

SIGNIFICANT FRENCH CRITICISM (1929-1936) ON

T. S. ELIOT: TRANSLATED AND EVALUATED

BY

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We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under
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PREFACE

In searching for an area of concentration for this thesis, I became aware of the numerous references made by the commentators to T. S. Eliot's affinity with the French writers. A considerable amount of study has been undertaken by British and American critics to show the parallels between Eliot's work and that of the French Symbolists, but hardly anyone has attempted to examine Eliot from the point of view of the French critics. The lack of attention to this particular investigation is due to the scanty volume of French criticism of Eliot which has actually been translated.

Following a suggestion by my thesis director, Dr. Virginia Moseley, I decided to follow a plan of translating and evaluating French criticism of T. S. Eliot over a period of three decades, 1930 to 1960. After translating articles and portions of books from each period, I realized the extensiveness of the material and decided to limit the evaluation to the criticism over a seven-year period from 1929 to 1936. This period seemed extremely important to me because the critics had so soon recognized Eliot's achievements as a literary artist and his emergence as one of the dominant writers of the twentieth century. Through the investigation of influences on Eliot from the French Symbolists and Imagists and the Metaphysicals, the critics agreed that he surpassed those he imitated and established a firm conception of a literary

tradition. They were greatly sensitive not only to his style but also to his timely message.

The additional criticism that I translated of the following two decades reiterated somewhat that of the material I used for evaluation but also revealed new concepts about the entire work of Eliot. The study undertaken in this paper is, therefore, only the beginning of what I hope will be in the future a much more extensive evaluation of three decades of French criticism of T. S. Eliot. Translating and evaluating the material has been a delightfully stimulating experience that has opened for me a new area of research--one that I certainly hope to pursue much further. A list of the additional material translated and consulted appears in the bibliography at the end of the paper.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Virginia Moseley of the T. W. U. English Department for her assistance and patience in guiding me in the development of the thesis, as well as for the stimulation I received as a student in her classes. I would also like to thank Mrs. Damron S. Dennis of the T. W. U. Library staff for her aid in securing the numerous resource materials through inter-library loan. I am quite grateful to Dean Wiley, Chairman of the T. W. U. English Department, and the additional members of my committee, Dr. Judith McDowell and Mrs. Lavon Fulwiler, for their careful reading of my thesis.

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SIGNIFICANT FRENCH CRITICISM (1929-1936) ON
T. S. ELIOT: TRANSLATED AND EVALUATED

Because Eliot himself acknowledged indebtedness to the French writers and lived for a time in France, numerous French critics have displayed interest in French influences on Eliot. The consensus is that French literature held a certain special place in Eliot's background and development as a writer. In an article written in French in 1944, Eliot himself said:

For several years France represented, especially in my eyes, poetry. If I had not discovered Baudelaire, and all the poetry which proceeds from Baudelaire--in particular that of Laforgue, Corbière, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé--I do not believe that I would ever have been able to write [See Appendix A. 3].

What has been almost disregarded, however, in the investigation of the affinity between Eliot and the French writers is the considerable body of French criticism on T. S. Eliot, possibly because very little of it has appeared in translation. Even his poems in French have not been given a great deal of attention. But, as Ruth Temple states,

From "Prufrock" to "Little Gidding" is a movement from Laforgue to Valéry; the body of poetic theory which illuminates and explains it is not in Mr. Eliot's essays nor anywhere else in English, but in French.¹

Especially during the period from 1929 to 1936 most French

¹Ruth Z. Temple and Martin Tucker, eds., A Library of Literary Criticism (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1966), I, 270.

critics seemed dominantly concerned with analyzing Eliot's poetics and investigating the influences on him of French symbolists. Even though many of the critics attributed Eliot's genius to his knowledge acquired from the French writers, most did not hesitate to point out that he treated similar material in an individual manner and exceeded some of his exemplars. Quick to realize his ability as a writer and his position of influence among the younger writers of the 1930's, the French critics seemed more sensitive to Eliot's innovations at this period in his career than did many English and American critics. Their recognition probably stemmed from their appreciation of his concern with the basic tenets of the French literary tradition.

As early as 1929 René Taupin undertook a thorough study of the art of T. S. Eliot in his L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine. Recognizing Eliot's strong control over the youth of the day, Taupin believed that no one had found a technique other than Eliot's for expressing irony, anguish, and the tragic. He stressed the point that Eliot, by producing an apt formula to express more things, had enriched imagery.²

²(Paris: Librairie ancienne honoré champion, 1929), p. 240. "On n'a pas trouvé pour exprimer l'ironie d'autres moyens que les siens, pour exprimer l'angoisse et le tragique pas d'autre technique que la sienne. Il a enrichi l'imagisme, a rendu la formule apte à exprimer plus de choses." [Appendix B. 42]

Among others who stated boldly Eliot's position in literature during this decade was D. S. Mirsky, who said, "I believe that T. S. Eliot has no equal among the bourgeois poets of today, whether they be in France or in England."³ Although Mirsky is highly critical of the majority of poets of the day because of their private language of symbols which defied comprehension, he felt that Eliot was different: ". . . in him a rare poetic power is found which is related to a theme of real social importance" ⁴ The critic explained this power as a comprehension--an intuition--of historic reality, saying that Eliot alone had been able to create a poetry of the dead: "The depth of his poetry is a common social experience, an experience summing up on the individual plane all the aspects of the death of a civilization."⁵ In comparing Eliot's position with that of Donne three hundred years before, Mirsky attributes the great poetic power of both to a theme which was, though historically valuable, more esoteric than popular.

³"T. S. Eliot et la fin de la poésie bourgeoise," Echanges, December, 1931, p. 44. "Je crois que T. S. Eliot n'a pas d'égal parmi les poètes bourgeois d'aujourd'hui soit en France, soit en Angleterre." [Appendix C. 1]

⁴Ibid., p. 48. "Ce qui rend Eliot différent de tous ces poètes c'est qu'en lui une rare puissance poétique se trouve alliée à un thème d'une réelle importance sociale." [Appendix C. 5]

⁵Ibid., p. 49. "Le fond de sa poésie est une expérience commune et sociale, une expérience résumant sur le plan individuel tout un aspect de la mort d'une civilisation." [Appendix C. 7]

Also praising Eliot for not joining the snobbish poets in their private world of symbols which cannot be understood, Amy Nimr declared Eliot a deliberate and conscious poet. She explained that the conscious poet

. . . aims straight at the intellect, compelling alert attention. The reader, then, is no longer his prey, but in a sense his collaborator, alive to the shock of startling image and involved thought.⁶

Both Mirsky and Nimr recognized Eliot's power of language and his ability to draw the reader into his own world of symbols but to remain comprehensible.

It is important to note, however, that although most French critics held Eliot in high esteem during this period, some rated him only as a leader of English opinion rather than as a necessarily great poet. Louis Gillet, for example, stated apologetically that he did not consider Eliot great, but that his work was a guide to the English temperament of the fifteen years following the Armistice. Gillet attributed Eliot's authority, especially among the young people of the

⁶"Introduction à la poésie de M. T.-S. Eliot," Echanges, IV (March 1931), 58-59. "S'il était possible de circonscrire les poètes en des dénominations aussi rigides que celles d'intuitifs ou subconscients, et de délibérés ou conscients M. Eliot se rangerait dans la deuxième de ces catégories.

"Par contre, le poète conscient, qui n'est pas moins poète, suit une voie opposée. Il vise carrément l'intellect et réclame une attention de tous les instants. Le lecteur n'est donc pas sa dupe, mais, dans une certaine mesure, son collaborateur, puisqu'il reste toujours prêt à accueillir le choc d'une image frappante et d'une pensée complexe."

day, to his investigation of the need for constructing and finding a fixed truth in a society whose only thought was demolishing.⁷

Eliot was also criticized in this period by writers such as I. A. Richards and Edwin Muir for an obscurity which caused readers to run aground, but D. S. Mirsky blames their lack of understanding on an attempt to analyze without a true knowledge of the language.⁸ As a whole, most critics assigned Eliot a dominant position, feeling that he had an important message for a society which seemed to be lost at this time, but that the message could be readily comprehended only through a knowledge of the poetic idiom of the day.

The consensus was that Eliot came at a time when he was able to profit considerably from the Imagists and the French Symbolists and to introduce many of their ideas into American poetry. According to René Taupin, "It is Eliot who made the transition between pure imagism and the new, more complex

⁷"M. T.-S. Eliot et les faux dieux," Revue des deux mondes, July, 1934, pp. 200-201. "Au lieu de se répan- dre, de courir de nouvelles aventures, il éprouve le besoin de se fixer et de se recueillir. Là où d'autres parlent de démolir, il pense au contraire à construire. Dans le gâchis d'une société qui doute d'elle-même au point d'avoir donné sa démission de penser, il veut croire du moins à l'existence d'une vérité." [Appendix D. 5]

⁸Echanges, December, 1931, p. 44. "Des milliers de lecteurs ont échoué devant l'obscurité de sa grammaire poétique et des critiques très avertis (notamment I. A. Richards et Edwin Muir) ont commis l'imprudence d'analyser son oeuvre sans en avoir appris la langue." [Appendix C. 1]

symbolism."⁹ Eliot had the advantage of arriving at a time of experimentation and discovery of determined values. Critics had often pointed out Eliot's debt to Ezra Pound and the mutual accomplishments of the two in tying a solid bond between the past and the present, but Eliot, said Taupin, had shown Pound new directions:

Coming after the imagist experience, Eliot states precisely certain views about it: the importance of the approach to the real without any afterthought, the necessity for objectivity--he notes that the poetic spirit and the critical spirit are inseparable; the importance for the poet to know his time, his country, and also the heritages of his century--which necessitates a great knowledge of European literature.¹⁰

Eliot's conscious intention to profit from the discoveries of the French movement and to extract from it certain elements is recognized. He definitely continued the Imagists' investigation of a tradition and supported the basic theory of the Imagists that ". . . vision is at the very base of all literary art."¹¹

⁹L'Influence du symbolisme français sur le poésie américaine, p. 287. "C'est Eliot qui doit être considéré comme faisant la transition entre le pur imagisme et ce nouveau symbolisme plus complexe."

