

T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY

NEWS & NOTES

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ELIOT REMEMBERED AT HOME AND ABROAD

Reflections by the President of the T.S. Eliot Society

On January 1, 1989, Grover Smith of Duke University will succeed me as President of the T.S. Eliot Society. Dr. Smith, a man of redoubtable scholarly credentials and great personal charm, has prepared himself for this office by serving as my vice-president and the editor of NEWS & NOTES, and undertakes the duties with enthusiasm. I am grateful to each of you for your support over the last three years, and look forward to our continued fellowship under the leadership of Grover Smith.

My thoughts, as I begin this farewell column, revolve around the worldwide acknowledgment this year of Eliot's achievements. From Maine to California, from Broadway to Bombay, Eliot in 1988 is being read and performed, chanted and discussed, evaluated and reevaluated by scholars, artists, and others who believe that he represents a special moment in the history of culture. His stature as a world poet has been confirmed by centennial celebrations in Asia, Europe, and America, and also by the fact that many of those attending the celebrations travelled thousands of miles to pay tribute. Our own centennial celebration in St. Louis had participants from the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, Germany, South Africa, and Japan, and we welcomed visitors from several other countries, including China and India.

Eliot started, as everyone knows, from St. Louis, from the heartland of America. When I made my first pilgrimage to St. Louis in 1983, I was astonished to find that most of the people I talked to either had no opinion of Eliot or considered him a foreign poet. I found almost no institutional interest in Eliot, not even in the university founded by his grandfather. The Eliot Society consisted of a Hungarian poet and his circle, most of them poets from other countries. In 1988, though, it must be said that St. Louis has reclaimed her native son. Three important celebrations—organized by the Eliot Society, Washington University, and St. Louis University—were held in St. Louis this fall. The way for these international symposia was prepared by various local groups such as the St. Louis Humanities Forum.

The American celebrations were distinguished by the participation of major American poets, who paused to celebrate Eliot as a kinsman. Symphony Space, in New York, presented a program which included Edward Albee, John Ashbery, Anthony Hecht, John Hollander, and others reading Eliot's poems; and Washington University presented readings by Howard Nemerov, James Merrill, Richard Wilbur, Anthony Hecht, Amy Clampitt, and G. Schnackenberg. The Manhattan Theatre Club presented actors reading the poetry, and other groups presented performances of Eliot's plays, including *The Elder Statesman* and *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Nineteen eighty-eight will also be remembered as the year in which it became easier to understand Eliot as a person. The major event in the rehumanizing of Mr. Eliot was the long awaited publication of the first volume of his letters. Punctiliously edited by Valerie Eliot, these letters provide intriguing glimpses of Mr. Eliot through the year 1922. The emerging portrait was enhanced by his friends who remembered him with affectionate remarks at the various centennial celebrations. The Manhattan Theatre Club featured memories by Eliot's longtime associate Robert Giroux, who also spoke at Washington University. The Eliot Society had talks by Cleanth Brooks and Russell Kirk, both personal friends of the poet. Muriel Bradbrook sketches a nostalgic miniature—"Growing Up With T.S. Eliot"—in the 1988 Yearbook of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

Valerie Eliot, in her personal greetings to the Eliot Society on the occasion of its celebration, remarked that TSE always disliked writers at the centenary moment. The centenary moment, however, has stimulated focus and reevaluation which have been enormously valuable and which will continue to bear fruit for years to come.

JEWEL SPEARS BROOKER

ELIOT CENTENNIAL PRODUCTION OF *THE ELDER STATESMAN*

One of the notable features of the Eliot Society's centennial celebration was the performance of two of T.S. Eliot's dramas, *The Elder Statesman* and *Murder in the Cathedral*. In addition, conference participants were treated to an experience that fulfills the dream of every theater-goer—a panel discussion in which the directors of both productions talked about the experience of producing the plays. William Randall Beard, Artistic Director of the Magic Circle Ensemble in Minneapolis, and Hollis Huston, of Washington University, discussed how well Eliot's plays work on the contemporary stage. Both concluded that the two dramas were by normal theatrical standards "unactable," but both directors took up the challenge because of personal admiration for Eliot's poetry. As Hollis Huston said, Eliot was not brought up to the rhythms of theater speech or the requirements of stage action.

