

T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

NEWS & NOTES

Number 1

Spring 1987

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

1987 PROGRAM IN PREPARATION

This year, because our meeting is being co-sponsored by the Missouri Historical Society, we have arranged through their generosity to conduct our program in their spacious headquarters, the Jefferson Memorial Building in Forest Park, Saint Louis. Saturday, September 26, is the day, marking Eliot's 99th birthday. Please reserve your time and transportation. Hotel information for members traveling to Saint Louis will be mailed out this summer.

On the morning of September 26, James Olney, editor of the *Southern Review* and internationally known literary critic, will deliver the annual Eliot Memorial Lecture on "Memory and Imagination in T. S. Eliot's Reconstruction of the Past." Dr. Olney, who was born in Marathon, Iowa, studied at the University of Iowa and Columbia University and held appointments at Drake and North Carolina Central before occupying, four years ago, his present position as Voorhies Professor of English at Louisiana State. He has lectured under the Fulbright Program and has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. His publications include *Metaphors of Self* (1972), *Tell Me Africa* (1973), *The Rhizome & the Flower* (1980), and an editorial compilation *Autobiography: Essays* (1980). The October 1985 number of the *Southern Review* dealt with Eliot exclusively, in various perspectives.

Along with the Memorial Lecture the morning section of the program will present music led by the Saint Louis composer John Warren Owen.

The afternoon section will feature a slide-talk, "Special Places in T. S. Eliot's World," by Allen J. Koppenhaver of Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio. Dr. Koppenhaver's slides, surveying views and settings associated with Eliot both in this country and abroad, formed lately the centerpiece of the Ash Wednesday symposium on Eliot at Central State University (Ohio).

And on the evening of the 26th, if funding is sufficient, the Society hopes to accommodate the Magic Circle Ensemble, a highly praised Minneapolis theatre group directed by William Randall Beard, for their production of Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. The play, originally staged at the 1949 Edinburgh Festival, has most recently been revived last fall, and is being given fresh critical attention. The production by the Magic Circle Ensemble would crown an already distinguished program for 1987 with a new kind of event for us.

Attendance at the 1987 meeting seems likely to surpass all our records. We invite new members and urge all current members to plan now for this occasion. Among the amenities of Saint Louis, by the way, that some members may have missed in previous years, are the absorbing up-to-date displays at the Missouri Historical Society's very professional museum, housed in the Jefferson Memorial Building. From Missouri frontier times to the Lindbergh flight of 1927 and beyond, this extraordinary collection of artifacts, photographs, costumes, and documents merits anyone's spare or studious hour. (Mark Twain fans also welcome.)

APPROACHING THE ELIOT CENTENARY

The sheer imminence of Eliot's birth Centenary, 1988, would daunt us no doubt if we had not strenuously expected the Celebration. The Society is trying to do something unusually vital; and except for the exact funding, which is dependent on times and seasons, our plans have beautifully developed. The Centenary Celebration of the T. S. Eliot Society will, it is likely, run from Thursday, September 22, to Sunday, September 25, 1988. In prospect are a production of Eliot's last play, *The Elder Statesman*, an Eliot book and historical exhibition, dramatic readings by an English acting group, set lectures on poetry and drama culminating in the Eliot Memorial Lecture, panel discussions, a forum, a further endowed lecture, and a musical recital.

The 1988 Eliot Memorial Lectureship has been bestowed on Lyndall Gordon, of Saint Hilda's College, Oxford. Dr. Gordon has written *Eliot's Early Years* (1977), which was awarded the Rose Mary Crawshaw Prize of the British Academy for 1978, and also *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* (1984). She is continuing her work in Eliot biography.

Not all of our distinguished guests at the Centenary Celebration can yet be listed. Mrs. T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot), enrolled as an honorary member of the Society since mid-1986, has been invited and has authorized us to say that she hopes to attend. The poet Yeats's son and granddaughter, Michael and Grainne Yeats, have been approached to participate in the critical and musical portions of the program, and the latter is already scheduled to do so. Also listed: Katherine J. Worth will come from London to interpret Eliot's dramatic verse with a troupe of dramatic artists. Yet all of these invitations, and others,

remain contingent on funding — a point for all members of the Society to regard thoughtfully.

