

T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The 23rd Annual Meeting
of
The T. S. Eliot Society

St. Louis, MO
September 27-29, 2002

The Society invites proposals for papers or presentations to be selected for the annual meeting in St. Louis. Papers on any topic related to Eliot are welcome. Proposals of approximately 500 words articulating clearly the central aim or direction of the paper or presentation should be forwarded to the President, Professor Shyamal Bagchee, Department of English, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, CANADA T6G 2E5 (or, preferably, by e-mail to shyamal.bagchee@ualberta.ca). To be considered, proposals must be postmarked or sent electronically by June 15. The Society has a small fund to help defray expenses of graduate students and new PhDs whose papers are selected for presentation.

This year the Society will also hold a peer seminar session. Up to 12 participants will be selected. Each participant will write a 5-page paper and will be responsible for distributing copies (by postal service or by e-mail) to all other participants and the seminar leader by August 15. These papers will be considered as conference papers delivered at the conference, but they will be read in advance by all participants rather than being read aloud at the session. The ideas presented in the papers will form the basis for a moderated discussion at the seminar session. We are particularly seeking papers on *Four Quartets*, but for this inaugural seminar, papers on other topics will also be accepted. Those interested in participating in this session should send a proposal of approximately 500 words to Professor Bagchee by June 15.

MARJORIE PERLOFF MEMORIAL LECTURER

The Memorial Lecture at this year's meeting will be given by Marjorie Perloff. In the course of her distinguished career, Dr. Perloff has taught at a number of institutions, including Catholic University, The University of Maryland, and the University of California, Irvine. She is Sadie Dernham Patek Professor of Humanities Emerita at Stanford University. She has written and lectured on a remarkably wide range of topics. A few of her books:

Rhyme and Meaning in the Poetry of Yeats
The Poetic Art of Robert Lowell
Frank O'Hara: Poet among Painters
The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition
Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary

Dr. Perloff's recent book, *21st Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics*, argues that contemporary poets still have much to learn from the avant-garde poets who were writing a century ago. The book includes a chapter on Eliot.

To pay dues, inquire about membership, or report a change of address, please contact the Treasurer:

William Charron
709 S. Skinker, #401, St. Louis, MO 63105
Ph: (314) 863-6550;
email: CHARROWC@SLU.EDU

IN MEMORIAM

Patricia Sloane

With deep regret we announce the death of one of our most active members, Patricia Sloane. Marcia Karp and Lee Oser have kindly forwarded her obituary from the *New York Times*, which reads (in part) as follows: "SLOANE-Hermine Patricia, 67. Passed away suddenly November 22, 2001. Dr. Sloane was a painter, an author, a filmmaker, and a professor of fine arts at NYC Technical College-CUNY. Dr. Sloane's books included topics on fine arts, art history, principles of color, and the works of T.S. Eliot. Dr. Sloane was the widow of Dr. Kenneth Campbell, a noted sculptor and artist."

Grover Smith offers these words:

Patricia Sloane was an observant critic of art and social history and had in large measure Eliot's own "historical sense." Her resourceful study *T.S. Eliot's Bleistein Poems* correlates the material with Dante's universe in principle because Eliot venerated the *Comedia* from his youth. Thus she sought evidence to substantiate his claim that "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" was "very serious," and again, "intensely serious." She believed that artistic vulgarity or offensiveness might function ironically, or as a blind, and considered that to imagine anti-Semitic intent in poems by Eliot amounted to misconstruction, by his detractors or others, of his poetic strategy. From her perspective, which was Jewish, she understood Dante's view of the role of the Jews in history, and attributed that view to Eliot also.

Pat wrote wittily and sometimes sardonically, but always with kindness to Eliot and good humor toward her readers. She was an amiable person, and I have never met a more dedicated Eliotist.

Richard Seddon has written these memorial verses:

Pat rode the hills
Of learning and
Reveled with them.
She rode those hills
And leveled them.
Tom smiling fondly

Holds her Rose
Dante laughing radiantly
Points her last hill
Sweeney, Bleistein and Gerontion
Grieve for her who understood them.
They and Pat
Could never abide fools.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Members are invited to nominate individuals for the following positions and awards:

Board Member: Dr. Jayme Stayer's term on the Board is due to expire. Society members are invited to submit nominations. Five nominations are needed to place a name on the ballot. Members may submit multiple nominations.