¹⁰Ibid., p. 211. "Venu après l'expérience imagiste, Eliot en précise certaines vues: l'importance de l'approche du réel sans aucune arrière-pensée, la nécessité d'une critique--il note que l'esprit poétique et l'esprit critique sont inséparables--l'importance pour le poète de connaître son temps, son pays, et aussi les hérédités de ce siècle, ce qui implique une grande connaissance des littératures européennes." [Appendix B. 3]

¹¹René Taupin, "The Example of Rémy de Gourmont," Criterion, X (July 1931), 620.

The critics label Eliot a classicist because he departed from the poetry of sentimental subjectivity and defined the synthesis of images. The consensus that his classicism has its parallels in France does not obscure the fact, however, that he went much further and established many new concepts. Eliot's explanation of the "objective correlative" recognized a more complex literary structure. According to Taupin, Eliot looked to the writings of the Greeks and the Middle Ages for a definition of classicism and explored the profound influence of the Elizabethans on all poetry, especially the poetry of the French.¹² He established a link between the Metaphysical poets and the French Symbolists and possessed qualities common to both. However, his poetry was more complex, and his imitations, for the most part, seemed to give a new life to the arrangement.

That Eliot continued in the Symbolist tradition is a major point made by the critics, owing not only to Eliot's acknowledgment of the influence of Arthur Symons' book, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, but also to his acknowledgment of indebtedness to the French Symbolists and the Elizabethans. Many similarities in style and themes were found between Eliot and the Symbolists. Taupin states,

Eliot's poetry is in the Symbolist tradition: it is a skillful grouping of sense impressions imaginatively rendered,

¹²René Taupin, "The Classicism of T. S. Eliot," trans. Louis Zukofsky, Symposium, January, 1932, p. 65.

and for the art of his arrangement, Eliot has drawn on Apollinaire and Laforgue as well as on the diction and choice of imagery familiarized by Corbière and Baudelaire.¹³

Likewise, Amy Nimr said that Eliot's poems were generally sets of precisely drawn images dovetailed together by a sequence of thought or by interdependent contrasts.¹⁴ Both Taupin and Nimr praised Eliot's inventive mind and his creation of life's equivalent with a fictive background--in other words, his inventive power to convince. What these critics felt that Eliot had accomplished parallels very closely an explanation of Symbolism given by Symons:

What is Symbolism if not an establishing of the links which hold the world together, the affirmation of an eternal, minute, intricate, almost invisible life, which runs through the whole universe? . . . To get at that truth which is all but the deepest meaning of beauty, to find that symbol which is its most adequate expression, is in itself a kind of creation¹⁵

The French critics seemed to see Eliot as an artist who, in searching for a literary order, created appropriate symbols to relay truth. They were also highly complimentary of his

¹³L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine, p. 221. "La poésie d'Eliot est de leur tradition: c'est un habile groupement d'impressions sensorielles imaginées; et l'art de ce groupement, Eliot l'a en partie reçu de l'école d'Apollinaire, des Elizabéthains, de Laforgue, de même qu'il a reçu de Baudelaire et de Corbière certains procédés de diction et certain art dans le choix des images." [Appendix B. 26]

¹⁴Echanges, IV, 60.

¹⁵Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1908), pp. 145-146.

adaptation of the styles, themes, and subject matter of the Symbolists to his own use.

On the whole, the critics of this period seem mostly concerned with the earlier influences on Eliot and the comparisons between his work and that of the Metaphysical poets and the French Symbolists. The direct influence of the English Metaphysicals was noted as an integral part of the French literary tradition. Mirsky stated that Eliot was bound to a tradition which attained its most individual expression in Donne, and he ranked Eliot along with Donne as a gifted poet with an esoteric, historically valuable theme.¹⁶ Of course, Eliot himself found many complementary qualities in the work of Donne and many of the French poets. But according to Taupin, Eliot saw Laforgue, Corbière, Racine, and Baudelaire to be in the school of Donne and discovered certain qualities of the Elizabethans to be possessed particularly by the French.¹⁷ It was logical, then, that Eliot should follow a method quite similar, in the sense of his comprehensiveness, allusiveness, and indirectness, in order to force language into his meaning; yet, he could at once imitate the Metaphysicals and the French Symbolists.

¹⁶Echanges, December, 1931, pp. 50-51. "La position d'Eliot aujourd'hui est sur beaucoup de points semblable à celle de Donne il y a trois cents ans. Donne est un exemple assez rare dans le passé d'un vrai poète doué d'une grande puissance poétique dont le thème quoique historiquement valable est ésotérique plutôt que populaire." [Appendix C. 9]

¹⁷"The Classicism of T. S. Eliot," Symposium, January, 1932, pp. 65-66.

The critics agree that the major French influences on Eliot were those of Gourmont, Laforgue, Corbière, Gautier, Baudelaire, Valéry, and the more recent Bosschere, Apollinaire, and Salmon. Each contributed an idea of style or theme; for example, Gourmont affected Eliot's critical theories, and Baudelaire, his religious views. According to Taupin, Gourmont aided Eliot in his effort to establish a classic conception of art, while Baudelaire and Laforgue helped determine the literary tradition to which Eliot bound himself.¹⁸

Taupin, like others, attributed many of Eliot's conclusions about style to Gourmont's ability to combine feeling, scholarship, and a sense of facts and history with a general power. Following Gourmont's effort to expel the sentimental from the artist, Eliot defined poetry as an escape from emotion. Gourmont influenced also Eliot's idea of correspondence between word and vision, but the critics agreed that Eliot's formulation of this idea surpassed Gourmont's. The problem of literary tradition had directed Eliot toward Gourmont's proposals of a European tradition, but had brought Eliot to the realization ". . . that the true artist, in embracing a tradition, modifies this tradition."¹⁹

Qualities in Rémy de Gourmont must have attracted Eliot

¹⁸L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine, p. 212.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 214. "Ailleurs T. S. Eliot fait remarquer après de Gourmont que le vrai artiste, en se joignant à une tradition modifie cette tradition." [Appendix B. 13]

during his search for a basic concept of art. The critics described Gourmont as an individual, a free spirit with evolutionary ideas, who admired all the periods of civilization.

Taupin characterized Gourmont in the following way:

Gourmont had a timely value for he was the first modern writer of his generation, the enemy of the intellectual and emotional haze through which, in France and elsewhere, people moved with such pleasure; de Gourmont was the logician who loved ideas, who sought a mental *equipoise*, who strove patiently and accurately to establish the value of things without ever falling a victim either to anger or to exaggerated enthusiasm.²⁰

Both Ezra Pound and Eliot were acknowledgedly interested in Gourmont's studies on vers libre (free verse), and the critics saw the value to Eliot's poetry and criticism of Gourmont's Problème du Style. The study of linguistics and the basis of style in this book encouraged Eliot to study the composition, the architecture, of a work.

Concerning the influence of critical views on Eliot, Garnet Rees and Taupin, among others, mentioned Eliot's own acknowledgment of Rémy de Gourmont as "the perfect critic"²¹ and "one by whose critical writings I was much stimulated and much helped."²² Eliot adhered to Gourmont's idea of an impressionist criticism based on a literary faith and established individual aesthetic principles. Garnet Rees stated

²⁰Criterion, X, 617.

²¹Ibid., p. 622.

²²Garnet Rees, "A French Influence on T. S. Eliot: Rémy de Gourmont," Revue de littérature comparée, XVI (October-December 1936), 765-766.

that even though Gourmont and Eliot had the same type of inquiring mind, "Eliot surpassed the former in becoming more interested in the real technique of poetry."²³ Thus, the general conclusion seems to be that Gourmont the critic, as well as Gourmont the poet and man, exercised a tremendous influence on both the criticism and poetry of T. S. Eliot.

Recognition of the literary affinity between Gourmont and Eliot led critics to a discussion of relationships between Eliot and other French writers. Jules Laforgue seemed to provide tremendous resources for Eliot in his search for a means of escape and transposition. According to Taupin, "Laforgue gave him a means of escape by irony, verbalism, and speculation."²⁴ Possibly in Laforgue's Moralities and Complaints, where he presents a method of expressing personal emotions raised by conjunction of the acts of an epoch with an amalgamation of the past, present, and future, Eliot grasped the idea of juxtaposing unexpected ideas with irony. Again, however, the critics credited Eliot with going beyond Laforgue's intoxicating speech in the sense of realizing a proportion, a definitive balance, between words, ideas, and images. Recognizing a similarity between images, points of view, and themes, the critics agreed Eliot's treatment of

²³Ibid., p. 767.

²⁴L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine, p. 225. "Laforgue lui a donné un moyen d'évasion par l'ironie, le verbalisme et le spéculation." [Appendix B. 31]

these aspects was an improvement. According to Mirsky, the bonds between Eliot and Laforgue are especially apparent in the work of Eliot's youth (Prufrock and Other Observations and Ara vos Prec) but seem almost to disappear in his mature work.²⁵ The Laforgueian irony of juxtaposition of the sublime and sordid in the early poems became to Eliot the pity and horror of reality.

J. J. Laboulle, who also saw a decline in Laforgue's influence on the later poetry, stated that the most obvious example of Laforgueian influence on T. S. Eliot is in Conversation Galante, which is similar to Laforgue's poetry in treatment and thought.²⁶ The parallel is recognized again in the mood of Prufrock, the repetition of phrases, the joining of conversational and technical terms, and the handling of the theme of love. Laboulle reached the conclusion that Laforgue is the most important of all the late nineteenth-century French influences on Eliot.²⁷ Their traits in common included diffidence, self-pity, and early distrust of established religion, yet Eliot retained his idiosyncrasies. The critics agreed that Eliot achieved a greater objectivity and

²⁵Echanges, December, 1931, p. 51. "Aussi les liens qui les unissent sont-ils surtout apparents dans l'oeuvre de jeunesse d'Eliot (poèmes contenues dans Prufrock and Other Observations, 1917 et dans Ara vos prec, 1920) et disparaissent presque dans son oeuvre mûre." [Appendix C. 10]

²⁶"T. S. Eliot and Some French Poets," Revue de littérature comparée, XVI (April-June 1936), 389.

