

# T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

Number 33

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### Nominations Sought for Board Members

As four positions on the T. S. Eliot Society Board of Directors become vacant in the next few months, members of the Society are urged to make nominations to the Board. Members may make multiple nominations; a person must be nominated by at least five members of the Society for his or her name to appear on the ballot. Members of the Board are eligible to succeed themselves.

Nominations may be sent by **December 31, 1997**, to the supervisor of elections, Sanford Schwartz, 465 Park Lane, State College, PA 16803; FAX 814-863-7285.

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### Call for Papers ALA 1998: San Diego

The eighth annual conference of the American Literature Association will be held on May 28-31, 1998, at the Bahia Hotel in San Diego. The T. S. Eliot Society has been scheduled to sponsor a session on Saturday, May 30. Papers must not be longer than 20 minutes. No person may present more than one paper at the conference, and chairs may not present a paper on panels they are moderating.

Members of the Society who have suggestions for organizing a topical session are urged to contact Linda Wyman **immediately**. She may be reached at 621-6 Woodlander Dr., Jefferson City, MO 65101; by phone at (573) 634-5431 or (573) 681-5233; by FAX at 573-681-5040; or by e-mail at wymanl@lincolnu.edu. Members who wish to submit one-page proposals for individual papers are invited to do so by **January 10, 1998**.

Members of the T. S. Eliot Society are automatically members of ALA and are entitled to attend its conference. Further information about the 1998 conference will appear in the Spring newsletter.

### Actions by the Board of the Society

At the annual meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society Board of Directors in St. Louis on September 26, Shyamal Bagchee was elected vice-president of the Society. The vice-president, who serves as editor of the newsletter, becomes president after three years. In other Board actions,

\*William C. Charron, treasurer, was re-elected to a three-year term.

\*The resignation of Joan Fillmore Hooker, member of the Board, was accepted with regret and with appreciation for her service.

\*The Board congratulated President Sanford Schwartz on a successful term as president and expressed to him its appreciation for his work in furthering the objectives of the society. Schwartz will become supervisor of elections.

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### Wyman, Bagchee to Lead Eliot Society

On January 1, 1998, Linda Wyman will become president of the T. S. Eliot Society. Wyman is currently vice-president, in which position she has edited the newsletter for the past three years. She previously served for six years as treasurer. In 1988 she was invited to speak on *Murder in the Cathedral* at the Society's centennial celebration of the poet's birth; invitations to give papers on the plays followed in the next two years. Among her publications on Eliot are essays in *The Placing of T. S. Eliot* and *Approaches to Teaching Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, both edited by Jewel Spears Brooker. Wyman is a professor of English at Lincoln University.

Shyamal Bagchee, a member of the Board since 1996, will serve as vice-president. Bagchee, a professor of English at the University of Alberta, is the founding editor of *Yeats Eliot Review*, which he edited from 1976-1986. In 1990 he delivered the eleventh T. S. Eliot Society Memorial Lecture. He is editor of *T. S. Eliot: A Voice Descanting, Centenary Essays* and *T. S. Eliot Annual, No. 1*, both published in 1990, and is the author of numerous publications and papers on Eliot.

**"HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" Again for  
a Poetic Revolution: Dialect and the Renewal of Poetry in  
Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage***

*Abstract*

Eliot's cosmopolitanism has long been recognized -- Delmore Schwartz declared him "the international hero" and "citizen of the world" as early as 1945 -- but it is a cosmopolitanism that has been studied almost exclusively in terms of Eliot's allusive practice rather than his subsequent international influence. While we know a lot about Eliot's debt to Dante and Donne, we do not yet know enough about his significance for writers such as Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Ralph Ellison, John Ashbery, Jorie Graham or Kamau Brathwaite. Indeed, Brathwaite, the Barbadian poet, critic and historian, is a singularly useful example, for he strategically appropriates and recasts several of Eliot's ideas and techniques to articulate a distinctly Caribbean postcolonial poetic.