Honorary Membership: The Board of Directors may confer Honorary (non-dues-paying, lifetime) Membership on friends and students of T.S. Eliot, distinguished for service in perpetuating the memory of the poet and knowledge of his work (total not to exceed ten). Board Members may not be nominated during their terms of office. Currently, the Honorary Members are:

Mrs. T.S. Eliot
Rober Giroux
A.D. Moody
Andre Osze

Christopher Ricks
Grover Smith
Marianne Thormählen
Leonard Unger

Distinguished Service Award: The Board of Directors may confer Distinguished Service Awards on members who have rendered the Society notable service of long duration or distinction. Up to two awards may be conferred annually.

Nominations for any of these positions or awards should be sent by June 15 to the Supervisor of Elections:

Dr. Linda Wyman
621-6 Woodlander Dr.
Jefferson City, MD 65101
e-mail: wymanl@lincolnu.edu

BOOK REVIEW

Norton *Waste Land* Revisited

Editor's Note: In the last issue, Joseph Baillargeon reviewed the new Norton Critical Edition of *The Waste Land*. Dr. Baillargeon, an authority on the text of the poem, concentrated on the textual issues involved in producing a new edition. In this issue we have a second review, by Dr. Jayme Stayer, focusing on the supplementary critical documents included in the Norton edition.

T.S. Eliot. *The Waste Land: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. A Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. xiii + 300 pp. \$10.00 paper.

There is an indiscriminate glut of *Waste Lands* now available; some of them—with their clunky fonts, blurred printing, cramped margins, and cheap paper—are an affront to the Muse of Poetry. Trying to read *The Waste Land* in such a sorry edition is enough to induce the *aboulie* and despair evoked in the poem before one has moved past the epigraph.

It is all the more significant then that we have such a fine version from Norton, edited by the able Michael North. I can add nothing to Joseph Baillargeon's assessment of its success on the textual level, but I will say that North's decision to put his own unobtrusive footnotes at the bottom of the page, while relegating Eliot's own notes to the end of the poem strikes me as utterly sensible. This format is further justified by the vertiginous effect that would have been created if North's own footnotes on Eliot's footnotes—which themselves reference other contexts—were all jockeying for space underneath the poem.

The text of the poem is followed by a useful "Contexts" section, the first part of which gives relevant passages from Frazer, Weston, Huxley, Augustine, etc. What a delight to have a crisp piano-vocal arrangement of Gene Buck, Herman Ruby, and David Stamper's "That Shakespearian Rag." North gives us the entire poem of Baudelaire's "The Seven Old Men"—whose first line (translated as "Teeming city...") is compared by Eliot to his "Unreal City." As many commentators point out, it is not an allusion at all, merely a point of departure for Eliot. So it seems arbitrary that North would include this poem, when he excludes many sources from which Eliot did directly crib lines. Neither Verlaine nor de Nerval appears here; Eliot's quotation from Bradley is not al-

lowed to breathe more expansively; and Dante is given no space other than footnoted translations of quoted or contiguous lines.

The most successful part of the "Contexts" is the "Composition and Publication" section, with its judiciously chosen excerpts: Lyndall Gordon's biography highlights relevant conflicts and anxieties in Eliot's life; Helen Gardner's analysis of the drafts and Pound's interventions shows how the poem took shape on paper; and Lawrence Rainey's admirable article narrates the politics of the poem's publication, revealing how the backstage scheming cemented the poem's reputation as the turning point in Modernism's transformation from tenuous avant-garde program into an institutional authority.

The most annoying section of the volume is "Eliot on *The Waste Land*"—the blame falling largely on Eliot rather than North. Here are collected many of Eliot's hedgings, qualifications, and arrhythmical grumblings about the meaning and reception of the poem. I will grant that collecting such authorial commentary in one place for indexing and comparison is an acceptable editorial goal, but such de-contextualized snippets are only likely to befuddle or mislead new devotees of the poem and to bore the initiated.

Some of that context is restored in the criticism section. The weaknesses of this section are partly inherent in the nature of the project: as North acknowledges in his preface, any attempt to give a representative sample of criticism of *The Waste Land* within the confines of a single volume is doomed to failure. So my quarrels with some of North's selections should be understood in this light. The best that can be said of the critical selections is that there is a balance of old and new, famous and obscure. According to North, he wants to indicate the "broad shift...whereby New Critical certainty has gradually given way to a renewed sense of the disruptive disorientations" of the poem (x). At first blush, no one would object to this bird's-eye view of the swath that *The Waste Land* criticism cuts through history, as long as we agree that the bird is flying too high, has bad astigmatism and lousy homing instincts. Unfortunately, the very excerpts North has chosen do not bear out this thesis. The five New Critical excerpts betray no unified "certainty" about the poem. Compare Cleanth Brooks' praise of the poem to John Crowe Ransom's excoriation of it, or compare F. R. Leavis' discussion of the "seeming disjointedness" (173) of the poem's underlying thematic unity to I. A. Richards' defensive admission that there is no intellectual unity to the poem, only an emotional

one. When will we stop thinking of New Criticism as a coherent practice rallying around Modernist texts?

