a poet to a certain extent, with at least incipient capabilities in this direction, because he must select and recombine the material of the text in a second, derivative act of poetry:



For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent . . . Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is a comprehension in its literal signification--that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into a physical whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist.<sup>29</sup>

This work done by the percipient, in our case the reader, certainly involves (1) a concentrated act of attention upon the intended meaning, as Richards proposed, but it also requires, (2) a reconstruction of the details and particulars judged according to one's own experience, as proposed by Dewey, and (3) a critical comparison between the intended meaning as understood and other possible meanings one can find. Affect is involved in each of these activities to the extent that we are motivated to do its job. The second and third seem to require more effort and the expenditure of more affective energy, but without adequate application to the first, the direct act of attention, our

reconstitution of the material would be personal and irrelevant. Also, the second and third modes of response, though proposed in a sequence, may be more profitably treated as occurring simultaneously, our comparison with other meanings making reconstruction possible and our act of reconstruction inversely suggesting comparable meanings.

Dewey also stressed the importance of emotion in the creation of art, a requirement which may easily be extended to the act of re-creation by the reader. According to Dewey, emotion is not extraneous to aesthetic pleasure, a frosting to be added or withheld at the choosing of either the poet or reader, but intrinsic to this experience: "The act of expression is not something which supervenes upon an inspiration already complete. It is the carrying forward to completion of an inspiration by means of the objective material of perception and imagery."<sup>30</sup> Dewey even proposed (as did Eastman) that emotion is the matrix of form, that our emotional response determines both what we select to respond to and its shape or pattern that we recognize:

That art is selective is a fact universally recognized. It is so because of the role of emotion in the act of expression. Any predominant mood automatically excludes all that is uncongenial with it. An emotion is more effective than any deliberate challenging sentinel could be. It reaches out tentacles for that which is cognate, for things which feed it and carry it to completion. Only when emotion dies or is broken to dispersed fragments, can

material to which it is alien enter consciousness. The selective operation of materials so powerfully exercised by a developing emotion in a series of continued acts extracts matter from a multitude of objects, numerically and spatially separated, and condenses what is abstracted in an object that is an epitome of the values belonging to them all. This function creates the "universality of a work of art."<sup>31</sup>

In other words, a work of art is universal because the artist is stimulated by shared emotions to make shared distinctions of thought but never so well arranged. Dewey did not believe that emotion entirely dominates the experience of art, but he did feel it is an integral part which helps determine the choice of form. He treated artistic experience as a unified act of perception including the events perceived, their successful choice and arrangement, and the emotions exercised in this act. In his estimation form is the "operation of forces" which results from the healthy interaction of these components. Unlike Richards, he connected form with affect and the two with belief, abstract ideas, and any other mode of thinking possibly relevant to the experience of literature.

Finally, Louise M. Rosenblatt has recently adopted a "transactional" theory of criticism based upon the theory of knowledge worked out by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley in A Philosophical Correspondence.<sup>32</sup> The term transaction was used by Dewey, Rosenblatt says, "to designate situations in

which the elements or factors are, one might say, aspects of the total situation in an ongoing process. Thus a known assumes a knower, and vice versa. A 'knowing' is the transaction between a particular individual and a particular environment."<sup>33</sup> Rosenblatt proposes that exactly the same process occurs with poetry because a person becomes a reader "by virtue of his activity in relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols . . ." This transaction is a dynamic act of selection, a total "situation" rather than a linear process and singular because both the poet and his readers uniquely combine their funds of experience. Rosenblatt also insists upon our making a semantic distinction between the Text and the Poem, the latter the involvement of the reader in the text. The reading of a poem, she claims, is an organic accretion of feelings and attitudes in response to the text: "There was not a simple additive process, one word-meaning added to another. There was an active trial-and-error, tentative structuring of the responses elicited by the text, the building up of a context which was modified or rejected as more and more of the text was deciphered."<sup>34</sup> She emphasizes that this activity of finding and interrelating "cues" cannot simply be divorced from experience, but must be recognized to be the effort of the reader in this dynamic "transaction" with the text:

. . . that the reader is active. He is not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He is actively involved

in building up a poem for himself out of the lines. He selects from the various referents that occur to him in response to the verbal symbols. He finds some context within which these referents can be related. He reinterprets earlier parts of the poem in the light of later parts. Actually, he has not fully read the first line until he has read the last, and interrelated them. There seems to be a kind of shuttling back and forth as one synthesis--one context, one persona, etc.--after another suggests itself to him.<sup>35</sup>

In this transaction catalyzed by the text, modifications organically expand the reader's experience of the poem, which thus becomes a human "event," a selective and synthesizing activity. The ideal reader and his ideal interpretation do not exist and cannot even be profitably hypothesized, since each reader must bring to the text new values and experience leading to an altogether new transaction. Each finds a fresh synthesis critically adequate to the extent the text is felt and understood, and likewise, in reverse, to the extent he is stimulated by the text. But within this strictly quantitative limitation there remains a wide variety of acceptable responses. Poetry is dynamic, the active experience of the text, not the text itself.

### III.

Affective criticism may be generally and almost meaninglessly defined as that which emphasizes the effect of

literature upon its readers. This brief history has amply shown the wide variety of critical approaches loosely fitting this description, though these often seem unrelated, or overlapping and cutting across each other in an interaction difficult to explain. They are often even contradictory with no clear resolution of their differences apparently to be found. The question naturally arises whether they might somehow be arranged according to categories, with at least a few of these difficulties explained as a matter of confusion or mixture among these categories. Richards attempted such a taxonomy with his list of sixteen theories of beauty, though his categories do not seem to have adequately covered many of the theories mentioned in our history. Wimsatt also made a rapid survey of approaches in his article, "The Affective Fallacy," including the emotive, intentional, vividness, physiological, and hallucination theories, as well as that of the grand style and undoubtedly others.<sup>36</sup> But his categories seem loosely organized, hastily concocted to give at least a semblance of order to the wide range of critical theories he considered fallacious. The superficiality of his categories probably resulted at least partly from his distaste for these theories.

A new typology seems in order, and one may be tentatively proposed from the theories we have surveyed, of which three basic kinds of affective criticism seem to emerge: of (1) emotion, (2) "transaction," and (3) projection. The

"emotive" explanation would include the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of intensification and catharsis, Shaftesburian sentimentalism, synaesthesia (the cancellation of emotions), and the psychoanalytic and archetypal interpretations of unconscious gratification.<sup>37</sup> The "transactional" explanation, emphasizing affective communication between the poet and his readers, would include Longinus' rhetorical theory of the sublime, Horace's "pragmatic" choice between dulce and utile, Poe's emphasis upon craftsmanship, and the approaches of Dewey and Rosenblatt specifically labeled as being "transactional."<sup>38</sup> Finally, the "projective" approach, emphasizing the interaction between affect and language to project an aesthetic reality, would include the neglected eighteenth century theories of Abraham Tucker and Alexander Gerard, the aestheticism of Santayana, Richards' interpretation of Coleridge, and, in certain contexts, the theories of D.W. James, and Max Eastman. A fourth affective approach might also be mentioned, intriguing but well beyond the scope of this study, the "adaptive" theories of Morse Peckham in Man's Rage for Chaos (1965), Arthur Koestler in The Act of Creation (1964), and, most recently, Stanley Burnshaw in The Seamless Web (1970). These bring the theory of affect ultimately to issues of experience as a biological quest for survival.

Few of the critics treated in this brief history may be neatly categorized in one or the other of these groupings. Most combined two or even three, but their emphasis and mode

of combination helps define their particular approaches. Thus Longinus gave equal emphasis to the emotive and transactional approaches, whereas Eastman's theory combined the emotive with the projective. Richards brought all three into account, first emphasizing the emotive and then the projective, while Dewey seems to have found a balance among the three. This threefold distinction (excluding the "adaptive" theories) is admittedly crude, but it has its basis in roughly complementary dynamics of literary experience: our response to the poet, induced emotions, and the stimulated projection of aesthetic experience. Moreover, these categories seem empirically useful as a preliminary basis for differentiation among these critics, enabling us to sort out many of the more complicated theories as combinations of others. The "stratificational" theory we proposed last chapter may accordingly be understood as an integration of transactional and projective approaches, while the particular experience of emotion has been left for a more technical explanation next chapter.



## Footnotes, Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Plato, "Ion," included in Criticism; The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, ed. by Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie (New York, 1958), p. 9--hereafter cited as Schorer.

<sup>2</sup>Schorer, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Schorer, pp. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup>Schorer, pp. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup>Schorer, p. 204.

<sup>6</sup>Schorer, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Schorer, pp. 14, 21.

<sup>8</sup>My treatment of the eighteenth century is necessarily brief, and I am mostly indebted to Earl R. Wasserman's article, "The Pleasures of Tragedy," ELH, XIV (December, 1947), pp. 283-307. Other sources I found useful include Wimsatt and Brook's Literary Criticism: A Short History, Chapter 14 ("Genius, Emotions and Association"); M.H. Abrams' The Mirror and the Lamp, Chapter 4 ("The Development of the Expressive Theory of Poetry and Art"); and Walter Jackson Bate's From Classic to Romantic, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. W.K. Wimsatt's article, "The Affective Fallacy," the locus classicus New Critical definition of affective criticism from a more or less hostile perspective, was also useful as a preliminary sketch of eighteenth and nineteenth century trends.

<sup>9</sup>Of course I must concur with Richards in rejecting this concept of the "ideal" reader, which would justify the

neglect of affective critical issues. If our response were a rubber stamp, either to form or the inspiration of the poet, there would be little more to say about the matter. Fortunately this is not the case--if it were, literature would be meaningless, a rote experience.

<sup>10</sup>This analogy with catalysis was of course suggested by T.S. Eliot, who was indirectly influenced by Poe through Baudelaire and the French symbolists. Eliot has had few affinities with Poe except in the "catalytic" theory of composition, which can be traced back to Poe and little farther.

<sup>11</sup>In Stallman, pp. 477-78.

