

T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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**AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
BOSTON, MAY 26-29, 2005**

The Society is sponsoring two sessions at the American Literature Association Conference this May in Boston.

Session 10-D Eliot I. Friday, May 27, 2005 11:00 am -12:20 pm

Chair: Benjamin G. Lockerd, Grand Valley State University

1. "‘Gerontion’ and the Context of Belief," Thomas Day, University of Warwick.
2. "The Women of *The Waste Land*," Burton Blistein, St. John’s College.
3. "OK, Don’t Consider Phlebas!: The Tin Trade, Cornwall, Glastonbury, the Grail, and the Christ," Russell Elliott Murphy, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Session 17-D Eliot II. Saturday, May 28, 2005, 9:30-10:50 am

Chair: Lee Oser, College of the Holy Cross

1. "Eliot’s Tenuous Dreamworld: Keats, Manet, and ‘On a Portrait’," Frances Dickey, University of Missouri.
2. "The Consolation of Poetry: Eliot’s ‘Preludes’ as a Critique of Aesthetic Satisfaction," Paul Stasi, University of California, Berkeley.
3. "What T. S. Eliot Knew," Iman Javadi, University of Cambridge.

For further information, please go to the ALA web site: www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2

CALL FOR PAPERS

**The 26th Annual Meeting of The T. S. Eliot Society
St. Louis, MO
September 23-25, 2005**

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 Benjamin Lockerd, Department of English, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI 49401, USA (or, preferably, by e-mail to lockerd@gvsu.edu). Please include a brief biographical sketch or short *curriculum vitae* as well. To be considered, proposals must be received 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.

PEER SEMINAR: ELIOT AND CULTURAL CONFLICT

The Society once again is offering a peer seminar at its annual meeting in St. Louis, 23–25 September 2005. This year's seminar will be led by Professor Ann Ardis, author of *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1991) and *Modernism and Cultural Conflict 1880-1922* (2002). Professor Ardis has also co-edited two recent collections: *Virginia Woolf: Turning the Centuries* (with Bonnie Kime Scott) and *Women's Experience of Modernity 1875-1945* (with Leslie W. Lewis).

The seminar will provide participants with an opportunity to share and discuss short position papers on Eliot's readings of early twentieth century culture, including consideration of his role(s) in staging the "modern"-ness of some ideas, genres, aesthetic forms, media, political or literary movements rather than others, as well as the characterization (including the mischaracterizations) of his views by other artists and cultural critics.

The seminar is open to the first 15 registrants; registration will close July 1st. Seminarians will submit 4-5 page position papers to Professor Ardis by e-mail, no later than September 1st. To sign up, register for the conference by going to the Society Web Site, www.luc.edu/eliot. Questions may be addressed to Michael Coyle (mcoyle@mail.colgate.edu).

THE 2005 T. S. ELIOT MEMORIAL LECTURER: ROBERT CRAWFORD

The twenty-sixth Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Robert Crawford, Professor of Modern Scottish Literature and Head of the School of English at St Andrews University. His volumes of original poetry in English include *A Scottish Assembly* (1990), *Spirit Machines* (1999) and *The Tip of My Tongue* (2003). He has also published work in Scots, such as *Sharawaggi* (1990). He co-edited *The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland Since 1945* (1998) and *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (2000). A founding editor of the magazine *Verse*, he has served as a judge for the T. S. Eliot Prize and other awards.

His critical books include *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (1987), *Identifying Poets* (1993), *Devolving English Literature* (2nd ed., 2000), and *The Modern Poet* (2001).

A founding Fellow of the English Association and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, he is presently writing *The Penguin History of Scottish Literature*.

REVIEWS

Donald Childs, *From Philosophy to Poetry: T. S. Eliot's Study of Knowledge and Experience* (Palgrave/St. Martin's, 2003).