Beard's production of *The Elder Statesman* testified to the importance of creative direction. In the opening scene the theme of guilt and expiation was vividly set forth before any words were spoken by the use of the expressionistic device of having each of Lord Claverton's "ghosts" enter and silently circle around him. The costuming of the Magic Circle production provided another means of stating the symbolic meaning of the ghosts: Gomez, played by James Hoyer, wore a green satin suit, Michael (Jeffery Allen) was dressed in shocking blue and Mrs. Cargill (Susan Townsend) in scarlet. All the other characters, including the butler, who was dressed as an Indian house-boy, appeared in white, except Lord Claverton (Peter Maronge), who was dressed in black throughout.

continued on page 2

THE ELDER STATESMAN continued from page 1

This device made the innocence of Charles (Michael Sward) and Monica (Katherine Lyons) apparent, in contrast to the dark past of Lord Claverton. These decisions of staging and costuming brought the production to life and made the symbolic content of the play visual and arresting.

The actors, too, did much to make this production a success. Monica and Charles were convincing as the stylized lovers, largely because of the physical warmth projected by Michael Sward. Peter Maronge had the most difficult task, bringing Lord Claverton from spiritual ignorance to insight in a play without overt conflict or even action. James Hoyer as Gomez added intellectual depth to the production because he was able to bring dramatic energy to the major confrontation of the play. The consensus among the conference participants I spoke with was that T.S. Eliot was well-served by this production of his last and in many ways least theatrical play.

CAROL H. SMITH

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL GRAHAM CHAPEL

In program notes for *Murder in the Cathedral* and in remarks delivered as part of the T.S. Eliot Society's ninth annual meeting, director Hollis Huston makes clear his vision of Eliot's play: "This is a script with many beauties, some of them theatrical. Dramatic conflict it has not. . . . What am I then to work with? with that most despised of Aristotle's elements—music. That is to say, with the disposition of images and sounds in the play." Mr. Huston's production—regrettably, some would say—is true to his vision.

Expanding Eliot's efforts to extend in time the historical fact of Thomas's martyrdom, Mr. Huston presents as television evangelists (complete with microphones and suits of pastel polyester) the "Priests" who welcome the Archbishop home from France, costumes as camouflaged commandos-with-bullhorns the "Knights" who slay Thomas, and projects a televised image of the Fourth Tempter, who urges Thomas to think of "glory after death." The Women of Canterbury wear the simple long skirts and shawls of the timeless poor.

With spectacle at the heart of his production, Mr. Huston employs both candlelight and the whirling lights of police cars, naked voices and voices amplified and distorted by various electronic means, traditional liturgical chants and police sirens. He also introduces the agreeably solemn sound of a cello, beautifully played by Mark Wallace, at such moments as the vesting of Thomas for the Christmas sermon.

Although in the opening chorus of Eliot's text the Women of Canterbury declare that they "are forced to bear witness"—a necessity which Eliot underscores by leaving the Women on stage throughout the play, in Mr. Huston's production the Women do not, in fact, "witness" the entire action. They are absent from the stage, for instance, during Thomas's temptation. Perhaps understandably, then, all of their speeches (except for the last) are delivered with little departure from the shrill tone of their first lines.

Alan Clarey, who portrays Thomas, is at his most convincing when he demands "Unbar the door!" to admit the murdering Knights. He is less successful at other moments. Eliot has included in the pivotal Christmas sermon, for instance, a definition of martyrdom which represents for Thomas "A condition of complete simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)" and which the Archbishop has learned only after the anguish caused by the fourth temptation. Mr. Clarey, however, faithful to director Huston's understanding that "nothing happens in the play," used his fine, clear voice to deliver the sermon without wonder or humility—indeed, without any suggestion that its message is not something that he has known all along.

