

# T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

## NEWS & NOTES

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### ALA: BALTIMORE 1995 CALL FOR PAPERS

In 1995 the annual conference of the American Literature Association (ALA) will return to Baltimore, where it will take place at the Stouffer Harborplace Hotel from Thursday, May 25 through Sunday, May 28. Proposals for papers should be sent by January 29th to Sanford Schwartz, 465 Park Lane, State College, PA 16803 (814-867-3031; Fax 814-863-7285). Papers should take no more than twenty minutes to read.

The ALA is a coalition of approximately forty American author societies and has been sponsoring an annual conference since 1990. Members of participating author societies are automatically members of ALA and are entitled to attend its conferences. The registration fee this year is \$40 (\$10 for retired persons, independent scholars, and graduate students), and should be sent to ALA, c/o Alfred Bendixen, Executive Director, California State University, 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110. For reservations at the Stouffer Harborplace Hotel (\$79 single, \$89 double) call 800-468-3571.

### ANNUAL SOCIETY MEETING: FIRST CALL FOR SESSION TOPICS AND PAPERS

The sixteenth annual meeting of the T.S. Eliot Society begins on Friday September 23 and continues through Sunday September 25. Once again most of the activities will take place at the Drury Inn at Union Station in St. Louis (314-231-3900). At this time the Board is issuing a first call for sessions topics and papers, the proposals for which should be sent by June 1 to Sanford Schwartz, 465 Park Lane, State College, PA 16803 (814-867-3031; Fax 814-863-7285). Papers should not have been published previously and should take no more than 20 minutes to read. The Board also welcomes recommendations for the Memorial Lecturer and for other activities at the annual meeting.

The September 1994 meeting featured William Harmon's Memorial Lecture, "The Fire and the Rose: Eliot and the Popular"; an excursion to the Missouri Historical Society; and papers by various members of the Society—Lee Oser, "The American Prufrock"; Robert Abboud, "T.S. Eliot's America: Eliot and the Classical Republican Tradition"; Christina Hauck, "Abortion and the Individual Talent," Elizabeth Daümer, "'Struck mad by the knowledge of his own beauty': Narcissus in the Early Poetry of T.S. Eliot"; A.D. Moody, "Nothingness and Being: Concerning Eliot's Fear"; Tatsuo Murata, "Buddhism in the Plays of T.S. Eliot"; and James Torrens, "Dante and the Clark Lectures: The Real Criterion". The conference also included an Open Forum of Society Members on Friday evening, a banquet at the Silk Road Restaurant on Saturday evening, and Rev. Earl K. Holt III's

annual address at the First Unitarian Church on Sunday morning.

Further information on the 1995 annual meeting will appear in the summer issue of *News & Notes*.

### BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Fleissner, *T.S. Eliot and the Heritage of Africa: The Magus and the Moor as Metaphor*. New York: Peter Lang. 1992. xii + 255 pp.

Robert Fleissner's *T.S. Eliot and the Heritage of Africa* is a well-timed and significant study of a relatively ignored subject. It makes its appearance in a critical context which has seen the revival of long-standing discussions about Eliot's anti-semitism, and in which misogyny in Eliot's poetry is frequently debated. Fleissner's examination of Eliot's not-so-apparent relationship with the Afro-American background of the poet's early life in St. Louis has relevance in this context. But Fleissner's work is substantially different in tone and in intention from most others which consider Eliot and issues of ethnicity or gender. Working in a largely unexplored area, Fleissner is as much engaged in revealing an Afro-American "presence" in Eliot's poetry, as he is in demonstrating this presence as a positive and sustaining one. Overall, there is also an implicit intention to defend Eliot against charges of racism and prejudice; to do this Fleissner braves himself against such formidable works as Christopher Ricks' *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (1988), and even against less memorable books like John Harrison's *The Reactionaries: A Study of the Anti-Democratic Intelligentsia* (1967).

Although Fleissner does not actually delve into Eliot's life *per se* to account for the African connection, he frequently mentions the St. Louis milieu of jazz culture and the syncopated ragtime rhythm in Eliot's poetry. Yet he is not much concerned with simply thematic and linguistic references to black culture in Eliot's poetry. The focus here is on some of the archetypal patterns that, Fleissner claims, Eliot acquired from black culture as well as his influence upon black writers. On the whole, the objective is to see the contact between Eliot and Africa as mutually enabling and vitalizing.