<sup>12</sup>In Stallman, loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup>R.G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (The Clarendon Press, 1938); selected passages reprinted in The Problems of Aesthetics, ed. by Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger (New York, 1953), pp. 343-58.

<sup>14</sup>Vivas and Krieger, pp. 344-45.

<sup>15</sup>Vivas and Krieger, pp. 353-54.

<sup>16</sup>Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Poetry with Anthology (New York, 1951), p. 249.

<sup>17</sup>Eastman, loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup>Eastman, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup>Eastman, p. 159.

<sup>20</sup>Eastman, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup>"Art and the Life of Action," in Eastman, p. 198.

<sup>22</sup>The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 124.

- <sup>23</sup>Eastman, pp. 196-97.
- <sup>24</sup>Eastman, op. cit.
- <sup>25</sup>Eastman, p. 154.
- <sup>26</sup>George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty (New York, 1896; reprinted 1955), pp. 42-52, esp. p. 49.
- <sup>27</sup>Santayana, p. 80.
- <sup>28</sup>John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York, 1934; reprinted 1958), p. 53.
- <sup>29</sup>Dewey, p. 54.
- <sup>30</sup>Dewey, p. 66.
- <sup>31</sup>Dewey, p. 68.
- <sup>32</sup>edited by Ratner and Altman (New Brunswick, 1964).
- <sup>33</sup>Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading," Journal of Reading Behavior, I, i (winter, 1969), p. 43; her views here are an extension of those expressed in an earlier article, "The Poem as Event," College English, XXVI, pp. 123-28.
- <sup>34</sup>Rosenblatt, p. 37.
- <sup>35</sup>Rosenblatt, p. 34.
- <sup>36</sup>W.K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon, pp. 28-31, in passim.
- <sup>37</sup>Though unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation, the psychoanalytic theory of affect seems important, particularly in the work of Ernst Kris, Simon Lesser, and Norman Holland.
- <sup>38</sup>Sartre's theory of the artist as a propagandist instilling a sense of engagement in his readers may be added to this list, and in fact seems an important link between

affective and Marxist critical approaches.

## Chapter Five:

## "Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Affective Criticism"

The foregoing critics and aestheticians included in the wide category of affective criticism may also be tentatively grouped in two clusters, (1) those broadly concerned with the reader's dynamic and transactional response to a text, including Richards, Dewey, and Eastman, and (2) those particularly concerned with the role of emotion in this response, including Plato, Aristotle, Collingwood, and eighteenth century figures such as Gerard. The first group have devoted their inquiry to the overall problems of conscious response and the a priori necessity to take these into account, which we obviously feel to be self-evident. The second group have been concerned with the relationship between cognition and emotion in this response, an area of investigation with manifold unexplored implications. Formalists and objectivists have tried to separate cognition from emotion, suggesting that the ideal reader, or one approaching such a prototype, must have the discipline to eliminate emotion or at least subdue it in his experience of poetry. In reply, the affective critics of the latter group have tried to show that the two are organically inter-related and not to be artificially divided.

To settle this and related disputes it would seem profitable to survey recent trends in the psychological theory of affect. The literature is vast and beyond the scope of this essay, but a brief summary would seem in order. There

has unfortunately been a pervasive vulgarization of psychoanalysis among critics, both sympathetic and hostile, and then again almost a total barrier separating experimental psychology from literary criticism. This wall of ignorance has encouraged facile conclusions in criticism, the most notable of which having been the treatment of cognition as an experience that may be isolated and rarified.

The first influential modern explanation of emotion, the James-Lange theory, proposed simultaneously by William James and Carl Lange around 1885, suggested that indeed emotion and cognition are separate conscious processes which may be successfully compartmentalized. According to this theory, the source of our emotion is a "bodily reverberation" following upon perception, not, as we would think, our direct conscious response. Our body automatically reacts with an appropriate pattern of adjustment to an external stimulus, and then our experience of emotion is the conscious awareness of this physical response, though we make a shortcut to treat it as a direct response to whatever triggered this reaction. The body thus acts as an intermediary that generates emotion, without which we would be devoid of feeling: "Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colorless, destitute of emotional warmth."<sup>1</sup> Our entire physical presence shapes our emotional response, our body providing the energy to be shaped and restrained by the cognitive function of the brain. I.A. Richards' affective

theory of criticism in Practical Criticism seems possibly derived from this theory. He proposed a comparable "circuit relay" judgment of poetry, that we first have a total response to a poem and then judge it by evaluating our response.

That this proposed response, the act of appreciation, is both cognitive and emotional rather than being strictly emotional, according to the James-Lange theory, seems a relatively minor difference. For our purposes in criticism, though, the James-Lange theory mostly seems to support the cognitive approach. Emotion is identified as physical activity in a polar opposition to cognition and is moreover limited to relatively crude patterns of response that involve overt physical behavior. Our emotional response is treated as a spilling over of behavior into consciousness, a geyser of physical release which may be arrested and cut off from experience if we have enough conscious will power. In fact James recommended that we exercise repression to "conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves," for, "the suppression of the actual movements has a tendency to suppress the nervous currents that incite them, so that the external quiescence is followed by the internal."<sup>2</sup> Here James's proposal seems to have anticipated the Pavlovian therapy techniques of behavioral psychology (actually first proposed by Plato) in advocating the inhibition of impulses in order to eliminate them, compared with cathartic theory of psychoanalysis, which seeks to eliminate them through their expression.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the therapeutic implications of the James-Lange theory, which I think perhaps considerable, James's distinction misleadingly implies that emotions are entirely a surplus dissipation of energy from the body which may be cut off from conscious processes, for example when we concentrate our attention upon interpreting poetry: "When we teach children to repress their emotional talk and display, it is not that they may feel more--quite the reverse. It is that they may think more; for, to a certain extent, whatever currents are diverted from the regions below must swell the activity of the thought-tracts of the brain."<sup>4</sup> Our neural energy may presumably either be discharged in emotion or preserved and concentrated in the act of thinking. However, this neural energy James wants to channel, will later be shown to be emotional, while the incipient and overt bodily responses he equates with emotion are its extreme manifestation in preparation for an emergency of some kind. Under normal circumstances, the body is simply alert, vaguely echoing our conscious attention, while we exercise a more refined emotional response in our conscious feelings, for example in our experience of poetry. We usually do not have a physical reaction to poetry, though figures such as Housman and Emily Dickinson have attested to gooseflesh and shivers down the spine. Those of us less inspired by the muse nevertheless have a cortical response which is emotional: if a poem's associations generally confirm our experience, we feel a sense of gratification; if they seem to hit us with new



insights, we respond with appreciative wonderment; if we must briefly disagree, there is concern and perhaps heightened alertness to see if our disagreement must be broadened; if we largely disagree, there is a mounting sense of indignation; if we partly agree with what we mostly reject, there is reluctant acknowledgement; and if we feel we just don't understand, there is impatient bafflement. All of these responses and many more are emotional though not necessarily aroused by the bodily reaction described by James.

These feelings we have about poetry may be identified as a "primary reading response," our direct reaction to a poem qua poem, compared with more overt appetites and emotions which may also be fictively aroused, most obviously, for example, in the vicarious gratification of pornography. Affective critics such as Richards have been entirely concerned with the primary response, but if our "suspension of disbelief" has been adequately sustained, an expanding sense of verisimilitude can lead to the incipient bodily response described by James in this vicarious gratification. In pornography this response would be sexual arousal, technically conation rather than emotion though certainly accompanied by emotions. If sufficiently stimulated, this mounting inclination toward gratification can altogether divert our attention from the primary reading response into a train of our own fantasies. To a certain extent the fantasy content of literature which might fit the James-Lange theory probably reinforces and extends our "primary" response, but beyond this

point it becomes a distraction. The ideal interaction, a compromise process of levitation, perhaps comparable to the hydrofoil, might be to indulge our fantasies in moderation as we skim over the text, high enough for an easy flight but also close enough to maintain our support in the more critical primary response to the text itself. This compromise applies as well to other emotional responses besides sexual arousal, for example the shame, guilt, and fear evoked in such a novel as Native Son, by Richard Wright, which successfully makes an intellectual experience of a full range of emotions brought to the threshold of incipient behavior proposed in the James-Lange theory.

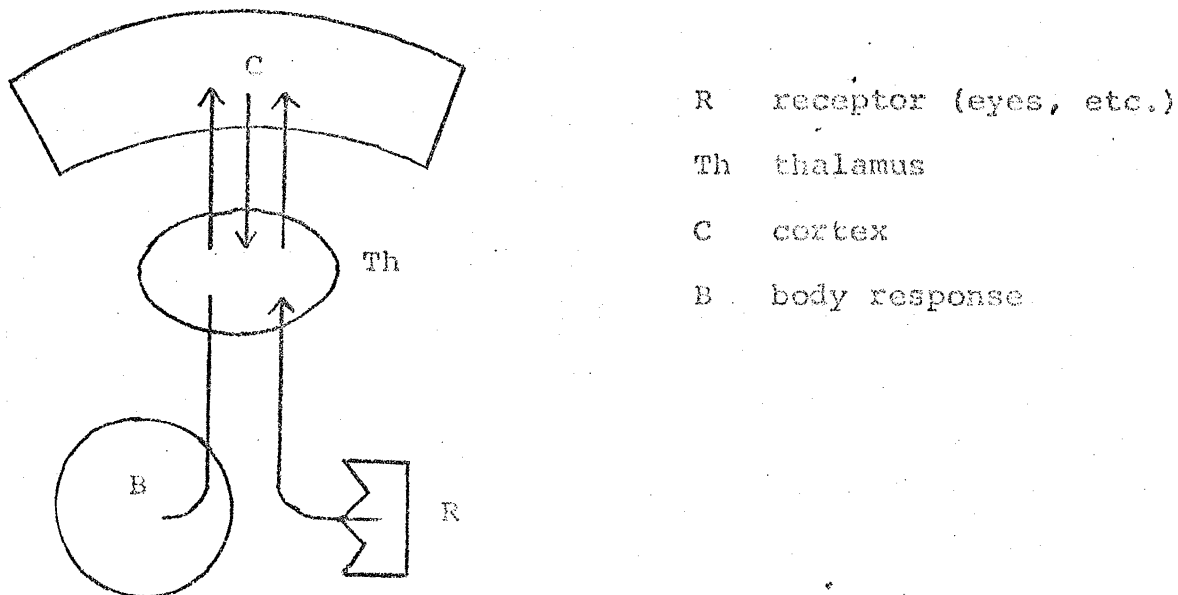
Of course the theory of affect has been considerably modified since the James-Lange explanation was proposed eighty years ago, and these modifications generally seem to confirm the principles of affective criticism that we support. The first major challenge to the James-Lange theory was the "thalamic" theory of W.B. Cannon (sometimes called the "Cannon-Bard theory"), developed through the twenties and early thirties on the basis of considerable neurological investigation. Cannon proposed that the emotions are generated in the thalamus and hypothalamus, not the body, which he proved to be relatively slow, insensitive, and indiscriminate in its response. He also performed lobotomies on animals to establish that those decorticated suffered extreme emotions, usually to the pitch of rage, while those whose thalamus and hypothalamus were damaged became predictably excitable, but if the thalamus and hypothalamus were alto-

