The American literary movement, commonly known as New Criticism, is considered to be the most influential, revolutionary critical and aesthetic school not only of this century but possibly in the whole history of literary criticism in the West. This in itself may be reason enough for yet another study of the movement viewed in a fresh perspective. It is difficult to accept the verdict of those who consider the New Criticism merely as a "historical phenomenon" and rejoice at its apparent outster from the academia. It is a fact that presently it is not very fashionable to talk of New Criticism. One reason for its temporary eclipse is the recent emergence of European schools like "the phenomenological critics" or "the critics of consciousness", "the structuralists" and the American critics who are influenced by these movements. The question whether the New Criticism has any fundamental, enduring value, a sustaining inner strength that can withstand the recent attacks, is worth asking as much for the purpose of examining the validity of these alternative newer movements as for assessing the permanent contribution of New Criticism itself. Literary criticism being truly international such a comparison becomes all the more important.

At this juncture when both J.C. Ransom and Allen Tate are dead and Cleanth Brooks appears to be less productive
are dead and Cleanth Brooks appears to be less productive and perhaps less assertive than he was it is quite reasonable to declare that we are at the close of an exciting and turbulent era. At the same time, the fact that an important and articulate critic like Murray Krieger, in direct line with the New Critics, is upholding through theorising and practice, (though with necessary modifications) the basic principles underlying the aesthetics and methodology of the New Critics is evidence enough to show its continuing relevance. The New Critical movement, as is well known, started as a reaction against romanticism, impressionism, biographical criticism, the aestheticism of the 1890s, scientism, psychologism and so on. In its turn again New Criticism faced many reactions, mainly academic, throughout its growth and establishment. The movement successfully withstood the early reactions and established itself laying claim to an appropriate aesthetics and a sound methodology of critical analysis. The vogue, curiously, after its un-paralleled triumph, now faces the biggest challenge, not wholly from academicians but rather from philosopher-critics who threaten to undo its basic assumptions. The defenders of New Criticism naturally feel that this challenge is to me squarely met and the labours of half a century or more of the predecessors or forerunners of the New Critics, of the New Critics themselves and their allies cannot be easily surrendered to this upsurge of "newer" criticism, many of the sponsors of which are not after all very different from
the critics against whom they have reacted.

This problem will receive attention at a later stage; at the moment my point of view is chronological, as I feel, a brief consideration of the emergence of New Criticism in the early decades of this century would provide a point of departure. New Criticism derived its strength from the labours of a certain seminal minds who were responsible for changing the climate of opinion and paving the way for the emergence of the New Critics proper. In dealing with these figures the focus of attention will be on those aspects of their critical theory and practice which have a direct bearing on the aesthetics and methodological problems of the New Critics. Thus in my necessarily limited discussion of these critics, thinkers and poets like T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards, I shall continually have in mind the basic premises of New Criticism such as the "organic" nature of a work of art, its objectivity and close analysis as a method of assessing it, the effort being to briefly indicate how these premises were anticipated or hinted at by these forerunners of the New Critics. This will be followed by brief reference to the immediate "Agrarian" background of the major New Critics like J.C. Ransom, Allen Tate and Cleanth Brooks to see how far their organicism and their position on the autonomy of art have roots in the Agrarian movement. The last part of this chapter will consider a more pervasive influence and what is in fact a more signi—
significant resource, by focussing on those aesthetic ideas which the New Critics finally owe to Kant and Coleridge. In other words, the Kantian and Coleridgean orientation of these critics shall be the context of that section. It is hoped that in this way the extensive background of thought from which New Criticism has evolved can be indicated.

The English poet and critic T.E. Hulme (1883-1917) is one of those early figures who were responsible for bringing about a change in the climate of opinion and giving an impetus not only to his contemporaries but also in a large measure to the New Critics who were to come later. Hulme's classicism, his emphasis on concreteness, his concept of the "vital" complexity of art based on Bergsonian intuition and his emphasis on the language of poetry have greatly influenced the New Critics. The break from romanticism in the early part of this century started with Hulme's avowed rejection of romanticism in his crucial essay "Classicism and Romanticism" (1914). In "Romanticism" he was inclined to see a kind of bastard phenomenon resulting from our disregard of what he called "basic discontinuities". And he prophetically declared that: "...we are nearing the end of romantic movement.... Now is the time for revival." Outlining the nature of the change more clearly in the lines: "After a hundred years of romanticism we are in for a classical revival...a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming...the great aim is accurate, precise and definite description."
Hulme's precise contribution to New Criticism lies in what may be called his "imagist" attitude to poetic excellence. For Hulme the poetic excellence lies above all in the concreteness of images and metaphors. The New Critics regard metaphor as the nucleus of poetry. Cleanth Brooks writes: "One can sum up modern poetic technique by calling it the rediscovery of metaphor and the full commitment to metaphor." Hulme's charge against romantic poetry is precisely on this ground. The vagueness of their images and the "sloppiness" of their writing are his \textit{bete noire}; they arouse him to anger. The tendency of the romantic poets to ignore the concrete particularities of the poetic object in order to fly away "into circumambient gas" or infinite space, he holds, makes romantic poetry what it is -- vague and abstract. For romantic poets, he observes:

\begin{quote}
The essence of poetry... is that it must lead to a beyond of some kind. Verse, strictly confined to the earthly and the definite, (Keats is full of it) might seem to them excellent writing but no poetry. So much has romanticism debauched us, that without some sort of vagueness we deny the highest.\end{quote}

