
by

Dominic Charles Edward Rowland

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University College London

July 1996
Abstract

This thesis examines T. S. Eliot’s critical interests in the inter-war period by means of attention to his contributions to *The Criterion*, and discussion of their place in contemporary controversies which occupied literary magazines. The preface situates this research in relation to previous work on this aspect of Eliot’s career, explains the use of controversy as a model for studying *The Criterion*, and outlines my methodology. The introduction looks at the genesis of *The Criterion*, analysing Eliot’s statements about the function of literary magazines and journalism, and the evolution of his ideas about the range of interests appropriate to them. Chapter one traces Eliot’s allegiance to classicism, and its discussion in *The Criterion*, centering on the role of T. E. Hulme, and exploring Eliot’s theoretical arguments with John Middleton Murry and the editors of *The Calendar of Modern Letters*. Chapter two discusses the influence of the French cultural critic, Julien Benda, and his antagonist, Charles Maurras, on Eliot’s classicism during the twenties, and the place of these complex affinities in Eliot’s concept of "the mind of Europe". Chapter three reviews the discussion and publication of D. H. Lawrence’s work in *The Criterion*, and surveys the changes in Eliot’s attitude towards him. Chapter four assesses *The Criterion’s* part in contemporary controversies over censorship, and Eliot’s critique of the censorship dogma of the Conservative government, and the popular press. Chapter five considers responses in *The Criterion* to the Spanish Civil War, particularly analysing Eliot’s editorial writing. Through readings of his editorial articles, the chapter attempts to show that Eliot maintained a philosophically founded neutrality. The conclusion looks at the end of *The
*Criterion*, and at Eliot's assessment of its achievements in his last editorial writings and in texts from the forties.
Contents

Abstract p. 2

Contents p. 4

Acknowledgements p. 6

References and abbreviations p. 7

Preface p. i

Introduction p. 8

Chapter 1. T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, and The Criterion’s "classicist tendency" p. 31
   i. Eliot and classicism
   ii. T. E. Hulme: "the forerunner of a new attitude of mind"
   iii. Hulme, Eliot, and The Criterion
   iv. The Criterion, classicism, and controversy
   v. Conclusion

Chapter 2. Julien Bend and Charles Maurras: Classicism and European Ideas p. 82
   i. "The European Idea"
   ii. "The French Intelligence": Julien Bend
   iii. Charles Maurras and the Action Française
   iv. "A very 'catholic' canon"
   v. Conclusion

   i. Introduction: "the most interesting novelist in England"
   ii. Eliot and Lawrence’s obituary
   iii. Reviewing Lawrence
   iv. "'Rotten and rotting others'": Lawrence, heresy, and discipleship
   v. Lawrence’s contributions to The Criterion: "The Woman Who Rode Away" and sexual politics
   vi. "That stewed T. S. Eliot quarterly"

Chapter 4. The Criterion and censorship p. 186
   i. Introduction
   ii. "One more episode in a national scandal": difficulties in publishing James Joyce
   iii. "The uncritical spirit of our race": the suppressions of D. H. Lawrence
   iv. "Do We Need a Censor?": Jix, Radclyffe Hall, and obscenity
v. The censorship of films
vi. Church, state, and the fourth estate
vii. Conclusion

Chapter 5. Politics and commitment:

*The Criterion* and the Spanish Civil War

i. "Authors take sides"?
ii. Non-intervention and neutrality
iii. Eliot and the contexts of the left
iv. "The just impartiality of a Christian philosopher"

v. The war and the press: mediation and understanding
vi. Writing and reviewing responses to the war
vii. Conclusion

Conclusion: the end of *The Criterion* and after

Works Cited
Acknowledgements

Work on this thesis was funded during the first three years by a British Academy Major State Studentship, and my thanks are due to the Academy for that support. I also received grants from the Graduate School at University College London, which enabled me to attend conferences in Nottingham and Leeds, and from the Chambers Fund, administered by the English Department at University College London, which enabled me to purchase a complete reprint set of The Criterion at the beginning of my research. This was invaluable.

I would like to thank colleagues, staff, and friends in the English Department of University College London for the intellectual stimulus I have received since I first joined the department as an undergraduate in 1987. Karl Miller supervised the first year of my research, and read some of my work in the last few months. John Sutherland was my supervisor, and he encouraged and cajoled me through the writing and revision, without flagging.

Lastly, I acknowledge the support of my family. My parents never lost patience, or stinted in their support and encouragement. This thesis is dedicated to them.
References and abbreviations

All references to, and quotations from *The Criterion* are taken from the complete reprinted edition, published as *The Criterion*: 1922-1939, in eighteen volumes, edited by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1967). I have also consulted holdings of original numbers of the magazine in the British Library, the library of the University of London, and the rare books and manuscripts collection of University College London. As far as possible, all citations from the magazine occur in the main body of the text, rather than in footnotes, by volume and page number, e.g. (I, p.1). All articles from *The Criterion* cited in the thesis are also listed in the bibliography. The first reference to other texts by T. S. Eliot is documented fully in a footnote, and where appropriate, subsequent citations employ the following abbreviations, adopted from *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, edited by A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994):

- **NTDC**  *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber & Faber, 1948.

Unless otherwise indicated, ellipses in quotations have been inserted by me.
Preface

This thesis is an exploration of some of the ideas and issues which were discussed in *The Criterion*, the literary magazine edited by T. S. Eliot between 1922 and 1939. In comparison with the vast amount of criticism that has accumulated on Eliot's life and work, there is relatively little published critical discussion of this aspect of his literary career. John D. Margolis draws substantially on material published in *The Criterion* in his book, *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939*, as does Roger Kojecký in his *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, and a number of essays and articles have been written about it.\(^1\) However, the only published book-length work wholly devoted to exploring and giving an account of *The Criterion* remains Agha Shahid Ali's book *T. S. Eliot as Editor* (1986), and it is pertinent from the outset to situate this thesis in relation to Dr. Ali's work. The contribution made by this thesis over and beyond what is covered in Ali's book can be divided into three principal areas: sources, subject matter, and methodology.

Dr. Ali divides the seventeen year lifespan of the magazine into five periods: the European *Criterion* (1922-1925), the New and Monthly *Criterions* (1926-1928), the Quarterly *Criterion* (1928-1930), the Marxist *Criterion* (1930-

---

1933), and the Failed *Criterion* (1933-1939). The chronological demarcations are congruent, according to Ali, with distinctively different phases in the magazine’s development, and they form the basis of the five chapters of his book. In each of these he surveys and describes the range of material - short stories, poems, letters, excerpts from novels, as well as critical essays, book and periodical reviews, chronicles of the arts, and editorial pieces - that was published in the magazine during these periods, and usefully includes lists of the writers whom the magazine published at different times. Ali’s framework is thus an essentially chronological approach, and his work is committed to tracing the modifications in the magazine’s character over seventeen years, by means of general reference to many of the individual pieces that were published in *The Criterion*.

