

# T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

## NEWS & NOTES

Number 23

Summer 1994

Published by the T.S. Eliot Society (incorporated in the State of Missouri as a literary non-profit organization), 5007 Waterman Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri 63108

### 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 "The 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. ELIOT SOCIETY DIRECTORS' MEETING *Drury Inn*

6:30-7:00 p.m. REGISTRATION AND VOUCHER PICK-UP *Drury Inn*  
Mildred Boaz, Secretary  
Linda Wyman, Treasurer

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

PANEL  
Chaired by Sanford Schwartz

Presentations:

Elizabeth Däumer, "Struck mad by the knowledge of his own beauty": Narcissus in the Early Poetry of T.S. Eliot."

A.D. Moody, "Nothingness and Being: Concerning Eliot's Fear"

10:30 a.m. INTERLUDE (hopefully musical)

Refreshments

11:15 a.m. FIFTEENTH ANNUAL T.S. ELIOT  
MEMORIAL LECTURE

William Harmon, "The Fire and the Rose: Eliot and the Popular"

12:15-1:45 p.m. LUNCH  
option 1: the local restaurant  
option 2: \$6 box lunch—see conference registration form

1:45 p.m. MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

6:00 p.m. DINNER  
*Silk Road Restaurant, 510 N. Euclid Ave,  
Central West End*—see conference registration form

Sunday September 25

9:30 a.m. ADDRESS *First Unitarian Church*  
Rev. Earl K. Holt III

11:00 a.m. FORUM *First Unitarian Church*  
Tatsuo Murata, "Buddhism in the Plays of T.S. Eliot"

James Torrens, "Dante and the Clark Lectures: The Real Criterion"

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

For one or more vacancies on the Society's Board of Directors as of next January 1, a ballot of election will be printed in the Fall 1994 issue of *News & Notes*. Any eligible member of the Society nominated by 5 or more members in good standing will appear on the ballot. Please send written nominations to the current Supervisor of Elections, Grover Smith, P.O. Box 90015, Durham, N.C. 27708, so that he may receive them by November 1, 1994.

### BOOK REVIEWS

Gail McDonald, *Learning to be Modern: Pound, Eliot, and the American University*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. xiv + 241 pp.

*Learning to be Modern* is an engaging if sometimes trying book. The author begins her study by presenting a set of commonplaces.

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 correlative 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 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—toward 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

Vinod Sena and Rajiva Verma (eds.), *The Fire and the Rose: New Essays on T. S. Eliot*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. Preface + 196 pp.

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: *Ave 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.

### UNDERNEATH THE ARCH, 1987

(for T.S. Eliot, born in Saint Louis, Missouri)

September in Saint Louis  
on your ninety-ninth birthday!  
And I'm Mississippi-bound!

I leave the scholars' jamboree,  
ride out an hour on the Olive  
Street bus, disembark,  
and dip my hand into the river.  
My hand is wet with river—  
as the setting sun drops fire and  
Saint Louis, in a passion of loss, trans-  
mogrifies her Arch.

Now the Arch is flinging up  
ribbons of green light,  
it's wildly weaving a net  
to catch the West,  
up it scoops Bunyan  
and young Huckleberry!  
Like a pair of hello-goodbye fish,  
they flop about, joking,  
making Territorial bets.

And the net swings again,  
for lovers long gone.

Don't fret, Mr. Eliot,  
in your distant empyrean,  
or, penitent, fly  
to console Saint Louis.  
It'll be all right, settle back.

Slipping suddenly,  
my foot dampens, as if burrowing  
into fruit or flesh.  
Pious, scared,  
I hang onto the hem  
of the Mississippi—

and the waters argue of mud and home,

and the river of light overhead  
becomes again  
a crystalline road out,  
or in.

Vinni Marie D'Ambrosio

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION FEE SCHEDULE		
	Before Sept. 15	After Sept. 15
Individual	\$10	\$20
Household	15	30
Students/Retirees	5	10

SOCIETY DUES SCHEDULE	
Regular	\$15-24
Supporting	\$25-49
Sustaining	\$50-99
Patron	\$100 and above

	#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	_____	_____

MAIL THIS FORM AND CHECK TO:

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

FOR RESERVATIONS AT DRURY INN:

Call 314-231-3900