One observes how in such statements Hulme connects loss of concreteness with a lapse of the craftsmanship of the poet. In fact, he was paving the way for the New Critics by emphasizing both craft and concreteness of the poetic object. By emphasizing concreteness he was indirectly admitting the objective existence of a work of art and its difference from other discourses. It is this concreteness that stands in
opposition to the "vague effusions of the romantics" and links his standpoint with J.C. Ransom's concept of the poet as the "restorer of the world's body." Phyllis Rackin has pointed out that Hulme even uses an image similar to Ransom's: "All poetry is an affair of the body ... to be real it must affect body." Sam Hynes, editor of Hulme's second and last instalment of essays entitled Further Speculations, puts it thus: "By disregarding thought as the source and logic as the method of poetry he reinstated physical experience as the core of the poem, and the imagery as the texture." As can be seen, this directly leads on to the distinction, the New Critics constantly insist on between scientific and philosophic discourse on the one hand and the poetic expression on the other. Hulme's insistence on the concreteness of images and metaphors had another far-reaching impact on New Critical methodology which adopted the study of individual figures as a part of critical analysis.

Hulme's notion of the creative process is another aspect of his contribution which is indeed very controversial in nature. His denigration of "imagination" and exaltation of "fancy" has something to do with his philosophical position. As a classicist, and for that matter as a formalist, he was inclined to emphasize the role of "fancy" and not "imagination" in the poetic process. The limitation that he as a classicist wanted to put on the poet made him suspect the unlimited powers of the imagination. Seen from another angle Hulme as a Christian
had reservations about assigning the role of a creator to the poet in the "romantic" sense. Coleridge's "imagination" obviously endows the poet with the creative powers of God. Hence his concept of a transcendental monistic view of imagination was not suitable to Hulme's dualistic Christian position, and that is why he opted for "fancy" rather than "imagination" as the essential factor behind the creative process. Nevertheless, as critics like Wimsatt and Brooks and Murray Krieger have convincingly shown Hulme has altogether a different side which comes close to the Coleridgean view of the imagination. For Hulme intellect can posit or discern "complexities of a mechanical kind" whereas intuition alone can deal with "vital complexities". The artist, according to him — and this is the Bergsonian element in Hulme's thought — through his intuition can penetrate the veil of stock perception and is able to grasp the real life of things behind the flux. Again, a poem as an "organic object" (or "intensive manifold") can be comprehended only by intuition. Thus, this faculty of intuition comes closer to the Coleridgean concept of the imagination than to fancy. Though there are difficulties in bringing Bergson and Coleridge together and in reconciling Hulme's dualistic metaphysics and classicism with the purer kind of Coleridgean theory of organicism they need not detain us here. As far as the aesthetics of organicism is concerned Hulme is not very much of an embarrassment to the
New Critics since, as we have seen, his Bergsonianism provides an important link and brings him closer to them in this respect. As Murray Krieger puts it: "Hulme properly sees Bergson and Coleridge agreeing."

Another aspect of Hulme — of seminal importance to New Criticism — which should be mentioned in passing is his interest in language — the medium of poetry. The recognition of the distinctive role of language in the poetic process takes him through and beyond New Criticism to a critic like Murray Krieger for whom not only imagination but also language plays a vital role in the creative process. Hulme's concept of "bending" or "warping" of words arises out of the poet's requirements to see that world in a new light. He firmly believes that without dislocating and renewing language the poet cannot hope to express the new vision. This is evident in his famous statement: "plain speech is essentially inaccurate. It is only by new metaphors... that it can be made precise." This is a crucial pronouncement which I.A. Richards found necessary to discuss at some length in his Philosophy of Rhetoric. This is one of the most important insights which benefited the New Critics.

Ezra Pound (1885-1972), though he has not left behind anything like a body of systematic literary criticism, was also responsible to a great extent in changing the ethos of opinion about criticism in the early part of this century. In his sporadic writings and comments he expresses views
which are in line with the New Critical assumption. He believed in the organic unity of a work of art and for him "content and expression are coterminous". His antiromantic emphasis on craft is well known. In a letter to Harriet Monroe in 1912 he wrote: "But, can you teach the American poet that poetry is an art, an art with a technique... Can you teach him that it is pentametric echo of the sociological dogma printed in last year's magazine?" Pound as an imagist with Hulme before him emphasized the concreteness and for that matter objectivity of a poem. The "concrete particularity" of Chinese ideograph fascinated him and he prescribed that kind of concreteness for the imagist poets. His own two line poem

**In a Station of the Metro:**

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
The Petals on a wet black bough.

is the best exemplar of what he meant by concrete image.