**Reviewed by Benjamin G. Lockerd, Jr.
Grand Valley State University**

The year 2003 was the year of the Childs—of Donald Childs, who published two books that year. The one entirely on Eliot is *From Philosophy to Poetry: T. S. Eliot's Study of Knowledge and Experience* (Palgrave/St. Martin's). The Introduction alone is worth the price of the book, for in it Childs gives a

lengthy and careful review of nearly everything that has been written on Eliot's philosophical thought. Early critics assumed that Eliot was a thorough-going devotee of F. H. Bradley, while later scholars began to notice Eliot's critique of Bradley and the development of his own views. One group (J. Hillis Miller is the leading representative) misread both Bradley and Eliot as subjectivists or solipsists; they were corrected by more judicious scholars such as Jewel Spears Brooker. Childs succinctly reviews the literature on a number of topics: Henri Bergson, Indian philosophy, anthropology, poststructuralism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychology, mysticism,

and political philosophy. This learned and thorough account has become essential reading.

In the rest of the book, Childs examines the influence of Eliot's philosophical ideas on his poetry. In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," the persona seeks the "lunar synthesis," the mystical Bergsonian intuition, but lapses into the practical intellect at the end. "Prufrock" enacts a merging of Bergson and Bradley. Childs makes an original and important contribution in pointing out that the evening "spread out against the sky" echoes Bergson's concern with the intellect's tendency to "spread out in space" anything that is quantifiable, particularly time. He also shows that, in spite of Eliot's critical treatment of occultism, the poet was involved in it at a certain point, attending séances of P. D. Ouspensky in 1920. *The Waste Land* expresses Eliot's ambivalence on the subject, for Mme. Sosostriis is ridiculous but her reading of the cards gives structure and symbolism to the rest of the poem.

Childs examines "The Death of Saint Narcissus" from the perspective of Eliot's discussion of "the insubstantiality of the self" in his dissertation. This poem describes the kind of romantic mysticism Eliot criticizes in the Clark Lectures. At the end of his poetic career, in "Burnt Norton," he follows instead the intellectual path of classical mysticism. The image of the "wounded surgeon" reprises "his recognition in the dissertation that there is no escape from the hermeneutic circle that involves and revolves as physician and patient both self and non-self." Childs rightly sees concern with the subjective and objective aspects of experience as central to Eliot's entire oeuvre.

The limitations of the approach Childs takes appear toward the end of the book, where he continues to use Eliot's dissertation as a proof-text, long after the poet's conversion to Christianity. In his dissertation Eliot speaks of knowledge as being strictly conventional, so Childs asserts that Eliot's proposals (in his late social criticism) to maintain Christianity as the foundation of society should be understood as "maintaining our groundless conventions"--which was surely not Eliot's view of Christian teachings at this time. Similarly, when Childs finds in *Four Quartets* an encounter between Bergsonism and pragmatism, he may be claiming too much longevity for these philosophies: by this time Eliot is thinking in very different categories. Childs takes the Incarnation, invoked in "The Dry Salvages" as one side of the old opposition, but surely Eliot's conviction is that it is the perfect conjunction of opposites.

In the end, it seems Childs translates Eliot's philosophical relativism into social constructionism. A fuller understanding of Eliot's relativism must see it

in relation to Aristotelian relativism, which is realist rather than constructionist. Childs gives us a learned and authoritative account of Eliot's engagement with modern philosophies, but to the neglect of classical philosophy, which was arguably more important to Eliot. Still, the introduction and all the chapters on Eliot's earlier works are excellent.

But Donald Childs is not finished with us, for in the same *annus mirabilis* he published *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge). Such an extended treatment of this subject is welcome, for it is a fact that many intellectuals in the early twentieth century were enthusiastic supporters of the eugenics movement. Apart from passing references, only two writers had previously addressed this issue in relation to Eliot: Robert Crawford in his 1987 book and Juan Leon in a 1988 article. Crawford concluded that Eliot was critical of eugenics, and Leon, that he was ambivalent. (Actually, another book dealing at some length with the topic came out just before this one, Lois Cuddy's *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Evolution*, reviewed in *The T. S. Eliot Society Newsletter*, no. 43.) Childs devotes three chapters to Eliot and concludes that he was a completely committed eugenicist from start to finish.