²⁷Ibid., p. 398.

continued where Laforgue left off, correcting and organizing his wanderings by strengthening his moral and religious sense and acquiring a consciousness of the world around him, but that his poems definitely resemble Laforgue's synthetic construction and verbal plays.

To Tristan Corbière was attributed the most direct influence on Eliot's poems in French. J. J. Laboulle compared Eliot's mocking of the romantic love for travel and color in "Lune de Miel" to Corbière's mocking of the unawareness of beautiful scenery in several poems. Laboulle said also that Eliot adopted the attitude of self-mockery from Corbière, and that in "Le Directeur" and "Dans le Restaurant," Eliot's puns were in the manner of Corbière.²⁸ In general, however, the affinity between Eliot and Corbière was de-emphasized with the exception of their relatively similar use of diction and choice of imagery. It was apparent that Eliot sympathized with Corbière's attempt to bring the language of poetry closer to common speech and to use antithesis to express something very modern and complicated. According to Taupin, Eliot systemized Corbière's method of employing images so that they seemed to radiate centrifugally.²⁹ Thus, Corbière's diction must have exerted a persuasiveness on Eliot's style.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 396-397.

²⁹L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine, p. 235. "Corbière atteint la pure émotion esthétique par ces faisceaux d'images."

Although the consensus is that Rémy de Gourmont exercised the most influence on Eliot's critical views, and Jules Laforgue on his poetry, the critics call attention, to a lesser extent, to Eliot's indebtedness to Gautier, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Apollinaire, and Salmon. Imitations of these writers were seen in Eliot's curiously sinister metaphors, his restoration of the impersonal stance, his sense of religious values, his contrasting of the poles of sense, and his vivid imagery. In each case, however, the critics acknowledged Eliot's surpassing of most of his models. The processes of Gautier were more abundant in Eliot; his Baudelairian religious views were not lost in the same religious slough of despondency;³⁰ and Mallarmé's diction, if more nearly perfect, was not so rich as Eliot's. All of the critics readily admitted that when Eliot imitated, he was at the same time master of his own method.

Evident in the criticism of this decade is the absorption with Eliot's style. Eliot had arrived at the idea of explaining emotion through an "objective correlative." The images in his poems were always linked by a sequence of thought or contingency of contrasts. An illusion of animation throughout the poetry was related to Eliot's ideas on the possibilities of symphonies in poetry. Taupin noticed that emotions were employed for their resonances and their arrangements, so

³⁰"The Classicism of T. S. Eliot," Symposium, January, 1932, p. 70.

that the poem could be divided into parts equivalent to those of the movements of the symphony.³¹ The images, then, became a train of thought set into motion by a suggestion.

There was also considerable interest among the critics in Eliot's choice of subjects and caricatures. That he picked his subjects from among the sordid and repulsive led the commentators to agree that this negative pursuit of beauty incorporated his meaning and gave depth and variety to his verse. He was a conscious poet who thought in contrasts. Juxtaposition of opposites was a device the French immediately recognized as part of the Symbolist tradition.

Eliot's sensitivity to subject matter and themes also led the critics of this period to an investigation of his philosophy and religious views. Eliot was praised for attempting to reconcile modern man to his place in the whole of the universe during a post-war period, a time of moral distress. He treated with a fresh poetic technique the aridity of modern life, the horror of a civilization dying of spiritual drought. His pessimism, according to Amy Nimr, was the result not only of an innately dark, cogitative mind, but also of the angle at which this mind met present-day problems and their clash with an intricate sensibility.³² Eliot introduced a new kind

³¹L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine, p. 248. "... les émotions seraient employées pour leurs résonances et leurs accords, où le poème pourrait se diviser en parties équivalents aux mouvements de la symphonie."

³²Echanges, IV, 66.

of wholly impersonal pessimism. His preoccupation with death was with the death which exists in life, the present-day sterility.³³ All the critics placed great importance on "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men," and "Ash Wednesday" as significant expressions of the spiritual post-war history. Mirsky commended Eliot for his intuitive awareness of historic reality and his solidly traditional poetry.

The critics realized that in his reference to tradition, Eliot was thinking of the Church and the need to rebuild the Church; therefore, he chose religion as his way out of the "waste land." Mirsky described this religion as one ". . . of pure spirit, freed from all vitality and psychology; a religion purely pneumatic, mystical, and extremely intellectual."³⁴ The philosophy which permeated the later poetry was not the blind gift of faith but a conscious, intellectual effort. As Mirsky said, "It is not in life, nor in historic reality that he [Eliot] finds the values which save the sterile and dry bourgeois. The kingdom that he is searching for is not of this world."³⁵

³³Ibid.

³⁴Echanges, December, 1931, p. 56. "Une religion de l'esprit pur, libre de tout vitalisme, de tout psychologisme, une religion purement pneumatique, mystique au sens le plus sévère du terme et aussi sévèrement intellectualiste." [Appendix C. 14]

³⁵Ibid., p. 58. "Ce n'est pas dans la vie, ni dans la réalité historique qu'il trouve les valeurs qui sauveront le bourgeois stérile et sec. Le royaume qu'il cherche, n'est pas de ce monde." [Appendix C. 17]

Eliot's critical views were also a point of interest to the critics. Although some ascribed to Rémy de Gourmont the responsibility for many of Eliot's ideas, they recognized the development and extension of many of Gourmont's theories. According to Garnet Rees, "At all times, Eliot insists on the subjectivity and creative powers of criticism; he refutes the idea that the critic is a parasite, living on other people's ideas."³⁶ Because Eliot thought the critic could appeal only to the intellect, he succeeded in evoking new ideas through a skillful handling of raw facts. The critics readily commended Eliot for his interest in the technique of poetry and the preservation of tradition. According to Taupin, Eliot exceeded the early French critics, especially Gourmont, in making the literary work objective and removing personal emotion.³⁷

Thus, the French critics from 1929 to 1936 investigated Eliot's position and influence, and concluded that he held a noteworthy post during that period. While they linked Eliot to the French Symbolists and Imagists in the development of his style and philosophy, most agreed that he extended their attempts in a unique and more fully developed manner. The major portion of the criticism, then, dealt with his influences and the development of his ensuing style which, to the critics, marked him as an important transitional figure between

³⁶Revue de littérature comparée, XVI, 766.

³⁷Criterion, X, 617.

the nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, as an artist with far-reaching influence on the twentieth century.

APPENDIX A

Eliot, T. S. "What France Means to You." La France libre, VIII (June 15, 1944), 94-95. [editor's translation]

In examining the responses everyone made to this question in a recent edition of La France libre, I realize that it is possible to interpret and respond to it in very diverse ways. In my brief attempt to answer, I will strive not to repeat what others have said and not to restate what France represents to me and to many of my compatriots. This elimination leads me to try to define, without speaking about the landscape, cuisine, or personal friendships, what France has been to me in the past and to search for an indication of what it means to me at present and what it will mean in the future. A. 1

It is certainly inevitable that France represents something different for me from what it represents to most of those who have resided there and have shown allegiance to France. The wharf of Cherbourg was the first place that I saw in Europe. Since then I have felt a particular affection for the Norman landscape that I first saw by moonlight . . . but I promised not to speak of landscapes. I resided in Paris before my first visit to England. It was exceptionally good fortune for an adolescent to discover Paris in the year 1910. La Nouvelle Revue française was still truly new, and the Cahiers de la quinzaine appeared under their austere covering of grey paper. I suppose there are still some Bergsonians; A. 2

but for one to have known truly the Bergsonian fervor, it was necessary to go regularly each week to the crowded room at the College of France where Bergson taught his courses. Along the wharfs one could always glance at Anatole France and buy the latest book of Gide or Claudel the same day of its publication. At times Paris would be all the past and, at times, all the future; these two aspects combine in a perfect present.

If that is what France represents to me, perhaps it is A. 3
 due to a happy accident of chance. It was not, however, an accident that led me to Paris. For several years France represented, in my eyes, poetry. If I had not discovered Baudelaire and all the poetry which proceeds from Baudelaire--in particular that of Laforgue, Corbière, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé--I do not believe that I would ever have been able to write. This discovery assured me of a fact which the English poetry of the same epoch had indicated to me: that a modern language existed, and that English poetry provided some unexplored possibilities. Perhaps I am exaggerating the importance that this discovery had for English poetry, but my testimony remains for the influence that it had in my life.

I have always maintained that literature needs great A. 4
 waves of foreign influence bestowed on it from time to time, and a constant self-criticism of the contemporary literary works produced by other countries. The relationship between the English and French literatures is very special. Having

come from somewhere else, the influences are especially individual ones from particular authors; in the case of England and France, it is a question of the global influence of all literature, even if it is practiced by the intermediary of particular authors. I am certain that French literature has exercised this type of influence on England; therefore, I hesitate to subscribe to the opinion of M. Mortimer. It is not a question for me of choosing between Montaigne, Pascal, and Voltaire. Even though this brief exposé expresses simply what France has been to me in the past, it must suffice to indicate what it will represent to me in the future. Because I care for the future of England, I am forced to care equally for the future of France; because I must believe in the future of England, I can see only with confidence the future of France.

APPENDIX B

Taupin, René. "Deuxième Phase de l'imagisme: T. S. Eliot."
L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine. Paris: Libraire ancienne honoré champion, 1929.
[editor's translation]

T. S. Eliot arrived after the poetry of the Imagists had B. 1
become an art and some principles could be abandoned without
danger. If Imagism appears, up to a certain point, later on
in the evolution of literature in Europe, with T. S. Eliot
American poetry entered into the vanguard of this evolution.