gether removed they became entirely passive. Comparable effects were observed in human beings whose brains had been damaged in the thalamic regions. Apparently confirming the James-Lange theory in one respect, however, he found the cortex to serve a largely inhibitory function, restraining the activity of the thalamus and hypothalamus.<sup>5</sup> Cannon's 1927 explanation of this process may be profitably quoted in full despite its heavy use of jargon:

An external situation stimulates receptors and the consequent excitation starts impulses towards the cortex. Arrival of the impulses in the cortex is associated with conditioned processes which determine the direction of the response. Either because the response is initiated in a certain mode or figure and the cortical neurones therefore stimulate the thalamic processes, they are roused and ready for discharge. That the thalamic neurones act in a special combination in a given emotional expression is proved by the reaction patterns typical of the several affective states. These neurones do not require detailed innervation from above in order to be driven into action. Being released for action is a primary condition for their service to the body--they then discharge precipitately and intensely.... When these neurones discharge in a particular combination, they not only innervate muscles and viscera but also excite afferent paths to the cortex....The peculiar quality of the emotion is added to simple sensation when

the thalamic processes are roused.<sup>6</sup>

With slight modifications Cannon diagrammed this process in a subsequent article published in 1931:<sup>7</sup>

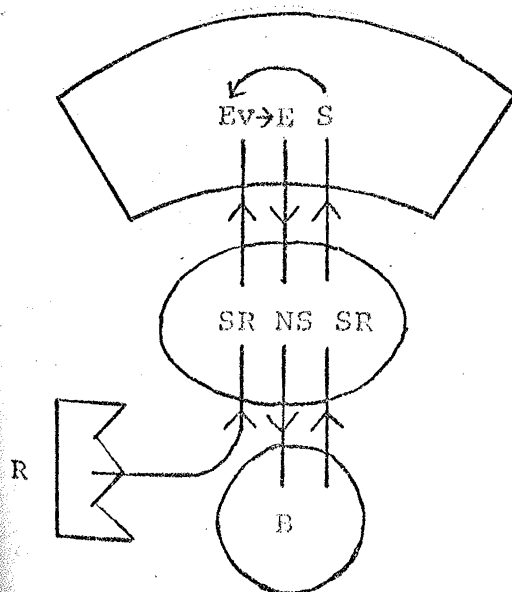


This diagram seems to differ from his earlier explanation in indicating an almost direct path from an external stimulus to the thalamus without intermediate cerebral interference, whereas his earlier explanation had suggested an initial cortical response before the centripetal stimulation of the thalamus. Unfortunately, the diagram seems to represent more accurately the commonly accepted thalamic theory that the primary function of the cortex in the experience of emotion remains inhibitory, simply shifting the seat of emotions from the body (according to the James-Lange theory) to the thalamus. Thus a clearly compartmentalized distinction yet

seems to have been maintained in the thalamic theory between cognition, a cortical activity, and emotion, thalamic activity inhibited by the cortex. The categorical difference between emotion and cognition assumed by John Crowe Ransom in New Criticism (1941) would seem to have been justified by current neurological research.

Cannon at least brought the source of emotions closer to the cortex, and subsequent research gave the cortex a much more significant role in the generation of emotions. The investigations of Dusser de Barenne and W.S. McCullough in 1939 cast doubt on the concept that cortical influence is entirely inhibitory since the stimulation of neurons leading from the cortex to the thalamus apparently brings an increase and not a decrease of thalamic activity.<sup>8</sup> Other experiments also demonstrated that afferent excitation is not essential to emotion, contrary to the James-Lange theory, and that emotion without cortical activity is an automatic reflex, usually an outburst of meaningless rage, not the felt experience of emotion. Parts of the brain outside but near the thalamus were also identified as being involved in the experience of fear and rage, and the success of pre-frontal lobotomy upon the cortex to eliminate fear and anxiety (with side effects of increased tactlessness and aggressiveness) suggested a direct involvement of cortical activity in the experience of emotion. It was concluded that the normal experience of emotion would seem to involve the interrelationship between the two rather than an exclusive activity of

one or the other. Since the mid-thirties psychologists have therefore tried to develop a more comprehensive theory of emotion, though incorporating both the James-Lange and thalamic theories, neither of which may be entirely discarded. Summarizing these further efforts in 1950, Magda Arnold proposed that emotion occurs in a complicated process of interaction among the cortex, thalamus and body. This process would begin with the activity of attention (comparable to the "primary response" we proposed above) stimulating almost simultaneously both the cortex and thalamus, with the cortical response initiating additional nerve impulses to the thalamus, which in turn relays them to the body to produce autonomic effects observed once again by the cortex. The diagram used by Arnold may be simplified to a slight extent (eliminating her schematically unnecessary distinction between the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems) to illustrate this process:<sup>9</sup>



R receptor

SR sensory relay station

Ev evaluation

E emotion

NS nervous system relay station

B body response

Th thalamus

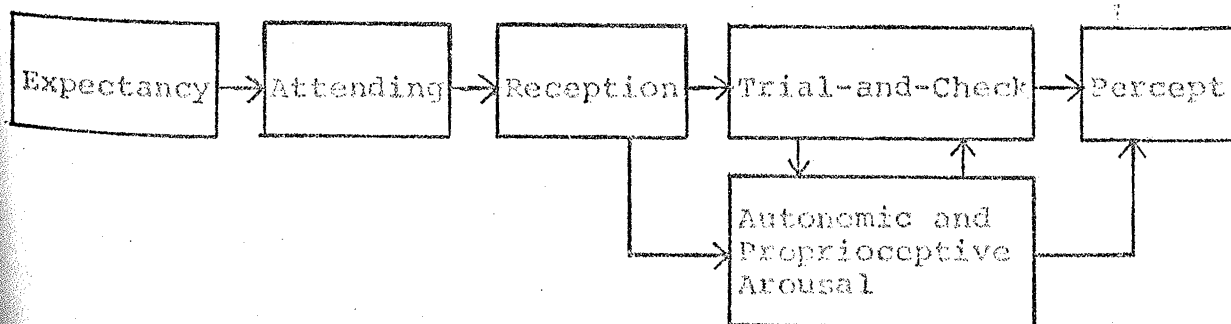
S sensation

C cortex

In this diagram the interaction between cortex and thalamus may be seen as essential to emotion, probably in an incessantly active circuit, while the body response relayed by the thalamus through the nervous system feeds back an awareness of our physical stimulation when our emotions reach a threshold of sufficient intensity. However, the common process involved in the experience of emotions would be cortico-thalamic interaction, and Arnold goes so far as to define all experience in terms of this relationship: "...that there is a psychological experience whenever there is cortico-thalamic or thalamo-cortical transmission of nerve impulses."<sup>10</sup> Emotion and cognition have become different faces of the same process of interaction in conscious experience. Cognition emphasizes the cortex and emotion the thalamic regions, but neither may entirely eliminate one or the other of these poles, because all experience involves the interaction between the two.

Since this explanation proposed by Arnold in 1950, the psychological theory of emotion has advanced even further with new discoveries in neurology which keep unsettled the issue of the exact relationship between emotions and cognition. The limbic system, a coordinating center linking the cortex and hypothalamus, has been found to play an important role; and another center, the reticulum, which controls waking and sleeping, has been discovered to control the activity level of both the cortex and hypothalamus. The stimulative influence of the reticulum would suggest once again a possible modifi-

cation of the James-Lange theory, that an entirely new body function creates emotions by stimulating cortical activity, though I am told the reciprocal influence of the cortex upon the reticulum has yet to be adequately studied.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, experiments by Schachter and Singer in the control of adrenaline supply have established that cognitive factors are the major determinant of the experience of emotion, not appetites or lower brain center functions. These experiments also indicated that few physiological patterns exist to differentiate our emotional responses, each of which stimulates a generalized high level of sympathetic activation in the autonomic nervous system.<sup>12</sup> In a study of perception published in 1960 by Solley and Murphy, the close relationship between cognition and emotion again seems to have been confirmed. Reviewing considerable experimental evidence, Solley and Murphy propose dividing perception into a five stage process: (1) expectancy, (2) attending, (3) reception, (4) trial-and-check, and (5) percept, with a sixth stage, autonomic and proprioceptive arousal, influenced by the third and fourth stages and in turn influencing the fourth and fifth stages. They diagrammed this process of perception as follows:





Shifting the terms to be integrated from emotion and cognition to motivation and perception, they proposed that motivation is an essential ingredient of all these stages. Without the energizing force of motivation, they claimed, the act of perception cannot occur:

Motivation raises or lowers the level of consciousness with which perceptual acts are carried out; it functions to guide the selectivity that we observe in perception; it serves both a facilitative and an inhibitory function. In short, motivation does govern the direction and strength of perceptual acts; indeed, without motivation effects it is doubtful that we would perceive at all.<sup>13</sup>

Current theories in psychology thus seem abundant in confirming our view that cognition and emotion are organically connected while the relatively crude incipient physical response often identified with emotion is a side effect which influences our conscious experience only when a certain threshold of intensity has been reached. Though this physical response may be controlled, minimized, or even possibly eliminated, the dynamics of cortico-thalamic interaction (conceding both to be stimulated by the reticulum) puts emotion and cognition in an inseparable, interpenetrating relationship.<sup>14</sup>

Research in experimental psychology would thus indicate the validity of Gerard's proposal in the eighteenth century and Dewey's in the twentieth that our perception and understanding of literature are dictated by emotion, or, if the

word "dictated" seems too strong, let us say suffused and directed by emotion. At both levels we suggested earlier, the "primary" act of attention and the subsequent mixture of catharsis and fantasies triggered by this act, emotion seems an important if not predominant factor.

