ANNUAL MEETING IN ST. LOUIS

The fifteenth annual meeting of the T.S. Eliot Society begins on Friday September 23 and continues through Sunday September 25. This year’s meeting features several papers and presentations by members of the Society, the Memorial Lecture by William Harmon, and a tour of the Missouri Historical Society.

REGISTRATION AND ACCOMMODATION

Once again our base of operations will be the Drury Inn at Union Station, a converted railroad YMCA valued for its architectural significance and its memorabilia of old St. Louis. For reservations call Drury Inn at 314-231-3900, or address your written request to 201 S. 20 Street, St. Louis, MO 63103. Reservations must be made by September 11 to obtain the Society member rates of $79 per night for a single room, or $89 for a double, including a free breakfast buffet.

To register for the conference please complete the registration form on page 4 of this issue of News & Notes and send it to Linda Wyman, Treasurer, 621-6 Woodlander, Jefferson City, MO 65101. Prior to September 15, the registration fee is $10 per person, $15 for two members of a single household, $5 for students and retirees. The registration fees are doubled after September 15.

ELIOT MEMORIAL LECTURE

The T.S. Eliot Memorial Lecturer for 1993 is the distinguished poet-critic William Harmon, the James Gordon Hanes Professor of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Mr. Harmon is the author of five volumes of poetry, several well-known anthologies, and a critical work on Ezra Pound. His articles on Eliot have appeared in PMLA, American Anthropology, South Carolina Review, and the MLA publication, Approaches to Teaching Eliot’s Poems and Plays.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

For several years Larry Melton has faithfully organized a book display at the annual meeting. Again this year members with publications on Eliot are invited to bring copies of their work to the meeting, or to send them in advance to Larry Melton at East Central College, P.O. Box 529, Union, MO 63084.

The Board is again attempting to arrange an encore performance by the St. Louis Ragtimers, including “That Shakespearean Rag” (1912) and Trebor Jay Tichenor’s recent “T.S. Eliot Rag,” a work commissioned by the Society.

Saturday morning and afternoon events will take place at the Missouri Historical Society, which may be reached directly by Metrolink rail from Union Station. The morning session will be devoted to papers and the Memorial Lecture, the afternoon to a private tour of the Society’s Gilded Age Exhibition, with particular attention to materials related to the lives and times of Eliot and his family.

PROGRAM OF EVENTS

Friday, September 23
4:00 p.m. E LIOT SOCIETY DIRECTORS’ MEETING  Drury Inn
6:30-7:00 p.m. REGISTRATION AND VOUCHER PICK-UP  Drury Inn
7:00 p.m. WELCOME  Vinni Marie D’Ambrosio, President
Panel
Chaired by Lois Cuddy
Presentations:
Lee Oser, “The American Prufrock”
Robert Abboud, “T.S. Eliot’s America: Eliot and the Classical Republican Tradition”
Christina Hauck, “Abortion and the Individual Talent”
8:30 p.m. OPEN FORUM OF SOCIETY MEMBERS Discussion of the Society’s current activities and future direction
Refreshments
Saturday, September 24
9:30 a.m. GREETINGS  Missouri Historical Society
Vinni Marie D’Ambrosio
Primary among these is the assumption that the poetry of high modernism was composed by the educated for the educated. Also, linked to this notion of educated poetry is McDonald’s belief that Eliot and Pound perceived that the cultural fortunes of poetry and liberal education were interdependent. To explore the implications of these general ideas as they manifest themselves in the poetry and prose of the two writers, the author focuses intensively on the development of the modern American university. It is not entirely clear to me whether or not McDonald always sees the correlation between the poetics and the university to be actual and literal. Does not the phenomenon she labels as the “American University” become at times a suggestive objective correlate for the various veerings and conflicts apparent in Pound’s and Eliot’s literary/cultural assumptions?

In common with virtually every responsible and alert recent student of Pound, Eliot and other Modernists, the author of this study accepts, and often convincingly elaborates upon, the self-divided nature of—or the contrary allegiances apparent in—the writings of the two poets: in particular, the conflicts between tradition and the individual, reason and sensation, the classic and the romantic. The pedagogical concerns of the modern American university are, the author argues, equally janus-faced. The modern teachers of humanities in the academy, McDonald insists, are faced with one fundamental question: “How... could we learn to be modern and yet not relinquish the past?” Presumably, the traditional American university—of, say, the 19th century—would have neither prompted nor tolerated such questions and uncertainties. The modern poets are useful to the modern reader/student/teacher precisely because their works force the reader to contend with shifting viewpoints, essential structural ellipses, and ambiguous endings, while also requiring vast amounts of traditional knowledge and learning. Through these and other similarly bipolar means “Pound and Eliot offer not one but several solutions to [our pedagogical] problems.”