Eliot should acknowledge Pound particularly in his first B. 2
works, for Pound holds so many of the Imagists' ideas. Pound
gives him the example of a neat, clear style, a direct expres-
sion, the art of satire, and probably some mutual French
admigrations. Even though Eliot has shown Pound some new
directions, these two poets complement each other. In Hugh
Selwyn Mauberly Eliot's influence is apparent; however, Pound
replaces Eliot's unilinear energy by a more complex energy.
After having become acquainted with Eliot, I believe that he
modifies somewhat Pound's judgments on the French poets and
places Laforgue among the three "permanent" French poets. How-
ever, instead of a precise affirmation, I want to say that
these two poets render mutual services, that they have a
similar artistic comprehension and education, and that the
poetry of Pound is a transition from Imagism to Eliot's
poetry.

Coming after the Imagist experience, Eliot states precisely certain views about it: the importance of the approach to the real without any after-thought, the necessity for objectivity--he notes that the poetic spirit and the critical spirit are inseparable; the importance for the poet to know his time, his country, and also the heritages of his century--which necessitates a great knowledge of European literature. B. 3

T. S. Eliot has profited from all the work done during the several years which preceded his debut: not only the work of Hulme, of Rémy de Gourmont and some of the Imagists, but also of works of the Surrealists and even of Paul Valéry. He had the advantage of arriving at a moment when numerous experiments were being made, when a determination of values had been accomplished. In other words, a classicism could have established itself as solidly in England as it had established itself in France. The Imagist movement had begun, thanks to Pound, Aldington, and H. D. But these poets came after an epoch of poverty and sluggishness and had not been able to think about creating a systematic poetic criticism. B. 4

If one speaks of the symbolism of T. S. Eliot (and we see that one has the right to do so), it is necessary to think that he has continued this movement very consciously with the clear intention of profiting from the essential discoveries of the French movement. The Imagists had already attempted this refining, extracting the most precious elements from French symbolism. T. S. Eliot took other elements from B. 5

it which are a part of the old English tradition. They were as precious to him as the elements he took from the Metaphysical poets. The investigation of a tradition had already been one of the principal activities of the Imagists.

Consequently, one can consider his action in diverse ways. It is possible to see how Rémy de Gourmont aided him in his effort to establish a classic conception of art and to see in studying Eliot's symbolism how Baudelaire and Laforgue contributed in determining the literary tradition which Eliot embraced and enriched. B. 6

T. S. Eliot and Rémy de Gourmont

Eliot shows the same admiration for Gourmont as for the Imagists: "Of all the modern critics, perhaps Rémy de Gourmont had in the highest degree an intelligence similar to Aristotle's. An amateur, although one extremely skillful in physiology, he combined remarkably feeling, scholarship, and a sense of facts and history with a general power." Eliot owes much to Gourmont, but he surpasses him. He has read The Problem of Style and follows Gourmont's theory of the art of writing; however, he advances certain ideas much further. B. 7

He thinks at first that style consists of thinking and feeling: "I have tried to write certain things which have truly moved me," he writes to Pound. Then, following Gourmont a little further, he finds that style is a specialization of feeling. The artist has an artistic sensibility and a human B. 8

sensibility; the latter does not interest us, even less since, in contrast to the former, it is obliterated in the personality of the artist. Eliot cites this phrase of Rémy de Gourmont: "The writer of abstract style is almost always a sentimental one, at the least a sensitive one. The writer-artist is almost never a sentimental, very rarely a sensitive person."

In pursuing this idea Eliot arrives at his conclusions on the art of the poet as related to that of the critic: B. 9

"Poetry is not an overflowing of emotions but an escape from emotions; it is not an expression of the personality. Of course, only those who have a personality and emotions know what they want to say and what they want to escape from."

Several pages of The Sacred Wood are clearly influenced by his reading of Problem of Style; Eliot even takes from Gourmont his examples of authors of sentimental style.

Some of Gourmont's statements such as the following give Eliot material on which to meditate: "Every word, every great style corresponds first to a vision." Pursuing this idea further, Eliot writes: "The charm of poetry is pure contemplation stripped of all the accidents of personal emotion; thus, we tend to see the object as it is in reality, and without an effort of the intelligence, we are incapable of attaining this state of vision: amor intellectualis dei." B. 10

It seems certain that the criticism of Eliot is thus sharpened by its contact with that of Rémy de Gourmont, which presented problems to solve and a model of solid, living B. 11

thought. It can be seen that he praises Henry James, for example, in the same way that Gourmont would have praised him--for a mind involved in the parasitism of ideas.

If it is true that one finds in an author's work only what he brings to it, the following traits of Eliot support this fact: free and vivid thought, a sense of the facts, and a living vision of these facts. However, Eliot completely surpasses the conception of Rémy de Gourmont. The author of Problem of Style had not arrived at the conception of the pure vision of which Eliot speaks. He always remained within the domain of sense and sensuality, and he thought that the writer of a book must relate himself to his epoch. T. S. Eliot recognizes in the writer only the right to precipitate the grouping, the "formations in structures" of the emotions and emotional experiences. He understands poetry as a living organization of the experiences of diverse epochs, and as "the living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written." B. 12

Another problem which he proposed is that of literary tradition. Gourmont had resolved it for himself in an article published and translated by R. Aldington in Poetry: "My tradition is not only French," said Gourmont; "it is European." Eliot alike recommends that one study the spirit of Europe and that of his own land (as they are living), in the vivid phases of its evolution, in its period of movement; the artist must know that the spirit of Europe, as well as the spirit of his own land, transforms him. Thus, Eliot B. 13

remarks in accordance with Gourmont that the true artist, in embracing a tradition, modifies this tradition.

The freedoms that these two authors search for oppose each other. Rémy de Gourmont, profoundly classic and profoundly French, needed to give himself the illusion of fleeing from his tradition, of being himself his tradition, and of organizing himself, first, by perusing the most diverse moments of literature. It was a necessary illusion, and he escaped, fortunately, from most of the hindrances without losing its classic clarity of his spirit. On the contrary, Eliot, coming after an epoch of vague sentimentalism and enjoying the tight tradition imposed on education in France, needed to find for himself a literary tradition. Even though he recognized the soundness of the ideas of Rémy de Gourmont, he had to face the question with more attention.

B. 14

Classicism of T. S. Eliot

Inspired by these ideas, Eliot greatly advanced the investigation of a poetry detached from the sentimentally subjective and fostered an objective criticism of poetry. For these reasons, one can speak of the classicism of T. S. Eliot. It is not lowering its value to show that this classicism paralleled movements in France, that Eliot was inspired by Gourmont's ideas, that they had similar contemporary theories, or that Eliot developed some of Pound's ideas. With Eliot, Pound's ideas took on so great amplification and precision that they can be considered originals.

B. 15

Eliot's classicism, an evasion of pure emotion, demands, B. 16
by consequence, a formal and almost architectural investiga-
tion of the literary work, as well as the fixation of an
artistic tradition. Pound and the Imagists ceased where Rémy
de Gourmont stopped, but Eliot completed the progress. Pound
had studied poetic diction, and Eliot had studied style. As
Pound had defined the images, Eliot had defined the synthesis
of images--their "structure," carrying each problem several
steps further.

Pound had defined the image as the projection, on the B. 17
objective plane, of sensation and emotion. Eliot wrote: "The
only manner of explaining the emotion underlying an artistic
form is to find an objective correlative; in other words, an
ensemble of objects, a situation, a series of events which
will constitute the formula of this particular emotion, in
a way that when the exterior facts in a sensuous experience
be given, the emotion will be immediately evoked." This
transposition of vision Pound had prescribed more precisely
than Gourmont. He had written with a rigor similar to Eliot's:
"Poetry is a sort of mathematic inspiration which gives some
equations, not for some of the abstract triangles, spheres,
or other figures, but for the human emotions. If one has a
spirit bent to magic more than to science, he would prefer to
speak of these equations in terms of charms and incantations
which have an air of the strange, the mysterious, and the
secret." But Eliot prescribes a more complete detachment and

a more complex architecture of the work.

Following Pound, but with a somewhat different intention, B. 18 Eliot searched the Greeks and the romantic Middle Ages for a definition of classicism. The Divine Comedy seemed to contain this pure vision at which he aimed. Pound had already studied Dante less systematically from this point of view. Both Eliot and Pound consider the Divine Comedy a masterpiece of architectural structure where the emotions are perfectly projected into the objects detached in relief.

Later, Pound used the modern French writers to complete B. 19 his tradition, in which the high points were Catullus, Dante, Villon, Browning, Gautier, and Corbière. Eliot's tradition is different but neighboring, more symbolistic and classical. Other newcomers were content to repeat what Pound had done successfully; but Eliot found a means for tying together the poetry of Laforgue and the "Metaphysicals."

The poetry of Eliot combines elements from John Donne and B. 20 Laforgue. Eliot shows that these poets had similar intentions, one trying to break off Elizabethan eloquence, and the other, the Parnassian eloquence of Baudelaire; one transposing in a philosophic world the gifts of his emotional life in order to augment its power and riches, and the other transposing the same gifts in the domain of science and superstitions.

The examination of Elizabethan works led Eliot to parallel B. 21 conclusions. With the best poets, "the idea and the simile become one" Since "a thought to Donne was an experience

which modified his sensibility," Donne's poems were transcriptions on the plane of the sensible. In many of their poems Jules Laforgue and Tristan Corbière were closer to the school of Donne than to that of any other modern English poet. But more classical poets had the same essential faculty of changing ideas into sensation and of transforming an observation into a spiritual state.

Eliot noticed how Racine, Baudelaire, and Donne--grand masters in poetic diction--were great explorers of the human heart, and how they studied the "cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts." Finally, he said: "We can only say that it seems probable that the poets of our civilization, like those who exist now, must be difficult. Our civilization is very complex and quite varied. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect of manner, in order to dislocate language so that he can express himself . . . and thus we obtain something which resembles very much the 'conceit'; we obtain, in fact, a method strangely similar to that of the Metaphysical poets, to their use of obscure words and of a similar construction." If one admits with certain symbolists such as Mallarmé and Laforgue a borrowing from England and from the poetry of the Metaphysicals, he knows that Eliot wants only to recapture in France a characteristic of English poetry. The French influence and qualities which one finds in his work are only English qualities that would have been valuable to a French work.