The eugenics movement was so popular that Julian Huxley could confidently predict, "eugenics will inevitably become a part of the religion of the future." It became socially acceptable to speak of the poor as "human weeds." In spite of resistance by a few writers and by the Roman Catholic Church, it looked as if Huxley was right. Childs bases his contention that Eliot was a eugenicist almost entirely on Eliot's 1918 review of "Recent Periodical Literature in Ethics." It seems that Eliot is indeed sympathetic to the eugenicists here, but it should be noted that he makes no definite statements of his own on the topic. He mentions an article by Leonard Darwin, "whose articles always deserve attention"--an ambiguous recommendation. He gives a paragraph to the essays of a Professor MacBride, saying the latter "draws two conclusions of social importance"--another positive statement that is not quite an endorsement. The only place where he unambiguously supports MacBride's view is where he writes, "Furthermore, he insists upon the importance of the responsibility of parents: 'there is no system of state subventions,' he says very justly, 'which will not break down if parental responsibility be removed and reckless reproduction encouraged.'" Here Eliot certainly seconds the eugenicist's worry about "reckless reproduction," and yet even here the emphasis falls on opposition to any "system of state subventions." I have quoted here the most positive things Eliot ever said about eugenics,

and it seems to me these comments will not bear the weight Childs puts on them.

More convincing, however, are observations Childs makes about the early poetry. "Hysteria" and "Ode" may reflect the fear of Rose Haigh-Wood that her daughter Vivienne had inherited what was termed "moral insanity." Eliot's frequent reference to prostitution also echoes a major concern of the eugenicists. Childs gives "A Game of Chess" a subtle reading, finding that the poet has greater sympathy for Lil than for the barren middle-class couple. The typist of "The Fire Sermon" is also connected with eugenics, for Bertrand Russell expresses a worry that typists and other working women are not bearing children, resulting in the "sterilizing of the best parts of the population."

Childs claims that the "impact" of eugenics "is evident as late as *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948)." He finds this impact in one statement in that work: "we have arrived at a stage of civilization at which the family is irresponsible, or incompetent, or helpless . . ." This passage is quoted out of context: Eliot is arguing that the modern educational system is displacing the family and thus weakening it. A far more relevant passage is to be found in Eliot's "Commentary" in the January 1931 issue of *The Criterion*, where he expresses his worry that "we may conceivably have, in time, legislation framed to enforce limitation of families (by the usual methods) upon certain parts of the population, and to enforce progenitiveness upon others. With the applause of some of the clergy." This statement was quoted long ago by Russell Kirk but is not quoted by Childs. It overtly deprecates the main principle of eugenics and strongly implies that the Darwinian materialism of the eugenicists is utterly incompatible with the Christian view of the human person. This is the understanding Eliot came to, well before many other intellectuals finally distanced themselves from the eugenics movement as it became a central tenet of the Nazi party.

Ω

Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* (U. of Virginia Press, 2004)

Reviewed by Michael R. Stevens and Jason Stevens

T. S. Eliot's influence has been much resented in the literary critical landscape of post-modernity. This is not news to Eliot scholars, who endure a measure of frustration with each new revisionist take on the poet. However, fresh winds do

occasionally blow, and in the case of a recent volume written by Charles Pollard, formerly on the Calvin College English faculty and now president of John Brown University, these winds come from the balmy Caribbean. Indeed, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* is a welcome book for students of Eliot, as an affirmation of his constructive influence even in the postcolonial world that the other two poets occupy. Our joint review is a product not simply of our brotherly communion, but also of the common ground we discovered as a T. S. Eliot scholar and American literature professor (Michael) dialoguing with an English major recently emerged from a class on Caribbean literature (Jason).