Not only do the New Critical excerpts fail to agree on what the poem means (and this disagreement is a good thing—it just contradicts North’s claim), many of the texts that are grouped under “Reconsiderations and New Readings” do not quite reach as broadly into the postmodern fray as North’s trajectory promises. The reason some, though not all of these “new readings” do not seem to have progressed very far beyond New Criticism is that North’s stated editorial policy does not really describe the logic of what has been chosen. North seems much less interested in tracing a shift from New Criticism to postmodernism than in showcasing criticism that answers the question: “Does the poem make sense or not?” As a consequence of preferring an exegetical to a historical model, many of these excerpts—from the griping first reviews, to the sober academic analyses, to the supposedly new readings—have a satisfying (or disturbing?) unity: *The Waste Land* does and does not make sense. The favorite trope of New Criticism—the paradox—becomes the structuring principle of the views selected here.

Trying to find a coherent narrative in the reception history of *The Waste Land* is almost as futile as trying to find a coherent narrative in the poem itself. So to organize a set of critical essays under an exegetical rubric is certainly reasonable. But to many critics, there is a broader rubric where more varied criticism of the poem could be sorted, namely: who has a political investment in what the poem means? Or: what does it *mean* to say that the poem means or doesn’t mean? As the Rainey article shows, this question guided Eliot’s and Pound’s interpretation of the poem even before it was published, and it guided where and how the poem was published.

Under this larger rubric, North might have included some critics whose influential readings of the poem have, for better or worse, shaped current academic understanding of Eliot more than any critic North has excerpted: Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson, who have made careers for themselves trashing Eliot’s poem. North has studiously avoided not just Marxist accounts, but critics who deal with Eliot’s other prejudices as well, with one exception: the homosocial theory of John Peter and James E. Miller. These two critics, who propose the least interesting thesis from the School of Eliot’s Prejudices, are not excerpted in the volume, but by accident the theory itself gets disproportionate space in the footnotes and in other critics’ summations. But the anti-Semitism,

class snobbery, conservatism, and misogyny issues are soft-pedaled or erased. As a critic, North has written eloquently and persuasively on these political issues. If he were to have excerpted some of his own writing, it might have redressed this imbalance. Such an inclusion might have been a failure of editorial modesty, but it would have made more interesting reading than Cleanth Brooks’ essay that stretches for twenty-six pages. North’s critical views would then have an appropriate channel instead of becoming diffused into an editorial policy that is honorable in its intentions if uneven in its practical results.

To broach the subject of Eliot’s prejudices in such a slim volume, Anthony Julius or Miller would not have been ideal choices anyway. But it is telling that such critics as Julius, Eagleton, and Jameson do not even appear in the bibliography. An interesting point of comparison here is Nick Selby’s Columbia critical guide to *The Waste Land* (1999). That two recent critical guides would tell such different narratives about the reception history of the poem is not at all surprising. It is disconcerting, however, to note that their bibliographies should have so little in common. Nor do even the two bibliographies taken together add up to anything impressive: there exists a number of thoughtful commentaries on *The Waste Land* that do not appear in either Selby’s or North’s references. There is an important history waiting to be told—and not just of Eliot, but all major literary figures—about how the politics of citation, critical intertextuality, and high-profile commentators create a monologic dialectic of criticism rather than an expanding network of dialogic exchange. Such meta-critical guides as the one under review are themselves part of that polemical dialectic.

But because of its sensible annotations, because of the useful contexts, and even because of the critical articles, this edition will no doubt be indispensable to many who teach the poem in upper-level courses, even though students are likely to have the poem itself in other forms. Those teachers stuck with the standard anthology versions of *The Waste Land* might be tempted to photocopy chunks of North’s sinfully handy volume; they should be reminded that such practices are strictly *verboten*. You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!

Jayme Stayer
Texas A&M University-Commerce

AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION
CONFERENCE
MAY 30–JUNE 2, 2002
LONG BEACH, CA, USA

The Eliot Society will again sponsor two panels at the ALA Conference.