Brathwaite acknowledges, for example, Eliot's influence on his decision to move away from standard English to "nation language" (his neologism for the dialect of the African-Caribbean folk). He describes listening to a recording of Eliot reading his poetry and hearing the "riddims of St. Louis" resisting standard British pronunciation. In other words, he hears Eliot's efforts to renew poetry with a modern colloquial idiom as an example of cultural decolonization, an example that encourages him to experiment with reconnecting his poetry to the common speech of the African-Caribbean folk. It is a selective hearing of Eliot's modernist poetic revolution, for Eliot is more deeply ambivalent about the social effects of his poetic ventriloquism. He mimics a range of class dialects with an affectionate condescension to convey the pervasiveness of linguistic alienation in modern life whereas Brathwaite represents national language as the bona fide speech of a folk community opposing the legacy of colonialism. I illustrate the difference between Eliot's more ambivalent and Brathwaite's more adversarial poetics of speech by comparing Eliot's use of Cockney in "A Game of Chess" with Brathwaite's use of nation language in "The Dust."

This example teaches an unfashionable lesson to a critical world that too easily finds poetry and ideology as coterminous. It testifies not only to the possibility of poetic exchange despite principled disagreement, but also to the strange and exciting migration of Eliot's ideas and techniques in the twentieth century. Indeed, Eliot is not the only modernist to have such a transcultural influence as recent studies of Joyce and Pound have shown. It truly is time to reassess these modernists' cosmopolitanism in terms of their international influences rather than their cross-cultural allusions. In Eliot's case, it is a task that should clarify his deficiencies and affirm his achievements, a task that should elucidate his place in the Anglo-American tradition as well as his role in a broader world literature, and a task that should enlighten those who love his poetry and challenge those who would dismiss it.

Charles Pollard  
Calvin College

**"The high-browed rhymes of his syncopated lines":  
Popular Song in *The Waste Land***

*Abstract*

Eliot's quotation of "That Shakespearian Rag" in *The Waste Land* has almost invariably been taken to indicate ironically how far culture has fallen since Shakespeare's time. Eliot may have been technically innovative in his adaptation of popular material, the argument runs; still, he used it only to show that popular culture is trivial and vapid, a debasement of high culture.

The function of Eliot's allusion becomes more interesting and complicated, though, when we reexamine the original song, because we then discover that the lyric itself self-consciously addresses the issue of levels of culture that preoccupied Eliot. In its own way, the song takes an ambiguous position on the respective values of popular culture and high culture that bears comparison with Eliot's own still-uncertain position as an American and modernist cultural interloper in the London literary scene. Eliot's personal admixture of cultural anxiety and confidence is mirrored in the song. So is his ambivalence toward the modernity he was compelled to choose--an ambivalence reflected in the ironies of poems like "Cousin Nancy" and "Portrait of a Lady." "That Shakespearian Rag" registers the widening gulf in public perception between popular culture and "Art." Shakespeare, who (as Eliot's essays remind us) was a popular writer in his own day but elite fare by Eliot's time, would seem to provide the supreme illustration of this problem. "A Game of Chess" presses that point by playing the same game of Shakespearean transformation that "That Shakespearian Rag."

That Eliot's "Shakespearian Rag" is not merely an illustration of modern vacuity may be more obvious in the manuscript version of *The Waste Land*, which contains several additional popular-song quotations. Especially intriguing is the presence there of a verse from Harry Von Tilzer's influential ragtime song "The Cubanola Glide," popularized by Sophie Tucker in 1909. Unlike "That Shakespearian Rag," which was a minor hit, "The Cubanola Glide" was a major success; it was also a far more exceptional song, one that--if it had survived Pound's editing process--would have been much harder for critics to dismiss as a just bit of musical debris that Eliot cited in order to disparage popular culture. Moreover, Eliot had quoted this song once before, ten years earlier. In the notebook we now know as *Inventions of the March Hare*, "The smoke that gathers blue and sinks" pits the torpid atmosphere of a European cabaret against the invasive energy of an American jazz band. Once again, Eliot deliberately yet reluctantly ranges himself with the modern, and with popular culture, against an unpalatable and moribund high tradition. The same conflict is thematized in "That Shakespearian Rag" and invoked by the allusion to that song in *The Waste Land*.