Dr. Ali’s work is especially informative about the early years of the magazine, referring widely to contemporary primary sources, which he uses to paint a picture of the individuals and institutions who came together to found, finance, and produce the magazine in the early twenties. He narrates the changes in the magazine’s financial backing, from the initial patronage of Lady Rothermere, wife of the newspaper magnate, to the assumption of responsibility for financing and producing the magazine by Faber and Gwyer in the mid-twenties. Ali refers valuably to a diverse range of private texts, such as diaries and correspondence, by writers who were close to Eliot or otherwise connected with *The Criterion* and other organs of literary journalism and publishing, including Virginia Woolf, Conrad Aiken, Katherine Mansfield, Aldous Huxley, and Arnold Bennett. He also

---

cites memoirs of Eliot, and of the period more generally, by Robert Sencourt, John Gould Fletcher, and those collected in Allen Tate’s *T. S. Eliot: the Man and His Work*, especially that by Herbert Read. Since the publication of Ali’s research, an important primary source for scholars has been published, the first volume of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* (1988), covering Eliot’s life from his birth in 1888 until the end of 1922, i.e. just after the publication of the first number of *The Criterion*. This has brought invaluable biographical material about Eliot, and information about his early journalistic career, into the public domain, although parts of Eliot’s correspondence have not survived: there are very few letters from the period 1910-1914, and those that Eliot wrote to Lady Rothermere were not kept. I refer to and quote from this volume of Eliot’s *Letters* throughout this thesis, in order to situate Eliot’s attitudes to literary journalism (the foundation of *The Criterion* in particular), and to the subjects of controversy, in relation to the development of his literary career, and to historical and social contexts. It is difficult to get access to Eliot’s letters subsequent to this period, and with the exception of a few which are quoted in secondary texts, such as Tate’s collection, I have not been able to refer to them. None the less, the publication of the first tranche of letters has enabled this thesis to augment Ali’s valuable work, in respect of information about the circumstances leading up to the first publication of the magazine.

The recent publication of Eliot’s 1926 Clark Lectures and 1933 Turnbull Lectures as *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* (1993) constitutes another major addition to the range of Eliot’s texts now in the public domain. Unfortunately, this volume appeared when research for this thesis was at a relatively advanced stage, and therefore I have not been able to incorporate the insights that this book offers
into Eliot’s criticism, and its relation to his literary journalism, as fully as would be ideal. I do make substantial reference to another set of lectures that Eliot gave in 1933, the Page-Barbour lectures, published as *After Strange Gods*, and my discussion of this work extends the attention that Ali gives to it, and suggests that there is a relation between its rhetoric and ideology, and the rhetoric and ideology of many of Eliot’s contributions to *The Criterion*.

There is inevitable overlap of subject material between Dr. Ali’s book and this thesis, which is both general and specific. Generally, both of us focus our discussion and analysis on Eliot’s editorial commentaries, and perceive these to be the central texts in the formation of the magazine’s character. More specific overlaps occur in chapters one, two, and five. They relate to Eliot’s relationship with three individual writers who influenced his ideas about what *The Criterion* should seek to do; and to his response to the Spanish Civil War. This thesis devotes considerable attention to Eliot’s interaction with the work of T. E. Hulme, Julien Benda, and Charles Maurras, all of whom figure in Ali’s account. Eliot’s response to the Spanish Civil War, the central topic of my last chapter, is discussed by Ali as one of the factors which contributed to *The Criterion’s* eventual failure. This thesis aims to expand upon Ali’s work in these areas in several ways. It includes a more detailed account of the work of Hulme and Benda, with sustained expositions of their work, particularly *Speculations*, *Belphegor*, and *La trahison des clercs*, in order to illustrate precisely the affinities between their ideas and Eliot’s, and their place in *The Criterion’s* project, and to investigate the ways in which Eliot used his position as editor to promote and respond to their work. My discussion of Hulme and Benda draws on written material from the teens and the
thirties, as well as the twenties (which I take to be the central decade in Eliot’s relationship with these "classicist" intellectuals), and it gives an account of contributions to *The Criterion* which Ali mentions but does not consider at length.

Part of chapter one of this thesis explores both sides of an important, controversial exchange about classicism between *The Criterion* and *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, which Ali does not mention, and which has not been discussed previously in studies of Eliot or *The Criterion*. In chapter five, I subject Eliot’s commentaries on the Spanish Civil War to a closer reading, and also refer to a broad range of other texts published at this time in *The Criterion*, particularly book reviews, to develop the context in which the controversy took place. Ali confines his discussion to about four pages, in which he essentially concurs with and restates the opinion of Denis Donoghue, rejecting the validity of Eliot’s position. However, this thesis takes the Spanish conflict as the crucial issue of the last controversy which it considers, and as a definitive example of *The Criterion*’s engagement with political events. It comes to different conclusions from Donoghue and Ali, and refers more broadly to the range of secondary criticism which thirties intellectuals’ responses to the Spanish Civil War have generated.

In the other chapters of this thesis there is, I would maintain, little significant overlap. Dr. Ali does not devote attention to the magazine’s attitude to D. H. Lawrence, which is the focus of chapter three of this thesis, beyond mentioning that Lawrence’s work was published in its pages. There is, of course, a quite substantial body of criticism which has previously explored the relationship between Eliot and Lawrence, and I refer more specifically to this in the course of the chapter. This thesis adds to that discussion in two principal ways: in situating
the relationship in the specific context of Eliot’s identity as editor of *The Criterion*; and in tracing its development as a controversy. The publication over the last few years of all of Lawrence’s extant letters has provided scholars with a very full account of his attitudes to literary journals, including *The Criterion*, and I refer to this recently available primary source extensively in this chapter. The issue of censorship, which I examine in chapter four, is mentioned in passing by Ali, and although it is a subject of perennial interest and concern in literary criticism, Eliot’s attitude towards the institutions, practices, and effects of censorship during the twenties and thirties has received very little critical attention, and the work in this thesis is almost wholly original. It is an important issue for the study of the place of Eliot’s editorship of *The Criterion* in his career, for three main reasons: major modernist writers (such as Joyce and Lawrence) encountered many problems with the publication of their work because of censorship; controversies over censorship function as paradigms of the relationship between literature and the institutions of power in a society at a given historical moment; and little magazines of the period frequently found that their ability to publish what they wanted was compromised by censorship. For all these reasons, censorship was a concern in the magazine almost throughout its life, most intensely in the late twenties. The discussion of the subject in this thesis adds substantially to our understanding of Eliot’s engagement with various institutions which, in different ways, affected the conditions in which literature and other cultural forms were produced and consumed during the early decades of this century.