As interesting as this idea is, it does not require a thorough analysis here. It suffices to say that the general law requires only two elements in order to unite profitably those things having certain affinities and certain oppositions. The influence of symbolism in England has probably been governed by this law; Anglo-Saxon poetry has recaptured through French symbolism a tradition and lost values, and has recognized a richer and more brilliant aspect.

The Symbolism of T. S. Eliot

One sees exactly in Eliot's study of the Elizabethan poets how he associates the "Metaphysicals," Corbière, Laforgue, and the Moderns. When one speaks of the "symbolism" of Eliot, it is necessary not only to notice certain qualities that he has in common with the symbolists and the modern French writers, but also with Donne, Webster, Jonson, and some other Elizabethans. Yet he has borrowed more from these groups than ideas of general discipline. His poetry is as complex as the civilization of which he speaks. If he has drawn in part from a great variety of experiences, he has also exploited a large variety of authors to whose verse he has rendered a new life, just as Ronsard brought life to the verse he borrowed from the Greeks. One can hardly separate these well reconciled influences; for example, in the same verse Eliot imitates the rhythm of Gautier and the phrases of Donne.

Eliot searches with the modern French poets for models of

B. 24

formal style where emotion is transcribed by an object or an association of objects without a blending of abstractions. He has profited as the Imagists have from Bosschere. During his sojourn in Paris, Eliot knew Salmon and Apollinaire, whose theories certainly influenced him. One feels their persuasiveness in several of his poems. "La Maison de Veuf" and some other works of Salmon resemble the poems in the Sweeney group. Eliot took some processes from Apollinaire also, such as the sudden change of time and place at the end of a poem. To compare the poems of Sweeney with the poems of Tiresias is to rediscover how to combine impersonally the most diverse objects with a unique rhythm and a unique effect.

As early as 1907, Andre Salmon likewise tended in the Féeries to "return emotion to the impersonal," to make an art "create each thing by its verbal description." Thus, in Prikaz he crystallized on a kind of film "feeling transmitted by the unknown more strongly than any factual account of the most poetic element of the time, the Bolshevik Revolution, could." Eliot wrote The Waste Land to transcribe a precious sentiment of the same order. There are good reasons to think that symbolism was as important to him as to the French poets who were grouped around Apollinaire before the war.

Eliot's poetry is of their tradition. It is a clever grouping of imagined sensuous impressions, a technique Eliot had learned from the school of Apollinaire, from the Elizabethans, and Laforgue, just as he had learned techniques of

B. 25

B. 26

diction and imagery from Baudelaire and Corbière. After a brief anti-symbolist reaction in England represented by a few novelists and dramatists and accompanied by a decadence of poetry, Eliot continued to use symbolism.

The elements that he borrowed from the French symbolists can now be detached. Of Baudelaire he wrote: "He had something to do with the nineties and a great deal to do with us" (Poet and Saint, "Dial, May, 1927). Eliot received from Baudelaire a very personal sense that Baudelaire was not the only poet of his generation to feel as he did about religious values. One cannot call Baudelaire a religious poet, for his sense of religious values implies neither a belief in God nor perhaps the desire to believe in God, nor even a belief in the divine symbols of nature, but a Christian sense of the reality hidden under appearances and the value of these appearances. A feeling of this Christian and Baudelarian order occurs throughout Eliot's poetry and gives it an intensity of emotion without ever betraying itself through an accidental inspection. Finally, these two poets attain the dramatic by the same route--by the choice of concrete images.

The art of T. S. Eliot is symbolic, but stripped of the too numerous reticences of Mallarmé, freed from the subjective lyricism of Laforgue, and enriched by methods that neither one nor the other uses. "Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady" are from symphonies, like "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," and if the word symphony could ever be applied with

meaning to poetry, it suits these poems, which are musical images. Each movement of each symphony is clearly defined; the measures in it are skillfully varied. An emotion is sustained by fragments of conversation, questions, and all sorts of movements, but it is never delivered by a subjective lyricism.

Mallarmé had a similar technique, yet his language, B. 29 although more nearly perfect, was less rich. The tendency of emotion to become intellectual often forced a purely technical language. It is by the method of transposing emotion into design and vision that both arrive at forming these symbolic poems in which these agglomerations of images are so conscientiously drawn up. One being as conscientious as the other, they arrive at an abandonment of the unconscious, and by doing so, they suppress all the errors and imperfections. This technique is true of Eliot perhaps even more than of Mallarmé, for if the poems of Mallarmé float in a dream, those of Eliot are torn away from the dream continually by the intensity of a word and the stimulation of an image.

The technique of Mallarmé or of Eliot cannot be revealed B. 30 in a few lines. It would be necessary to compare again how they arrived at this transposition of the abstract into the concrete, of emotion into vision, and of what Mallarmé called synthesis and Eliot called structure. I am content with the following statement made by Eliot himself: "Donne, Poe, and Mallarmé have the passion of metaphysical speculation, but it

is evident that they do not believe in their theories nor do they imitate their methods derived from Ovid and Lucretius. They use the theories of the Metaphysicals in order to attain a more limited and exclusive goal and to refine and develop their power of sensibility and emotion. Their work was an expansion of their sensibility beyond the limits of the normal world, a discovery of a new combination proper to arouse new emotions--how to transmute the accidental into the real." Eliot profited from the theories of Donne and Marvell, but in his search for escape and transpositions, Laforgue supplied the method.

The Influence of Laforgue

Laforgue gave Eliot the means of escape through irony, verbalism, and meditation. But of course the Laforguian influence was general during this epoch in France and England. In 1908 T. S. Eliot discovered this poet; consequently, the study of Laforgue became the fashion. B. 31

The Moralities and Complaints presents two new techniques: a method of expressing personal emotions stirred by contact with the events of an epoch, and a method of expressing contempt for the ideas which destroyed this epoch--a method of explaining romantic literature and of singing a song of the suburb at the same time. So Eliot treated his generation. Next, there was an effort in the Moralities to amalgamate the resonances of appearances in order to hear the echoes of the B. 32

past and some presentiments of the future, and to make the flow of time pass through the poem.

Richard Aldington is wrong in trying to free Eliot from the charge of imitation when he says: ". . . For while it is certain that the poetry of M. Eliot has some affinities with that of Laforgue, is it not a perfect example of incoherent reasoning to conclude that affinity in spirit is imitation? To say that M. Eliot imitates Laforgue because they both have a common gift for unexpectedly juxtaposing ironic ideas would be as absurd as to say that M. Eliot imitates Ausone because they both cite other poets in their verse." "As to the rest," adds R. Aldington, "M. Eliot has as much affinity with Rimbaud and Corbière." This statement is not true; Eliot has learned from Corbière, but one feels less sympathy in his work for Corbière than for Laforgue. As to Rimbaud, the most thorough reader of the two poets cannot disclose secret affinities between them. B. 33

For Eliot as for Laforgue, the problem is to express "in a searching and modern language" the "history" of a man in his epoch (Paris for Laforgue, Europe for Eliot). They both have the ambition to be "thought-painters." Beyond the principal idea are projected designs, compositions of landscapes, circumstances which are the necessary air to the life of this idea, and moments of the past which are a varnish applied on the present. Imbedded in a language where moments of observations and very direct affirmations go side by side with B. 34

moments of verbal play, clusters of recollections are formed into images. Eliot's work establishes a perfect equilibrium between verbalistic virtuosity and violent images. The study of the Elizabethans, Laforgue, Ezra Pound, and Gautier, among others, must have helped him to decide on the quantity of these.

With Laforgue there is too often an intoxication of speech which produces words and phrases around which the images are formed, while with Eliot the images obey the force of the words less. Eliot's accomplishment was to realize the proportion and definitive balance among words, ideas, and images. T. S. Eliot's poetry is not that of an adolescent as Laforgue's poetry is, but it has crystallized images of adolescence with the solidity of art. The two poets have seen the same things, and they have heard the same voices and complaints. Both poets have used the same themes: lists of morals; interiors; the social world; suburbs--with the center of a man and his passion. If one finds in these two poets similar images, it is because they have observed the same things in the same countrysides, or because the thorough study of Laforgue's poetry has forced Eliot to feel identically and to see from the same point of view. He has given expression to certain striking images which he recalls with artistic emotion after they have been closed in an obscure chamber of the subconscious.

B. 35

We have seen already that Ezra Pound attributes qualities

B. 36

to Laforgue that he is far from possessing in the highest degree--among others, the surety of expression. Even if some foreigners know French as well as Ezra Pound or T. S. Eliot, certain formal imperfections are not sensible to them. One is somewhat astonished to hear that Laforgue uses a language which always obeys him, that his irony is sculptured from an inflexible mould, and that we have known all along his reputation of being content with very little and of being a master in the fa presto. Although Pound and Eliot have corrected the imperfections of Laforgue, they have used him as a model and have become his disciples.

The verbalism of T. S. Eliot is never the effect of a B. 37 moment of inspiration or of a drunkenness of the tongue. All verbalism is more or less a play or a sport, but games and sports have laws which one cannot ignore if one aspires to virtuosity. Laforgue himself recognized his faults and arrived at the correction in his last verse. For the same reasons, the irony of Eliot is less an affair of play on words than on facts and situations. It certainly has much less spirit, but even if his irony is less playful, it is more startling. Eliot refined Laforgue even in his irony and corrected him even down to his nonchalance. The nonchalance is not yet civilized; it attracts public notice. That of Eliot is safe from being reproached for impoliteness. Eliot practiced the use of literary clichés with more care. He left Laforgue to his song and used only expressions of good

standing, with a resulting loss of comic effect but a gain of elegance.

In summary, I do not see any essential difference between B. 38 the art of T. S. Eliot and that of Laforgue. If one gives the name of symbolism to the art of Laforgue, one can also give it to T. S. Eliot's. Eliot continues, corrects, and organizes the wanderings of Laforgue, straightens him out when he becomes sentimental, even if this sentimentalism is hidden under the cloaks of irony, and corrects his diction, which is not always in exact correspondence with his emotions. The poems of Eliot can thus appear very different from the poems of Laforgue in duration of expression, clarity of vision, and creation of illusion. It is still true that the processes of Laforgue are all present, however, from the synthetic construction of the poem up to the verbal play. Eliot has played these instruments so well that his symphony appeared completely new. Likewise, Picasso found his technique in Cézanne. In the two cases there is direct influence, since there is a living evolution.