Pollard knows from the outset that he has to overcome some rather sharp biases of contemporary theory, primarily that the "high modernism" epitomized by Eliot is construed as the arch-enemy of all post-colonial writers. Pollard's way out of this dilemma is to unravel the "faulty historical parallel (i.e., that modernism is to postmodernism as colonialism is to postcolonialism)" (15). Instead, the rich notion of a "modernist postcolonialism," whereby these two Caribbean poets evoke Eliot as muse for their own struggles with language and cultural unity, is the heart of Pollard's argument. Many of the key notions are borrowed from contemporary critics, but Pollard does yeoman service in sorting out the chaotic web of biases. From the anthropologist James Clifford he finds the term "discrepant cosmopolitanism," which is a descriptor for histories and cultures characterized by chaotic, even violent upheaval, and the subsequent melding of different, sometimes startlingly rearranged, cultural sources. In the post-colonial context of Walcott and Brathwaite, the term "creolization" offers both cultural and linguistic resonances of such a reshaping. But the original "creole" from whom they each draw inspiration is surprisingly enough Eliot himself.

Pollard opens up interesting territory by showing Eliot's modernism as an essential ingredient for the work of these post-colonial poets. The notion of Eliot as the malevolent father-figure, offering only a closely-guarded canon to which one must pay obeisance, has been a favorite target of contemporary critics. But Pollard's argument is a strong remonstrance here. Not only does he quote both Walcott and Brathwaite explicitly citing Eliot's influence on their work, but he also shows that the modernism given voice in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* is perhaps an ideal strategy for the dysfunctions particular to the post-colonial author. Pollard offers this helpful analysis of the genealogy of modernism: "These modernist strategies of 'making it new' by

making it exotic and of substituting aesthetic for political domination clearly implicate European modernism in the cultural imperialism of its age, but these strategies do not irrevocably bind all of modernism's aesthetic innovations to colonialism's ideology. Subsequent postcolonial writers have transformed these strategies into different forms of innovation and inclusiveness that bring together the cultural fragments left by colonialism" (25). The echo of "these fragments I have shored against my ruins" emphasizes the strong connection of these diverse poets.

Furthermore, Pollard reveals not just the overarching influence of Eliot, but the multifaceted effect as well. It turns out that these two Caribbean poets have gone in equal and opposite directions with Eliot's critical cues. Pollard isolates these different strands when he points out that "Brathwaite makes the seemingly obvious choice of transposing and extending the ideas and practices of the younger, more 'revolutionary' Eliot. Walcott, on the other hand, boldly modifies the ideas of the older, more conservative Eliot, the Eliot who describes the desire to 'live in a state of perpetual revolution' as a form of poetic and cultural pathology, a 'craving for continual novelty of diction and metric [that is] unwholesome'" (82). The obvious external differences between the wild, Poundian pictographic work of Brathwaite in his *Letter Sycorax*, and the Nobel-winning, classically-laced rendering of a Caribbean *Iliad* in Walcott's *Omeros*, could easily lead a reader of both to assume a kind of postmodern fracturing of directions. But Pollard makes a compelling case that it is Eliot, all along, who points out language's possibilities, both to offer a "murmur of maternal lamentation" and "to purify the dialect of the tribe."

Pollard perhaps strains the sense of affinity of Eliot's vision with that of Brathwaite and Walcott in his chapter on "Listening to Eliot," where the place of the spoken poetic word is given priority. One cannot help but be intrigued that "Brathwaite and Walcott both recall hearing Eliot read poems on the phonograph, and what each recalls him reading reveals a lot about that writer's own answers to the question of poetry's relationship to speech" (81). For Brathwaite, again, the voices of "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* are preeminent, for Walcott the austerity of *Four Quartets*, but the importance for both of the direct encounter with Eliot's voice is central. Here, one might wonder anecdotally what exactly they were hearing in Eliot's declamations of his verse, which have often been labeled intractable. A more lasting concern would be that Eliot does not "do the police in different voices" very long, nor does he always see his mature task as "purifying the dialect of the tribe." He certainly comes down closer to the

latter activity in the later poems and verse dramas, and hence his connection to Walcott seems tighter. As for Brathwaite's endeavor to create or assemble a "nation language" from cultural fragments, Pollard is probably most helpful in admitting that "Modernism has become a cosmopolitan aesthetic at least in part because its poetic strategies have survived despite, and even thrived against, the intentions of its first practitioners" (87).