Trends in the psychoanalytic theory of emotion have been roughly parallel to those of experimental psychology, though differences between the two fields are tantalizing for those who try to reach an acceptable synthesis. On one hand, the psychoanalytic model of personality dynamics has little similarity to brain processes traced by neurologists. The libido may be tentatively identified somehow as involving the activity of the hypothalamus, reticulum, and other lower brain centers, and the conscious and unconscious may be located in the cortex in some pattern of interaction among neural shortcuts, as William James briefly proposed in Chapter Six of Principles of Psychology. But this contorted application of Freudian theory is at best tenuous and probably useless in experimental psychology, certainly in the study of neurology. On the other hand, psychoanalysis successfully explores patterns of behavior that presently cannot be explained in terms of either neurology or experimental psychology. Their labored conclusions too often seem the initial assumptions of psychoanalysis, beyond which it leads us to clearly significant insights in the dynamics of personality. In the theory of affect (or emotion), these differences between the two

approaches seem especially interesting because of the apparent early influence of the James-Lange theory upon Freud, after which psychoanalysis underwent its own evolution toward a "structural" explanation of affect somewhat similar to the cortico-thalamic theory described above.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of his career, Freud treated affect as undifferentiated psychic energy discharged to attain gratification and causing a side effect in our feeling of emotion. Ironically, perhaps, this first explanation was broad enough to be easily integrated with the present cortico-thalamic theory for our purposes in affective criticism because language could be understood to be a channel of discharge (or catharsis), for example in therapy: "By providing an opportunity for the pent-up affect to discharge itself in words the therapy deprives of its effective power the idea which was not originally abreacted."<sup>16</sup> Such a simple principle of catharsis in language could easily be extended in toto to literature, much to our gratification as critics, but Freud's early theory was soon drastically modified because it confused affect with drives, our emotions with our appetites. In The Interpretation of Dreams, published in 1900, he apparently adopted the James-Lange theory to his own purposes by shifting from the "dynamic" to the "economic" point of view. He proposed that our fundamental psychic energy is drive cathexis, creating drive tensions (appetites, etc.) either directly released through motility (the active effort toward gratification) or indirectly reduced through drive representations, (1) in conscious ideas and presumably their

ion in language, and (2) in an affect charge of the motor or secretory functions. He thus treated ideas and affects as entirely different kinds of drive representations. Ideas were seen as externalizing cathexes, structures seeking expression in an indirect, sublimated pattern of gratification, while affects were seen as internalizing processes of discharge experienced in the body which, lacking structure, became dissipated in the unconscious. This theory of affect held by Freud as late as 1915, when he published his important article, "The Unconscious," bore the same implications deleterious to affective criticism as the James-Lange and thalamic theories did. If idea and affect can be polarized into exactly opposite drive representations, the one a process involving the body and the other a structure involving the mind, then the New Critical distinction between affective and cognitive approaches to criticism would seem valid, a major premise of formalist (or contextualist) approaches. The separability of affect and cognition in the dynamics of personality would justify their compartmentalization in the field of criticism. To our insistence that both must be involved in a comprehensive theory of literature, the proponents of "cognitive" criticism might reply with a measure of justification that Freudian theory itself suggests they can be isolated, and they (the proponents) prefer to do this, dealing exclusively with perceived structures and letting the vaguer and less clearly discriminated process of affect automatically take care of itself.

However, with the publication of The Ego and the Id in 1923 and Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety in 1926, Freud shifted to a new perspective more in agreement with the cortico-thalamic theory in combining affect with cognition. He proposed that the affect-charge becomes structuralized in the personality as an "ego function" which may be used to signal an attitude without affect discharge actually taking place. This patterning occurs in affect-discharge channels for the release of emotion, innate to begin with, which proliferate and become structuralized as part of the personality. In this process the existence of a "super-affect" has been proposed which once formed would be continuously present as a structuralized affective state, a character trait, or, in the words of Rapaport, a "complex quasi-stable substructure of the personality."<sup>17</sup> Rapaport himself tries to combine these three stages of Freudian theory of affect into an acceptable synthesis. He defines affects as safety-valve drive representations which at first use inborn channels and thresholds of discharge much in accordance with the James-Lange theory of affect. Then, in the development of personality, he proposed that "the damming up of drives by defenses makes for more intensive and more varied use of the affect discharge channels . . .," resulting in the increased importance of subtle affect discharge-channels and a comparable deemphasis of "massive affect attacks" in the overt expression of emotion. As a result, he proposes, "a continuum of affects extends in all shadings from massive affect

attacks to mere signals and even signals of signals."<sup>18</sup> This comprehensive explanation by Rapaport seems harmonious with neurological evidence of a perpetual cortico-thalamic transmission of nerve impulses. The child more easily fits the James-Lange theory in his frequent outburst of emotion, but with the structuralization of the mature Ego in countless subtle discharge-channels, affect would be moderated to become a sustained influence upon the personality in its interaction with its environment, either in a normal or pathological pattern of response.

Thus experimental psychology and psychoanalysis seem to bring us by different routes to the same conclusion. Affect (or emotion, loosely its pattern of behavior) is a function of personality which colours our attitudes, values, beliefs, even our most abstract reflections. It guides our choice of words, arouses our attention, contours our memory. It thus cannot be eliminated or successfully compartmentalized, for the patience and steadfastness required to seem to be doing this likewise evoke feelings, however subdued and restrained by our purpose. Likewise, affect cannot and should not be eliminated from the experience of reading literature, either in our "primary response" or vicarious gratification. Whether we like it or not, our experience of literature is emotional--to deny this is hypocritical, to advocate its cessation is to ask the impossible, to make it a "fallacy" absurd. Our task is not to deny affect, but to encourage the most satisfactory affective response to literature,

fully cultivating our attention in synaesthesia, as I.A. Richards proposed, but also exploring our emotional involvement, our fantasies as a commitment to the adventures of identification.

## Footnotes, Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>William James, The Principles of Psychology (1891), Great Books Edition (alas), p. 743.

<sup>2</sup>William James, p. 752.

<sup>3</sup>The best introduction to behavior therapy and its successful treatment of neuroses is by Joseph Wolpe, The Practice of Behavior Therapy (1969).

<sup>4</sup>William James, p. 754.

<sup>5</sup>For the layman it is almost essential to rely upon the summary of Cannon's extensive investigations. Those I have found most useful (and available) for my purposes are, "Emotion as Visceral Action: An extension of Lange's Theory," by M.A. Wenger and "An Excitatory Theory of Emotion," by Magda B. Arnold, both included in Feelings and Emotions, edited by Martin L. Reymert (New York, 1950), a collection of articles making frequent references to Cannon's theory. For developments in the theory of affect since Cannon, the article, "Affect, Awareness, and Performance," by Carroll Izzard et al., included in Affect, Cognition, and Personality, edited by Sylvan Tomkins and Carroll Izzard (New York, 1965), is quite useful.

<sup>6</sup>Reymert, pp. 12-13; quoted by Arnold from "The James-Lange Theory of Emotion," Amer. J. Psychol. 39 (1927), p. 120.

<sup>7</sup>Reymert, p. 13; from "Again the James-Lange and the Thalamic Theories of Emotion," Psychol. Rev., 38 (1931), p. 282.

<sup>8</sup>Reymert, pp. 17-18; cited by Arnold from J. Neurophysiol., 1 (1938), p. 69.



<sup>9</sup>Reymert, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>Reymert, pp. 30-31.

<sup>11</sup>I am informed of this by Angus McDonald, a psychologist and personal friend.

<sup>12</sup>S. Schachter and J.E. Singer, "Cognitive, Social and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State." Psychol. Rev. 69 (1962), pp. 379-399.

<sup>13</sup>Charles M. Solley and Gardner Murphy, Development of the Perceptual World (New York, 1960), p. 52.

<sup>14</sup>Other theories apparently bearing out the same conclusion, by Elizabeth Duffy, D.C. McClelland, and S.S. Tomkins, are surveyed in "Affect, Awareness, and Performance," by Carroll Izzard et. al., op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>The best account of this evolution is by David Rapaport, "On the Psychoanalytic Theory of Affects," in Psychoanalytic Psychiatry and Psychology, Clinical and Theoretical Papers, Austen Riggs Center, Vol I (New York, 1954), pp. 274-310-- hereafter cited as Rapaport. Also useful are Rapaport's two books, Emotions and Memory (New York, 1942) and Organization and Pathology of Thought (New York, 1951), in passim., as well as Otto Fenichel's The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York, 1945), again in passim.

<sup>16</sup>Cited by Rapaport, p. 278; from "On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena." Collected Papers 1:24-41 (London, 1946).

<sup>17</sup>Rapaport, pp. 300-301.

<sup>18</sup>Rapaport, pp. 304-305.

## Chapter Six:

## "Linguistics, Stylistics, and Affective Criticism"

Theories of linguistics and stylistics might also seem to separate literature from emotion in their oft-maintained distinction between language and psychology. As the James-Lange theory suggested that emotion is a body function easily kept distinct from conscious experience, the study of language and style too frequently operates on the complementary axiom that literature is merely a particular, albeit refined, use of language, thus a mode of experience easily kept distinct from emotions. Our fundamental objective of course remains the same, to demonstrate the importance of affect in literature, but now we have a new task, to prove its importance in style and even language relatively devoid of style or the "personality" found in style. In one respect, we concede, language is largely habitual, the langue proposed by Saussure, a repository of words and grammatical patterns we have learned by heart from infancy. Psychologists have demonstrated the relative absence of affect in habitual modes of behavior, and language would seem not the least of these automatic patterns of response, certainly in much of the use of syntax.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, our choice of words and even syntax while speaking, the parole defined by Saussure, necessitates first recognizing words and syntactic patterns suitable in a particular context and then making a choice from among them. In this complex act both cognition and affect would seem vitally important, though a welter of

formalist equations and theories have diverted many from this fundamental certainty.