The Influence of Corbière

The desire for parody, the compression, and the tone of B. 39 playfulness with which Eliot glides over the facts of a varied life are quite characteristic of modern poetry. All of M. Eliot's poems in French correspond perfectly to the development of the French poets of the younger generation. We will dispense with the comparisons here. The French poems of Eliot :

are excellent pastiches, excellent exercises which show the discipline to which the Imagist poets submitted themselves in order to obtain a reliable technique which would probably have escaped from them otherwise. From this point of view, the important poem is "Dans le Restaurant," a realistic poem which ends with a very beautiful escape toward another world. With a realism of extraordinary intensity and unequalled density, Eliot followed Bosschere, Pound, and Corbière in poems such as "Mr. Apollinax" and "Gerontion," where each word is a presentation of a real object stripped of all mist and dust, of emotion and sentimentalism. Eliot possessed at this time Rimbaud's harmony and proportion, and Corbière's freedom of expression, movement, and spontaneous imagery.

The Influence of Gautier

Corbière and Rimbaud rejoined the literary tradition of B. 40 Gautier. We have seen that Pound and Eliot profited from their authority in order to put a stop to the great ease with which Americans produced free verse. The two poets succeeded in creating model quatrains composed in the manner of Gautier; these disciples would soon have other disciples. When he imitated Gautier, Eliot was, nevertheless, master of his method and of the magic powers of Gautier. Pound and Eliot--the one in Maunderley, the other in the poems where the American-type Sweeney passes, in "Burbank with a Baedeker," "Bleinstein with a Cigar, " "Whispers of Immortality," "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service," and especially "The

Hippopotamus"--successfully handled the tools of Gautier with a dexterity equal to their own, and in the case of Eliot, especially, created some caricatures surpassing in power the romantic designs of the "Emaux and Camées."

All that is in Eliot's poetry was in Gautier's work in B. 41 general--repetitions, contrasts, repetitions of the contrasts, perfect usage of the words of caricature and the images; but all were more abundant in Eliot than in Gautier. The goal pursued by Pound and Eliot was attained. The strict forms employed by Gautier passed through their works into the poems of H. Read in England and into those of Elinor Wylie, Hart Crane, and A. MacLeish, among others, in America.

But the influence of Eliot was not born in the United B. 42 States. He has a very strong influence on the young people today. A means other than his to express irony, or a technique other than his to express anguish and the tragic has not been found. He has enriched Imagism by producing an apt formula to express more things. Everyone had reproached the Imagists for their brightness of vision. Without losing the precise reality of their images, Eliot gave to the body of the poem a means of sustaining the most varied objects and the most diverse observations.

APPENDIX C

Mirsky, D. S. "T. S. Eliot et la fin de la poésie bourgeoise."
Echanges, December, 1931, pp. 44-58. [editor's translation]

I believe that T. S. Eliot has no equal among the bourgeois poets of today, whether they be in France or in England. C. 1
I know that the regime of the cenacle, which established itself in bourgeois poetry for more than a generation, makes it doubly difficult to demonstrate this proposition. Poetic glories are limited to some schools that I am very far from having completely examined. Now it may well be that there were some among those into which I have not looked which conceal poets no less remarkable than Eliot. This mechanical difficulty of penetrating into all the schools is perhaps still less than that of acquiring all the languages necessary. For, essentially, the regime of the cenacle is such that each cenacle possesses an exclusive idiom not easy to master in a brief time. The growing glory of Eliot himself has furnished an example of this linguistic difficulty. Some thousands of readers have failed when faced with his poetic grammar, and some well-informed critics (notably I. A. Richards and Edwin Muir) have committed the imprudence of analyzing his work without having learned the language. The obscurity of today's poets is no longer reduced to simple difficulties of logic and to accumulated ellipses which have become obligations making modern poetry defeating and inaccessible at first glance.

What is more serious is that each poet has his own particular language of symbols that he scarcely cares to make his reader understand and that only a very experienced psychoanalyst could read from an open book. The poet no longer wishes to be understood, and the reader no longer wishes to understand. Poetry has ceased to be a means of communication; the poetic forum has become a market of snobbish values that one finds by feeling, without interesting himself in their intrinsic contents. Poetic glories have become purely fortuitous and are attached to some poetically void persons. Also, the scholarship of poetic values does not possess any interest for whoever wants to study the poetry or the poetic sensibility of the fading bourgeoisie. Since it hardly says more than the reader likes or understands, it is a phenomenon of social organization which relieves only sociologists and economists. C. 2

But do the bourgeois poets deserve more? Is there something of value behind the disconcerting shop-front of their originalities? Never has the poetry been so empty of sense, so devoid of all socially valuable content. The worlds that the poets construct are rigorously private, arbitrary, and as exclusive as dreams. Since no one really needs them, the mind can amuse itself by merely reviewing them. The feeling (and by feeling I understand everything which contains any judgments of value) is scarcely found ahead of reaction. The only thing linking the efforts of similar poets is the C. 3

distortion of language, emptying it of all social sense.

Against the background of makers of crossed words and crossed images, the number of poets whose work has some inter-individual interest is quite small. Likewise, there is among those a smaller number who speak of really significant things. The importance of a poet lies in the function of two independent variables--his poetic power and the human and historical importance of his theme. Poetic power alone is a neutral value just like a cannon whose destructive force does not depend on the reason that fires it. In the great poets of the preceding age the two variables had a strong tendency to coincide. Dante, Milton, and Goethe had at the same time the most powerful voices and the most representative minds of their times. Victor Hugo was the last great poet who was at the same time a popular poet of the living forces of his age. But even before the death of Hugo, bourgeois poetry, castrated of its last revolutionary vigor, had ceased to give birth.

What makes Eliot different from all these poets is that in him a rare poetic power is related to a theme of real social importance, the only historically valuable and sincere theme accessible to a bourgeois poet of today. His contemporaries are only so many manifestations of the death of poetry and of bourgeois civilization; he alone has been able to create a poetry of the dead.

Eliot's theme is properly the only accessible theme in

C. 4

C. 5

C. 6

a true poet of the decadent bourgeoisie. The true poet is one who has a conscious comprehension and intuition of historic reality. One could object that possibly the struggle against the history of a class devoted to the dead can well become the inspiration of a poet of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Le Caton de Lucain, a militant of a condemned class, is a figure which does not permit one to be highly poetic. Why then would Fascism inspire a poet of the stature of Eliot? Well before the moment when the bourgeoisie was to be overcome, well before its physical and military defeat, it lost all justification, even in its own eyes, of its struggle against the class of the future. The bourgeoisie is empty of values; all the living values belong to the working class. If the idealistic bourgeois poet wants to oppose the Revolution, something spiritually positive and convincing, he can only resurrect some medieval ghost--like the Catholicism of Claudel--with the inevitable consequence of losing all real value for his contemporaries. Thus, the active struggle of the bourgeoisie against the Revolution is ideologically sterile.

The obscurity of Eliot is also a very interesting subject to approach from this point of view. Eliot is knowingly, aggressively obscure, with a vengeance--a true militant for obscurity and for the right of the poet not to be understood. However, his obscurity is different from that of most of his contemporaries who strive to be incomprehensible because they

have hardly anything to say worth the pain of being understood. For Eliot obscurity is a defensive weapon which permits him to speak of esoteric things which must not be understood by the common man. The depth of his poetry is obscure. It is not an exclusive world of associated images expressed by the aid of symbols carefully chosen to be disconcerting in order to create a confused subconscious filled with matter. The depth of his poetry is a common social experience summing up on the individual plane all aspects of the death of a civilization. But to speak openly would have been to lose modesty and betray a revered nudity. Strong inhibitions due in part (as some have insisted too much) to a Puritan education and to the inferiority complex of the American high-brow, for whom the fact of not being born English constitutes an incurable injury, have come to his aid and have facilitated the task of making obscure what could become too clear. A thorough analysis of his poetry makes it clear that his obscurity is completely exterior, completely superimposed, and completely made of ellipses and silences; the foundation of symbols with which he operates is remarkably transparent and devoid of investigation and arbitration. He possesses so rigorous an order and logic that one can almost class the work of Eliot as allegory. The Waste Land is arranged completely around three fundamental symbols--the Wet, the Dry, and the Hot. These same symbols almost totally dominate his work. The obscurity which is superimposed on a simple and

clear drama resides especially in the series of images, the ingenious arranging, and the disconcerting poetic which links Eliot to surrealism--especially to surrealist films, of which he is the unrecognized precursor.

Like all great decadent poetry, that of Eliot is at the same time violently novel and solidly traditional. The tradition to which he is bound is what one could call the English secentismo, the powerful school which began with Shakespeare and Chapman, attained its most individual expression in Donne and Webster, and after a long decadence, made a last appearance in the work of Pope. On this serious and robust trunk is grafted the daintily affected irony of Laforgue; and the originality of Eliot's style comes largely from this juxtaposition of sonorities with the ironic secrets of the decadent French. The Eliot montage owes a great many of its best effects to blank verse passages, exact imitations of the Elizabethans interrupted suddenly by a modern and vulgar dissonance. The empire which trained Eliot in the English secentismo is due to a complex play of attractions and repulsions. It is natural that the light of English poetry should glow over the last poet of the English bourgeoisie. C. 8

The position of Eliot today is in many ways similar to that of Donne three hundred years ago. Donne is a rather rare example in the past of a true poet gifted with a great poetic power whose theme, though historically valuable, was more esoteric than popular--a typical poet of a dead elite. C. 9

Attracted to Donne by a similarity too great to go unrecognized, Eliot is at the same time in continuous struggle against what he finds foreign and hostile in the old poet--against his mastered but always living flesh, against his soul, his mind, and his incapability to detach himself from the flesh and become spirit.