Pollard also hits some uneven territory in his account of the role of the "public poet" that Eliot models for the two Caribbean writers. Here again the dissonant chords of Brathwaite's verse, its explicit anger at the imperialist ethos that harshly birthed it, doesn't seem to click with the mature Eliot and his arguably elitist vision of a return to the "European mind" that Chaucer and Dante so ably exemplified. Closer is Walcott's struggle to combine the Old World traditions with New World dilemmas and tensions. Pollard's extended treatment in Chapter 4 of the interwoven ways in which both Eliot and Walcott use Dante as poetic model is one of the most elucidating portions of *New World Modernisms*, precisely because it shows the amazing commonality beneath the surface differences. Pollard remains a bit ambivalent about the rootedness of these connections, though his caveats are often quite enlightening, as when he finally proclaims that "Eliot's transcultural influence extends beyond the limits of his own Eurocentric focus" (182).

We heartily encourage a reading of Pollard's text, for anyone interested in modernist poetry, but further for those who look through the lens of the postcolonial experience—both parties will be surprised and intrigued by the fabric of Pollard's synthesis. For Eliot scholars in particular, this work will reaffirm the power of the poetic vision that created works as rich and resonant as *The Waste Land* and "Little Gidding." Such a vision jumps across critical and theoretical (and clearly also cultural) boundaries and continues to do the good work of speaking to the essential human questions. For this refreshing reminder, our thanks to Charles Pollard.

ABSTRACTS FROM THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE CONFERENCE, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, FEBRUARY 24-26, 2005

**"Totalizing the City: Eliot, de Certeau, and the Evolution of *The Waste Land*"
Richard Badenhause, Westminster College**

This essay examines the drafts of T. S. Eliot's long poem within the context provided by Michel de Certeau's seminal 1974 essay, "Walking in the City." That piece theorizes an ideal vision of urban landscape by arguing that one must descend from "above" (a perspective from which the view is rigid, panoptic, totalizing, and ultimately false) into the "everyday," where one may interact with waste, difference, and disorder, and consequently "enunciate" an authentic (though less legible) version of place. It establishes a rather startling background for an examination of the way in which *The Waste Land* evolved, for in its earliest stages, Eliot's poem very much anticipates de Certeau's vision of an individualistic construction of the city that resists official notions of the urban via a "rhetoric of walking" ("Walking" 100). Remarkably, the drafts of *The Waste Land* enact a struggle between these two versions of urban place: an early incarnation of the poem embraced a perspective from "ground level" (97) and literally articulated a "chorus of idle footsteps" (97), only to give in, under the guidance of Pound, to a viewpoint from "above" that endorses the "urbanistic ratio" (94). Interestingly, this evolution towards order tells us much about the artistic, cultural, and theoretical battlegrounds over which Eliot and Pound skirmished on their way to constructing a poem the latter called "the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment . . ." (L 180).