David Chinitz

Loyola University Chicago

## "That Shakespearean Rag: A Refinement"

### Abstract

Late-20th-century audiences like ourselves have decidedly different notions about what constitutes jazz, and about what it is that makes jazz significant, than did the audiences of this century's first quarter. We no longer experience jazz as so racially marked, or so illustrative of modernity as a return to the "primitive." Consequently, we often miss the play of Eliot's allusion, in *The Waste Land* to Gene Buck, Herman Ruby and Dave Stamper's song of 1912--"That Shakespearean Rag": a song they composed for that year's Ziegfeld Follies. In fact, what happens in *The Waste Land* is both an allusion to and a concrete inclusion of elements of "That Shakespearean Rag." As an allusion, Eliot's use of *this* song to represent modern popular music or culture is in certain respects very odd, not least because by 1922 it was a decade old. Granted, popular music did not change as swiftly then as it does today; still, by 1922 a popular song from 1912 would have struck most fashionable people like a prewar idyll. Consequently, it is important to recognize that Eliot also includes elements of the song: in effect, he trumps Buck, Ruby and Stamper's entertainment by "jazzing" up their lines much as they had done to Shakespeare's.

"That Shakespearean Rag" is not jazz, even by the standards of the day. Neither were Buck and his colleagues even "ragtime" musicians, but were employed by Florenz Ziegfeld to provide numbers for the annual follies. To appreciate how far ragtime was from their usual work we might simply note that their big hit for Ziegfeld the year before was the decidedly not-ready-for-ragtime ballad, "Daddy Has a Sweetheart, and Mother is Her Name." Their sentimentality deliberately reproduced the prevailing mores of middle-class life, as did the self-conscious display of culture in "That Shakespearean Rag." This "Rag" doesn't claim that Shakespeare is dull because he's old hat; it submits instead that what makes the bard so great is the assimilability of his work to modern tastes. In other words, he's great because he could have been one of us--maybe even good enough to play Broadway. And so, in a kind of perverse analogue to Eliot's notion of "tradition," Buck's show-tune defines modernity in terms of its relation to tradition.

Eliot recognized the gesture, and whether or not he counted on an overlap between his audience and Buck's, enjoyed turning the tables on him. Where the chorus of Buck's song simply begins, "That Shakespearean Rag," Eliot adds a stuttering series of ejaculations: "O O O O," presumably to represent an insistent syncopation. That stuttering phrase is then followed by the deft transformation of "That Shakespearean Rag," and a reversal whereby Buck's apposition, "most intelligent, very elegant" becomes "It's so elegant / so intelligent." Together these transformations bring a post-war sophistication and syncopation to a song that paraded the one while largely lacking the other.

It is Eliot's transformations that have given rise to the misconception that Buck's song had anything much to do with jazz. While these transformations perform the self-consciousness of our pride in our own modernity, they serve another function as well, one that I imagine brought Eliot no small pleasure: the jazzing up of Buck's lines enables Eliot to

demonstrate a one-upmanship over the popular songwriter. If it had been what jazz musicians call a cutting contest, Eliot's line would have left Buck's on the floor. In effect, he anticipates our contemporary sense of jazz as less a dismissal of elite art than a reworking of the popular--the kind of transformation wrought by serious play.