T.S. ELIOT I

Saturday, June 1, 3:30 p.m.

Chair: Benjamin Lockerd, Jr.
Grand Valley State University

Matthew Hofer
University of Chicago
"Eliot in Pound's 'Hell Cantos'"

Shannon McRae
University of Washington
"Vivien, Madness, and Eliot's Desiring Text"

Christopher R. Miller
Yale University
"Eliot's Pervigilium: A Poetics of Evening"

T.S. ELIOT II

Sunday, June 2, 10:00 a.m.

Chair: Benjamin Lockerd, Jr.
Grand Valley State University

William Blissett
University of Toronto
"The Cocktail Party: Mediocrity and
Manichaeism"

Virginia O. Craighill
University of the South
"The Conscription of Eliot: Images of War in
the *Waste Land*, V"

John Whalen-Bridge
National University of Singapore
"Four Quartets, Orientalism, and Gary Snyder's
Poetry"

For further information on the conference, go to the
ALA website: calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2

ELIOT BIBLIOGRAPHY: AN ADDITION

T. S. Eliot, "Maxims and Precepts," *To-day*, 47, no.8
(September, 1921), p. 186.

From March 1917 until June 1923 Holbrook Jackson, later noted for his writings on "bibliomania," edited the literary periodical entitled *To-day*. Appearing in a London already crowded with little magazines, it still managed to attract many of the leading writers of the day including Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and Walter De La Mare. In the September, 1921 issue Jackson included a review of Eliot's recently published critical collection *The Sacred Wood* written by Richard Aldington, then Eliot's friend. In the same issue, Jackson distilled from *SW* a set of "Maxims and Precepts" with T. S. Eliot as the byline. One wonders what Eliot thought of the idea. He mentioned in a letter to Aldington on September 8 that he appreciated the favorable review but made no mention of the distillation. That he continued to write of someday having dinner with Jackson suggests that he approved of it. The text of the piece in *To-Day* follows:

Maxims and Precepts

Criticism . . . is a development of sensibility.

Not only all knowledge, but all feeling, is in perception.

A literary critic should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art—and these are, . . . when valid, perhaps not to be called emotions at all.

The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed.

The only cure for Romanticism is to analyse it.

There is only one man better and more uncommon than the patrician, and that is the Individual.

Art never improves, but . . . the material of Art is never quite the same.

The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotions, but an escape from emotion.

Erwin Welsch
University of Wisconsin

SOCIETY PEOPLE

Richard Badenhausen reports a move to the Rockies. His new contact information:

Richard Badenhausen
Adamson Chair of International Studies
Westminster College
1840 South 1300 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84105

E-mail: rbadenha@wscslc.edu

In the mountains, there you feel free.

Robert Fleissner informs us that he can obtain discounted copies of his book *T. S. Eliot and the Heritage of Africa* (1992). Copies are available through him for \$10.49 (postage included). Write to him at:

Department of Humanities
Central State University
Wilberforce, OH 35384

Professor Russell Murphy, editor of the *Yeats Eliot Review*, informs us that he has had a small press imprint for a number of years and is considering undertaking a more ambitious publishing program. Anyone who is seeking a publisher for a book-length work may send a detailed query (not the full MS) to

Milestone Press
c/o Russell Murphy
655 CR 220
Eureka Springs, AR 72631

Queries may also be sent via e-mail to murphy2@arkansas.net

Persons having business with the Secretary are advised to contact him directly:

David Huisman
1134 Giddings SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Ph: (616) 452-0478

THE MODERNIST STUDIES ASSOCIATION FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

31 October - 3 November, 2002
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Founded in 1999, the Modernist Studies Association is devoted to the study of the arts in their social, political, cultural, and intellectual contexts from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth. Through its annual conferences and its journal, *Modernism/Modernity*, the organization seeks to develop an international and interdisciplinary forum for exchange among scholars in this revitalized and rapidly expanding field. For more information, please see their web site at <http://msa.press.jhu.edu>

The fourth annual Modernist Studies Association Conference will be held from 31 October to 3 November, 2002, at the Monona Terrace Convention Center, a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright on the shores of Lake Monona in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. Sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the conference will feature plenaries, panels, seminars, poetry readings, and film screenings related to the study of modernism and modernity.

All who attend the MSA Conference must be members of the organization with dues paid for 2002; further details can be had on the MSA website, or by contacting Michael Coyle: mcoyle@colgate.edu

For all matters regarding the content of the T.S. Eliot Society Newsletter, please contact the Vice-President and editor of the Newsletter:

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