Eliot's original version actually opens with an extended walking tour in which mostly unnamed individuals stumble through a composite urban landscape late at night. As de Certeau starts off one of his major sections—on "pedestrian speech acts"—by remarking that "[t]heir story begins on ground level, with footsteps" (97), so, too, does Eliot inaugurate the action in this first draft of *The Waste Land* with a dramatic tableau in which numerous characters spend a night on the town punctuated by drinking, a trip to the theater, aimless wandering through the streets in which they lose a companion, a running race with a cabby, and a final view of the sunrise before a walk home. This scene provides an enormously lyrical embodiment of de Certeau's notion of walking as "improvisation," a literal "spatial acting out of the place" in which the individual transgresses "constructed order" (98). In this case, that struggle is best represented when the drunken group ventures down an alley only to be confronted by a young policeman—a "fly cop"—charged with enforcing (through a Foucauldian assertion of discipline, a context that rests behind part of de Certeau's essay) the stabilizing features that ensure the city remains "a field of programmed and regulated operations" (95). While Eliot's characters move through the city landscape

and draw from its energy, they also disrupt the crowd very much along the lines of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, which makes sense given that Eliot wrote under the influence of Baudelaire at this early stage of his career and responded particularly to that writer's ability to demonstrate how the "modern metropolis" could serve as material for poetry (TCC 126).

What we end up with in the final version of *The Waste Land*'s opening is something starkly different. Rather than experiencing the traces of everyday expression that grow out of a pedestrian encounter with place, we receive a totalized view whose broadened spatial perspective derives from the poem's extended historical view, the emphasis on literary allusion that acts out the lofty aims of the "Tradition" essay, and the controlling character of Tiresias, who both participates in the action of the poem and supposedly hovers over its events by unifying the multiple perspectives of the sequence—at least that's what Eliot claims in his infamous footnote detailing Tiresias's role as the "most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest." Eliot continues that "[w]hat Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem," which anticipates de Certeau's critique of totalized views that result in the "pleasure of 'seeing the whole,' of looking down on . . ." "because it transforms the viewer into a "voyeur," puts him at a distance," and positions him as "a celestial eye" that results in nothing more than "fictions" (92).

In its early stages, *The Waste Land* deeply reflects the individualized vision and personal interests of Eliot, for it includes extended references to or meditations on the theater, boating, martyrdom, Boston landmarks, and even a character named Tom, a personal echo that never appears in any of Eliot's published poetry or drama. (I'm not counting Becket, who is referenced twice as "Tom" in *Murder in the Cathedral*.) Other deleted sections, like "The Death of the Duchess," contain poetry that could have been most readily identified in 1922 as Eliotic, in the manner of "Prufrock" and its companion poems, and thus more easily tied to the poet. Despite the fact that the final version of *The Waste Land* retains a bit of the personal flavor of its author, one must search much harder to discover Eliot's presence in the text: the overall vision is far more general, universalized, and ultimately mythic, reflecting a move away from what de Certeau walls "an innumerable collection of singularities" (97) towards a more legible, fixed representation, ". . . the clear text of the planned and readable city" (93). Eliot himself seems essentially absent from the published poem, a move critics typically tie to his emphasis on impersonality in his critical program but which transpires in my

model as a result of Eliot's capitulation to what de Certeau calls "the fiction of knowledge" (92).

The central preoccupations of de Certeau's essay and Eliot's poem overlap to an incredible degree. They include concerns about the readability of texts (both linguistic and spatial), which are expressed as an attraction to systems that might stabilize those inherently unstable entities, in the case of Eliot, and meditations upon how to embrace and live successfully amidst instability, in the case of de Certeau; the problem of perspective; the mythification of place; the presence and purpose of waste within the urban landscape; and the function of authority and its relationship to the individual. Perhaps the most haunting similarity, though, is their shared concern with the towers of cities, which in de Certeau's essay enable the panoptic vision that he mythologizes in the view from the top of the World Trade Center and in Eliot become symbols for the crumbling civilizations in the "falling towers" reference towards the end of "What the Thunder Said." Because both writers tend to hierarchize their worlds, towers serve as effective metaphors for the relationships that exist within such stratified spaces. Eliot's reference alludes to both the actual named cities in the poem—a sequence that culminates in the reference to London, presumably collapsing before our eyes—and the Tower in the Tarot pack, introduced earlier in the poem when we encounter Madame Sosostris, "famous clairvoyante" and expert in the Tarot. On that card, a lightning bolt strikes and shears off the top of a crumbling tower as a flailing body plunges to its death (see fig. 1, below), an image de Certeau certainly could not have imagined in the opening of his essay, which looks out from the summit of the twin towers, a perspective that now can only be reproduced in the imagination.