Having outlined how this thesis adds to Dr. Ali’s work in relation to sources and subject matter, it is necessary to discuss the different methodological
approach that I have adopted, as this is the most substantial difference in my work. Ali’s approach (like that of Margolis) is chronological, and he divides the magazine into segments, relating contributions on disparate subjects to one another through their contiguity in time. His divisions are inevitably retrospective, rather than indicative of the conscious ideas of those who produced *The Criterion* (with the exception of the chapter which he devotes to the New and Monthly *Criterion* - clearly in these cases Eliot was conscious of changes in the magazine’s character at a specific historical juncture).\(^3\) This thesis does not analyse contiguities in themselves, but rather investigates how contributions to the magazine demonstrated continuities of interest through engagement in controversy. These may have been concentrated in one short period, as in the chapter on censorship, but frequently the contributions which this thesis analyses were participating in debates which cropped up in various manifestations throughout the magazine’s life. This thesis focuses on five subjects which generated a continuity of interest over a period of years, analysing in depth the debates conducted around them: classicism, Europe, Lawrence, censorship, and politics. The idea or model of controversy is a useful way of conceptualising the conduct and expression of these debates, and of recognising that *The Criterion* was continuously and consciously engaged in argument, and that this was a part of its function as a literary review.

The term controversy, as I employ it, does not denote a systematic model or method of critical writing, which aims to arrive at a truth about a particular subject,

\(^3\) Ali acknowledges that Eliot himself believed that the magazine went through “three clear phases”, 1922-1925, 1925-1928, and 1928-1939 (p.9). These phases were demarcated by the changes in format and financing of the magazine, rather than by obvious changes in its character.
rather it indicates the publication of ideas and opinions with an awareness of their place in a disputation, at a particular time, with an idea (sometimes very specific) of the identity of one’s opponent(s), and the tendency of one’s audience. In English literary critical history, the term controversy has been most frequently employed in relation to the production and dissemination of certain kinds of religious or political texts in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, there is no single established way of discussing controversialist writing, and no body of theory of controversial method. The models of controversy developed in these fields of study are not simply transferable to the modernist period, for several reasons. Some critical work on the history of controversial writing has constructed its unity or coherence around a focus on a single subject of controversy. Thus, Marilyn Butler’s anthology of primary sources entitled *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* publishes texts by a range of writers on a single specific topic. Another work considers a body of texts which are more heterogeneous. The essays on seventeenth and eighteenth century literature collected by Thomas N. Corns in *The Literature of Controversy: Polemical Strategy from Milton to Junius*, cannot be cohered into one over-arching narrative about developments in controversial writing in the period; rather, Corns writes, the essays “constitute ... discrete readings of major texts within the shared problematic

---

4 The most sustained theoretical writing on the subject is Arthur Schopenhauer’s "The Art of Controversy", in *The Art of Controversy and other posthumous papers*, sel., tr., T. Bailey Saunders (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1896), pp.1-48. This is an ironic and often humorous critique of controversy as a way of conducting intellectual inquiry, which offers an intriguing guide to its techniques and stratagems.
of the critique of ideology." This thesis is quite concentrated, chronologically, and the issues raised in the controversies that it considers are, to some extent, inter-related. For instance, Benda contributed to the formation of The Criterion's position on classicism, and on Europe; Lawrence's work provoked controversy on account of its supposed literary and moral influence, and also informed the magazine's discussions of censorship, to cite two instances. None the less, the chapters of this thesis are essentially separate, and no single model of controversy is applicable across all five. They do, however, achieve coherence and relatedness through the presence of Eliot as a participant, and the central importance of The Criterion as a forum for controversy, within the larger context of modernist literary magazine publication.

The little magazines of the first decades of the twentieth century were a different kind of text from the pamphlets which were the principle media for the conduct of controversy in earlier periods. They published contributions in several genres within the same number; they were multi-authored, generally; and juxtaposed with controversial material, they published contributions which had no direct bearing on any specific debate, and were not argumentative, by intention or consequence. The motivation for the foundation and publication of The Criterion, and other contemporary magazines such as The Adelphi, or The Calendar, (three magazines which began publication within three years of one another), was, one may assert, less single-mindedly polemical in intention than the pamphleteering exchanges of the seventeenth century or the 1790s, when texts were disseminated

---

with the aim of bringing about specific political and social changes. In the issues considered in the first three chapters of this thesis, what was more often at stake was abstract intellectual principle, and even when Eliot was advocating political change, as in his animadversions on the censorship laws, he sought to develop the lessons he had learned from experience into a position of principle.

Having identified some specific differences between methods of studying controversy, it is important to recognise that certain issues obtain alike in these different contexts, and that attention to controversy raises similar critical questions across historical periods. These questions concern the complex ways in which texts engage other texts, how they seek to address, inform, and influence specific readers, and how they participate in the literary, cultural, and political struggles which they attempt to shape and influence. In an introductory essay on the writers and texts which participated in the Revolution controversy of the 1790s, Marilyn Butler usefully makes clear a principle about the mutual inter-dependence of controversial texts in the production of meaning, a principle which has general application in the study of literary controversy: "The Revolution debate represents in its totality not discrete texts and not the oeuvres of autonomous authors, but a single series of works which depend for their meaning upon one another, upon the historical situation which gave them birth, and upon the different kinds of reader for whom they were designed." This model has been applied in the separate chapters which constitute this thesis. To take a specific example: the full meaning

---

6 Corns, p.1.

and significance of Eliot’s editorial attacks on the censorship policies of the then Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson Hicks, only becomes apparent in reference to the latter’s own published writings on the issue, specifically one article in a periodical, and a pamphlet. Eliot’s references to Joynson Hicks’s texts indicate the argumentative foundation of his ideas, and the target of his rhetorical devices. My description of the interactions of the various texts under consideration is constrained by the fact that this is a research thesis about The Criterion, rather than an anthology of controversial texts from the twenties and thirties, and therefore it is necessary to concentrate representation and analysis of material on texts published in The Criterion. Eliot quite frequently published material in the magazine which dissented from the position which he held himself, and it was not simply the case that The Criterion was engaged in controversy with texts, authors, and institutions external to itself - in all the controversies under consideration, there was also an internal argumentative dynamic.