Michael Coyle  
Colgate University

## DA: A Syllable's Career

### Abstract

When we can program a Universal Molecular Hermeneutic Concordance to display every important occurrence of the syllable "da" in literature, *The Waste Land* will lead the list, followed closely by the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (Eliot's source) and by an episode in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* in which the thunder god Donner gives a resonant wake-up call to his legions ("Heda! Heda! Hedo!"). Another parallel, via *damyata*, occurs in the last word of the *Iliad* (*hippodámoio*), of which the basic form (*hippodamos*) was misconstrued by Spenser as "hippodame," a mythological sea-creature.

Both Eliot's "DA" and Wagner's "heda" are repeated in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, which also features a number of hundred-letter thunder-words. In Beckett's *Molly* "da" is given as the Irish diminutive for "father," a usage confirmed in the title of Hugh Leornad's play *Da*. The Russian *da*, "yes," is an important term in Cumming's *Eimi*, which alludes many times to "T. S. Waistline." Variations on Freud's *fort/da* and Heidegger's *Dasein* are played by Derrida, patently alert to the last syllable of his own name, as in the conclusion of Lacan's "Roman Discourse," which begins with the Sibyl's death-wish in the *Satyricon* and ends with the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad's *Da Da Da*.

William Harmon  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*This issue of T. S. Eliot Society Newsletter is the last of nine issues for the current editor. She would like to express heartfelt appreciation to the officers of the Society--Sanford Schwartz, William Charron, Mildred Boaz, Grover Smith, and Earl Holt--whose contributions and advice made publication possible; to Diane Morgan, most skillful and cooperative of compositors, who prepared each issue for publication; to members of the Society who up-graded the newsletter by allowing abstracts of their papers at the annual meeting to be printed; to David Partenheimer, who served as bibliographer; to members of the Society who contributed articles, tips, advice and interesting challenges; and to members of the Board for their unfailing encouragement.*

## Typography and *The Waste Land*

### Abstract

*The Waste Land* commonly reaches its auditors through the medium of print. For seventy-five years, the poem's irregular line length, eclectic stanzas, and dozens of other typographical exigencies which govern the poem's visual transmission have presented unique problems to its publishers.

It's unlikely that any one edition of the poem satisfied Eliot. The only version of the text that displayed each line completely without a break, or "turnover," thus defining its cadence, was his own pre-publication typescript. On the printed edition, line length is always a function of the typeface and overall design of the book in which the poem appeared. The management of *The Waste Land*, in fact, governed the typography of the entire volume.

Eliot had once envisioned *The Waste Land* in print like that Bruce Rogers had designed for John Freeman's "Red Path" et al., published by Sunster House in 1922. However, it was not until its eighth edition (1932) that Eliot personally proofed, that the poem appears to have been treated typographically with the modernist intent of facilitating its transmission beyond merely recording it in print. That edition (in both its American and English issues) for the first time employs a modern typeface with the words carefully spaced, appropriate "leading" (line spacing), and well-proportioned margins (English issue only) all assisting the poem's readability in that particular context.

Coordinating these elements had become the interest of the modernist movement in typography which had reformed the book arts in the 1920's, reacting to the beautifying techniques of William Morris and driven by the demand for new typefaces for the mechanical typesetting technology that revolutionized book production after World War I. Like their literary modernist counterparts, designers and typographers found their sources in historical typefaces. The movement was articulated through *The Fleuron* collaborated in by Oliver Simon, Stanley Morison, Francis Meynell and others with whom Eliot had various professional associations. Not the least of their practitioners was Richard de la Mare, Eliot's Faber and Faber colleague and probably the designer of the 1932 edition. Their test of good design of both the typeface and the book page was that it transmit a text without calling attention to itself.

By these modernist principles, publishing *The Waste Land* involves a host of decisions in the interest of gaining this transparency. These include how the poem can be typographically unified and the degree to which the type controls the movement of the eye. There is no ideal answer, but any edition of the poem challenges the publisher and typographer to resolve all the elements harmoniously.

Joseph C. Baillargeon  
Seattle

Proposals for ALA Papers are due by January 10.

