



The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry

By W.K. Wimsatt

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The sixteen essays in this volume form a series of related focuses upon various levels and areas of literary criticism. W.K. Wimsatt's assumption is that practice and theory of both the past and the present are integrally related—that there is a continuity in the materials of criticism—that a person who studies poetry today has a critical concern, not merely a historical interest, in what Aristotle or Plato said about poetry. He regards the great perennial problems of criticism as arising not by the whim of a tolerantly pluralist choice, but from the nature of language and reality.

With profound learning and insight, Wimsatt treats almost the whole range of literary criticism. The first group of essays deals with fallacies he believes are involved in prevalent approaches to the literary object. The next two groups face the responsibilities of the critic who defends literature as a form of knowledge; they treat various problems of structure and style. The last group undertakes to examine the relation of literature to other arts, the relation of evaluative criticism to historical studies, and the relation of literature not only to morals, but more broadly to the whole complex of the Christian religious tradition.

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About the Author

W. K. Wimsatt (1907-1975) was associate professor of English at Yale University.

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