The locus classicus in the modern history of formalism is Course in General Linguistics, by Ferdinand de Saussure, compiled and published by some of his students after his death in 1915. Saussure's theory of language was not itself formalist in separating language from personality and emotion, but he made a number of linguistic distinctions subsequently essential to the formalists. His dichotomy between synchrony (simultaneity in structure) and diachrony (change in time) in the study of language has been easily shifted to other fields, primarily anthropology in the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, according to which history (the diachronous) is mostly ignored to concentrate upon a structural description of phenomena relatively impervious to time, for example synchronous patterns in myths and kinship systems. A denial of history is implied, apparently a reactionary opposition to theories of social progress, particularly Marxism, though Levi-Strauss himself has maintained that he does not wish to deny the progressive theory of history, but to supplement it with a comparable theory of pre-historic kinship systems.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, this distinction between synchrony and diachrony has also been applied in the interpretation of literature, in the search for static forms to the exclusion of dynamic process either within the text itself or its "transactional" relationship with the reader. Probably the most remarkable example of this ultra-formalism is

the interpretation of Baudelaire's Les Chats by Jakobson and Levi-Strauss and its extension by Michael Riffaterre integrating linguistic and poetic structures.<sup>3</sup> Riffaterre claims that our previously cited paradigm of information theory must be drastically reduced to the message and the addressee, a reduction which actually seems further limited to "message--decoding" without the final "hearer." He concedes that the purpose of the message is to draw a response from the hearer, but insists that this response be a comprehension of linguistic structure devoid of content, either in idea or, we may presume, affect. His critical position is technically affective since he is concerned with response, but in the sense of poetic structures being duplicated or stereotyped by our minds in their exact pattern. Mind-shape duplicates poem-shape, while cognition and affect are eliminated from consideration as choice-making activities. Diachrony, in this case the growth of our response, the accretion of emotion, ideas, and language, is altogether denied.

Saussure's distinction between "signifier" and "signified" (more or less word and its referent) also has formal implications and curiously appeals to our conservative inclinations. The relationship between the two, defined mathematically as an axis, is described as "arbitrary" and by implication autocratic so "the masses have no voice in the matter." Instead a "contract" exists between the two which is a "heritage of the preceding period," implying the

acceptability of diachrony if it involves the history of received arbitrary symbols. The "prime conservative force" in this historic contract shows the "impossibility of revolution," he claims, a prospect likewise assuaging our fear of political upheaval in these troubled times.<sup>4</sup> For a few pages Saussure thus resorted to political metaphors which might be valid strictly applied to language, though one cannot help noticing a peculiar consonance between his rejection of process in linguistics and the conservatism implied in his metaphor's vehicle, a rejection of process in history toward barbarous democratic vistas. Again we seem to be brought back to the erstwhile virtues of synchrony, the preservation of existing structures, the most demonstrable of which would be language. For our purposes in affective criticism, however, a fundamental modification is required to accept this dichotomy between "signifier" and "signified" in the total "sign situation." Saussure proposed simply that the "signified" is whatever object might be arbitrarily indicated by a word, for example with equos representing a horse, the picture of which was actually included in his text. He repeatedly suggested an explicit, fixed relationship between the two, bridging an enormous gap between objective immediacy and the language act, as if words naturally consist of signs representing discrete Lockean things and events. The intermediate stages in our conscious integration of experience seem to have been eliminated from this radically attenuated explanation of the

sign event. In Elements of Semiology, Roland Barthes, a modern proponent of Saussurean linguistics, assures us that Saussure did not intend the "signified" to be a thing but its mental representation, an important distinction. It is possible to find this meaning in Saussure, but he did not adequately clarify this point, and neither he nor Barthes seems to have been much concerned with the intermediate stages of conscious experience. Barthes proposes that Saussure meant the objective horse to be particularly depicted by its mental representation, which in turn is particularly and arbitrarily represented by the word horse or eguos, so its mental experience is in effect an intermediate stereotype linking the horse with its name without adding or subtracting any further connections of meaning. We would argue that experience is virtually eliminated from language in this theory, and what we have left is reduced to two homologous planes parallel to each other, one of content, the signified objective world, and the other of expression, language as the signifier of this objective world. Language-wielding homo sapiens simply transposes pattern from one plane to the other.

For Barthes and other radical formalists influenced by Saussure, literature understandably becomes the "classical" assortment of meaningful counterparts between these two planes, language and reality. However, in the context of affective criticism we must particularly reject this entire conception of language because of the vital importance of

our experience mediating objective reality and its depiction in language. We must insist that conscious processes "anterior" to language, certainly in our early stages of childhood but even to a large extent in the mature adult, combine and integrate areas of experience into gestalts recognized as "things." Words help in this process, but are likewise its product, not a priori to experience. The manifold associations and implications of the word horse in the context of Frost's stanza treated earlier (fortunately, Saussure's example brings us back again to Frost) illustrate this point and entirely belie the simple representational theory of Saussure. Frost's horse is a harnessed source of animal energy directed forward, a silent, respectful debater, a single companion with profound, unspoken rapport, etc., and none of these meanings nor certainly their complex interpretation may be deduced from the one-to-one equivalence between signifier and signified advocated by Saussure, or even Barthes. The explanation is disarmingly simple: a word's meaning is not arbitrary and atomistic, but like a penumbra, an area of undefined, recollected experience. Often, as Santayana proposed, it has enough clustered superimpositions of meaning to create a fairly precise representation, for example in our conception of a horse. Yet, this picture or clustered meaning has manifold associations stemming from our past experience with horses both directly in our lives and symbolically in language and pictures. Whenever we use the word horse, a perimeter of countless memories and

associations is sensitized, all of which have some bearing upon our conception of horse. It is a radical abstraction and utterly inadequate to ignore these associations and lock our minds into a one-to-one equation, a pseudo-Platonic abstraction, for example the drawing of a horse used by Saussure.<sup>5</sup> Instead, while reading we must dynamically sort through these associations, a tangle of words and impressions, and the more venturesome our effort, the more worthwhile we make literature.

In Elements of Semiology, Barthes tries to explain this experience as "connotation" strictly in terms of linguistic signifiers, but his theory seems entirely inadequate. He proposes that the "plane of expression" produces the effect of connotation by including a signifying system with a new "plane of expression," so a referent becomes itself a symbol, ad infinitum. Non-verbal experience thus may be explained in terms of signification through the inclusion of all possible associations in a pyramid-like regression of symbolic functions.<sup>5</sup> This ingenious theory suggests Richards' proposal in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, that all thought is metaphoric, involving comparisons of one sort or another; but Richards did not reduce this concept to a rigid binary paradigm, and he clearly proposed non-verbal experience described as metaphor, not all experience reduced, as in Ramist logic, to an infinite regression of binary functions. The "looseness" of his proposal seems to have been well advised, for non-verbal experience is an essential



ingredient of the language act which helps to interrelate words, and of course is itself shaped and directed by the connection among words. Without this organic, non-discreet process of experience, any proposed hierarchy of signifying systems seems mostly a matter of formalist ingenuity.

The last of Saussure's dichotomies which concern us is his distinction between langue and parole, respectively the entire system of language and its particular combinations when we speak or write. Langue is a system, a synchronic pattern of speech habits we share in order to communicate with each other, while parole is the diachronous act of choosing particular combinations from this system in order to express ourselves. He claims the two are absolutely different as system and process and must be studied separately. Again, his distinction is useful but misleading. It seems to be supported by recent investigations of structural and transformational linguistics, but both schools have unabashedly restricted their discovery procedures to the investigation of synchronic patterns in langue, precisely accounting for their limitation in explaining the actual processes of speech. Immediate constituents sought by structuralists and the generation of sentences by transformationalists have practically nothing to do with our actual formation of sentences while talking, and their results may be expected to reflect the limits of their methods. In Syntactic Structures Chomsky acknowledges this limitation:

"A grammar does not tell us how to synthesize a specific

utterance; it does not tell us how to analyze a particular given utterance. In fact, these two tasks which the speaker and hearer must perform are essentially the same, and are both outside the scope of grammars . . . [according to generative and transformational rules]."<sup>7</sup> The overwhelming emphasis of linguistics upon langue, the system of language irrespective of its use, has led quite naturally to the conviction that we are virtually slaves of language, a vast internalized system which entirely dominates our thought. All we can do, it seems, is pick and choose from its structures, a qualified volitional choice among non-volitional patterns, with the balance of authority lying in langue, the structure itself, rather than our feelings and motives in the selection we make.

Quite the contrary, we insist, the act of speaking or writing is an entirely different sort of behavior. While engaged in this act we almost simultaneously project meaning forward in time, find words to particularize this meaning, and syntactic patterns to connect these words among themselves and with our present context of thought. Linguists acknowledge a linear dimension of language, but what they usually have in mind is a sequence seen objectively from an external vantage, for example the horizontal line of print seen on a page or a voice filling the dimension of time understood spatially. It would seem more useful to describe this forward projection of meaning by imagining ourselves in actual progress along a single dimension, perhaps through

a tunnel or over a highway toward a vanishing point on the horizon. Like scenery along a Nebraska road, impressions to be expressed in words but a good deal ahead seem vague though upcoming. As we approach, particular words materialize like barns and houses, while possibilities for syntactic arrangement almost simultaneously materialize to connect them among themselves and in relationship to our present context. Then, once our words have been syntactically combined, in effect locked in the act of expression, they and their combination remain in our memory to help project connections toward new words and meanings. It is a swift, unmeasurable process, yet its sequence generally seems to progress from feelings and pre-verbal ideas to particular words, especially substantives, then verbs, modifiers, and finally most of the form class words (prepositions, conjunctions, etc.). Substantives and verbs seem to carry the burden of meaning, while syntax, a mortar binding them, is effected through the function of pronouns, form class words, etc., and of course the position among words.