## "A Poem I Have in Mind": Reading *The Waste Land* Composition Through the Letters"

### Abstract

Biographers and critics have used Eliot's letters to study his life and works, but Valerie Eliot's publication of the early letters makes possible more careful study of them as *texts*, helping us to piece together Eliot's mental, experiential, and compositional life with remarkable detail. Letters suggest a writer's thoughts and ways of thinking, helping us to understand the "poet's mind" which, in Eliot's words, is a "receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles. . . unite to form a new compound." Eliot's letters reveal that mind, divulging hints about his mental world while writing *The Waste Land*, suggesting lived origins for the poem's characters, and commenting on his writing progress.

"O City City" and "London"--urban and London-based fragments penciled on one sheet--appear to reflect Eliot's March 1917 career shift from teacher to Lloyd's bank clerk in London's commercial district, since the Eliots' letters to America reveal that they were suddenly both remarking on central London as "the City" with a capital "C," as in "O City City." "London" and "The Death of the Duchess," Part I, are linked in their identical images of inhabitants who are "bound upon the wheel." The first part of "Duchess," which satirically characterizes Hampsteaders, probably reflects the Eliots' June-July 1917 residency at Vivien's parents' home in Hampstead, where they write of Hampstead's social pretension and restriction compared to the vastness and alienation of inner city life.

The letters also reveal when Eliot composed the poem itself. After using the phrase "a poem that I have in mind" four times in letters beginning in November 1919, Eliot changed his language in December 1920, suggesting that he began the poem in February and wrote a considerable amount by April. Using Grover Smith's typewriter evidence along with the letters, we can speculate that Eliot wrote parts I and II from mid-February through May 1921. After August 20, Eliot typed Part III, which he may have composed earlier that summer.

We are still left with the problem of Part I's Madame Sosostris, a name thought to echo a character from Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow*, which was not published until November 1921, when Eliot was at Margate. But Eliot's letters suggest a life source for the poem's fortune-teller, a "mad" Mrs. Howells from his 1917 Southall class, who was "a spiritualist" who "wanted to give me mental treatment for a cold in the head" and asked "to cast my horoscope." Letters reveal not only that Eliot probably wrote Part III's Thamesdaughters' fragments at Margate, but that they may have been inspired by the oral description of an earlier Margate experience told by the couple's intimate and longstanding servant Ellen Kellond. His capsule portrait of her reaction to all occurrences in her life--"it makes a change"--suggests someone whose diminished sense of self allowed her to view life with resigned indifference, much as do the Thamesdaughters.

Eliot's letters reflect the genre's intimacy and textuality, and demonstrate the poetic mind gathering and amalgamating. These scattered bits revealed in the letters document Eliot's writing

progress and reveal striking life slices, which illuminate the biography and the poetic work, opening windows on the poem held in a particular mind, which continued to gather impressions, images, and feelings while the body lived its life.

Carol Gilbertson  
Luther College

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**Wagner and *The Waste Land* Scholarship:  
A Bakhtinian Framework for the  
Interpretation of Allusions**

*Abstract*

Of the many questions which constantly reassert themselves in the voluminous *Waste Land* criticism, surely one of the most nagging is: how do we account for the various levels of allusions? Even scholars who agree on the overall "meaning" of *The Waste Land* will often read a particular allusion in different ways.

The diversity of those interpretations can be partly chalked up to readings that do not articulate how one goes about reading a text within another text. In order to illustrate the implicitly sloppy claims that scholars sometimes make when interpreting allusions, I use Eliot's allusions to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* as a case study in how those allusions have been used to support mutually incompatible readings. Depending on the amount of Wagnerian context that is dredged up, one can make a particular allusion mean just about anything.

I offer a Bakhtinian taxonomy as a way of understanding the dialogical nature of allusions, and as providing a system of scales on which to gauge them. Besides being adaptable for musical and linguistic systems, the scales are both continuous and contiguous, instead of a random assemblage of terms haphazardly shaped throughout literary history, and thus offer an advantage in locating registers, contexts, languages, and styles.