Fleissner's book opens with the broad and inclusive metaphor of "the Magus and the Moor" which he sees as central to Eliot's works. It is derived from the poem "Journey of the Magi," in which the two figures—the Magus and the Moor—seem to become conflated in the voice of the Magus who repeats the well-known phrases of Shakespeare's Moor; Fleissner's reading of the two as "the Wise Man and the Stranger . . . part *alter egos*" (2) is convincing. (To shore up this argument, Fleissner reproduces the 1927 [Gallup A9] cover illustration of the poem by E. McKnight Kauffer, which, in fact, shows two black magi.) Rather ingeniously, Fleissner manipulates this metaphor to include in its

scope several other interrelated, even if sometimes ancillary, ideas. Thus, in Chapter 7, Fleissner connects the title, "The Hollow Men" with the key words "Hollow Land" in Dowson's poem "A Last Word," only to point out their common link to Levy-Bruhl's phrase "Dead-Land" to refer to a term in African anthropology. Not surprisingly, at the end of this section Fleissner reformulates his thesis to say that although this part has "nothing essential to do with either ethnicity or black culture," it is an "extended formula of the metaphor" (89). This so-called "extension," one later finds, is present in one form or another throughout the book. Chapter 4, entitled "That Shakespearean Rag Again: T.S. Eliot and Frost's Sound of Sense," may be seen as yet another extension, albeit a digression from the main theme, to a discussion of how Eliot "borrow[s]" extensively from Jules Laforgue in his early verse, including in the Shakespearean references in *The Waste Land* (62). This discussion is continued into the following chapter, "The Image of Night: Ophelia, Laforgue and *The Waste Land*," and here the conclusion is drawn that the echoes of Ophelia's song in the final words of "A Game of Chess" reiterates the archetype of the Magus and the Moor in two ways: "Ophelia's virginal martyrdom . . . relating to the Christ story" (70) and the "blackness of the night," (70) heralded by Ophelia's song tying in with the "archetypal blackness associated with her suffering" (70). The whole thing is then somewhat tenuously linked with Africa.

In this reviewer's opinion, Part III, rather cleverly titled, "A Wise Man Amid Moorish Environs," contains the central and most relevant arguments in this book. It opens with a timely survey and reconsideration of previous and current assessments of Eliot's prejudicial and racial attitudes. It is a well-researched section, useful as a source of reference and worthy in its own merit as Fleissner tries to redress some of the charges against Eliot. Also in this section, the African archetype is reviewed through the Conradian echoes in both "The Hollow Men" and in the manuscripts of *The Waste Land* after which Fleissner then moves on to correlate the import of these echoes with Jung's African archetypes. The final chapter of Part III, "T.S. Eliot and Influence of and on Black Culture," is extensive both in scope and length and is divided into six subsections. Earlier, Fleissner had mentioned his indebtedness to Robert Crawford's *The Savage and the City in the Works of T.S. Eliot* (1987), in which that author confirms that "from his early years Eliot displayed a sensibility fascinated by the bringing together of opposites." And now, in this chapter, Fleissner uses much the same notion to discuss the relationship of blues music, with its pattern of doleful subject and overall uplifting tone, and the similar paradoxical combination in Eliot's poetry of the "seemingly despairing initial effect with a jaunty glimmer of hope" (142). The other sections of this chapter discuss Eliot's interest in "non-Chaucerian" mysticism and his occasional use of black subject-matter; questions about his racism that might arise from Eliot's poetry are discussed, and it is suggested that answers to such questions can be found in Eliot's otherwise positive attitude to black culture.

The "Afterward" tries to pull together the many and diversely-oriented arguments of the book, as a sort of lengthy *raison-d'être*. In conclusion, I wish to say that Fleissner's book provides a range of information on, and leads the reader into, a largely unexplored area. I also think that in these times of intense interest in cultural studies, this book will have some relevance.

Sumana Sen-Bagchee

Manju Jain, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. ix + 251.

Manju Jain's exploration of the influence of Eliot's philosophical studies at Harvard on the formation of his sensibility captures an Eliot in progress, an Eliot whom she sees coming to philosophy from a pre-college rejection of Unitarianism, dogma and style, and an undergraduate entrenchment in literature. Eliot comes to philosophy already the sceptic, the classicist, the poet. Jain shows us an Eliot who approaches philosophy at Harvard as a mature critic while still its student, one who proclaims the limits of his professors' philosophical dispositions and projects. His major criticism was one he shared with/received from Santayana: the Harvard philosophers' preoccupation with synthesizing science and religion, ethics and logic, idealism and realism.