Eliot himself used the term controversy to describe his activities as a critic and as an editor on occasions throughout the lifetime of The Criterion. In January 1926, he discussed his ideas about what The Criterion was seeking to do, and promised that “We will not include … subjects of current political and economic controversy” (IV, p.4). He does not, however, eschew literary controversy, and the term “current” indicates a disdain for ephemerality which does not mean that the magazine would make no response to events. On occasion he could be frankly disingenuous, and adopted the guise of the possum: "In religious controversies, again, THE CRITERION can take no side. It can only examine the ideas involved, and their implications, their consequences and their relations to the general
problems of civilisation; but at the point where intellectual analysis stops, and emotional conviction begins, our commission ends" (VII, p.291). Clearly, the way in which such examinations were conducted might itself be controversial. The struggle for dispassionate analysis was not always pursued so diligently, as my analysis of the use of *ad personam* arguments in the debates over Lawrence in particular demonstrates. In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot expressed scepticism about the usefulness of controversy at that moment in intellectual history: "In our time, controversy seems to me, on really fundamental matters, to be futile.... The acrimony which accompanies much debate is a symptom of differences so large that there is nothing to argue about."\(^8\) This identifies in controversy the necessity of finding a tone which negotiates the distinction between altercation and acrimony; it also brings out a crucial point for Eliot, which is relevant in all the chapters: that there must be "common ground for disagreement" if an argument is to progress. In so far as controversy is a tone or rhetoric, this thesis make some provisional points about Eliot's style of writing, identifying his use of parodic repetition as a striking argumentative technique that he employed in his commentaries. There has been interest recently in the various ways in which Eliot rhetorically manifested himself, as a poet, and philosophical critic. Controversy was one of his rhetorics, and Eliot was fully conscious that he employed it. Writing self-critically to Paul Elmer More in June 1934, Eliot identified himself as a controversialist, if anything: "although I may have some skill in the barren game of controversy, [I] have little capacity for

sustained, exact, and closely knit argument and reasoning." This is the dominant
tone of his contributions to *The Criterion*, and indeed the nature of periodical
publication - occasional, contingent, reactive - made it the most appropriate for him
to adopt.

The model of controversy unified the diverse interests of the magazine's
editor and contributors. What Eliot sought for *The Criterion* was not a consensual
agreement over subjects of debate - agreement is the opposite of controversy - but
rather a common ground for disagreement. Controversy, as a model, does not seek
for conclusion; what is important is the controversial process, the conduct of the
argument itself. This is also one of its problems, as a way of conducting
intellectual inquiry, in so far as it is predicated on the provisionality of whatever
position seems to hold sway. Such dialectical provisionality encouraged debates to
continue in irresolution. On only one occasion did Eliot explicitly bring a
controversy to an end. This was during the exchange in which he engaged with
Leo Ward over the Vatican's actions in censoring the *Action Française*. The
controversy was conducted almost as a debate within the magazine's pages, with
each antagonist having the opportunity to respond to, and attempt to refute, the
arguments of the other. What became clear after each had made two contributions
was that there would be no resolution in such a context, and therefore Eliot felt
compelled to end it formally: "This controversy must now be closed - EDITOR"
(VIII, p.378), he wrote. This did not represent a complete closure, however, as
Eliot had appended to his first response to Ward a list of texts on both sides of the

---

9 Quoted in John D. Margolis, *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939*
argument which were relevant, thereby encouraging *The Criterion*’s readers to pursue the issue for themselves.

Controversy did not only unify disparate contributions to *The Criterion*, but functioned to give the magazines of the time a sense of community. The study of controversy can enable us to determine the question of the extent to which the magazines of the period were conscious of being in an argumentative or other relationship with one another. References to other magazines in Eliot’s commentaries, and in the reviews of periodicals which *The Criterion* published, indicate the ways in which the magazine was participating in the circulation and exchange of ideas and arguments, and how this circulation was dependent upon the existence of small circulation periodicals.

Debates between magazines, and the differences in their critical principles, clearly had an effect on editorial policy, and on content. This thesis argues that controversy was for Eliot and *The Criterion* dependent upon, and shaped by, these sorts of contingent relationships, and that controversy is very much a historicised model of writing. To a great extent, the controversies in which *The Criterion* engaged were occasional, that is, provoked by events. By events I mean a range of different things, and in this thesis I understand the publication of texts of all kinds (and in the chapter which is concerned with censorship, obstacles to such publication) to be an event. I also include acts of parliament, and other political developments both in Britain and abroad; the Vatican’s placing of the works of Charles Maurras on the *Indexus Expurgatorius*; the death of D. H. Lawrence; judicial censorship of Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well of Loneliness* and of an exhibition of Lawrence’s paintings; and the bombing and destruction of the Spanish
city Guernica. What emerges, and is important, is that Eliot and *The Criterion*'s contributors responded primarily to the ways in which these events were reported and written about, and that in this context, controversy is a model of textual exchange.

One of the things which differentiates the models of controversy with which this thesis is concerned is the various kinds of events to which Eliot and his contributors were responding. Each chapter is concerned with a different central controversy, but each of these involves the investigation of diverse texts in different genres, which participated in and contributed to its formation. Chapter one explores Eliot’s problematic, and ultimately unsatisfactory allegiance to classicism. His earliest declaration in *The Criterion* was a direct response to an article by John Middleton Murry in *The Adelphi*; Eliot employed various discursive and rhetorical techniques to belittle his opponent’s argument, and controversy appears as a model of argument in which antagonists do not seek for the truth, but for the provisional dominance of one set of propositions over another. Another event which played a role in this controversy was the publication of T. E. Hulme’s *Speculations*. Eliot responded to this by using the occasion of his editorial commentary in *The Criterion* to promote this text, and recommend its ideas to his readers, referring to classicism, but without making specific reference to his debate with Murry. Chapter two extends the consideration of classicism to explore Eliot’s affinities with Julien Benda and Charles Maurras. Eliot promoted these writers as exemplars of the classicist tendency. My reading of Benda’s *Belphégor* and *La trahison des clercs* brings out the ways in which these texts were attempting to engage with and refute what Benda perceived to be the dominant aesthetic trends in France at the time,
particularly some of Maurras's ideas. This tension between the two led Eliot to review *La trahison* somewhat dismissively at exactly the time when he was engaged in defence of Maurras in the pages of *The Criterion*, having earlier promoted Benda's work. The changes in Eliot's attitude to Benda are indicative of the contingencies which influenced him as a literary journalist and editor. This chapter also considers some British responses to Eliot's avowals of classicism, which engaged with Eliot by satirising him. This is a way in which controversy can develop, for it is an adversarial model of argument, and Eliot's opponents - in this instance Richard Aldington and Wyndham Lewis - attacked his arguments by attacking him personally, through caricature.