The three Knights (and one lady) who defend the murder of Thomas are effective in their ironic roles. Their strong presentations and the director's heroic efforts to cope with the architectural

and acoustical challenges of the beautiful Graham Chapel at Washington University are not enough, however, to save a production seriously flawed in its conception.

LINDA WYMAN

ST. LOUIS MAYOR HONORS ELIOT LOCAL PRESS, OTHERS, LEAD NATIONAL TRIBUTES

The Mayor of the City of St. Louis, Vincent C. Schoemehl, Jr., issued the following Proclamation to commemorate T.S. Eliot's hundredth birthday. An official representative of the Mayor read the document at the opening session of the Society's Centenary meeting.

"WHEREAS T.S. Eliot, one of the foremost literary figures of modern times, was born in Saint Louis on September 26, 1888; and

"Whereas, the T.S. Eliot Society was organized in 1980 to honor and perpetuate the memory of this great poet in the city of his birth and formative years; and

"Whereas, generations of the Eliot family have contributed to the social, educational, religious and cultural development of Saint Louis, through such institutions as the public schools, Washington University, Mary Institute and the Unitarian Church; and

"Whereas, the centenary of T.S. Eliot's birth will be marked in Saint Louis by an international gathering of prominent scholars and leaders of intellectual and cultural thought, sponsored by the T.S. Eliot Society.

"Now, therefore, I, Vincent C. Schoemehl, Jr., Mayor of the City of Saint Louis, do hereby proclaim September 23-26, 1988, as T.S. ELIOT WEEKEND in St. Louis.

"In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Seal of the City of Saint Louis, this 23rd day of September, A.D., 1988."

After the reading of the Proclamation, the text of which had been approved for the Mayor's drafting committee by Mr. Holt, the engrossed and illuminated parchment copy was presented to the society for permanent display.

The Centenary, recognized throughout the country, was further noted in St. Louis by a conference at Washington University, a Bookmark Society program at the Olin Library, a heavily attended series of programs sponsored by Donna Charron's St. Louis Humanities Forum, and a week-long "Cabaret Eliot" event at St. Louis University. Journalistic attention included an editorial and a feature-magazine article, with a cover portrait of Eliot, in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. One of two notices published in the weekly *Riverfront Times* purported to convey comments by Mme Sosotris, famous clairvoyante, and Mr. Eugenides, fruit merchant and art patron, as well as supplying references to the St. Louis celebration and the academic offerings.

DEATH OF JOSEPH BENTLEY

A memorial service for Joseph G. Bentley, 56, who died of cancer on September 28 after an illness of three months, was conducted at the University of South Florida in Tampa on October 8. Approximately five hundred friends and colleagues attended. The conference held in St. Petersburg October 28-29, "T.S. Eliot and the Modernists: A Centennial Celebration," was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Bentley.

Dr. Bentley, Professor of English and Director of Graduate Studies in his department at South Florida, had published on Joyce, Huxley, and Eliot. He took part in the Eliot conference at Little Rock in May and planned to participate in the Orono conference, the Society's meeting in St. Louis, the St. Petersburg conference, and the SAMLA Eliot session in Washington. Papers he completed for presentation were read by friends at the two last-named meetings. Dr. Bentley in collaboration with Jewel Spears Brooker had written a book on *The Waste Land*, recently accepted for publica-

tion by the University of Massachusetts Press. A volume of his uncollected essays is in preparation.

He was a versatile and original analyst of linkages between literature and philosophy, psychology, and post-Einsteinian theory. Characteristically brilliant and stimulating in conversation, he was awarded several distinctions for excellence in teaching.

Dr. Bentley was the fourth Society member who died in the past year, the others being Helen M. Wroughton, Francis Gall, and Robert Clive Roach, the 1981 Memorial Lecturer.