All but one of McDonald’s chapter headings contain correspondingly suggestive dualities: Sons and Students, Real Teachers in Imaginary Universities, Change and Permanence, and Poets as Educators. The remaining chapter, the last one in the book, is titled Academic Identities, and is the least satisfactory section of the study. Here McDonald ranges far and wide—from Coleridge’s Notebooks to John Dewey and Edward Said—in order to construct a narrative of the modern American university that corresponds to her otherwise reasonable view of modern poetry, its reception, and current status. This reader is not entirely convinced that Pound and Eliot were either the typical (or the typical for the typically exceptional) products specifically of the American university at the cusp of modernity and tradition. Also questionable is the characterization of the change in the American university in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a passage from a theological (i.e. dogmatic) to a technological (research-oriented, skeptical) institution. Evidently both tendencies—toard conservatism and innovation—have been parts of the American psyche from the very beginning, and perhaps of other peoples as well. At least the fact that Massachusetts Institute of Technology and California Institute of Technology were both founded in the last century should have given McDonald reason to rethink a somewhat-too-neat thesis. Simply by changing the principals, one could project a similar narrative line at various other locations around the world.

This book on the American university is published by the Clarendon Press of the Oxford University. Its first footnote is to a Canadian graduate and citizen—Hugh Kenner—and the very last one to work done at the University of Toronto.

Shyamal Bagchee
These twelve new essays on Eliot are new in the sense that they address items overlooked: Eliot’s use of Buddhism in order to reapproach Western Christianity; his fastidious and yet misrepresentative use of Sanskrit; his (until recently) unpublished lecture, “The Bible as Scripture and as Literature”; and his use of visual form. The essays are not new in the sense that they were written by “leading Eliot specialists,” or, more specifically, in the sense that they continue the critical consensus of approaching Eliot through his religious and secular sources.

As with any collection of essays, one of the most useful things that one can do to gain a conceptual outline of the arguments is to view the Table of Contents against the Index. Noting, for example, the number of titles that address Eliot without some reference to Modernism, one finds few index references to other Modern writers: Robert Frost is mentioned on three pages, Ezra Pound on nine, and William Carlos Williams on three. On the other hand, Dante is mentioned on thirty-six pages. The Index references also support the volume’s predominant focus on Four Quartets; but in terms of a secondary focus on Eliot’s lifelong aesthetics, one is surprised to find only four references (three of which are merely footnotes) to his mid-career The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism, which he felt best represented his critical stance.

To return to the idea of what is new in this collection, then, one finds new essays (or at least, as in S. Nagarajan’s case, revised versions) written for the centenary conference at the University of Delhi in December of 1988. But the essays themselves represent a continuation of the practice of reading Eliot for his unique originality—as an artist who continues to provoke and evade categorization—or of finding previously overlooked or “misread” elements of his works.

Jo-Anne Cappeluti

THE PRESIDENT WRITES
Vinni Marie D’Ambrosio

I am at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts this summer of 1994, on a month’s fellowship, sitting in my studio, trying to answer a question I have put to myself—instead of writing poetry. The studio is large, austere, fresh, cool. Its windows look west on a rolling green meadow bounded by tall oaks and drooping wire fences set up for the occasional cows. I should be thinking about my translations from Spanish of the poems of Alfonsina Storni, or of my own poems’ manuscript in progress. Or, I could do some attractive cheating, and think about polishing up two articles on Eliot. But the question won’t let go. Once or twice I’ve been asked why I have refrained for nearly three years from writing a president’s column. One friend hazards a guess: I suffered from the very subject of my book on Eliot (Eliot Possessed)—an anxiety of influence. Grover Smith was, after all, my precursor.

My case seemed as well to be like Isocrates’, whom Emerson quotes in “Clubs”: “The things which are now seasonable I cannot say; and for the things which I can say it is now not the time.” So I think the following words—uttered at the end of a term of office—may be seasonable: Atque atque vale, hail and farewell. Together we have shaped our nearly-three years into a happy and profitable memory. You have made the business side of my tenure easy, and for that my heartfelt thanks. For my part, with the generous and capable support of the Board of Directors, I was able to help develop policies, programs, and entertainments that were worthwhile. So, ciao. I wish you fruitful readings and re-readings of Eliot and friends—and even of Eliot and non-friends. Finally, I offer you a poem I completed this summer in this studio.
SOCIETY PEOPLE

The Society mourns the death of two of its distinguished Honorary Members, Cleanth Brooks and Russell Kirk. Professor Brooks was one of the most prominent literary critics of the century, and author of some highly influential pieces on Eliot. Mr. Kirk was one of the most highly regarded conservative intellectuals of the post-war era, and author of a major book on Eliot. Retrospectives of their careers will appear in subsequent issues of News & Notes.

ERRATUM

Readers of News & Notes did not take long to discover that the previous issue was a year behind the times and labeled Spring 1993. Enclosed in this issue of News & Notes is a small sticker that may be pasted over the appropriate spot on the header of the spring issue. The editor apologizes for the gaff, and continues on his elusive quest for an error-free newsletter.

REGISTRATION FORM

THE 15TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY
DRURY INN AT UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS
SEPTEMBER 23-25, 1994

Name
Address
Telephone

#Persons Amount
Registration
Saturday Lunch
(x $6.00 each-optional)
Saturday Dinner
(x $8.95 each-optional)
Dues for 1994
(if not yet paid)
Dues for 1995
(optional-pay by Nov. 1)
Total Enclosed

REGISTRATION FEE SCHEDULE

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SOCIETY DUES SCHEDULE

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Linda Wyman, Treasurer
621-6 Woodlander
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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