The controversy over Lawrence's work became most bitter in the years after his death, when his reputation and influence persisted as a source of conflict in critical opinion. Eliot was engaged in antagonistic debate with E. M Forster and F. R. Leavis in the years after Lawrence's death, and while there is some critical work in this area, this thesis adds to it by relating the controversy to debates over the conduct of literary magazines, and showing that the position of editorship influenced the way in which Eliot expressed his judgement, in comparison with other occasions when he wrote about Lawrence. Leavis was provoked into condemnation of *The Criterion* by the absence of any obituary of Lawrence. I demonstrate that the magazine had indeed established a tradition of commemorating the deaths of writers, particularly contributors - this aspect of the controversy was then provoked by the absence of publication of a certain kind of text. This chapter examines the ways in which Eliot used book reviews as a specific medium for the conduct of argument, as they justified a closer focus on
the ideas of the individual in question than was usual in editorial commentaries. The fourth chapter surveys a range of controversies about censorship, and looks at the particular argumentative strategies which Eliot employed, contingent upon what was being subject to censorship, how the censorship was being operated, and how this was being justified, judicially and politically. It is possible to trace the development of Eliot’s arguments in opposition to censorship over a period of time, as he modulated between arguments founded in civil liberty issues, artistic intention, and the definition of obscenity, and as he faced different antagonists: newspapers, politicians, the judiciary. The final chapter explores controversial exchanges in the late thirties about the Spanish Civil War, and also more recent critical controversy about Eliot’s neutrality. It examines the ways in which different pieces in The Criterion contributed to the formation of the magazine’s position, and supported or opposed the line that Eliot developed in his commentaries. The conclusion that this thesis draws from these analyses of controversy is that The Criterion’s major achievement was to be a forum for engagement in intellectual debate, and that the impossibility of continuing such a project after 1939, because of the Second World War, brought about the magazine’s end.

Analysis of The Criterion is concentrated on Eliot’s editorial and other writings, for these demonstrably had most influence on the formation of the magazine’s character. Although complete runs of the magazine are, according to Alvin Sullivan’s reference work British Literary Magazines: the modern age 1914-1984, "widely available" for study,\(^\text{10}\) it had throughout its life a circulation of less

than 800, and when the magazine was reprinted in 1967, Faber and Faber produced only 1100 sets.\textsuperscript{11} With the exception of the poetry, only a few of Eliot’s contributions to \textit{The Criterion} have been published in other volumes, and these are early pieces such as "In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd" (1923), "The Function of Criticism" (1923), and "Four Elizabethan Dramatists" (1924). Other than these, the materials, including Eliot’s commentaries, are largely inaccessible outside research libraries. Part of the responsibility of this research is to offer an exposition of these texts, and to disseminate knowledge of them, and thereby to extend our perception of the nature of Eliot’s criticism in the third and fourth decades of this century.

The commentaries are generically unique in the canon of Eliot’s work, and this uniqueness derives from the responsibility and authority of being an editor. Eliot had editorial experience from working at \textit{The Egoist}, but none of his writings from that magazine have the full authority of the editorial persona. The commentaries from \textit{The Criterion’s} early years clearly are developments, in terms of their tone and range and rhetoric from other, earlier forms of his writing, such as the "London Letters" which he contributed to \textit{The Dial}. However, this tone modulates in \textit{The Criterion}, and the commentaries from the twenties in particular are shorter, more concise, and more engaged with the historical moment than anything else that he wrote - with the obvious exception of his poetry. I make reference to editorial material in the magazine from every year of its publication, with the exception of 1935. One aspect of the value and interest of all the commentaries inheres in their historicity, and their controversy. They are occasional and contingent, and very few

\textsuperscript{11} For discussion of the magazine’s circulation between 1922 and 1939, see the introduction to this thesis. For the reprint edition, see Donald Gallup, \textit{T. S. Eliot: a bibliography} (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p.157.
of them aim for an application outside a specific context, which is not to say that they do not achieve a permanence of interest. Their range encapsulates the span of subjects in which *The Criterion* was interested; Eliot frequently used them to speculate on the appropriate interests for a literary review, but they are not just meditations on the limits and opportunities of plurality, but enactments of it.

I seek to explore the connections between Eliot’s currently quite obscure contributions to *The Criterion* and other, better-known writing from the period. Dr. Ali considers Eliot’s essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" to be "essential for understanding Eliot’s editorship of *The Criterion*." This is certainly an important essay for our understanding of many aspects of Eliot’s career, however, I would maintain that *The Criterion* is too heterogeneous to be conceptualised as an enactment of the values laid down in it. Eliot refers to it extensively and overtly in his polemical essay "The Function of Criticism," which was published in the number of October 1923. And the "celebrated metaphor" of the chemical reaction and the catalytic shred of platinum was ironically mocked by the anonymous reviewer of Eliot’s *Selected Essays 1917-1932*, who drew attention to Eliot’s lack of "elementary knowledge of chemistry" (XII, p.167). However, Eliot was reluctant to publish any kind of prescriptive manifesto. Ali explains that it is an important piece because "understanding of the essay helps to clarify how Eliot’s view of tradition was enlarging as he accepted and rejected contributions to the journal." 12

It is difficult at the moment to have anything other than a partial and provisional knowledge of Eliot’s principles of acceptance and rejection. Until the archives of *The Criterion* become accessible to scholars, it will be impossible to describe

---

12 Ali, p.2.
precisely Eliot's editorial processes. I do not identify one piece of Eliot's writing from outside *The Criterion* as a particular intertext, or methodological pointer. Rather, I refer extensively to other writings by Eliot, and examine a range of intertextual relationships. These texts include the books and essay collections, *The Sacred Wood*, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, *After Strange Gods*, and *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, and contributions to a range of contemporary and near-contemporary periodicals. It is necessary to juxtapose these texts with material from *The Criterion*, with the aim of trying to acquire as full a picture as possible of Eliot's writings, but more specifically to enable comparisons between the texts, in order to identify variations and similarities in Eliot's opinions and in his tone. This thesis investigates these textual relationships in terms of the differences between literary journalism and other types of writing, arguing that Eliot formulated the expression of his opinions in different ways, for different audiences, at different times. In addition, reference is made to a range of Eliot's texts in order to identify change and development. The pattern of development that emerges in Eliot's writing is not systematic. Rather, it consists of a series of positions on different issues, taken up and held for a period of time, which then are either i, dropped as historical circumstances changed, and they become historically irrelevant, or ii, reconceived in different terms. The first pattern can, to some extent be seen in the controversy over censorship. The second can be identified in the modulation of the debate about classicism, which initially was located in a conceptual framework derived from aesthetics, primarily, then rapidly became more concerned with religion, until eventually Eliot rejected the whole terminology of the classicism-romanticism opposition for a terminology defined by religion. It is
necessary to refer to texts outside *The Criterion* in order to understand the
particular ways in which *The Criterion* participated in debates over these issues.