In his "Imagist Manifesto" Pound indicates the nature of an image in these words: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time". The chief premise underlying this formulation owes something to the French symbolists who had insisted that emotion cannot be communicated by direct means. Imagism insists that every pattern of feeling has its corresponding pattern of objects and events. If these set down concretely, they will exactly evoke the precise emotion. This was partly at least aimed against the imprecise, vague, emotionalizing of a Shelley or
a Tennyson but it is easy to see that here was one of the immediate sources from which the New Critics drew support for their concept of the poem's self-sufficiency. Thus Pound's "Imagist Manifesto" together with Hulme's seminal essay "Classicism and Romanticism" gave fillip to new thinking and new formulations in critical theory. Self-sufficiency of the image, for example, was emphasized by Pound for the first time. The hard precise image -- with sharp edges and no fuzziness -- has a powerful life of its own. By excluding all other elements he has invested the image with a mystical power. The tendency seemed to be continued in the work of Cleanth Brooks as becomes manifest, for example, in his emphasis on metaphor.

The critical ideas of these two writers immensely influenced their contemporary poet and critic, T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), as we shall shortly see, has admitted his indebtedness to these two pioneering poets and critics. Even though Cleanth Brooks and W.K. Wimsatt have mentioned that Hulme and Eliot had no personal contact, in a letter to Allen Tate (22 Feb. 1929) Eliot unequivocally admitted: "Hulme has influenced me enormously." He was saying this obviously with Hulme's Speculations in mind. Margolis points out that: "The only English author represented in Eliot's 1926 list of books exemplifying the classicist tendency of the Criterion was T.E. Hulme." Reviewing Hulme's Speculations Eliot compliments him by saying that he "appears as a forerunner of a new
attitude of mind, if twentieth century is to have a mind of its own. There is indeed ample evidence of Eliot's appreciation and indebtedness to Hulme. Equally great is the influence of Pound on Eliot. The emphasis on the craft of poetry and on close reading was originally insisted on by Pound. The critics who followed him more or less accepted and elaborated the hints they found in Pound. To quote Eliot again: "Pound was original in insisting that poetry was an art that demands the most arduous application and study; and in seeing that in our time it had to be a highly conscious art." The importance of such evidence of mutual corroboration and sharing of points of view is that it brings out the interrelatedness of these critics in the growth of a new tradition of critical theory and practice.

Besides being influenced by Hulme and Pound Eliot was "much stimulated" by the French critic Remy de Gourmont and symbolist poets like Baudelaire and Mallarme who insisted on the importance of form and the need for the objectification of emotions. These aspects of Eliot's work do not call for elaboration here, having long since become common places of modern criticism.

Eliot assimilated all these influences and formulated his own critical theories whose impact on the New Critics was decisive inspite of their disagreements on certain points. Ransom admitted this immense debt by saying, "We had no better critic than Eliot." As the editor of The Criterion,
Eliot gave the New Critics "encouragement" and "an exercise ground". Eliot obviously felt a little uneasy to be regarded as an "ancestor of modern criticism" and expressed his feelings in these words: "I have been somewhat bewildered to find from time to time that I am regarded as one of the ancestors of modern criticism, if too old to be a modern critic myself". It would be necessary to see in more concrete terms the nature of his influence on the New Critics and his contribution to the evolving tradition of twentieth century formalism.

Some consider the publication of his collection of essays entitled *The Sacred Wood* in 1920 as marking the beginning of New Criticism. His central essay of this volume "Tradition and Individual Talent" is almost belligerently antiromantic. In retrospect it appears now how strongly, perhaps even excessively, Eliot was reacting against a cult of personality which was at the basis of much of the poetry and criticism of the romantic period and the Victorian age. Eliot's insistence that "the poet has not a personality to express" and "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion" demonstrate his antipathy to romanticism. This bias was rapidly assimilated into criticism and had far-reaching results as can be seen from the debunking of biographical criticism signalled by such famous essays as Allen Tate's "*Miss Emily* and her Biographers" and, in a slightly different context, L.C. Knight's "How Many
Children had Lady Macbeth. But it is Eliot's notion of "the objective correlative" which advanced in his essay "Hamlet and his Problems" (1919) that became the real touchstone of New Criticism. The need of a concrete poetic object is also implicit in his other important essay "The Function of Criticism" (1923). Eliot reacting against impressionistic and extrinsic criticism writes: "Comparison and analysis need only cadavers on the table; but interpretation is always producing parts of the body from its pockets and fixing them in place." The idea of the objectivity of a poem, the conception of poetry as organic metaphor, the idea of autonomy and, above all, the need for the study of the nature of the art object by appropriate means all these seem to underlie the concept of the objective correlative. Eliot elaborated the concept of "the objective correlative" in a celebrated passage:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative, in other words a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of a particular emotion; such that when external facts which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