Ultimately, what both of these writers are struggling with is the place of authority in everyday lives. While Eliot's original vision embraced and even celebrated the disorder, anonymity, and singularity of the city, the poem ends up seeming to fear those qualities and actively seeks out authority as a solution. This can be seen in something as simple as the change of epigraphs—from Eliot's preferred reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to the final one from Petronius' *Satyricon*—because of Pound's fear that Conrad was "not weighty enough" (*Letters* 497), or in a slightly more complicated issue: the transformation of the title. Eliot's original, "He Do the Police in Different Voices," emphasized both the individuation of experience through improvisation and the conscious resistance to authoritative discourses—that title stresses active engagement with authority through a literal re-writing of its texts, and yet the ever-changing nature of improvisational performance

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ensures an almost evanescent illegibility that de Certeau privileges. The final version, however, abandons the individual's experience in favor of codifying (from a position of visual, historical, and literary power) a generalized place, or what de Certeau alludes to as "an optical artifact" (92). In Eliot, we have a writer who was very much attracted early in his career to the energy of the everyday, but who ultimately suppressed that interest during the editing of *The Waste Land* in favor of the official, the universal, the legible.



Fig. 1

☉

"In Scorn of Eyes: Tiresias and the Lady in the Pub in *The Waste Land*"

Patricia S. Garofalo, Grand Valley State University

Tiresias and the lady in the pub are complementary narrative voices in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Even though they are not fully developed characters, they are distinct enough to function as intermediaries between author and reader. Both figures are androgynous and tell stories about a particular couple that represents larger social, historical, psychological, and philosophical issues. Although Tiresias's is said to be the central vision of the poem, that position is certainly rivaled by the woman in the pub whose words

vividly portray Lil and Albert, as well as give a strong sense of her own identity.

The anonymous barmaid and the mythic figure are only onlookers, however, of the lives they describe. What the reader gets is second- or third-hand. Given Tiresias's mythic identity the reader is required to see through a blind man's eyes. The lady in the pub implies a direct involvement in the lives of Lil and Albert, but even by her own account she is only a guest at their family dinner. Tiresias can focus his blind sight on the typist's intimate affairs, but he does not know her name. Tiresias is insistently identified by name, but what is known about him comes from a distant past in which he is an archetypal character. The woman in the pub remains unnamed but is tied to an apparently present reality and specifics of occupation and class.

As partial characters or "half-objects" in Eliot's play of many voices, they challenge the interpretive powers of the reader to determine whether they are speaking fondly or contemptuously, straightforwardly or from a slanted point of view. The reader is also required to play a part in Eliot's vaudeville review. Tiresias can be seen as emotionally as well as physically blind or specially endowed by both blindness and bisexuality with a deeper understanding of life and sexuality. The lady in the pub sounds at times like trusted confidant and concerned friend and at other times like a troublemaking busybody. They both serve to join two other characters in the poem, but they also act as hinges between reader and author, but hinges which can swing either way, forcing the reader to question the nature of reality in the poem and in life.



**Gear-and-Girder-Age Narrative
and T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages"**
J. N. Nodelman, University of Alberta

Criticism of "The Dry Salvages" (1941), the third of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, has often considered how the poem incorporates and rethinks religious and mythological symbolism. Many have commented on how it locates these contemplations specifically within the maritime landscape of Cape Ann, Massachusetts; John D. Boyd, for one, argues that "both cumulatively and in detail this topography offers evidence of being a peculiarly realistic basis for the symbolism of the rocks and the sea in the poem" (2). Manifestations of the sea and the river are therefore most crucial: as Karl Malkoff puts it, the poem is "deeply involved in the exploration of the relationship between time and eternity" (245), and in

it Eliot "reveals that the river corresponds to time, as the ocean into which it flows corresponds to eternity" (250).