The happy nature of the Centenary, along with the memorial purpose to which the Society is dedicated, gives us obvious and essential guidelines for 1988. We shall certainly not be holding a critical post-mortem. The due time for that, if there is one, is not this time. Eliot's genius and work are indisputably alive. We shall be acclaiming the power of Eliot's mind to enchant us and future generations with his gift of language and with the feelings it transmits. Through the arts of reasoning and speech, of dramatic action, of photography, and of music and song, we shall be responding gratefully to an excellence rare in the history of poetry. Remembering Eliot at his Centenary we shall join in celebration, honoring his high values, restoring and transforming our previous experiences of his meaning in our renewed approach to it. Our Centenary Celebration has been intentionally so named. To live up to the intention is the job of all of us.

A NEIGHBORING RECENT EVENT

Last March 4 at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio, a "T. S. Eliot Symposium for Ash Wednesday," already noted, took place under the direction of Robert F. Fleissner, with papers and readings in addition to the slide-lecture by Dr. Koppenhaver. Both Dr. Fleissner and Dr. Koppenhaver carry the (figurative) banner of the Society. The program was announced as pre-Centenary; it sets an example worthy of like efforts in other places. What will your local program be like?

MORE AND MORE CENTENARY ATTRACTIONS

Programs projected for 1988 vary greatly. Some are even pedagogic. For the spring semester at Duke University, a commemoration has been linked with a credit course. This, entitled "T. S. Eliot: A Centenary Overview," will be conducted by Grover Smith under the joint sponsorship of the Department of English, chaired by Stanley Fish, and the Duke University Institute of the Arts, directed by Michael E. Cerveris. A limited number of the semi-weekly lectures will be taken by visiting Eliot specialists, who in each instance will perform a critical expertise or contribute unique technical knowledge, thus complementing more general lectures of the professor in charge. The visitors' lectures will be open to the public.

In April 1988, at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, a Centenary conference will highlight the editorial move of the *Yeats Eliot Review* (see below) to that institution. Details are still being formulated.

The National Poetry Conference will convene the first weekend of June, 1988, at its headquarters, the University of Maine, Orono. Annually the Conference, which focuses on one poet each year, attracts a couple of hundred visitors, and for the T. S. Eliot celebration this estimate appears but modest. For information address the director, C. F. Terrell, at the Orono campus, Orono, Maine 04469.

On the level of professional meetings, the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, assembling in Washington, D.C., in November 1988, will "almost certainly" put together an Eliot program in its Modern British Section (English V). And if the T. S. Eliot Society conducts a special program at the Modern Language Association meeting in New Orleans in December 1988, as appears possible at this writing, members of the Society will wish to join in this annual swooping of scholars.

PARALLEL CONFERENCES IN SAINT LOUIS

Starting in the week of September 25, 1988, and closely following upon our Centenary Celebration, two further Eliot commemorations will take place in Saint Louis. Local and many visiting members of the Society may want to experience these, prolonging their immediate attention on Eliot a week beyond the Centenary itself. Future issues of NEWS & NOTES will give particulars.

First, and probably in midweek, i.e., September 27-29, the Thompson Center at 12145 Ladue Road, Saint Louis 63141, an ecumenical educational foundation, will have a conference or symposium on Eliot's religious aspect. The executive director of the Center, the Rev. Martin A. Seeley, has promised to keep us posted on plans.

Secondly, from September 30 to October 2, 1988, Washington University will celebrate the Centenary with readings by visiting poets, with a conference of literary critics to evaluate Eliot's work, opinions, and career, and tentatively with a production of *Murder in the Cathedral*. Eliot's friend and publisher Robert Giroux has been asked to participate. The program will be held at Washington University (Saint Louis 63130), which Eliot's grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot co-founded and also served as Board president and as chancellor.

NEW ESSAY COLLECTIONS ON ELIOT

In 1988 or thereabouts the work of Eliot will undergo scrutiny in several essay collections of interest to Society members. A new compilation edited by Jewel Spears Brooker for the Modern Language Association of America, *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, has gone to press. The T. S. Eliot Society will sponsor, also under Dr. Brooker's editorship, a selection of the annual Eliot Memorial Lectures; this will come out after the Centenary. And next year the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* will issue its *D.L.B. Yearbook 1988*, in which Dr. Brooker will introduce an unpublished group of personal and critical impressions of Eliot by various writers.