FESTIVITIES AND PROFUNDITIES

Those Society members who may be maintaining a connection with the Modern Language Association of America will find, in the official program of the Association's convention in New Orleans, December 27-30, no fewer than seven meetings dealing in one way or another with T.S. Eliot. As a service to those intending to go to the convention, the list-numbers of these meetings are here provided: 115, 130, 240, 367, 414, 484, 530. (Warning: if you do not copy this list down, the only way you can obtain it is by searching through the entire program, page by page; the implications of this task may be left to your imagination.)

Meeting No. 367, "Eliot, Language, and Theory in the Classroom," is chaired by Jewel Spears Brooker. The announced speakers are Jacob Korg, J.P. Riquelme, and Society members A.D. Moody and Carol H. Smith. Furthermore, Sanford Schwartz and K.M. Sibbald will speak at meetings 240 and 530 respectively. No Society members are listed in other Eliot settings—which is not to say that others may not be worth your curiosity as well.

Too late for the Summer number, news reached NEWS & NOTES of a July conference in Glasgow, "T.S. Eliot and His Legacies," organized by Robert Crawford with the assistance of Cleo M. Kearns, at which these members of the Society and also Harriet Davidson, as well as other scholars, read papers on poets influenced by Eliot.

On September 26, four academic departments of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, united to offer a hundredth-birthday celebration featuring vocal performances of Eliot's poetry and instrumental renderings of music suggested by it. Beforehand, at a banquet served from a menu of dishes mentioned in Eliot poems or plays, William Harmon of UNC read an original poem of tribute and Grover Smith of Duke University led a toast to the centenarian.

Russell Kirk addressed "a grand Eliot celebration" at Marquette University on November 2, when *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced. The following week, at the convention of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association in Washington, D.C., the

Modern British Section, Grover Smith chairing, mounted a program entitled "T.S. Eliot at His Centenary." The authors of the papers were W. Ronald Schuchard, Jewel Spears Brooker, E.P. Bollier, Ashley Brown, and Joseph Bentley.

SOCIETY PEOPLE

Recent book publications by Society members, not previously listed, comprise the following:

Ann P. Brady, *Pompilia: Woman's Risorgimento in Browning's "The Ring and the Book"* (Ohio University, 1988).

Jewel Spears Brooker, ed., *Approaches to Teaching T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (Modern Language Association, 1988). Twenty-five essays with an editorial Introduction. The Society members contributing are: Jewel Spears Brooker, the late Joseph Bentley, James Torrens, Robert W. Ayers, Mildred Boaz, Glenn P. Wright, Rex McGuinn, Cleanth Brooks, Grover Smith, A.D. Moody, Armin Paul Frank, William Harmon, Nancy D. Hargrove, Douglas Fowler, Marilyn Chandler, and Carol H. Smith.

Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Works of T.S. Eliot* (Oxford, 1988).

Alzina Stone Dale, *T.S. Eliot: The Philosopher Poet* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1988).

Harriet Davidson, *T.S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in The Waste Land* (LSU, 1985).

Valerie Eliot, ed., *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, Vol. I, 1898-1922* (Faber & Faber; Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988).

Nancy Gish, *The Waste Land: A Poem of Memory and Desire* (Twayne, 1988).

Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's New Life* (Oxford, 1988).

James Longenbach, *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past* (Princeton, 1987); *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (Oxford, 1988).

David D. Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry, Vol II: Modernism and After* (Harvard, 1987).

Sanford Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-Century Thought* (Princeton, 1985).

Richard Shusterman, *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (Columbia, 1988).

Stanley Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company* (Oxford, 1987).

Charles Warren, *T.S. Eliot on Shakespeare* (UMI Research Press, 1987).

George T. Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (Berkeley, 1988).

BALLOT

LEONARD UNGER NAMED 1989 ELIOT MEMORIAL LECTURER

Leonard Unger, Professor of English (Emeritus) at the University of Minnesota, has accepted the invitation to deliver the next T.S. Eliot Society annual Memorial Lecture. The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 23, 1989. A topic will be announced in the Spring number of NEWS & NOTES.