For example, while the common lexicon holds that style and paradox are opposed notions of voice, Bakhtin shows us that style and parody exist, instead, on a continuum that can measure nuances of double-voicing ranging from style proper to stylization to variation to parodic stylization to rhetorical parody. Hence, Bakhtin's taxonomy gives us a system for thinking about the various ways in which allusion functions in Eliot's work; such theories (like most of Bakhtin's work) melt easily into other critical issues such as style and voice--issues that are intimately related to Eliot's appropriations of others' texts.

I use Bakhtin's theories of double-voiced discourses to reinterpret some of the incompatible readings of the Wagner quotations which I outlined at the beginning of the paper. Setting those interpretations on a common scale makes the differences between them look less like a matter of individual scholars' irreconcilable tastes and predilections, and more like a genuine dialogue in which both shared assumptions and disagreements are articulated.

I suggest that if scholars who work on allusion were to use common scales more nuanced than the current critical lexicon affords, they would be allowed to map their interpretations with one another, and to sharpen their understanding of where interpretations agree and disagree. By using a common ground that describes their differences, rather than prescribes a correct approach to interpretation, scholars can be in a much more interesting position to dialogue with one another, and with Eliot.

Jayne Stayer  
Owens Community College

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**Memory and Desire: A Sermon**

*Abstract*

Eliot was immersed, to a degree almost unimaginable with our increasingly ahistorical consciousness, with the presence of the past. He wanted, I think, to be Dante to an age where it was impossible, where he knew it was impossible because of the very disconnection from the past which was both the symptom and the root of the spiritual disease of the modern age.

"April is the cruellest month," he wrote, turning on its head the romantic premise with its symbolic hope of the springtime, which is a false hope, part only of the endless recurrence of death and life and death, "mixing memory and desire." The memory of what has been, whether remembered with pleasure or regret, the irredeemable past. The desire for what is not, an endless longing never fully assuaged. Suffering is the life we live in between, which is where we always are, between memory and desire, when we live without awareness of grace, without the promise of faith. The real horror, though, is not to feel the horror. The modern world sees suffering as something to be escaped or avoided, if not by conscious action then by unconscious denial, which is mainly denial of feeling.

*The Waste Land* succeeds as a poem to the extent that through it we may recover feeling, by evoking conscious awareness of our suffering. Faith cannot be regained until we realize its absence, though to realize it is painful. We cannot hope to be found if we do not know we are lost, and feel that lostness keenly. Before we can know real hope we must feel real despair. It is better to feel bad than to feel nothing.

If the poem succeeds, we are freed from the icy depths of Hell which was Dante's image, freed from unfeeling, and released not to Paradise but to Purgatory, where suffering has meaning. At the end we are still in *The Waste Land*, we are still wandering, between memory and desire. We have not escaped from suffering, in fact just the opposite. But in conscious awareness of the real source of our suffering, the lostness of a life full of things and empty of meaning, we are at least embarked on a right path, a spiritual path as Dante was, as Eliot was, and if we will walk with them, as we all might be.

Earl K. Holt III  
First Unitarian Church, St. Louis

**“The Cubist Ballet *Parade* and  
Eliot’s *The Waste Land*”**

*Abstract*

Because *The Waste Land* contains so many striking correspondences with and indeed apparent reflections of the innovative and notorious ballet *Parade*, a collaborative creation with scenario by Jean Cocteau, music by Erik Satie, set, curtain, and costumes by Pablo Picasso, choreography by Léonide Massine, and programme notes by Guillaume Apollinaire first produced in Paris in May 1917, I am convinced that Eliot saw a performance either during its British run in the autumn of 1919 or during its Paris revival in December 1920.