This concept of the objective correlative is an extension and reformulation of his impersonal theory of poetry discussed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". It is also a continuation of the ideas of the theoreticians of Imagism. The arguments of the Symbolist poets referred to
earlier in this chapter that emotion cannot be communicated directly also find an echo in this concept. In a way this is central to Eliot's theory of the poetic process which emphasizes the necessity of choosing an object for embodying the emotion of the poet. As the emotion cannot be communicated without the mediation of concrete object which is a tertium quid, the poet struggles to choose, the material symbol which becomes the poem. The origin of this concept as Mario Praz has suggested may be traced in Pound whose idea of poetry is "a sort of inspired mathematics which gives us equations for human emotions."25 Whether it is Pound's mathematical formula or Eliot's objective correlative the stress is clearly on one thing and that is the objective and autonomous existence of the art object. This object is subject to manipulation by the artist in process of objectification and concretization, such manipulation being an art that Eliot as a classicist firmly believes in. For the Romantics poetry is the spontaneous expression of the emotions and personality of the poet whereas for Eliot it is an escape from personality — an escape into the art object. This is also what criticism comes to terms with, the critic being particularly concerned with examining, scrutinizing this art object. Hence the impersonal theory of art focusses attention "not upon the poet but upon the poetry" as an objective thing. This is, in short, "the special highlights of the classicism of Eliot."26
Connected with it are Eliot's ideas of the autonomy of a poem and the organic unity of a work of art. The idea of autonomy was expressed in his earliest work *The Sacred Wood*. Eliot holds the view that what poetry communicates is itself. His war with the theories of the *Art for Art’s Sake* School was on the ground that they made poetry surrogate for everything which he was not prepared to admit. The New Critics accepted this stand afterwards as a matter of course.

Similarly Eliot's concept of "unified sensibility" as opposed to "the dissociation of sensibility" -- which is presumed to have set in towards the end of the 17th century -- is an offshoot of his impersonal theory of poetry. "Unified Sensibility" like Coleridge's "secondary imagination" is capable of assimilating disparate experiences. And though there does not appear to be one to one correspondence between these two concepts both Coleridge and Eliot in their several ways support the poem's claim to an autonomous status. Eliot like the organicists before and after him, believed that a work of art is an organism and has a life of its own. In *The Sacred Wood* he writes: "We can only say that a poem in some sense has its own life."  

Eliot's critical methodology too has largely influenced the New Critics. He attacked romantic criticism and his conviction that a critic must be above all an intelligent and perceptive reader and that "Honest criticism and sensitive
appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry." He goes on say that shifting "interest from the poet to the poetry... would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry good and bad." This attitude of Eliot as we shall presently see was also shared by I.A.Richards and afterwards became the basic principle of New Criticism.

Even though some of the contradictions and inconsistencies of Eliot were attacked by critics like Ransom (for his "automatism" — the poet having no control over his creation), Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger (for the cathartic origin of his concept of objective correlative and his inability to take into consideration the role of the medium as a shaping factor in the emerging product i.e. the poem) it cannot be gainsaid that his contribution to New Criticism in particular and twentieth century critical temper in general was enormous.

In dealing with the other great literary critic, I.A. Richards (1893-1979), I shall focus attention only on two aspects of his works which have been a most radical influence on the New Critics and have also contributed to the evolution of the formal-contextualist tradition of twentieth century criticism. It will not be necessary here to enter into the complexities or to decide whether or not there has been change and development in his thought. We need to notice only those aspects which would interest us most in the present
context. His influence on New Criticism has been most salutary even when some of his early psychological theories of poetry were rejected by the major New Critics like Ransom, Tate and Brooks. Ransom finds Richards' earlier works like *The Meaning of Meaning* (with Ogden) and *The Principles of Literary Criticism* too positivistic and nominalistic. Richards' positivistic bias, Ransom feels, is something "through which the thinker is led to take the referential capacity of science as perfect... and by comparison all other kinds of discourse as falling short." Similarly Richards' nominalistic bias makes him "very alert to the possibility that the word which seems to refer to the objective world... really refers to a psychological context and has no objective reference." Ransom also rejected Richards' affective criticism that emphasised the poem-reader relationship rather than the poet-poem relationship. Because of his concern to preserve the autonomy of the poem he rejected the early Richards who considered a poem on the basis of its impact on the reader's mind. He likewise objected to Richards' denial of any cognitive value to poetry. For Richards' concept of the "pseudo-statements" which poetry supposedly makes, prevent him from ascribing any truth value to poetry. Ransom rejected the early Richards for his subordination of the cognitive to the emotive.

Tate, too, was inimical to some of Richards' views.
He branded the theory of poetry propounded by Richards in *The Principles of Literary Criticism* as the "latest version of the allegorical, puritan and utilitarian theory of the arts" and went on to say, referring to his concept of poetry as "pseudo-statement": "How can poetry, a tissue of lies, equip the public with 'relevant response' to an environment? Our responses must work; they must be, in at least a provisional sense, scientifically true. What is this mysterious emotional function of poetry that orders our mind with falsehood?" Tate in his essay "Three Types of Poetry" calls Richards a "negative Platonist" the idea being that his theory gives the primacy to a poetry of the will rather than to a poetry of imagination. It is interesting to know in this context that recent scholarship has shown how the New Critics are themselves guilty of the same faults for which they attacked Richards.

But both Ransom and Brooks find the later Richards of *Practical Criticism* (1929), *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934) and *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) more congenial. They have interpreted Richards' later position as one that approximates more closely to that of the New Critics themselves. The earlier materialist Richards, according them, underwent a transformation in *Coleridge on Imagination* and became an organicist. Richards' emphasis on myth and his altered definition of poetry as "the completest mode of utterance" are evidence of his conversion. Apart from the New Critics this
view is also held by Richard Foster who places Richards among the Romantic Critics. Similarly, in a recent paper, Gerald Graff attempts to prove Richards' theory, both early and late, as at once romantic and positivistic.