The overwhelming importance of substantives and verbs may be seen in poetry, where John Ciardi has suggested the healthy ratio of nouns and verbs to adjectives and adverbs to be approximately two to one. Form class words are even fewer and carry little meaning except to connect other words. In Frost's stanza, for example, the sequence of form class words alone seems entirely cryptic (his a to if there the the of and) while the sequence of substantives carries a great

deal of the meaning (He harness bells shake mistake sound sweep wind flake), expanded even further by the inclusion of verbs (He gives harness bells shake ask is mistake sound's sweep wind flake) and virtually completed with the addition of adjectives and adverbs (He gives harness bells shake ask some mistake only other sound's sweep easy wind downy flake). Even if the sequence is mixed it would still carry more meaning than any arrangement of the form class words alone or combined with jabberwocky ("kee dabs his harbob dums a glake/ To ung if there ot mungs piflake./ The arly ither bag'd the gleep/ Of iggly glind and bowzy plake."). Thus syntax would seem not dominant but subordinate to the meaning and connotations of words used in sequence. It seems the mortar, the last ingredient added to give coherence to the rest just previous to their utterance.<sup>8</sup>

Even with regard to syntax alone, though, smaller syntactic units, for example the prepositional phrase and adverb clause, apparently take precedence over the unity of the entire sentence. Local syntactic connections seem to have immediate priority, while total unity is accomplished without more interference than necessary. This unpopular supposition among most linguists bears important implications in literature. As Christensen has demonstrated in Notes toward a New Rhetoric (1967), poets usually escape the equational limitations of the subject-predicate relationship in a sentence by losing themselves in a welter of agglomerated terminal sentence modifiers, and, we might add,

of appositives and parenthetical inclusions within the sentence. The accumulation of these modifiers forces us to pay more attention to local syntactic connections rather than total sentence unity. This local emphasis seems a natural by-product of our emphasis upon words rather than syntax, particularly the artificial subject-predicate equation which is binary. Moreover, as C.S. Lewis has demonstrated in his wise book, A Preface to Paradise Lost (1942), the syntax of a poet such as Milton matters little compared to the rolling and expanding sequence of words. Milton's involuted, Latinate sentence pattern justifies this sequence in a conventionally acceptable syntactic formulation, but sentence structure itself does not constitute the poetry, which lies more in the progressive sequence of words with impinging auras of experience.<sup>9</sup> This is precisely the "interanimation" of words in proximity with each other which interested Richards in both Coleridge on the Imagination and The Philosophy of Rhetoric.

It must be emphasized that we cannot entirely deny the Whorfian hypothesis regarding the influence of syntax upon thinking, for example in the logical bias of the subject-predicate relationship, but we suggest that the choice of words more significantly influences our thinking than does their syntactic arrangement, largely a by-product of this choice, and that the primary relationship for both is with the experience evoked. In a passage often conveniently overlooked, Whorf himself has conceded the priority of non-

verbal conscious processes to language: "My own studies suggest, to me, that language, for all its kingly role, is in some sense a superficial embroidery upon deeper processes of consciousness, which are necessary before any communication, signaling, or symbolism whatsoever can occur . . ."10 These "deeper processes" involve our experiential grasp of "objective immediacy," mostly a non-verbal activity which determines our choice of words and their syntactic arrangement. There seems to be an interlocking stage at which words and experience are tested and confirmed with regard to each other with a certain degree of parity and often even the dominance of language, but anterior non-verbal dynamics of consciousness nevertheless occur. These processes may be postulated phylogenetically in the evolution of the human species as a language-wielding animal, ontogenetically in the infant's acquired capacity to use and understand language, and, we insist, in the ordinary process of choice among words whenever we speak or write as mature adults. The words arise (or erupt) in consciousness to describe and specify our experience, not vice versa, as any high school teacher knows about student compositions. If a student compensates for ignorance by relying upon language or jargon alone, his prose is awkward or vapid and repetitious, but if he "knows" what he is writing about, for example an incident in his own life, then his language flows, his skill as a stylist demonstrably improves. Likewise, Ezra Pound has repeatedly insisted that a poet must have a fund of

actual experience to write about, and language alone does not fill this bill.

More specifically, with regard to the language act as it occurs, if we wish to profit from the example of Frost in our wonder about snowfall, we do not necessarily begin with the intention to use the synaesthetic word "sweep" and hold it in abeyance until exactly the right context. Beginning with feelings and impressions, we gradually unwind ourselves in language until the word "sweep" bodies forth into our immediate cluster of experience shaped and articulated by language, becomes "locked" as a word into syntax, and is finally uttered. The lag or discrepancy in time between first reaching the threshold of consciousness and its expression may of course vary considerably, but such a lag seems essential, especially for poets, who must load with meaning the words they finally choose. The longer a particular word remains suspended at the threshold of speech, the more weight in meaning it probably accumulates in conscious associations and syntactic possibilities, that is to say, the more it would seem to gain in relevance to the poet's total experience. Vice versa, the more words and combinations a poet may gather and hold for ripening in this cluster at the threshold of speech, the more adequate will be the context of his expression. A facile talent narrows this discrepancy, quickening the turnover of gathered words, but profundity would usually oblige its expansion. The reader has exactly the same task in reverse--he must

"rewind" the syntax and vocabulary in a comparably de-liberate fashion to assess most fully the meaning and feelings they represent.

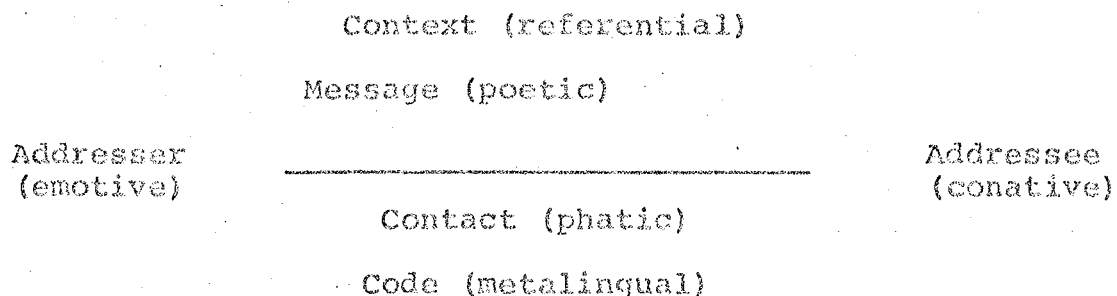
The best defense I have found of syntax as the dominant feature of language (most take for granted this dominance) is Roman Jakobson's important distinction between metaphoric and metonymic styles.<sup>11</sup> Jakobson claims there are two basic types of aphasia, "contiguity disorder," in which words are loosely associated without being syntactically connected, and "similarity disorder" in which syntax literally gropes for words. These two extremes, he claims, suggest a polarity between two radically different kinds of style, the metaphoric and metonymic, with comparable differences in experience and literary genre. Metaphoric style and thinking is supposedly substitutive, involving easy accessibility of particular words and (as Richards proposed) a deemphasis of syntax, most clearly observable in poetry. As Eastman suggested, it would disrupt the continuity of syntax to arrest our attention upon the manifold implications of particular words. In contrast, metonymic style would be predicative, progressing syntactically from subject to predicate, from modifiers to "head words," or vice versa, from "head words" to modifiers, creating the sequence of language characteristic of prose. Metaphoric style would directly and expansively connect the "vehicle," whatever word is used, with its "tenor," the congeries of meaning represented; while metonymic style would minimize this



referential connection to shift to associated words which may be syntactically connected. No particular style can be exclusively devoted to one or the other of these extremes, since both the lexical and syntactic functions are obviously essential to language, but a writer's style may be expected to emphasize one or the other to a certain extent. For example, the free association of Joyce would be considered ultra-metaphoric and the late style of James ultra-metonymic. Likewise, the current linguistic concern with langue and its syntactic manifestation in particular sentences might be considered a metonymic approach, while the concern we share with Richards upon the eruption of language into consciousness is metaphoric. The beauty of this distinction, however, is that both functions of language proposed by Jakobson may be treated as being dynamic and affective (though he himself apparently does not do this), suggesting parole, the spoken language, the actual process of finding words and syntactic combinations to express ourselves. Also, to a certain extent, Jakobson's metonymic pole recalls Kenneth Burke's comparable use of synecdoche to describe style, that any word, event, or figure of speech implies those which follow, so that narrative is a mode of synecdochic overlay, each part elaborating the meaning of those which precede it and requiring comparable elaboration from those which follow, a regressive pattern analogically suggested, perhaps, by a stack of conical paper cups lying on its side. Burke's distinction between harmony and arpeggio as a musical

basis for comparing styles also helps explain the difference between the metaphoric and metonymic extremes.<sup>12</sup> The metaphoric style is "harmonious" in its emphasis upon the simultaneity of tenor and vehicle (or simply word and referent) while the metonymic style suggests the arpeggio in sequentially connecting associations, that is, in emphasizing the sentential context of a word as its true referent rather than its meaning, or, more exactly, its verbal rather than its mental context.

