

CLEANTH BROOKS PAPERS

MSS# 054

**Arranged and described by Molly Dohrmann
July 2006**

**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
Jean and Alexander Heard Library
Vanderbilt University
419 21st. Avenue South
Nashville, Tennessee 37240
Telephone: (615) 322-2807**

CLEANTH BROOKS PAPERS

Biographical Note

Cleanth Brooks was born October 16, 1906 in Murray, Kentucky . He graduated from Vanderbilt University where he met John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, and Andrew Lytle as well as Robert Penn Warren, his lifelong friends and colleagues. He did graduate work at Tulane University, and then went on to Exeter College at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar (1929-1932). Brooks and Warren were also friends during their time at Oxford. They overlapped there one year. From 1932 to 1947 he was a Professor of English at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. From 1947 to 1975 he was an English professor at Yale University, where he held the position of Gray Professor of Rhetoric from 1960 until his retirement in 1975.

Brooks is best known for his contributions to the New Criticism and for his influence in the teaching of poetry in American universities which emphasized “close reading” of the structural and textual details of the poem. Also with Warren he wrote the landmark texts *Understanding Poetry* (1938), and *Understanding Fiction* (1943). In 1947 he published *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. Later he published works on William Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha County. His courses on Faulkner at Yale became legendary.

In 1935 with Robert Penn Warren he founded and edited the *Southern Review* which published the work of a number of important writers. Collections of his correspondence with Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate have been published. Brooks received many awards and honorary degrees. He died in New Haven, Connecticut on May 10, 1994. His papers were donated to Yale University in 1987 and are in the Yale Collection of American Literature in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

In 1934 he married Edith Amy Blanchard, who was known as Tinkum.

Scope and Content Note

This small collection (.21 linear feet) includes correspondence between Cleanth Brooks and a number of Vanderbilt University faculty about the Fugitive Poets Reunion at Vanderbilt in 1956, the Literary Symposia in 1958 and 1964, and other literary and academic matters. There are also newspaper clippings and articles and several photographs taken by Merrill Moore at the 1956 Fugitive Poets Reunion at Vanderbilt.

Folder Listing

Folder 1

Incoming Correspondence
1938-1967
21 Letters

Folder 2

Incoming Correspondence
1967-1976
15 Letters

Folder 3

Fugitive Reunion in Nashville, TN, 1956
Incoming Correspondence to Cleanth Brooks from Randall Stewart
11 Letters and Calendar of Events for the Reunion, May 3-5, 1956

Folder 4

Fugitive Reunion in Nashville, TN, 1956
Cleanth Brooks' notes from the conversations

Folder 5

Fugitive Reunion in Nashville, Tennessee, May 3-5, 1956
Newspaper Clippings

Folder 6

Editorials by Allen Tate and Cleanth Brooks in *Vanderbilt Alumnus*, March 1941
Cover of *Vanderbilt Alumnus* June 1956, photo of five poets—Tate, Moore, Warren, Ransom, and Davidson

Folder 7

Notice of a Public Reading during the Reunion of the Fugitive Poets at Vanderbilt, May 4, 1956
Publisher's notice of *The Fugitives: A Critical Account* by John M. Bradbury

Folder 8

The Fugitive Reunion in Nashville, TN, May 1956
8 photographs taken May 5, 1956

Folder 9

Vanderbilt Literary Symposium, 1958
Correspondence, program, *Vanderbilt Hustler* article (May 2, 1958); p. 14 *Vanderbilt Alumnus* (July-August 1958)

Folder 10

Vanderbilt Literary Symposium, 1964

Correspondence with Walter Sullivan, Mrs. Frank Owsley, Alexander Heard

Folder 11

“A Proposal to Establish Fugitive-Agrarian Collections in the Joint University Library”

By A. F. Kuhlman

Folder 12

Articles in *Mid South Magazine*, Feb. 13, 1977, “The Fugitives Recaptured”; “A Conversation with Allen Tate”; “Robert Penn Warren: Southerner”; “A Fugitive Sampler”

Folder 13

Original Register for this Collection