Notwithstanding these polemics one fact remains clear, namely, that Richards had many more positive things to contribute to New Criticism which the New Critics themselves have unequivocally admitted. Richards' contextualist poetics which is manifested in his division of poetry of "inclusion" and poetry of "exclusion" has influenced Cleanth Brooks most. Richards writes: "There are two ways in which impulses may be organised; by exclusion and by inclusion, by synthesis and elimination." In this context Richards talks of the value of irony in helping to bring about a poise or equilibrium which became afterwards for Brooks the basic principles of poetic structure, "an acknowledgement of the pressures of the context." For Richards synthesis or synaesthesia is the prime condition of all great poetry. Irony enables the poet to reduce opposite emotions to a balanced state whereby he somehow achieves an equilibrium of his conflicting emotions through synthesis: "(It) consists in bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses; that is why poetry which is exposed to it is not of the highest order, and why irony is so constantly a characteristic of poetry which is." The counter balancing of the impulse by an antithetical one makes poetry invulnerable to irony. In short this is the purport
of Richards' irony. But it must be pointed out here that though in this way Richards is laying the foundation of a poetics of tension, for him the locus of tension, or irony for that matter, is the mind of the poet, whereas for a New Critic like Brooks the locus is the structure of the poem. To put it differently, irony which is psychological for Richards became a linguistic conception for Cleanth Brooks. Brooks in an earlier essay "Irons as a Principle of Structure" and in a very recent essay "I.A.Richards on the concept of Tension" written for the "Festschrift" on I.A.Richards elaborates on this basic concept and makes his indebtedness to Richards very clear. In that context he writes: "Richards has exerted during the last fifty years a powerful influence on our understanding of these matters perhaps the most powerful of all." The idea of "inclusion" joins Richards with Coleridge's "essemplastic imagination," Eliot's "unification of sensibility" and Santayana's concept of "sublimity". This tensional poetics finally led Richards to a concern with poetic language especially metaphor which became the subject matter of Philosophy of Rhetoric. Metaphor for him became the central significances of poetry and a bridge between contexts. He derived clues from Coleridge for his contextual aesthetics and showed how words interanimate each other in a context. This contextualist position of Richards though in a slightly modified form was taken over by Brooks, Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger.
In 1929 Richards published another of his influential books *Practical Criticism*, which laid the groundwork for intensely close analytical study of poetry. Its impact was cataclysmic. This "great case book on the reading of poetry" had a far reaching impact. Its method and technique became tremendously effective in the teaching of poetry. Tate writes:

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 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.

Richards gave thirteen "crutchless", anonymous poems to his Honours students at Cambridge for analysis and demanded their critical comments on them. Afterwards Richards as an acute reader went through the poems and comments offered giving a brilliant insightful description of the pitfalls and excellences of the readers and suggested ways for improving the reading.

Brooks retrospectively recollects: "I found him immediately rewarding, usually very exciting and general a powerful educative force". Ransom, however he may disagree with Richards' psychological criticism, highly applauded the work saying: "I think presently the historians will be rating this book: as one of the documents of major influence upon the thinking of our age". He went on to say:

His most incontestable contribution to poetic discussion, in my opinion, is in developing the ideal or exemplary readings and improving such readings from other schools ....... they
have been extremely provocative in the sense of a New Criticism. 47

this concept of close analysis was once again emphasized in his almost equally influential book *Philosophy of Rhetoric* mentioned earlier. In that book apart from emphasizing the organic nature of metaphor he established the "locus of criticism" in poem itself. This may be considered a leading contribution to the New Critics' study of literature.

The pioneering efforts made by Richards culminated in the publication of somewhat similar books by Brooks and Warren like their *Understanding Poetry* 48 which became even more influential than Richards' *Practical Criticism* in the teaching of poetry as an academic discipline. It may be mentioned in passing that this kind of discrete and close structural analysis is presently attacked and discredited on the ground of "mediation" by "the critics of consciousness" and the American "visionary critics"; but they do so, however, without providing a suitable pedagogical substitute. We will have occasion to elaborate some of these problems at a later stage.

"Agrarian" Connections:

The immediate American background of the major New Critics -- Ransom, Tate and Brooks -- is the Agrarian movement of the south which in the 1920s and 30s took a militant posture against the technological, commercial and political incursions of the North. The Agrarian ideology aimed at solving certain
problems of humanistic values in the situation created by the wild, unrestricted advance of science, industrialism and the so-called "progress". It pleaded for the preservation of the "culture of the soil" which was agricultural, communal, aristocratic and anti-technological. Before joining the Agrarian movement Ransom, Tate, Donald Davidson and a number of other young men had assembled in early twenties in Nashville, Tennessee and had started publishing the journal The Fugitive (1922-23), which, for quite some time, remained extremely influential. It is in the pages of this journal that the would-be New Critics tried their hand what in effect was a fresh and rigorous approach to literature and its analysis. This earnest group of talented young men was widely acclaimed in those days for their spirited rejection of the prevailing ideologies of creative writing and literary criticism.

Commenting upon this group C.H. Holman observes:

Astringent wit, philosophic depths, clouded by obscurity, high technical skill and an almost religious devotion to art and its thoughtful and committed criticism were typical of the group. The very name of their magazine reflected a certain Ishmaelism, a sense of alienation.