THE ANNUAL AND THE REVIEW

For over two years Eliot specialists have been expecting the first volume of the *T. S. Eliot Annual*, edited by Shyamal Bagchee of the University of Alberta. Congratulations are now due to Dr. Bagchee. The *Annual*, to be published by Macmillan in London, has at length

received from Eliot's copyright holders, after a fifteen-month study of the typescript, the necessary permission for critical quotations, and is now definitely nearing production. The first volume will contain essays or book reviews by Cleanth Brooks, Lois A. Cuddy, Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio, Armin Paul Frank, Grover Smith, Stanley Sultan, George T. Wright, and a number of other Eliotists. (These writers are noticed now because they are all members of the Society — Dr. Brooks an honorary member, like Donald C. Gallup and Mrs. Eliot.) The *Annual* may come into subscribers' hands as early as this fall. For terms of subscription to this lively and learned addition to Macmillan's list of annuals, write to Shyamal Bagchee at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 2E5.

It is reported that Dr. Bagchee will also be preparing for Macmillan a specially commissioned Centenary collection of essays on Eliot.

Owing to the responsibility of the *Annual*, Dr. Bagchee has relinquished to Russell Murphy, of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, the editorship of the *Yeats Eliot Review*. The last number edited by Dr. Bagchee (Vol. 8, Double Issue, 1986) has just been received. The *Review*, now to be published in the U.S.A., was founded in 1974 as the *T. S. Eliot Newsletter*, and was edited jointly until 1976 with D. E. S. Maxwell at York University, Toronto. For three years it was called the *T. S. Eliot Review*, acquiring its present title and scope in 1978. It will continue to meet the needs of Eliot and Yeats scholarship alike. Old and new subscribers and contributors will want to rally round. To subscribe at \$8.00 a year or to submit typescripts on Yeats or Eliot or both (1,500-2,500 words), address Russell Murphy, Editor, *Yeats Eliot Review*, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas 72204.

REQUEST TO MEMBERS

Please inform NEWS & NOTES (a) as soon as you have word of any further Eliot conferences, exhibits, symposia, lectures, or group celebrations in 1987-88, and especially of programs for the Centenary; or (b) if you hear of anthologies, essay collections, or new serial publications intended to appear in this period. Titles, names and addresses of sponsors and publishers, and other such data will be appreciated.

If you are planning a T. S. Eliot event at your book club, library, school, or college, we should like to know about it. We will publicize it as boldly as our space here allows.

OUR INCORPORATION AND NEW BY-LAWS

The Society was founded by Leslie Konnyu in 1980 as the T. S. Eliot Society of Saint Louis. At Dr. Konnyu's suggestion, the last phrase was dropped from the name when Articles of Incorporation were filed by Dr. Konnyu, Mr. Holt, and Dr. Brooker with the Missouri Secretary of State. Over the years the Society has extended its membership beyond the confines of Saint Louis, and it now

has members on three continents. It will remain centered in Saint Louis, but it hopes to exert a cultural influence wherever interest in Eliot thrives. (It aspires to reach six continents, if not seven.)

The Certificate of Incorporation, executed at Jefferson City on December 2, 1986, warrants the Society to be "a general not for profit corporation" and recognizes our stated purposes:

1. To constitute a living and continuing memorial to T. S. Eliot;
2. To organize an annual memorial program which will be presented on or within a week of the poet's birthday on September 26, and which will be free and open to non-members;
3. To encourage fellowship among persons interested in T. S. Eliot's life, his art, his ideas, and his times;
4. To encourage scholarship on T. S. Eliot's life, his art, his ideas, and his times;
5. To cooperate on a national and an international level with persons or organizations having similar interests; to encourage the establishment of such organizations;
6. To work toward the establishment of a fitting public monument to T. S. Eliot in the city of his birth, St. Louis, Missouri.

As to this sixth and final clause, although a bronze memorial plaque, paid for by Dr. Konnyu and executed by the sculptor Andrew Osze, was unveiled at Dr. Konnyu's house seven years ago, where it remains as the *only* sculptural monument to T. S. Eliot in Saint Louis, this cannot satisfy the demand for "a fitting public monument" with public backing and on a public site.

