



Cleanth Brooks and the Rise of Modern Criticism

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For students and scholars of English and American literature, Mark Royden Winchell's study of Cleanth Brooks and his fellow southern "New Critics" is an indispensable addition to literary studies, and this long overdue volume will certainly become required reading for all serious readers of twentieth century literature and its criticism.

Winchell offers a most authoritative and comprehensive overview of what Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and their fellow "fugitives" of the 1930's and 1940's brought to modern literary criticism. While focusing on Brooks as the central figure in modern criticism, Winchell also details the importance of academic contexts and controversies surrounding the New Critics emphasis on close examinations of literary texts, providing readers a survey of how southern academic culture came into its own in the middle of the century. Winchell's study is far more than biography or straightforward history; what elevates this volume into a landmark study is Winchell's evaluations and analysis of Brooks's and Warren's seminal textbooks, periodicals, and influence on later generations, showing how subsequent critics, notably Alfred Kazin, F. O. Matthiessen, and Leslie Fiedler added New Critical perspectives that were dependent on the critical milieu created by the southern school.

CLEANTH BROOKS AND THE RISE OF MODERN CRITICISM brings together much information that needed to be available in one source and favorably reviews the contributions of Brooks and his colleagues that shaped the form not only of highbrow literary studies but also of the teaching of literature in college classrooms for the latter half of the twentieth century. In addition, readers of southern novelists and poets, particularly William Faulkner, will find fresh insights and commentary not ordinarily discussed in most historical surveys of literary scholars. No college library should be without it. No teacher of literature can afford to be unfamiliar with it.

Sources for Further Study

Library Journal. CXXI, March 15, 1996, p. 72.

The New Leader. LXXIX, August 12, 1996, p. 24.

Publishers Weekly. CCXLIII, April 29, 1996, p. 58.

The Washington Post Book World. XXVI, August 11, 1996, p. 3.

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