The similarity of Eliot to Laforgue is more direct and immediate. The French poet is the true father of Eliot according to poetic affiliation. The bonds which unite them are especially apparent in the work of Eliot's youth (poems contained in Prufrock and Other Observations, 1917, and in Ara vos prec, 1920) and almost disappear in his mature work. Romantic irony implying death as the only possible voyage toward paradise is the point of departure and return for Laforgue as well as for Eliot. The Laforguian atmosphere is diffuse in the verse of Eliot's youth; it is only little by little that a wholly different poetry rises up in the end--a poetry liberated from the vacillating ambiguity of the decadent, a poetry where the irony disappears before a tragic and sexual ambivalence of a consumptive is replaced by the renunciation of an ascetic.

The commentators on Eliot make a great case out of his romantic irony, an opposing of a repeated action on two keys--the sublime and the sordid. Initially, all such episodes in the poems are without doubt linked to Laforgue and to the romanticism of the Decadents. But in Eliot's context the

C. 10

C. 11

irony of contrasts is no longer outstanding, nor is the juxtaposition of beauty and ugliness. It is the pity and the horror of living reality that are common to both poets.

Dampness and Dryness are the two fundamental symbols of the cycle beginning with "Gerontion," of which the center is The Waste Land. The Damp, its principal manifestations being water and flowers, is life, sex, and the eternal return of the seasons: all the variety of the sensual and physical life and the world of passion and feeling. An ambivalence in Eliot's attitude toward Dampness is evident; his attitude is not completely one of repulsion. The critic Edmund Wilson found in Prufrock and The Waste Land a permanent trace in Eliot of juvenile renunciation. But it is not the individual psychoanalysis of the poet which interests us; it is the social and historic range of his development of feeling. Essentially, this point of view is the nostalgia of the lover dominant in Prufrock, and sometimes discernible much later as little by little it is transformed into a horror of sex and the reproductive function and into a phobia of life which is biologically defeating. The Waste Land is constructed on a skeleton borrowed from comparative religion--the animalistic idea of the eternal resurrection of the vital god of the seasons. With the horror and the vulgarity of the Damp triumphant, the poet opposes the dryness and sterility from the depths of his decadent and defeated being. But the Dryness and the real, concrete sterility are only that same Dampness

reduced to a very small and powerless dose. Completely imprisoned by the vital sap, the world is still more humiliating and torturing. It was this image I. A. Richards saw when he called Eliot the only poet presenting us a world of empty and sterile values without beliefs or ideals.

What was for the humanist and positivist Richards a C. 13
bare, smooth table about which the scientific spirit freed from prejudices of practical reason rejoiced, was for Eliot himself a horrifying yet true picture of bourgeois civilization, empty of faith, and void of hope and vitality. To Richards we say, The Waste Land must not be read as a personal and subjective poem, but as the complete rendering of a type of social experience--the death of bourgeois society. Prosaically, Eliot is not really politically inclined. His recent interest in politics is unfortunate. In his poems directly political allusions are, for the most part, quite simple. The esoteric, obscure bourgeois minds who subconsciously have a sharp, direct experience of the last malady of bourgeois society are incapable of speaking intelligently with bourgeois reasoning. The political naiveté of Eliot in defending the bourgeois is of the same order as the obscurity of his poetry. The poet has shown that the bourgeois speaks only of ineptitudes. The world he describes is only a dry, sterile desert of cactus, but he is not resigned to renounce in the least the life which remains for him.

Eliot did not want to linger in the waste land nor C. 14

remain a hollow man. As heir of the dead poets, he wanted to leave the desert; like Claudel, he chose religion as his guiding star. The honesty of Eliot stands out in relation to Claudel because what he searched for and found was not an image or sham resuscitated from a dead civilization nor a positive system dressed up by rusty symbolism. He found a definitive escape from life and from the bad cycle of the seasons in a negative dimension. What Eliot asked of religion was existence and being which would scarcely depend on life--a religion of pure spirit, freed from all vitality and psychology; a religion purely pneumatic, mystical, and extremely intellectual. Rejecting all symbolism which could sanctify life, Eliot found Fire to be the symbol for which he searched.

Even in The Waste Land (in spite of what Richards said) C. 15
 Fire vanquished the Dampness and the Dryness. Between this poem and his purely religious poems (to which the poetic work of Eliot since 1927 is reduced) came a group of highly important writings, the fragments of an unfinished drama (of which "The Hollow Men" appears originally to have been a part), and some writings in prose, of which the most interesting is the essay on an Anglican preacher of the seventeenth century, Lancelot Andrewes.

Of all Eliot's prose writings the essay on Andrewes is C. 16
 certainly the most important. Yet still more interesting alongside this is the remarkable Fragment of an Agon, where

the theme of life is resumed in a more realistic and vulgar tone, and where formulas of extraordinary force due to a clever utilization of dissonance and disgusting vulgarity have been found to express the ultimate horror of life as only "birth, coupling, and death." In order not to leave any doubt about the moral of the fragment, he supplied as epigraph some words of St. John of the Cross concerning the soul which cannot come to a union with God "without great purity, and this purity is not gained without detachment from every created thing and sharp mortification" (Dark Night of the Soul, Book II, XXIV).

In the religious poems of recent years the style of Eliot is restricted; more and more it is "small and dry." The great symphonic movement of "Gerontion," The Waste Land, and Fragment of an Agon no longer returns. Purgatorial fire refines the bones of the poet. The air is rarer and emptier. The Being he seeks is assuredly outside life and bears no resemblance to life. It is not in life, nor in historical reality where he finds the values which save the sterile, dry bourgeois. The kingdom he is searching for is not of this world: such is the answer of Eliot the poet. But Eliot the publisher evidently believes the values of the mystical spiritualist can be integrated to affirm that he is a classicist in literature, an Anglo-Catholic in religion, and a royalist in politics. His poetry shows that he is none of these, and that what he found in the Fire "che es

C. 17

gli affina"¹ is indeed nothingness.

¹From Dante's Purgatorio, Canto XXVI, 1.148: "which to him is refining." The exact wording is as follows: "With such words he disappeared in the refining flame." See The Waste Land, V, 1.428, for the above quotation.

APPENDIX D

Gillet, Louis. "M. T.-S. Eliot et les faux dieux." Revue des deux mondes, July, 1934, pp. 199-210. [editor's translation]

In America, a professor,
In England, a journalist . . .
In Yorkshire, a lecturer;
In London, somewhat a banker,
In Germany, a philosopher, . . .
I wander always from this to that
To diverse beats of tra la la,
From Damas up to Omaha . . .

It was about fifteen years ago that M. T.-S. Eliot, the D. 1
young hope of literature and a lieutenant of J. M. Murray,
director of The Athenaeum, published this comical epitaph
about himself in French verse after the style of Laforgue:

Everyone will display my cenotaphe
At the burning coasts of Mozambique.

Concluding this small ironic and disabused piece, Mélange
adultère de tout, the author assumed a gaiety in which it
was easy to discern the grimace.

It was in the days after the war, in an overworked world D. 2
aching with tragic emotions where it would have appeared bad
manners to be serious. The poems of Prufrock, contracted by
dryness, expressed a note of acid humor which was quite the
style of the day. Everyone is grateful to the author for pre-
serving sensibility, for affecting a style of blunt and angu-
lar writing, for entertaining us with indifferent sensations,

and for tracing vivid sketches of a somewhat foggy, sordid morning on a gloomy street in London where the wind tears from the face of a filthy passer-by an aimless smile which floats high and vanishes along the level of the roofs.

These slight collections give the impression of a reserved, modest, and bare character. The Waste Land and "Ash Wednesday," published in 1930, were two significant contributions to the spiritual history of the post-war period. The first poem is concerned with a sort of dismal painting, somewhat recalling the nightmares of A Season in Hell; it is an excessively complicated, laboriously allegorical painting, but nevertheless strongly moving in its expression of the moral distress, the desert, and the ruins left by the great slaughter--veritable devastations of the heart. The following poem, with its penitential title, marked already a debut of convalescence. No longer is there the total despair and gloomy apathy of nothingness, but an expectation and hope of a dawn and a possible resurrection. D. 3

If I have begun by sketching the poetic physiognomy of M. T.-S. Eliot, it is not because I consider him (if you will pardon me for saying it) to be a very great poet. It is because this small ascetic volume, which has continued to please and has defended itself against everything, is indeed a very significant book, a precious guide, a map and chart of English temperament during the fifteen years following the armistice. D. 4

This significance explains the authority attached to the name of M. Eliot, making him one of the most influential masters of the younger poets. While his old friend M. Murray, a disturbed and vagabond spirit, moves away from the investigation of new truths adhered to by half of Moscow and lays down the pride of his own culture at the foot of the Soviet crib where the future wails, M. Eliot follows a diametrically inverse route. Instead of extending himself to search for new adventures, he realizes the necessity to stabilize and collect himself. Where others speak of demolishing, he thinks, on the contrary, of constructing. In a doubtful society resigned from thinking, he wants to believe, at least, in the existence of truth. In brief, this critic occupies a position in England somewhat analogous to that in France of M. Julien Benda or M. Jacques Maritain. D. 5

What adds interest to M. T.-S. Eliot's position is that this leader of English opinion is only an Englishman by adoption. M. T.-S. Eliot is of American origin, a grand-nephew, I believe, of the famous President Eliot, the long-time rector of Harvard University. Possibly, the gravity and passionate conviction of the young Eliot came from him. I had occasion to meet him only once, in his office on Russell Square, the general section of the bookstores in London, behind the British museum, a neighborhood of gardens and of silence D. 6

Five or six years ago, after writing an essay on the Bishop of Winchester, Lancelot Andrewes, the English Saint D. 7

François de Sales, M. Eliot announced that he proposed to write later three works, the first to be devoted to contemporary heresies. He executed this project, in part, in a series of lectures delivered last autumn at the University of Virginia. The aristocratic frame and security of the old house of Jefferson and the pure, delicate, slightly provincial atmosphere withdrawn from modern affairs were proper for this enterprise. It was a peaceful place, at a fixed point, in which to consider the disorder of modern thought and to collect oneself and conduct a sort of spiritual retreat.