The revised By-Laws for the Society under Incorporation provide for governance by a *Board of Directors*, who include the Officers of the Society. The Board elect officers from the Society's membership, as follows: the *vice-president*, the *treasurer*, the *secretary*, and the *historian*, to three-year terms. The vice-president after a single term automatically becomes *president*; the president after a single three-year term automatically becomes for three years the *supervisor of elections*. The present officers were elected partly in 1986 and partly in prior years. Vacancies on the Board of Directors, except in these offices, are filled by vote of the Society's membership. Only members of the Society are eligible for election to the Board. The present officers, with the dates when their terms expire, are as follows:

President: Jewel Spears Brooker, 1988
Vice-President: Grover Smith, 1988
Treasurer: Earl K. Holt III, 1987
Secretary: Nancy D. Hargrove, 1988
Historian: Allen J. Koppenhaver, 1989

A RETROSPECTIVE ON 1986

Before the 1986 meeting, came the T. S. Eliot Commemorative Postage Stamp Ceremony. That was on the 98th birthday, Friday, September 26. Not many members of the Society, alas, had free time for this festival occasion. It was buoyant, amusing — and yet, like any ritual event, inherently solemn and moving also. In the capacious meeting hall of the Missouri Historical Society's Jefferson Memorial Building, which weighed from above with severe and ponderous implication, representatives of

the U. S. Postal Service and the T. S. Eliot Society spoke formal words to inaugurate the sale of the stamp issue. Dr. Brooker was an honored guest; Grover Smith and the Rev. Earl Holt spoke, the latter most feelingly with readings from "The Dry Salvages" and evocations of Eliot's youth in Saint Louis. Dark-orange, with Eliot's face unsmiling but wearing a half-quizzical, half-haunted expression (the asymmetry of mood had been marvelously caught in the photographic original), the stamp captures character.

The stamp collectors present moved in a different world of values, one of eagerness to acquire those magic rectangles of paper and stick them on first-day cachets. And indeed the cachets were fine: one by the Missouri Historical Society, decorated with Eliot's figure as a child of seven or eight, smiling; one by Bob Johnson of the T. S. Eliot Society, with a middle-aged Eliot, stiff and pinned by the camera with his back to the Charles River — and below at the side Dr. Brooker's snapshot of Saint Michael's Church, East Coker. His beginning, his end. Afterwards — as the stamp collectors buzzed round in the broad enclosed loggia of the building, and the dignitaries signed programs, and the stamps were sold and canceled (one plate block was posted off to Valerie Eliot in London, on a cover containing the typescript of Dr. Smith's address of tribute) — one might have thought, if so idle, that an odd collocation had occurred. On the one hand, small paper effigies of Eliot, great-great-grandnephew of President John Adams; on the other hand, monumentally seated above this happy scene, the great image of President Jefferson. But this irony came only in an afterthought.

One of our members has written concerning the 1986 meeting, which came on Saturday the 27th: "I have attended many conferences, but none was as special as this. It was a small, intimate, cordial gathering of people who all shared a love for Eliot and his poetry, and I had never found myself in such a group before. I had been invited by Dr. Brooker, and I knew no one else; but thanks to her I was soon introduced to three delightful people with whom I went to dinner and to the reception at the Sayman Building on Locust Street.

"The next morning we gathered at the impressive Public Library for the program. After a warm welcome from Dr. Brooker, whose graciousness set the tone for the entire meeting, the new members were inducted and given certificates of membership. In this group, I was beginning to realize, each member is important and valued. The next part of the program was an original composition created specially for the program by John Warren Owen. Entitled "The Choice" and based on a passage from *Hamlet* (IV, vii, 117 ff.), the piece, which was performed by the John Warren Owen Chorale, was haunting and evocative. It was also a perfect introduction to the lecture by Grover Smith on Eliot's fascination with *Hamlet*. Following the lecture, which as a scholar I found both informative and challenging, the Chorale presented an absolutely delightful medley of songs from the musical "Cats," a fitting close to an outstanding program.

"That afternoon the group boarded a bus for a tour of sites in St. Louis associated with Eliot. Our guide, Melanie Fathman, was full of information, and we all appreciated the work she had obviously done in preparing the tour . . .

Later my three friends and I all agreed that the experience of the day had been wonderful and meaningful. We parted that evening as if we were old friends, and the next morning as I left for the airport I realized that, as he has done so many times, T. S. Eliot had once again enriched my life."

Indeed: and the John Warren Owen Chorale sent us all away with the melody of "Memory," from "Cats," singing in our ears, for days.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE AND DUES

The drive for members in the early months of this year brought good results, but things could improve. Why couldn't each member undertake to bring one new member in? Is it a deal? And to pay 1987 dues, right away, if not yet paid? And to contribute more than \$15.00, a good deal more, if able to do so? The second number of NEWS & NOTES will be mailed to dues-paying members.

Answers to the "Request to Members" (above) should be sent to the Editor, T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY NEWS & NOTES, 5007 Waterman Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri, 63108.