It was a brave gesture in many ways symptomatic of the modern man's sickness which it aimed at curing. Several of the members of this group along with Ransom and Tate joined the Agrarian movement and in 1930 twelve of them issued the now famous manifesto, I'll Take My Stand, in which they made, as stated earlier, a fervent plea for the maintenance
of the status quo. Their demand which was economic, political and cultural was not taken seriously and they all but lost the cause for which they fought so enthusiastically. The inexorable march of science and industrialism found their efforts helplessly brushed aside and their dream of a society based on leisure, love of nature, agricultural economy and a kind of feudalism wholly dissipated.

But this failure could not destroy the potentiality which these writers displayed and gradually the socio-economic and political aspects of their programme yielded place to their deep commitment to aesthetics and literary criticism where they became central to a renaissance in the field and gained international standing. Cleanth Brooks who came to be associated with Ransom at Vanderbilt also became a key figure in the resurgence. Others of the movement like Donald Davidson and Robert Penn Warren achieved signal triumphs in writing even though they did not become as crucial figures in the aesthetic movement as Ransom, Tate and Brooks. What is pertinent in the present context is to see how much of the movement's socio-economic and cultural drive suffered a "sea change" and contributed to the shaping of the aesthetic and critical theories of the New Critics.

One important aspect of the Agrarian movement was, as we have seen, a distrust of science and industrialism and of all the abstractions associated with them. One may find this attitude being translated into Ransom's philosophical, aesthetic standpoint elaborated in The World's
Body (1938). Ransom's basic impulse is a fury against abstrac-
tion, against the domination of the intellect in the realm of
science. In 1946 we find him writing to J.L. Stewart about his
conviction in these words:

That modern man is crippled by a dissociation
of the reason and sensibility which results
in an imbalance whereby reason armed with
abstract principles which have been specta-
cularly successful in supplying the material
needs of the body tyrannizes over the sensi-
bility and restricts its innocent, profitless
delight in the vividness and variety of the
world. 50

Indeed, it might seem that, for Ransom, this loss of "the
innocent, profitless delight in the vividness and variety
of the world" carries religious overtones. He connects it
with the mythical eating of the forbidden fruit, that of the
"tree of knowledge". What man gained thereby was the rational-
ism of science; what he lost was the ability to respond
uninhibitedly to the richness of "The World's Body." That
event ruptured the balance between prose and poetry. Ever
since poetry offers us the only hope of recapturing the lost
Eden however fitfully and however feebly it may be possible
to do so. 51 This attitude of Ransom is consistently maintain-
ed throughout his writing. His dominant metaphor, "The
Word's Body" is aimed at conveying at once the "predatory"
quality of science and the "restorative" function of art
which it realizes through its rich sensuous particularities
or Dinglichkeit of the world. For Ransom the raison d' être
of art lies in giving us the particularities of the "World's
Body" which science fails to provide. The Southern sense of the particular and the concrete in a general way finds expression in the New Critical hostility to scientific rationalism and Platonism. For the Southerners again self-sufficiency and autonomy were two key terms of enormous significance having philosophical, social and political connotations. Autonomy and self-sufficiency in a broad way opposed division of man into minute segments. Louis D. Rubin observes:

The Agrarians refused to divide man's life into isolated segments; there was no such thing as economic man, political man, social man; there was only man, and their various attributes must be considered as parts of one human life. To think and act otherwise was to make him less than human providing fragmentation, division, Chaos. 52

The New Critical emphasis on autonomy, self-sufficiency and inviolability of the poetic context in a way derives its strength from the agrarian hatred of fragmentation and division. Ransom's "ontology", Brooks's "Heresy of Paraphrase" and a similar idea of Tate's expressed in statements like: "We know the particular poem not what it says we can restate" 53 all link them to the Southern emphasis on self-sufficiency and autonomy. So also, the Agrarian antipathy to the rationalism of science finds expression in their tenet of the untranslatability of a poem. To translate is to inevitably separate and emphasize the rational argument of the poem and hence the process of translation is tantamount to
impoverishment and disintegration which the New Critics as Southerners refused to accept.

In another significant way, as C.Hugh Holman has pointed out, Southern history, it seems, has played an important role in shaping of New Critical theory of poetry:

Approach it however you will, you will find at the heart of the Southern riddle a union of opposites, a condition of instability, a paradox. Calm grace and raw hatred. Polished manners and violence. An intense individualism and intense group pressures toward conformity...

The list is legion. This paradoxical situation is perhaps reflected in the poetic theories of both Brooks and Tate; Brooks finds the meaning of a poem in paradox and Tate in tension. And Murray Krieger's observation that the New Critics are trying to justify their classicism by borrowing critical weapons from romanticism can be understood if this paradoxical situation of the background of New Criticism is borne in mind.