This thesis incorporates reference to contributions to *The Criterion* which
both supported and opposed Eliot’s position, for it is not possible to represent a
controversy solely through the contributions of one antagonist, even if he is the
principal figure. Controversy in *The Criterion* was not just conducted in editorial
materials, writers of chronicle articles, book reviews, and periodical surveys all
participated. In addition, I quote from the texts that engendered controversialist
responses in *The Criterion*, or participated in debates in which Eliot was interested,
and these include literary criticism and theory, cultural theory, judicial rulings, acts
of parliament, newspaper articles, political pamphlets and manifestos, and
contributions to contemporary literary magazines, including *The Calendar of
Modern Letters*, *The Nation and Athenæum*, *Scrutiny*, *The Adelphi*, and *Left
Review*. I have not been able, within the confines of this thesis, to quote as
extensively from these sources as would be ideal, without limiting the range of
controversies to which I attend. I have rejected this in the interests of trying to
illustrate the breadth of *The Criterion’s* concerns, while at the same time
considering the five controversies in sufficient depth that a genuine understanding
of their influence on Eliot, and Eliot’s influence on them can be understood.

Citations from other texts, and references to the historical, political, and social
context are employed to shed light on *The Criterion’s* participation in the
controversies which are at issue. Throughout, the focus is not on the controversy
itself, but on the modulation of that controversy in Eliot’s writing, and in *The
Criterion*. When these texts from *The Criterion* become more accessible, and better
known to students and scholars, as the Clark Lectures are becoming, it will be possible, and necessary, to contextualise them in ways that this research has not sought to do, and they might, in time, be as frequently cited and referred to as the better known pieces of journalism that were published in *The Sacred Wood*.

Comparison and evaluation of the differences between *The Criterion* texts and the better known parts of Eliot's critical canon will extend our knowledge of Eliot's place in the literary history of our century.

In the twenties and thirties, Eliot devoted a significant amount of time to editing *The Criterion*. As an editor, he frequently became involved in controversial exchanges, and this thesis traces five such exchanges. Exploration of similarities and differences in the ways in which they were conducted adds to our current knowledge of the magazine, and of Eliot's role as its editor. His editorial persona changed over the two decades, for reasons which I have sought to explore, such as his changing intellectual allegiances, and the evolution of his ideas about the relationship between literature and society; and for reasons which lie outside the province of my research, such as his personal relationships. This process of change is not, I think, evidence of "uncertainty" on Eliot's part about his aims and priorities for the magazine. Rather, it demonstrates that as a literary journalist and editor he was extremely responsive to the intellectual, political, and cultural environment in which he and his contributors were producing *The Criterion*. Engagement in literary controversy enabled the magazine to participate in the shaping of that environment.

---

13 Ali, p.141.
Introduction

The first number of *The Criterion* was published in October 1922, and the last in January 1939. T. S. Eliot founded the magazine and edited it throughout its existence, which ran to eighteen volumes. It is commonly known and referred to simply as *The Criterion*, but in fact it appeared under four different titles. The first two volumes (eight issues), published between October 1922 and July 1925, had the full title *The Criterion: A Quarterly Review*. Then followed a six month hiatus in publication, until it reappeared in January 1926 as *The New Criterion: A Quarterly Review*. During 1926, its publication was erratic: it appeared in January, April, June, and October. The final number of *The New Criterion* came out in January 1927, and there was then another gap until May 1927, when the first number of *The Monthly Criterion: A Literary Review* appeared. It retained this designation and was published as a monthly through the rest of 1927, until March 1928. In June 1928 it came out with the title that it would have for the rest of its publication life, *The Criterion: A Literary Review*.\(^1\) The terms "quarterly" and "literary" were not simply descriptive additions to the subtitle, but were intended to indicate something of the magazine’s character, which Eliot constantly redefined in the first six years of publication. Throughout its life, *The Criterion* was a forum for discussion of some of the most important issues which concerned writers during the period between the world wars, and editing it occupied a great deal of Eliot’s

---

\(^1\) See Agha Shahid Ali, *T. S. Eliot as Editor* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), for an account of the reasons for these changes, which were related to the funding of the magazine.
time and thought.

This thesis is an account of the development of some of Eliot's most important ideas and beliefs in the period between the wars, and focuses on their expression and evolution in the pages of *The Criterion*. It is conducted by means of an exposition and exploration of a range of literary controversies which contributed to the formation of the magazine's character. The word "controversy", in this context, does not have any specialised meaning, but indicates an exchange of opposing beliefs and ideas. One of its range of meanings was expressed by Eliot in *After Strange Gods*, where he wrote, in a diatribe against the intellectual climate of the early thirties:

In our time, controversy seems to me, on really fundamental matters, to be futile. It can only usefully be practised where there is common understanding. It requires common assumptions; and perhaps the assumptions that are only felt are more important than those which can be formulated. The acrimony which accompanies much debate is a symptom of differences so large that there is nothing to argue about.\(^2\)

Controversy was for Eliot a good thing, for it symbolised a cohesive culture where differences in opinion were not necessarily divisive. It was worthwhile attempting to create the intellectual conditions in which it could flourish, and *The Criterion* made a contribution to this. On occasions throughout *The Criterion*'s life, controversy on fundamental matters was not futile, indeed it was necessary.