Dr. Unger has written, edited, or co-edited ten books, of which five deal extensively with T.S. Eliot's work. He may fairly be called the doyen of Eliot specialists, his early work going back fifty years and his later work carrying on an almost unbroken continuity of interest. He has studied and lectured in Rome, Florence, and Athens and has published both fiction and poetry as well as learned articles. His critical range embraces the poetry of Milton, Keats, Frost, Yeats, and Shakespeare with an originality of perspective rivalled only by discoveries that have placed him among the best known of all Eliot scholars, past or present.

A NEW YEAR INVESTMENT IN CULTURAL THRIFT

All contributing members are reminded that their T.S. Eliot Society 1989 dues should be paid on January 1 to guarantee continuous "good standing" in the Society. Dues may qualify for special tax treatment, as contributions to a non-profit organization, subject to State and Federal laws. The scale of memberships remains the same: \$100 and above, Patron Membership; \$50-\$99, Sustaining Membership; \$25-\$49, Supporting Membership; \$15-\$24, Regular Membership. Please do not delay mailing your check for dues; plans for the next meeting require careful budgeting. Members who can upgrade their memberships from previous years are entreated to do so. Address as hitherto: Treasurer, T.S. Eliot Society, 5007 Waterman Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63108. (This will remain the home address of the Society.) Please note that unpaid 1988 dues are not waived.

NEW 1989-91 OFFICERS, BOARD ELECTIONS

At the Board meeting in September, new officers of the T.S. Eliot Society were elected for three-year terms in accordance with the By-Laws. Terms will commence on January 1, 1989. Grover Smith, currently vice-president, will succeed automatically to the

presidency. The newly elected vice-president is Cleo McNelly Kearns, Visiting Lecturer in Theology and Literature at the Princeton Theological Seminary; Dr. Kearns will take over from Dr. Smith the editorship of NEWS & NOTES. Elected as treasurer is Linda Wyman, Professor of English at Lincoln University, Jefferson City, MO. Elected as secretary is Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio, Associate Professor of English at Brooklyn College, CUNY. As provided by the By-Laws, Dr. Brooker, the retiring president, will become supervisor of elections; and Mr. Holt, the retiring treasurer, will also remain on the Board, in accordance with the provision giving him a permanent seat.

Effective January 1, the Board of Directors will be composed as follows:

Grover Smith, *President and Chairman*
Cleo McNelly Kearns, *Vice-President*
Linda Wyman, *Treasurer*
Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio, *Secretary*
Allen J. Koppenhaver, *Historian*
Jewel Spears Brooker, *Supervisor of Elections*
Ann P. Brady
Melanie Fathman*
Earl K. Holt III
Leslie Konnyu (Founder)
Peter J. Michel
Glenn Patton Wright

*Unopposed for re-election. The present Board seats of Margit Vincenz and Charles Guenther, whose terms are expiring, will be occupied by Dr. Brooker and Mr. Holt.

Dr. Brooker wishes to thank the present officers and members of the Board who have supported the responsibilities of the Centenary year.

On June 1, 1989, the Board terms of Dr. Brady and Mr. Michel will expire. A ballot, to be printed in the Spring number of NEWS & NOTES, will be mailed no later than May 2 to all Society members in good standing. Members are reminded of the provision of the By-Laws that "any member of the Society who is nominated in writing sixty days in advance of the opening by five or more members of the Society" shall appear on the ballot. Both Board seats are for terms of three years. Nominations may be sent to Jewel Spears Brooker as supervisor of elections, 501 68th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33705, and must arrive by April 2, 1989.

Members who wish to vote for Melanie Fathman's continuation on the Board must detach the ballot below, mark it, and mail it to Dr. Nancy D. Hargrove, Secretary, 115 Grand Ridge Drive, Starkville, MS. To be counted, ballots must be received by December 16, 1988.

MEMBER'S BALLOT FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE T.S. ELIOT SOCIETY (Term ending 1991)

MELANIE FATHMAN
(unopposed)

Signature _____ Dated _____ 1988

Mail to: Dr. Nancy D. Hargrove, Secretary, 115 Grand Ridge Drive, Starkville, MS 39759.