Apart from the roots we have traced in a very general way it is possible to show how the Agrarian's conservatism and love of tradition are reflected in the critical theories of the New Critics like Ransom and Tate. However one should guard against giving exaggerated importance to the Agrarian background as Professor Naresh Chandra has done in a recent paper with his claim that "even if the technique and methodology of Eliot and Richards had never reached America, New Criticism would still have
been much of the same complexion as we know it today...
Whatever influences from outside may have to be recognised, have to be taken as accidental." To accept this view is to completely ignore the Anglo-American character of the background of the movement and also the Kant-Coleridgean orientation of these critics. It should be borne in mind that even though the particular American ethos had its role to play in providing the immediate stimulus the movement should best be regarded as a broad aesthetic reaction against romanticism, impressionism, historical-biographical scholarship, scientism and a whole lot of similar ideologies. Besides the major concern of these critics was to give poetry a distinct and unique status in the face of the devastating inroads into human civilisation and culture made by science.
The anti-scientific stance of the New Critics can be understood by proper appreciation of the intellectual basis of their effort and by placing them in philosophical and aesthetic tradition of Kant and Coleridge. It is therefore necessary to see the relevance of Kant and Coleridge to the critical preoccupations of the New Critics.
Continuing Relevance of Kant and Coleridge:

Kant and Coleridge together constitute the major theoretical basis for the New Critics. Ransom, the leader of the movement, is the most philosophical of the New Critics.
and is out and out a Kantian — he calls himself a "Post-Kantian." His followers, Brooks and Tate, to a great extent, if not fully, subscribe to the views propounded in The Critique of Judgement. Both Earl Magner and J.H. Handy have painstakingly examined Kant's influence on Ransom and the other New Critics. In the present context we are concerned with only the salient points of the theoretical influence. It is necessary to see the philosophical orientation of the New Critics which in its turn will facilitate an understanding of the recent philosophical attack on the movement.

The most important preoccupation of Ransom's aesthetics and literary criticism is the conception of science as "predatory" and art as "restorative." As we have seen, for Ransom, science through its abstracting process destroys "the World's Body" and gives us only rational universals. Whereas through its "sensuous particularities" or Dinglichkeit art "restores the concrete world" for us; or to put it in other words "it restores the body which science has emptied." The raison d'être of poetry for Ransom lies in this kind of action. He elaborates the position: "We live in a world which must be distinguished from the world of words, for there are many of them, which we treat in our scientific discourse. They are its reduced, emasculated and docile versions." And throughout his writing he rings variations on this central motif. To give
a few examples from different texts:

A real thing is a bundle of complementary qualities and an inexhaustible particularity. 60

What we cannot know constitutionally as scientist is the world which is made up of whole and indefeasible objects, and this is the world which poetry recovers for us. 61

Art recovers for us "the denser and more refractory original world which is known loosely through our perceptions and memories." 62

And Art fishes out of the stream what would become the dead abstraction of science, but catches it still alive. 63

The root of this antipathy for science and concern for rational, logical reasoning can be traced back to Kant who in The Critique of Judgement propounded the idea of insufficiency of the reasoning power or abstraction of logic to comprehend a part of man's experience embodied in a literary work. Poetry is symbolic formulation of man's experience in terms of concrete particulars where the impulse for abstraction is avoided. The unique poetic discourse is in this way set apart from the discourse of science and logic. In Kant's words: "We have a faculty of mere aesthetical judgement by which we judge forms without concepts." 64

Ransom who claims to be Kantian 65 derives this seminal insight from his "mentor" 66 and proceeds to elaborate its implications. Thus according to him the differentia of poetry lies in its mode of "being". It is not moralism,
emotionalism or mental equilibrium; as he explains in The

New Criticism:
The differentia of poetry as discourse
is an ontological one. It treats an order
of experience, a grade of objectivity
which cannot be treated in scientific
discourse... 67

The unique discourse of poetry gives a unique knowledge
which science is not capable of giving. For Ransom it is a
"knowledge by images, by reporting the fullness or particular-
ity of nature." 68 Rational or logical discourse utterly lacks
qualitative dimension which the particularity implicit in
poetic discourse embodies. The fullness or totality of knowledge
that the poetic discourse presents makes it unique.

In a seminal essay entitled "The Concrete Universal:
Observations on the understanding of poetry" 69 Ransom
discusses Kant's understanding of poetry and its relevance
to modern critics and provides a kind of apologia "for
bringing philosophy into literary discussion." In this
essay Ransom admits that "We are still under the domination
of an aesthetic humanism which we must call either Kantian
or Post-Kantian." 70 He goes on to say: "...his (Kant's)
is the more poetic soul (than Hegel's) and the greater
poetry. I have come to think of him as the most radical and
ultimate spokesman for poetry that we have had." 71
In this essay, Ransom describes the universal of poetry as the concrete universal. The term is Hegel's but Ransom feels that "Kant might easily have used it." Ransom takes the Hegelian term and gives it a Kantian interpretation showing its special relevance to poetry. The universal is a conceptual design which exists in understanding and is realized in the form of concrete objects, the end product being a concrete universal -- a poem. The universal of a poem is a moral universal and its concrete is "the sensuous detail which puts it into action." The moral universal uses nature for the "sensuous Particularies" or for the images and metaphors. The relationship of the universal to the concrete of nature is one of supreme importance for Ransom as for Kant. Ransom observes:

The moral universal of the poem does not use nature as a means but as an end; it goes out into nature... as nature naturally is; and sees what its own reception there may be. 72