Eliot conducted controversies in *The Criterion* with a range of opponents: politicians, magistrates, and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church amongst them. But his disputes were mainly with other writers: the period 1922-1939, and indeed the decade preceding it, witnessed the foundation and the demise of many

literary magazines, and writers of this period were dedicated to producing and contributing to this type of publication, for the magazines of this period were central to the vitality of the culture. As Eliot wrote in 1949, in a public letter to the editor of a new periodical, *Nine*:

> The value of the 'little reviews' for my generation was very great: literary history will have an impressive debt to acknowledge to their editors. They were issued always under difficulties; they were never adequately supported even by that public which professed a concern for the arts and for independent thought; they lived always under sentence of death; and they always died. Nevertheless, they helped to keep literature alive.³

Eliot often encountered his opponents’ ideas through their publication in other literary reviews, and used *The Criterion* as a medium through which to respond to them. Throughout *The Criterion's* controversies he saw himself as a member of a community of critics and writers practising literary journalism, and keeping literature alive. He was interested in the contribution that good literary journalism made to a healthy literary culture. In 1927, another small literary magazine, *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, closed down, and in his commentary in *The Monthly Criterion* of September 1927 Eliot wrote:

> We take the opportunity of expressing regret at the suspension of *The Calendar*. Were the demise of one literary review useful to the success of another we should assume no mask of hypocrisy; but that is not at all the fact. Our complaint against most of our contemporaries is that they are so little interested in ideas that it is never worth while either to agree or disagree with them; but in *The Calendar* and *The Adelphi* we have sometimes found, at least, a common ground for disagreement. (VI, p.194)

Eliot identifies three particular literary magazines in which controversies could be debated. He suggests that although the outlooks of these three magazines differed they at least shared similar premises. The idea of "a common ground for

"disagreement" is an interesting model for the interaction of literary magazines, and for the interactions of contributors within the pages of individual magazines. The discussion of how this common ground might be established, and by extension the definition of the function of a small literary journal, necessarily occupied Eliot's attention in the early years of The Criterion's life.

Literary journalism was also personally important to Eliot, and helped him to carve out a place in British culture in the early years of his life in Britain. On 29 March 1919 he wrote to his mother:

through the Egoist I am getting to be looked up to by people who are far better known to the general public than I. There is a small and select public which regards me as the best living critic, as well as the best living poet in England .... I really think that I have far more influence on English letters than any other American has ever had, unless it be Henry James.4

We should take into account the fact that Eliot probably exaggerated his position out of a sense of filial pride and a desire to compensate for his parents' disappointment that he had given up a promising career in philosophy at Harvard. Nonetheless, it is significant that Eliot saw the journalistic publication of his criticism as a means to gain influence. It is not clear exactly when in the early twenties Eliot conceived of founding and editing a periodical of his own in London. On 31 October 1920 Eliot wrote to his mother, outlining the various literary journalistic projects in which he was engaged:

I have promised to write occasional "London Letters" for the Dial, and also letters of some sort to a weekly called The Freeman in New York. I have been asked to send a contribution to the Evening Post. Then there is the Revue de Geneve [sic], and Bruce Richmond, of the Times (London), wants something from me when I have time. Wyndham Lewis is projecting a small Art and Literature paper and wants my help. So if I would undertake

it, I should have my hands very full. But I want to get to work on a poem I have in mind.\(^5\)

He hints at *The Waste Land* here, but there is no suggestion that Eliot intends to found and edit his own magazine, and it is reasonable to assume that he would have mentioned something about it to his mother, in addition to the work that he was doing for other editors, if he had had any plans. Eliot’s first reference in his published correspondence to the possibility of starting a journal is in a letter to Ottoline Morrell on 14 July 1921:

> There has been a project for the revival of *Arts and Letters*, or rather as it now appears, a quarterly of similar size under a new name. It has undergone various transformations and passed through various hands since it was first broached to me - Schiff has taken part in it, but the person to provide the money is Lady Rothermere.... it is something that, once started, one feels could be made something of, in time, and would be an interesting attempt just now when there is nothing in London....
>
> I tell you all this *in the strictest confidence*, of course: I particularly don’t want it mentioned at present. It is so vague.\(^6\)

Thus one reason why Eliot founded *The Criterion* was that he perceived a temporary absence of good literary journals in London in the early twenties; indeed the journals with which he sought to associate his own were foreign. In his final editorial, in *The Criterion* of January 1939, Eliot listed some of them, making mention also of particular editors:

*The Criterion* did not start with any ambition of emulating the traditional type of British quarterly.... so far as *The Criterion* measured itself against more ‘professional’ periodicals, they were certain reviews, many of them now extinct, published abroad. The *Nouvelle Revue Française* still flourishes; there was the *Revista de Occidente* (under Ortega y Gasset); the *Journal de Genève* (under Robert de Traz); the *Neue Rundschau*, the *Dial* of New York, and others. It was the aim of *The Criterion* to maintain close

---

\(^5\) *Letters* I, p.419.

\(^6\) *Letters* I, p.461. Valerie Eliot states in her introduction to this volume that “it is known that TSE’s [letters] to Lady Rothermere were not kept” (p.xv).
relations with other literary reviews of its type, on the Continent and in America; and to provide in London a local forum of international thought. (XVIII, pp.270-1)

Negotiations with Lady Rothermere, and the recruitment of contributors to *The Criterion*, occupied the fifteen months until the publication of the first number. Bernard Bergonzi implies that Eliot's illness in the autumn of 1921, while it was beneficial in so far as it allowed Eliot time to complete *The Waste Land*, delayed *The Criterion's* publication. Conversely, in March 1923, Eliot blamed his commitment to *The Criterion* for having held back his poetry, writing to John Quinn: "I have sunk the whole of my strength for the past 18 months into this confounded paper, when I ought to have been minding my own business and doing my own writing." Thus Eliot was unhappy about the demands that editing *The Criterion* made on his time, while he was also working full time at Lloyd's bank; but he believed that it was a necessary and interesting venture. These tensions continued until he was able to leave his bank job, and join the board of Faber and Faber.

In addition to being the founding editor, Eliot was also the most prolific contributor to *The Criterion*. *The Waste Land*, "Salutation" (an early version of part of "Ash Wednesday"), and "Three Poems" (sections of the text which became "The Hollow Men"), were among the poetry which appeared in the magazine. Critical essays included "The Function of Criticism", "Four Elizabethan Dramatists - A Preface", and "The Literature of Fascism". He also published book reviews, and

---


translated articles from the French. This thesis explores the development of Eliot's ideas, and their involvement in controversy, by means of attention primarily to his regular editorial pieces entitled "A Commentary". These commentaries were the most important feature in the formation of the magazine's character throughout its publication, and they were also the most significant manifestations of Eliot as a literary journalist in the two decades. The first commentary, a piece in praise of T. E. Hulme, appeared in the seventh number, published in April 1924, and thereafter a commentary was published in every number, bar two. With the exceptions of the number of July 1925, which opened with Hulme's "Notes on Language and Style", and the number of January 1926 which opened with Eliot’s essay "The Idea of a Literary Review", a commentary was published as the opening article in every number between April 1924 and October 1930, and consisted of a number of short, sub-titled reflections on a range of literary and non-literary issues. From January 1931 onwards, the commentaries were published, without titles, in the middle of each number, and consisted of one piece of continuous prose. There was no published explanation for this change of practice.