It is a pity this manual of heresy does not fulfill all its promise and is too scanty for such a subject. Three hours for such a picture. It is too bad the reader waited for that canvas. To correct the error, Eliot would need to apply himself more deeply to his subject. He should have also broadened his references to English contemporary letters and the names of recent authors. Is he missing examples in Germany, France, Russia, and even in America? Is it necessary to consider English thought an independent phenomenon with no outside influences? Perhaps at the last moment the author found himself taking the shortest way. He weakened before the undertaking and, in place of a regular order, he limited himself to a lively bickering. A clarion call and a fanfare were enough, it seemed to him, to stir up the spirits and provoke the reflections. It would suffice to make a gesture of proposing a theme: the germ would come from him, and heavenly

D. 8

grace would do the rest.

In reality, the merit of this manifesto lies neither in its volume, nor in its documentation. It is a declaration of an attitude more than a book and reveals the presence and person of the author. He is a man who thinks lofty thoughts. The discourse is a monologue of which the development is of no importance because it will always recall the same motifs. A phrase or a word evokes a prior study that the motifs resume. This small book is less a particular work than a mark of direction for the entire work of M. Eliot. Only a title and a flag need be added. D. 9

One is embarrassed to sum up a work of this genre. It is surprising to encounter formulas acknowledged by all the young people of today: "Our desire for unity, for economy, and for synthesis, as opposed to the disorder and intellectual waste of the preceding epoch--the willingness to reunite with the wisdom of the past; the design of re-establishing accord between the individual and the race; in a word, strife on all the front against liberalism, etc." These are singular speeches from the mouth of an Anglo-Saxon. Romanticism has no more followers in England than in France. M. Eliot speaks of Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth with the same reserve that we do of Hugo and with no more indulgence for Dickens, Browning, or Carlyle than we. M. Eliot has made carnage of Swinburne. These children are terrible! This is a game of massacre, quite pleasing, as I see it, for one who speaks so D. 10

much of tradition. It is amazing to see an Englishman--Catholic, but not Roman Catholic--declare that he would strongly approve a Papal Index in defining the nation: "Not too many Jews, especially liberals!" But it is a Yankee who speaks, and there are millions of Jews in New York.

The point of departure from these studies is an article D. 11 which appeared in 1917, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." It concerns a particular aspect of the problem of tradition, itself an aspect of the problem of life. Even though everyone speaks a lot about tradition, it is not simple. The English are tradition-conscious people, for they have preserved the wig of the barristers as well as the scarlet tunic of the Beef-eaters at the Tower of London, and their traditions reconcile respect for monarchy with a cabinet governed by a working class.

In such matters I believe almost in absolute formulas. D. 12 These are not problems to be treated in abstract. I am for Sainte-Beuve more than for Saint Thomas Aquinas. The great Saint Thomas, like Jehovah, is an intelligence which contemplates the universe in repose and the unalterable light of the seventh day. These are the spirits of Sunday; we are the humble workers of Monday.

In summing up, these questions are not much better D. 13 known than the laws of heredity. One can deny his father; one is not free to choose him or not to have one at all. Even though one may greatly rebel, the greatest rebel is

not always the least likely son. The English have a good proverb; "Blood is thicker than water," they say, and need they say more? That is why I find it difficult to follow M. T.-S. Eliot. When he mixes questions of race with those of classicism and orthodoxy, he is literal and rigid and combines sensual order and physiology with reason and justice. All this is to me extremely confusing, a mixture of terms borrowed from different languages that must be distinguished with great care. It is necessary to let theology take care of itself and take greater pains with history or literary criticism. To each his own technique; everyone will only turn out the better for it.

The truth is that for M. Eliot the problem laid down is very specifically Anglo-Saxon, which can be in no degree that of another land. He dares many of the contemporary English writers to chance wrong, to cross the religious domain, and to become idols haphazardly--the first comers--with what falls into their hands through whim or feeling. It is a kind of religious rubbish that one adopts when he lacks the authentic item, the real thing, as the English say, for want of the word of God. Thus, everyone has seen for himself a crowd of "mystics"--social, humanitarian, esthetic, decadent, industrial, progressive, scientific, naturalistic, and Freudian. D. 14

Here, I must say that M. Eliot clearly grasps an essential cause, the "extreme degeneration of some Protestant D. 15

Churches," and the state of profound physiologic and cerebral anemia into which the Church of England has progressively fallen for two centuries. The churches have carried the germ of this illness from the beginning. They were born dying, without strength or ties, and with a completely negative credo which has rapidly become volatile in pure agnosticism.

Undoubtedly, this state of denutrition and extreme religious indigence of the Church of England had grave consequences for English thought, especially in the last century. M. Eliot attributes to it the "childish character which caused English literature, focus of the principal intellectual centers of Europe, to have a provincial, warped, childish air." M. Eliot shows that the solutions are made only for the happy few who have the benefit of a previous background in Christian education. D. 16

It is necessary to add that more than one of these traits of which M. Eliot complains are not peculiar to England alone and to the state of the English Church. The whole of the modern world (one would have to say the spirit of the world and of the century) is against religion and the religious spirit. In considering D. H. Lawrence, for example, M. Eliot is greatly inspired when he recognizes that the danger of the error (and of Lawrence's seduction) is that it almost always contains a parcel of truth. Everything is a mixture of good and bad. True, there is a "demon" in D. H. Lawrence; he is greatly possessed by certain images and ideas. His illness D. 17

is no less of spirit than of body; however, a malady is not a damnation. That impossible man sometimes has a prodigious instinct for the divine: he wrote in Boat of the Dead some of the most beautiful religious verse in the world. His mistake was relying too much on his genius; it is the mistake of all the inspired. No one can judge, says M. Eliot, as good or bad the quality of his inspiration. No one can judge his own holiness, for the true saint is humble. He knows that we are impure, and that scarcely anything absolutely good can come out of a corrupt heart and a soiled flesh. For this reason the Church does well to try those who interfere by making the prophets and reformers surround themselves with prudence and caution before pronouncing that they are concerned in the name of God.

Again, one must admire similar maxims in the mouth of a Protestant. One can understand what M. Eliot intends when he speaks of tradition: he intends the sense of the Church's definition as the body of doctrines and of religious truths, founded on the Scripture, attested and deepened by all of the Fathers and theologians. He condemns and rejects, as a dead skin fallen from power, absolute individualism, the folly of free examination, and the crumbling of the Protestant sects like the weakly compromise of the official Church in its lack of resistance against the modern spirit. The first task to undertake is to rebuild the Church, "this unaffected factory of God," and to supply it with a body and soul and the

consciousness of its role and traditions. Without the Church there is no salvation.

It is true that M. Eliot rejects the name of Protestant, D. 19 because he ceases to protest. He abjures his father (as Barres said of Psichari) only to resume relations with his fathers. He puts aside the nineteenth century in order to resume accord with the continuity of the other centuries. He scarcely wants to know of the hybrid Reform conceived by a limited mind of a female, "the most mediocre of the Tudors," this small bourgeois that everyone calls the great Elizabeth. He declares himself Catholic as one did in the Middle Ages, as did Dante, Villon, and Chaucer. He embraces in his Catholicism all that the men who constructed the cathedrals of York, Peterborough, Durham, and of Westminster understood--everything that the pilgrims of Canterbury embraced. He wrote a beautiful book on Dante, his favorite poet. In his eyes Dante was the epitome of Christianity and an influencer of Shakespeare himself, not so much in the genius and grace which made the poet as in the majesty of his architecture and the solidity of his fundamental design of creation. In his Faust Goethe could have borrowed from Dante only the scene of its immense mystery.

Indeed, Eliot's Christian themes, like the foundation of D. 20 decor in the façade of Notre Dame, were elaborated by centuries of thought and love. At the same time he worked at his own risk and peril on the petty adventures and illusory

fantasies that the brief experience of man can present.

D. 21

With all this, and in spite of the breadth of his Catholicism, M. Eliot remained unshakeable on one point. He remained an "English Catholic," which is not the same thing as a Catholic Englishman. He paused on the question of Rome. "There is there," he wrote somewhere, "an overly important stake, so that one can leave matters in the hands of oneself." The refuge completely shaded it. It was always, as in Doullens, the question of the unique commandment. I am not entering into the discussion, and I am trying not to quarrel with M. Eliot. These affairs can be resolved in a spirit of controversy.

APPENDIX E

Wahl, Jean. "Poems 1909-1925, by T. S. Eliot." La Nouvelle Revue française, April, 1933, pp. 689-690. [editor's translation]

A long series of streets, a cage of stairs, a waste land-- these are some of the preferred places for the conjuring of minds to which the poetry of T. S. Eliot is devoted. The usual, under a glance which hallucinates, is transformed into a nightmare. Sometimes we are in a vast inundated land: the "protozoic mud" of the tongues of fog lick collapsing palates; the crabs and toads crawl in an insensible sky, under a moon which seems to have smallpox. Sometimes we find ourselves in a land of great dryness, where thunder without rain can be eternally heard; sometimes it is simply our worn-out, ruined, and moulded world. These instants of the day resemble the end of the day, the still-life; some cigarette stubs and oyster shells lie about, accompanying odors of oil and tar and frayed sounds of an organ of barbarity. The memory also is frayed, dissolved, and shattered; it no longer presents only a crowd stirring with distorted, twisted, sometimes withered and sticky things, limbs and larva. But in the same way, little by little, the unity of the human being reappears; the bits of memory join in a new way; the identity of situations in the most distant times is revealed. Fear is born before this universality, which is also born: "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." Redeemer of terror. Perhaps our

salvation is in this dissolution of ourselves. Will the sound of thunder finally make the rain appear? Will the flood re-create life? Behind the warped scenery, can we find the true life? Already we know that certain spectacles and poignant sorrows have come from beyond, and only a shadow which is accompanied by the sound of bells falls "between the desire and the spasm, between the essence and the descent."

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