For this insight Ransom is indebted to Kant. For Kant nature has freedom and purpose like man. Kant does not allow man to superimpose his own purpose on nature in which case nature's freedom will be lost. But man can only claim to interpret nature as seemingly sympathetic to his moral purpose. Real beauty of nature, for Kant, can be perceived by seeing nature free. Hence the artist or poet to gain access to concrete particulars should not impose his own mind on nature but should rather establish harmony while
granting nature full freedom. In Ransom's words:

The human kingdom and natural kingdom appear like free and harmonious powers, collaborating with each other in dignity and peace; and in the sequel the poetic imagination is able to set up memorials of art which bear witness to their concord. 73

On this point Ransom disagrees with Hegel for whom, it seems, nature has no such freedom. Ransom argues that in the Hegelian system, the pressure of the universal is so "brisk and demanding that the natural world simply becomes mechanized or adapted, and made over, a pure convenience which in its own right is quite disregarded." 74 Ransom cites Browning's *Pippa's Song* (the last two lines -- God's in his heaven/All's right with the world.) as an instance of the "moral and theological universals" supressing the natural world. Hegel might have approved the tag of this poem but not Kant.

The faculty that gives "objective or concrete existence to the homeless moral universal" is poetic imagination that goes on finding concrete analogy from the storehouse of nature in the form of metaphor. Ransom praises Brooks for his emphasis on metaphor as the microcosm of poetry and says that "Kant would not have repudiated his implication." Ransom is "not prepared to abandon nature, because that would be the abandonment of poetry; which when they have weighted it, would be a serious abridgement of the range of the human experience." 75 The alternative
is to follow Hegel in his insistence on universals which Ransom who places his emphasis squarely on concrete particulars with Kant as "his mentor" would not accept.

Ransom's followers, Tate and Brooks, are not so avowedly Kantians as Ransom is. Nevertheless, they, often implicitly and at times explicitly, have subscribed to the idea of the uniqueness of poetic discourse. Ransom's rage against scientism and abstraction and consequent emphasis on concretion is shared by his fellow New Critics. Tate is very eloquent on this aspect. In "Reactionary Essays (1936) Tate attacked "the perpetually modern impulse to allegorise poetry, to abstract for use those features that are available for immediate action, and to repudiate the rest." In another essay, "Present Function Criticism", he makes the same point: "The function of criticism should have been in our time, as in all times, to maintain and to demonstrate the special, unique, and complete knowledge which the great forms of literature afford us." In Cleanth Brooks we find the same stand put forward a bit differently: "Poetry is not merely emotive, therefore but cognitive. It gives us truth and characteristically gives its truth through its metaphor." This common characteristic shared by the important New Critics is in the Kantian tradition of the uniqueness of the aesthetic judgement. This tradition helped them to establish the autonomy of poetry or poetic discourse.
Coleridge:

Coleridge is not very far from the Kantian tradition. The transcendental philosophy of which Coleridge was one of the great propounders owes its origin to Kant. Coleridge was Kant's follower in England as Emerson was in America. The similarity between Kant and Coleridge lies in their concept of the imagination as a faculty distinct from conceptual thinking. Coleridge owes this concept of imagination and its corollary aesthetic ideal of organicism to Kant and his German followers. Kant, he says, took possession of him "as with the giant's hands." His indebtedness to Kant is expressed in the following lines: "I reverence Kant with my whole heart and soul and believe him to be the only philosopher, for all men who have the power of thinking." 79

Kant, together with Coleridge, exerted the greatest influence on the New Critical movement as on the predecessors of New Criticism like Coleridge whose influence on New Criticism has been immense. His influence on New Criticism has been dealt with by Murray Krieger 80 and Richard Foster 81 in some detail. In the present context we cannot do more than hinting at the broad aesthetic concepts of Coleridge which shaped modern literary theory and criticism. His Biographia Literaria, as S.E. Hyman says, is the "Bible of modern criticism." From Richards to Brooks every one in one way or another has been influenced by his concept of imagination and organic theory of poetic creation. T.E. Hulme as we have seen, even though did not accept Coleridge's
monistic theory of imagination came very close to it through Bergson. Richards came very close to Coleridge in his statement: "poetry is the completest mode of utterance." He also regarded Coleridge as the founder of Semasiology. Eliot's "unification of sensibility" also reflects more or less the same Coleridgean organic concept. Coming to the New Critics proper, Ransom, for whom Coleridge is the "chief mentor" (even though his dualistic position does not fully corroborate Coleridge's monistic views), writes: I should say that imagination is an organ of knowledge whose technique is image. It presents to the reflective mind the particularity of nature; whereas there is quite another organ, working by technique of universals which gives us science.

The poetic knowledge is possible through the working of imagination. The "miraculism" of metaphor to which Ransom refers is a product of the faculty of imagination which somehow defies rational understanding. But it must be remembered that Ransom's dualism (in his emphasis on rational argument of a poem) does not make him wholly Coleridgean. For Tate "a fuller vision or richer report of things that a poet gives in a poem is possible due to the essemplastic power," the only creative faculty of the imagination. Cleanth Brooks's monistic contextualism for which he has been taken to task by other critics leans upon the Coleridgean concept of imagination. Unlike Ransom he is wholly Coleridgean. Two of his essays "Heresy of Paraphrase" and "implications of an Organic Theory of Poetry" demonstrate his Coleridgean background.