Jain draws extensively on Eliot's student notes, papers, and presentations as she charts his intellectual progress, but she attempts to go beyond the intellectual to relate Eliot's work to issues in his spiritual pilgrimage.

A full chapter is devoted Eliot's work in Josiah Royce's seminar on "A Comparative Study of Various Types of Scientific Method." The subject deserves extended treatment, for this is the occasion for Eliot's deep grounding in the new social sciences—anthropology and sociology with the attendant historicism and relativism. The discussion shows Eliot unswayed by the claims of anthropology to establish a scientific basis for the study of religion. It is impressive to see Eliot's deft handling of the limits of hermeneutics in ways that continue to occupy professional philosophers even today. Though he eschews the major claims of the social sciences, Eliot is fascinated by the details, especially the connections between primitive rites and higher spiritual experiences.

The influence of the Jamesian program also receives its own chapter. Jain's presentation of Eliot's study of psychology in the formative years of the science again shows him to cut to the core of the methodological problems, the incompatibility between voluntarism and physiological concepts of mental life. Eliot's notes during this time show him reading broadly in the life of the mind, ranging from epistemology to mysticism to morbid states of mind. We know that these ideas will surface throughout Eliot's poetic life.

The chapter on the dissertation shows Eliot drawing from his now vast knowledge of Kant, Royce, James, fused in his own crucible. Jain provides a clear analysis of the philosophical argument and gives compelling evidence for her interpretations of specific influences of Eliot's philosophical studies.

In "The 'Golden Age' of American Philosophy" (Chapter IV), Jain substantively summarizes the major themes and persons dominating American philosophy in the early decades of the century. It is a treatment that has much to teach the philosopher and literary critic alike.

The book consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. It nicely ends with an appendix listing the courses Eliot took at Harvard during his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. programs. The list shows Eliot well exposed to the literature of many languages. His undergraduate program included eighteen literature courses and only two in philosophy. The graduate program shows a switch of emphasis with ten courses in philosophy and five in Indic philology. This listing promises to pique many an imagination.

Donna Card Charron

## NEW BOOKS

If you are interested in reviewing one of these or any other new publication for *News & Notes*, please contact the editor, Linda Wyman, 621-6 Woodlander, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101. In fairness to all members of the Society, the assignment of reviews will operate on a first come/first served basis, though every effort will be made to distribute assignments as widely as possible among the membership. Reviews may be descriptive and analytical but not openly judgmental.

Kenneth Asher, *T.S. Eliot and Ideology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.  
Frank Lentricchia, *Modernist Quartet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.  
Ronald Schuchard (ed.), *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.  
Marianne Thormählen, *T.S. Eliot at the Turn of the Century*, Lund: Lund University Press, 1994.  
John H. Timmerman, *T.S. Eliot's Ariel Poems: The Poetics of Recovery*, Lewisberg, Bucknell University Press, 1994.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS TWO NOMINEES ON BALLOT CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

At the present time there are two positions vacant on the Board of Directors. Two members of the Society have received the five nominations required to appear on the ballot: Melanie Fathman and William Harmon. A ballot is provided in this issue for the formal election of these nominees.

The terms of two other members of the Board—Ann Brady and Lois Cuddy—will expire in June 1995. Please send nominations by April 2nd to the Supervisor of Elections, Vinni Marie D'Ambrosio, 11 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003. Nominees will appear on the ballot in the Spring 1995 issue of *News & Notes*. The terms will commence on June 1, 1995 and last for three years.

## MEMBER'S BALLOT FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE T.S. ELIOT SOCIETY (TERMS ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1997)

YOU MAY VOTE FOR TWO:

MELANIE FATHMAN

WILLIAM HARMON

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_ 1995

Mail to the Secretary: Dr. Mildred M. Boaz, 603 Radliff Road, Bloomington, IL 61701

## MEMBERS OF THE T.S. ELIOT SOCIETY, 1995

In this list of current members of the Society, an asterisk indicates that dues for 1995 have been paid. If no asterisk appears before your name, please send a check, and or any queries concerning your dues, to William Charron, Treasurer, 709 S. Skinker, #401, St. Louis, MO 63105.

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