Although there has been discussion of the degree to which Eliot's description of natural landscape in this poem is meant to be generically allegorical and that to which it is grounded in a specific real place (Boyd contends, for instance, that "The river and the sea of this poem are actual river and sea. You could get wet in them" [8]), few have noted the importance of mechanical engineering and transportation technologies to the poet's perception. Indeed, Eliot himself starts off the poem by suggesting that transportation engineers do not allow people to experience the river and the sea in exciting and potentially unsettling new ways so much as simply to forget about them. Unlike American writers such as Hart Crane, who celebrates the Brooklyn Bridge as a transcendent object capable of serving as the foundation for a new means of perceiving time and history: Eliot's river is "Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce; / Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges. / The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten" (1.4-6).

While this appears to be an outright criticism and dismissal of modern technology in favour of a return to nature, however, this paper will contend that it is not. Eliot's meditations on time and eternity throughout "The Dry Salvages" are not focalized through a static perception of natural landscape, but through a series of journeys on boats, trains, and modern ocean liners. This paper, drawing on a range of contexts from the writings of Hart Crane (whose evocation of the Mississippi river Eliot appears to cite directly in the poem), Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson, will argue that Eliot's poem in fact actively takes part not only in discussions of religion and nature but speaks directly to widespread then-contemporary discourses exploring the nature of time and narrative, of how notions of beginning and end, of transition and transformation, were being redefined in the context of standardized mechanical transportation networks. Eliot himself, we shall see, does not reject engineering and transportation technologies out of hand for coming "between" people and nature, but recognizes that in their dynamic functioning they challenge notions of the meaningfulness of movement itself. It is their operation, not the features of the natural Massachusetts landscape, which prompts his specific re-examination of time and eternity.



NOTE

The advance program for the Eighth International Connotations Symposium: "Textual Surprises," July 24-28, 2005, Universitätskolleg Bommerholz (Dortmund, Germany), includes the following abstract from Marius Crisan (University of Turin, Italy): "Reading as Surprise in T. S. Eliot's Essays"

In my paper I will discuss the way that in T. S. Eliot's essays surprise is seen as an effect of reading. I will refer to the encounter between the reader and the text (showing how a reader is surprised and influenced by a text) and then to the surprise of the author who re-reads his work in a new light after having found out his readers' interpretations.

Eliot shows that reading a literary text means learning something new about what we already know. Defining poetry, Eliot writes that in reading it, "there is always the communication of some new experience". The reader of a literary text can define his identity at the end of the act of reading, but also he finds a challenge to his personality. Speaking about the role of literature, Eliot shows that "it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther." (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 86). (In this quoted fragment, by "us" Eliot refers to the community of all readers.) The act of reading is defined as a challenge to our knowledge and expectations and thus as a surprise. I will analyze in my paper how Eliot discusses the encounter between text and reader as an interrelation between the reader's personality and expectations and the new world of the literary work. For instance, in "The Experience of Literature" (*Points of View*: London, Faber & Faber, 1941) Eliot shows that less experienced readers (their age may matter or not) are "surprised" and directly influenced by a text to a greater extent than experienced readers, who have a more reserved attitude. In the light of Eliot's essays, at the level of reading, I see surprise as a dialogue (within the reader) between known and unknown.

The interpretation of a text may be an eternal surprise, because: "A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all of these meanings may be different from what the author thought or meant... The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid – it may even better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of." (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 31). Not only the reader, but even the author can

be surprised by the text. Although we sometimes find in Eliot's essays the author's intention of guessing the reader's reaction to his thoughts, we also see the surprise of the author who himself finds new meanings in what he had written, after having read other readers' interpretations of his poems.



REPORT FROM THE SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

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