Actually, all of these polarities seem to boil down without too much simplification to an orthodox linguistic distinction between the lexical and syntactic dimensions of language. The metaphoric style, "harmonious" and substitutive, emphasizes particular words and the ideas and feelings they represent; while the metonymic style, arpeggio-like, synecdochic and predicative, emphasizes their syntactic progress forward in time or across the page. The problem with these dichotomies, however, is that they are too often construed to imply a self-sufficient formal combination of syntax and figuration exclusive of conscious processes anterior to the formation of words and sentences. A fine example of this formalist reasoning may be found in another article by Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in which he proposes representing verbal communication with a complex paradigm:



He claims that within this paradigm poetry focusses on the message for its own sake exclusive of the addresser, addressee, context, etc., though also proposing a threefold division of genres based upon the conjugation of verbs that would seem to integrate one other component of the paradigm for each genre: (1) the epic in the third person involves the referential function; (2) moral poetry in the second person involves the conative function; and (3) lyric poetry in the first person is linked with the emotive function. The "sign situation" of poetry thus becomes multi-dimensional, but defined as such by grammatical categories. He also proposes a quadrant to represent the two modes of arrangement in verbal behavior, selection and combination, respectively the metaphoric and metonymic poles described above. The vertical axis is of selection, represented by metaphor, while the horizontal axis is of combination, represented by metonymy. The "poetic function," he claims, "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination."<sup>13</sup> By this he means the choice of words according to equivalence of meaning on the axis of selection (equos representing the horse we see) is duplicated on the axis of combination by the principle of repetition in metrics

and sound pattern. In other words, sounds and rhythms duplicate each other in poetry just as the signifier duplicates the signified on the axis of selection in other modes of verbal expression. The usual pattern of variation on the axis of combination (different words following each other) is thus internally balanced by a pattern of repetition, the principle of which is borrowed from the axis of selection. Variety and repetition successfully interact on the axis of combination alone, enabling the total elimination of meaning and feeling, the cognitive and affective functions of poetry.

In comparable fashion Eugenio Donato, a protege of Levi-Strauss, has summarized Lacan to the effect that "metaphor is the substitution of one signifier for another, whereas metonymy is the displacement of one signifier by another." This apparently harmless formula suggests that each signifier, the vehicle for another in metaphor or metonymy, must itself be the tenor for a new signifier in another mode of figuration, *ad infinitum*.<sup>14</sup> As Barthes uses a regressive sequence of planes of expression to represent connotation (ref. p. 48), Donato quotes Lacan in proposing a similar pattern of regression which effectively eliminates the signified except as another signifier. Each signifier represents a signified, but in turn each signified is itself a signifier representing another signified, again *ad infinitum*. This pattern of regression in signification would suggest linguistic solipsism except that Donato extends

the concept of signs to explain all human thought and activity in an extra-lingual category of "epistemological operators," a universal application of the sign function proposed by Roland Barthes in Elements of Semiology. The broad application of this approach is evident in Lacan's comparison of metaphor and metonymy with the Freudian concepts of condensation and displacement in an effort to reduce psychoanalytic theory to figurative and linguistic categories, and also in his definition of the unconscious as "that part of one's speech which one lacks to establish the continuity of one's discourse," again with the same purpose (both examples cited approvingly by Donato). Even the unconscious and our experience of objective immediacy become sign functions. The goal of structuralism, Donato claims, is "the mapping of the domain of the signifier upon itself," eliminating the signified and with it the organic processes of consciousness it involves. The human being becomes a congeries of symbolic functions, a repository of mathematical terms: "The structuralist subject is empty, uninhabited by consciousness, emotion, affectivity, and so forth. It is only a term within a general set of functions which in fact constitutes him as subject and these functions take precedence over the elements they articulate."<sup>15</sup>

Saussure's dichotomy of signifier and signified is thus used as radical abstraction for interrelating symbols to the exclusion of underlying processes of consciousness.

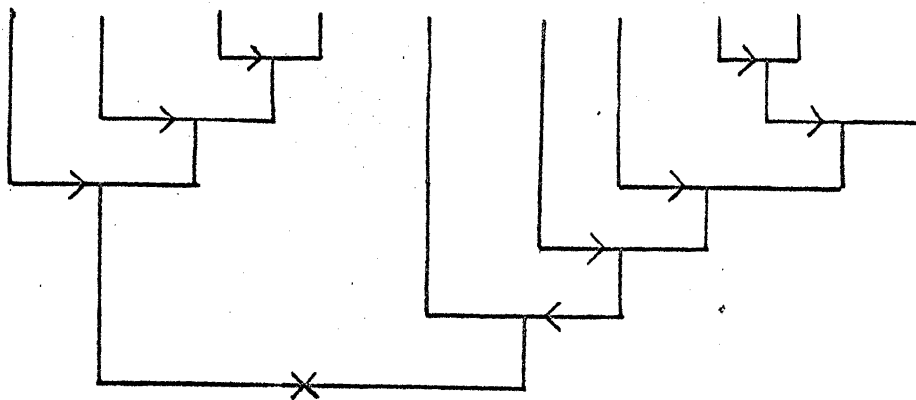
Jakobson's theory of aphasia likewise excludes conscious processes though extending linguistic categories into the domain of figuration (paradoxically, as Richards first proposed, by making metaphor itself a metaphor). Both approaches to language encourage formalist extravagance, the search for linguistic self-sufficiency in literature independent of experience.<sup>16</sup> If the connections between language and consciousness may be treated as being non-existent, or a new and slightly different pattern of signification, then literature has been conveniently extricated from the confusion and uncertainty of affective criticism. The "empty subject" is not humanly addressed by literature, has no "transactional" relationship with it, but applies himself dispassionately to its formal interpretation. His emotional response is inconsequential--form and language alone would be of the essence.

We must of course deny this position, even in its moderate guise. Syntax and words involve conscious processes that transcend any proposed one-for-one equation in sign functions; and though figurative explanations might be useful to help clarify these processes, they must be treated as paradigmatic analogies dangerous to the extent that they lead to the misunderstandings summarized above. As we amply demonstrated in our explication of the Frost stanza, every word involves complex feelings and associations that constitute a total possible meaning both expanded and somewhat defined by the word's context. Both the explicit

denotative reference (if entirely possible) and its penumbra of connotations are essential ingredients for the genuine poetic response. Without this penumbra, a word carries the same nearly meaningless value as a foreign word we can barely translate. Likewise, if a word stands alone, as Richards insisted, this penumbra is too inclusive and undefined to sustain either meaning or experience, but in its combination with other words, an "interanimation" results which both generates and defines experience. The same principle applies to syntax, though in a slightly different fashion. There are relatively few syntactic functions compared to our resources in vocabulary, and these few are constantly applied in the formation of every sentence we use. As a result, syntax becomes second nature, a habitual manner of arranging words. Like other habits, it serves consciousness without often penetrating it while we concentrate our effort upon the use of words. Nevertheless, syntax is undeniably of crucial importance in helping us both to remember and arrange the words we use. It also possesses magnificent flexibility in its subject-predicate equation as well as its patterns of modification. Adjectives of course modify nouns, adverbs verbs, etc., much as we learned in school, but words and their modifiers also form groups which in turn act as modifiers, for example the participle phrase and adverb clause, and even the total predicate of a sentence, which may be understood to modify the total subject. A binomial division may be found at every

level of combination in a sentence to link each word or group of words with its most direct modifier, usually adjacent, also a word or group of words. As a result, we may construct a pyramid of binomial relationships to indicate the full extent of modification in a sentence. The clearest paradigm of this process would probably be Eugene Nida's tree diagram of immediate constituents which rests this pyramid on its apex:<sup>17</sup>

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog's back.



Each horizontal line indicates a binomial unit, and its arrow shows the direction of modification, usually forward. Nida uses an "X" at the bottom horizontal line to indicate the equation between subject and predicate, but for our purposes it may be replaced with an arrow to indicate that the predicate modifies the subject in the sense of extending and clarifying its meaning. This binomial division into immediate constituents may also be turned on its pyramid base in order to illustrate the generative rules of transformational linguistics. Each so-called "kernel sentence" in this approach is constructed (or "derived")



with step-by-step binomial expansions beginning with the initial equation,  $S \rightarrow NP+VP$ , that the sentence is composed of a noun phrase plus a verb phrase.

In both structural linguistics and transformational linguistics this binomial principle thus seems to have been completely accepted. It serves our purposes equally well (discounting the limited influence of grammar we insist upon) since the relationship between two syntactic units in which one supposedly modifies the other is reciprocal. They interact with each other even if they are not adjacent, their meanings syntactically overlapping to particularize whatever sense is intended. And as their meaning is thus particularized it gains the eidetic coherence and validity mentioned earlier. For example, in the noun phrase diagrammed above, "the quick brown fox," both quick and brown partly predominate over successive words simply because their effects are felt first, though the initial determiner the indicates that they are soon to be followed by a substantive. Each suggests a quality (quickness and the color brown) which merges with our more general image of a fox, also a quality but with enough tangibility to give it the effect of a substantive. Our total experience as the noun phrase progresses is of the act of quickness seeking its actor, the color of brown seeking its bearer, and the fox finally particularizing and being particularized by these qualities. Each word splashes upon consciousness and each pairing (quick plus what follows and brown plus what follows)

energizes these splashings through their interanimation. If these words were kept separate, each would bear random sluggishly isolated associations, but their syntactic relationship reinforces their sequential interanimation to bring them to an eidetic threshold. Without much difficulty we can visualize a fox in nature, perhaps a field, abruptly coming into sight, pausing long enough to be clearly seen, and then just as quickly disappearing in a new direction, perhaps over a lazy dog's back. Alone, the word fox might produce a vague impression of this scene, especially if we have once seen a fox in such a moment, but the three words properly combined provide this effect much more readily, and of course a sentence, stanza or entire poem by a competent writer can give us an infinitely more convincing impression.

It was stated earlier that a poet usually tries to minimize the arbitrary limitations of syntax by concentrating upon free-floating word combinations such as appositives and sentence modifiers, smaller, less assertive, and less syntactically demanding than the simple sentence, which emphasizes the abstract equation between subject and predicate. We must now slightly modify this view. Syntax obviously cannot be eliminated short of free association as almost any two words adjacent to each other in literature (and not separated by terminal punctuation) may be shown to have a syntactic relationship, however distant. What I would propose is simply that poets reduce the importance of syntax by concentrating upon local relationships among

adjacent words rather than constructions emphasizing the relationship among words separated by other words, for example the simple subject and predicate. The metaphoric "local" effect is largely produced by increasing the frequency of relatively autonomous subordinate constructions and often, paradoxically, by complicating the sentence with an accumulation of these constructions to obfuscate and deemphasize its subject-predicate relationship. As a result, the association, the interpenetration of experience among adjacent words, dominates the mathematical equation. In poetry as simple as the Frost stanza we have quoted, this freedom is also effected by rhyme and rhythm somewhat diffusing the logical inevitability of the sentence structure. In Paradise Lost rhyme is replaced by a consummate use of cadence to engulf its twisted and distended Latinate syntax in a baroque sequence of effects. Thus syntax becomes a filigree to connect words in their natural, meaningful sequence as they rise to consciousness, emphasizing their local relatedness rather than abstract syntactic connections.