Although there is no hard evidence that he saw the ballet, Eliot’s involvement with and knowledge of the Ballets Russes, beginning probably in 1911 during his student years in Paris, suggest the strong likelihood that he would have seen it. In London in the teens and twenties he attended and wrote about numerous performances of the company’s current productions, along with many of his literary and artistic friends who passionately admired their modernist elements. Further, his profound knowledge of the dance is revealed in letters, essays, and reviews.

In creating *Parade*, the collaborators intended to produce a work based on ordinary, contemporary life, specifically the low-brow world of popular entertainment seen in the music hall, the street fair, and the circus, to incorporate new technological inventions, such as the typewriter, airplane, and skyscraper, and to use techniques from the avant-garde developments in all the arts, in short to create something entirely new. Numerous aspects of the ballet from its guiding principles to its concrete details have parallels in Eliot’s poem. The plot, a “parade” or preview of the acts of traveling performers, is reflected in the structure of *The Waste Land*, while the ballet’s characters, both as a group and as individuals, share techniques of presentation as well as particular traits with those of the poem. The same is true of the ballet’s music and sound effects, its front curtain and set, and its choreography. For example, Satie’s use of ragtime and jazz tunes in combination with classical music, an unthinkable combination at the time, seems to be echoed in Eliot’s use of “That Shakespearian Rag” along with fragments from Wagner’s operas, and Picasso’s cubist set of a modern city with menacing and featureless apartment buildings looming in the background and with disorienting steep angles of multiple perspectives is similar to Eliot’s descriptions of London as anonymous, chaotic, and unsettling, descriptions which employ techniques similar to Picasso’s.

These previously unacknowledged correspondences between this revolutionary ballet and *The Waste Land* ground the poem firmly in the mainstream of avant-garde experiments of the time, confirm Eliot’s in-depth knowledge of a variety of the arts, and demonstrate yet again his genius for merging the traditional and the individual, the everyday and the extraordinary.

Nancy D. Hargrove  
Mississippi State University

**Signing Off:  
A Message from the President**

*As the Society prepares to welcome its new president and vice-president, we should also remember that we are approaching a major election to the Board of Directors. As of January 1st there will be four vacancies on the Board, which means that the forthcoming election may have significant consequences for the future direction of the Society. This issue of the newsletter contains a call for nominations. Please take some time to consider prospective candidates for the Board and send in your nominations.*

*As I approach my final days as president, I find myself continually pondering the troubled course of T. S. Eliot’s posthumous reputation. The thirty years since his death have not been kind to Eliot, and in recent years the perpetual allegations of misogyny, anti-semitism, and crypto-fascism seem to have made his name virtually synonymous with political incorrectness. Nevertheless, I’ve been heartened by a number of developments in the last few years. A new generation of scholar-critics, no longer beholden to the adversarial view of Eliot that arose in reaction to his mid-century hegemony, has raised the prospect of a new cycle of research based on a restored appreciation of his achievement. The appearance of excellent editions of the Clark Lectures and the Berg Collection poems has prompted new interest in Eliot and rekindled hope that we may one day possess a comprehensive and well-annotated edition of his works. And the arrival of the Internet, which is already generating some productive discussion on an international scale, promises a multitude of benefits over the coming years. The Eliot Society should also feel encouraged by recent developments. Our membership has actually risen substantially over the last year or so, and concerns over the graying of the Society have been dispelled by the increasingly active participation of a new cadre of younger members. Our calls for papers for the Annual Meeting and our sessions ALA (especially in Baltimore) have been eliciting a healthy response both from Society members and from others who are interested in participating. And the appearance of our own ambitious website, now scheduled for the end of this year, will not only publicize the Society but also lay the foundation for sustained communication among the various Eliot societies around the world.*

*I am particularly grateful for the chance to have served the T. S. Eliot Society during these years of transition. Perhaps more than anything else it has been an opportunity to meet and work with the many fine people who provide the Society with unflinching support and stimulation, and have made my term in office as pleasant as it has been rewarding.*

Sanford Schwartz