The major consideration in style is not syntax or a sound pattern of repetition and variation or a "mapping of the domain of the signifier upon itself," but the interanimation of experience among words, both adjacent and syntactically connected, as communicated by the poet to his readers. Each word is a "sign," a component of experience removed by Pavlovian habit to be used in the context of expression. The artist recombines it with others to reconstitute

experience and bring us to the threshold of eidetic fulfillment he wants us to share and understand. This is the message, the ultimate profundity of poetry.

## Postscript to Chapter Seven: Chomsky's Review of B.F. Skinner

B.F. Skinner's book Verbal Behavior (1957), reputedly the first systematic effort in behaviorist psychology to provide a functional analysis of language, is too concerned with the rudimentary conditioned response to be particularly relevant to our task of explaining the process of writing and speaking, especially in poetry. Likewise, Chomsky's 1959 review of Skinner's book (included in The Structure of Language, edited by Fodor and Katz, 1964, pp. 547-578), a closely reasoned reply now more influential than the book itself, seems largely irrelevant to our task, though most of its arguments are probably valid. In the last two sections of his review, however, Chomsky briefly proposes his own theory of verbal behavior which significantly conflicts with our own. With all due respect to Chomsky's contribution to the field of linguistics, we must heartily take exception with these particular views.

In the first place he assails as a "very implausible speculation" B.F. Skinner's proposal, similar to our own, that we generally choose nouns, verbs, and adjectives first in our formation of sentences, and then arrange them by "autoclitic responses," that is to say, through the use of function words to connect them in syntax. Chomsky proposes instead that we might actually recall function words first, as would be indicated by the fact that we usually pause before nouns and verbs if at all, suggesting greater uncertainty in their choice (p. 547). But this common experience need not

be denied, and in fact it exactly corroborates Skinner's point. We pause before nouns because they are essential to the expression of our ideas and we cannot go on without them. Once a momentarily forgotten noun is recalled, the function words (of habitual availability) are quickly selected and arranged to fit in among other nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The accessibility and interchangeability of function words thus enable us to concentrate on words with more referential (and emotive) concern in our utterance. Experience seems to corroborate this. If nouns, verbs, and adjectives quickly and easily flow into consciousness, function words seem to fall right into place, but if there is stoppage, for example in aphasia identified by Jakobson as "similarity disorder," then and only then do function words grope around fruitlessly in search for their justification. We do not claim that the choice of nouns and verbs always precedes that of function words, and many examples may be found where the emphasis of a sentence is on an adverb or even a preposition ("Not only is he in debt, but over the hill, and I mean over."), but even here the abstract lexical meaning of the function word is particularly emphasized. In general, however, a loose hierarchy seems to extend from substantives to verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and then the non-adverbial function words.

Chomsky concludes his criticism of Skinner on this point with the remark, "It is evident that more is involved

in sentence structure than insertion of lexical items in grammatical frames," clearly a criticism directed at structural linguistics as well as the psycholinguistic theory of Skinner. Our view is that Chomsky's accusation likewise seems to put the cart before the horse. The slot and filler approach he appropriately criticizes is no less correct in this sense than his own insistence that the "generalized pattern" of syntax is "imposed on the specific acts as they occur," suggesting that the shape of the entire sentence first establishes itself in our minds and then we choose and interrelate the words according to its pattern. No such process occurs! We often begin sentences with no idea how they will turn out. We are confident only that the subject will bring us to an appropriate predicate, which in turn enables us to use pertinent sentence modifiers, etc., all along the way fulfilling local syntactic necessities to justify the use of words we want to express. In this sense, sentence structure is not an overall pattern filled up by or superimposed upon the ideas we want to express, but a dynamic pattern in forward progress perhaps best suggested by Kenneth Burke's analogy with synecdoche mentioned above. We are moving along the single dimension of language, not examining it objectively from a separate vantage as pattern fulfilled in space. In our progress forward each word chosen for its meaning must be syntactically justified in the context of previous words already thus justified, and in turn it helps set limits requiring similar modifications in the

choice of subsequent words. These auxiliary modifications which facilitate the passage of language on the axis of combination proposed by Jakobson (ref. p. 204) may be defined as syntax. Each word has a range or what we might propose to be a "lexicon" of syntactic "obligations" to the expectations aroused by previous words, mostly within the sentence (though pronouns would be an obvious exception) and usually within the last three or four words. Each word also has a range of syntactic "influence" in the expectations it itself triggers, also mostly within the sentence and usually not more than three or four words in advance. For example in the sentence "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog's back," the word brown has a syntactic obligation to the to be a modifier which may follow it preceding the substantive it introduces, and also perhaps an obligation to quick to be one more adjective using up the supply acceptable in English before getting on to the substantive. Its relatively minor syntactic influence, then, would be in reinforcing the expectations earlier triggered by both the and quick for the impending use of a substantive. These obligations and influences occur, of course, in the forward progress of the sentence; in our conscious initial formation of the phrase, however, there is retrogressive movement as well. The word fox probably occurs first; next it is immediately contracted and promised with the determiner the, after which we are at leisure to insert adjectives which correctly modify it.



Once the backwards and forwards progress of this noun clause has been completed (fox→the→quick→brown→fox), we shift to the verb phrase, still mostly concerned with meaning but also aware of syntactic obligations, for example the need for agreement, etc.

Thus there is an almost instantaneous progressive-retrogressive interaction as we move along a sentence through small clusters of words, with each exerting and fulfilling syntactic influence to intensify and clarify the symbolic expression of experience. Chomsky perhaps suggests this process, really the parole defined by Saussure, with his brief proposal for "optional rules" in grammar, but he does not develop his ideas (p. 576). In terms of the optional rules he proposes, each word would be syntactically determined within a wide range of current options and in turn it would create new options as we move along the dimension of spoken words. However, it must be stressed that those options of a word, really its syntactic function, are set by auxiliary signals (including location) generally secondary to its lexical meaning except in function words. It must also be stressed that both meaning and syntax properly reside in the word itself, not the sentence, its meaning (obviously) in its use as a sign and its syntax in its lexicon of options, its influence and obligations mentioned above. The entire sentence is cumulatively produced when enough words are combined with consonant sets of options, but it remains "open ended" since more words

may be added so long as their options are consonant. This neglected truth accounts for the enormous freedom of language and also the ease with which it is acquired by children, a phenomenon held unaccountable by Chomsky (p. 577). The child does not learn complex sentence patterns, but this lexicon of options for words as well as their full meaning as experience. Our approach undoubtedly fits Chomsky's pejorative description of "mentalistic" linguistics, but it seems empirically more accurate in describing what actually happens when we speak, and it brings the emphasis back from syntax to meaning and of course its relationship with affect, which concerns us the most.

## Footnotes, Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup>Tomkins emphasizes the contrariety between affect and habit in his monumental four volume work, Affect, Imagery, Consciousness; cited by Izzard, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (New York, 1963), pp. 336-37.

<sup>3</sup>Roman Jakobson and Claude Levi-Strauss, "Les Chats de Charles Baudelaire," L'Homme, 2 (1962), pp. 5-21; summarized and extended by Michael Riffaterre, "Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches to Baudelaire's les Chats," Yale French Studies, 36-37 (1966), pp. 200-242.

<sup>4</sup>Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (1915), McGraw Hill Paperback edition (New York, 1966), pp. 67, 71-74.

<sup>5</sup>The difference between words and pictures as temporal (or dynamic) and spatial representations was an important critical issue in the eighteenth century. Besides Laocoon, by Lessing, the definitive exploration of this difference, La Fontaine, the Abbé Du Bos, and Edmund Burke remarked upon the necessity of making this distinction. A useful brief account of their views may be found in Wimsatt and Brooks, op. cit., pp. 268-70.

<sup>6</sup>Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology (1964; New York, trans. 1967), pp. 89-90.

<sup>7</sup>Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague, 1967), p. 43.

<sup>8</sup>Richards effectively used Jabberwocky to illustrate

the unimportance of sound pattern in Practical Criticism, p. 232. Here I am extending the principle to grammar.

<sup>9</sup>C.S. Lewis, Preface to Paradise Lost, (Oxford, 1942), Chapter VII, "The Style of Secondary Epic."

<sup>10</sup>Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Languages and Logic," in Language, Thought, and Reality (Boston, 1956), p. 239.

<sup>11</sup>"Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," included in Fundamentals of Language, by Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle (The Hague, 1956), pp. 55-82-- hereafter cited as Jakobson.

<sup>12</sup>Kenneth Burke, Philosophy of Literary Form (Baton Rouge, 1967); for his theory of synecdoche, pp. 25-28; for his analogy with the arpeggio, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>Jakobson, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup>Eugenio Donato, "Of Structuralism and Literature," MLN, 82 (1967), pp. 549-74, here quoted from p. 561--hereafter cited as Donato. This article is an extremely useful sympathetic account of the formalist implications in structuralist theory. The best unsympathetic account of formalism that I have found remains Chapter V ("The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism") of Literature and Revolution, by Leon Trotsky, (1924) in which Trotsky took the young critic Roman Jakobson severely to task among others. The best history of the conflict between Trotsky and the formalists is Chapter VI, "Marxism versus Formalism," pp. 98-117, in Russian Formalism, (The Hague, 1965) by Victor Erlich, a protege of Jakobson.

<sup>15</sup>Donato, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>This search for formal self-sufficiency in literature has been conducted the most thoroughly and successfully by Roland Barthes, whose eclectic formalism is treated at length in Appendix I.

<sup>17</sup>Eugene Nida, A Synopsis of English Syntax (Norman, Okla., 1960).

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