Through his commentaries Eliot became The Criterion's dominant voice. He was, however, keen to stress that the magazine did not devote itself to the support of any single programme. During the first six years of publication he used several of the commentaries as occasions on which to consider and define the magazine's purpose and character. In tracing Eliot's ideas through the controversies discussed

---

9 Author and subject indexes to the magazine, compiled by E. Alan Baker, were published in the final volume of the complete reprint edition, which was published as The Criterion, 1922-1939, 18 vols., ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), pp.417-716.
in this thesis, it is essential to bear in mind that his idea of the role of a literary review was constantly evolving. This was a result not only of his experience as an editor, but also of modulations in his ideas about literature, and literature's relation to other fields of intellectual and spiritual enquiry such as religion and politics.

Eliot was initially reluctant to publish a manifesto or a definition of the magazine’s role. His first quasi-editorial piece did not appear until the fourth number, in a section titled "Notes". The subtitle was "The Function of a Literary Review", and it was signed T. S. E. "On the completion of the first volume of the CRITERION, it is pertinent to define, and perhaps to defend, the purposes of a literary review," he wrote.

It is not, certainly, the function of a literary review to provide material for the chat of coteries - nor is a review called upon to avoid such appeal. A literary review should maintain the application, in literature, of principles which have their consequences also in politics and in private conduct; and it should maintain them without tolerating any confusion of the purposes of pure literature with the purposes of politics or ethics. (I, p.421)

Definition of the function of a literary review contributed to the definition of literary criticism itself, and of literature. In this note Eliot acknowledged the interaction of literature with other fields of intellectual endeavour, and he cited politics and ethics as examples of adjacent fields. He posited the existence of something which he called "pure literature"; the concerns and character of the eighteen volumes of The Criterion serve, however, to question whether such a phenomenon could ever exist, and within two and a half years Eliot himself was disputing it in the magazine’s pages.

In the next number Eliot published his essay "The Function of Criticism" (which is discussed at greater length in the first chapter of this thesis). He here claimed to eschew controversy as an appropriate method for criticism, arguing
rather that criticism was "a place for quiet co-operative labour", and that the critic ought to "discipline his personal prejudices and cranks ... in the common pursuit of true judgement" (II, p.33). The essay was nevertheless an unambiguous oppositional response to the ideas of John Middleton Murry, and as such constituted an engagement in controversy. In fact, Eliot praised Murry for being "aware that there are different positions to be taken, and that now and then one must actually reject something and select something else" (II, p.34). These rejections and selections, together with the articulation of judgement, are bound to generate disagreement, and that disagreement can itself be a form of collaborative activity. More than that, without such disagreements a small literary magazine would cease to exist, for such magazines functioned to promote, and be the medium for, the circulation and exchange of competing ideas.

Eliot explained what he understood to be the appropriate subject matter of a periodical like *The Criterion* in an essay entitled "The Idea of a Literary Review" which was published in the first number of *The New Criterion*. Eliot saw those occasions on which the magazine changed its title, or frequency of publication, as important opportunities to discuss the evolution, character, and purpose of literary magazines. He sought not only to describe his own magazine, but also to come to broader conclusions, for he believed that all magazines needed to "conceive" their "purposes and possibilities clearly" (IV, p.1). His essay was less "concerned ... with the point of view of *The New Criterion*, compared with that of other reviews, than with the definition of the literary review in general, and the precise application of the term literature in such a periodical" (IV, p.1). Eliot believed that literary magazines faced the dilemma of being either "too general or too strictly 'literary'"
Those which were too general would have no character other than that of a miscellany. To the latter Eliot argued that the "profonder objection is the impossibility of defining the frontiers, or limiting the context of 'literature'. Even the purest literature is alimented from non-literary sources, and has non-literary consequences. Pure literature is a chimera of sensation" (IV, pp.3-4). Consequently:

We must ... form a literary review, not merely on literature, but on what we may suppose to be the interests of any intelligent person with literary taste. We will not include irrelevant information, subjects of technical and limited interest, or subjects of current political and economic controversy. We must include besides 'creative' work and literary criticism, any material which should be operative on general ideas - the results of contemporary work in history, archaeology, anthropology, even of the more technical sciences when those results are of such a nature to be valuable to the man of general culture and when they can be made intelligible to him. (IV, p.4)

Thus a magazine which described itself as a literary review must be aware of current issues in other domains of intellectual inquiry. However, the principles that Eliot articulated in this passage for the character of a literary review were vague, and specific descriptions of the magazine's procedures were resisted.

In addition to addressing a plurality of subjects, it was necessary that a literary review could accommodate, and indeed benefit from, the disagreements generated by a heterogeneous group of contributors. While Eliot believed that the "miscellaneous review is negative", because it was more or less indiscriminate in its choice of contributors,

the review which propagates the ideas of a single man, or the views and fancies of a small group, is more evidently obnoxious. In the realm of action, of political or theological controversy, a small and compact body of troops, or even a single leader, may accomplish useful work. But in the world of ideas, no individual, no small group, is ever good enough or wise enough to deserve such licence. (IV, pp.2-3)

A literary review is not then simply an organ for single-minded polemic. A literary review must allow for a play of controversy within its pages, between its
contributors: "Editor and collaborators may freely express their individual opinions and ideas, so long as there is a residue of common tendency, in the light of which many occasional contributors, otherwise irrelevant or even antagonistic, may take their place and counteract any narrow sectarianism" (IV, p.3). This tendency must be deduced by the reader in light of what appeared to be The Criterion's common assumptions, judgements and practices.

In January 1927, Eliot used his opening commentary to reflect on The New Criterion's first year, and to develop his ideas about how the ideas of contributors interact.

The programme of The New Criterion - so far as it has a programme - remains the same as it was a year ago. But it is the opinion of those chiefly responsible for its character, that the first function of such a review is to be a vehicle for opinion. Not for the haphazard opinion of a miscellaneous group of 'writers', or for the opinion of an individual, or for the drilled opinion of a school or order, but for the various, divergent or even contradictory opinion of a widening group of individuals in communication. (V, pp.1-2)

One might question this avowal of pluralism, and argue that an editor always selects his or her contributors, and therefore has a measure of control over the divergence of opinion that will appear in the magazine. But Eliot stressed that the magazine was genuinely open minded:

The New Criterion is not the organ of one generation or of one style of writing. It respects independence and originality: it does not believe that independence and originality are the possession of one generation or of one school, but of a few individuals of every age; and in seeking these qualities it may sometimes, as it has already done, present at the same time authors in appearance the most radical and the most reactionary. (V, p.2)

The Criterion did publish a broad spectrum of writers, radicals and reactionaries in literature and in politics, from Joyce and Woolf to T. Sturge Moore and Hugh Walpole; from Auden and Spender to Wyndham Lewis and Henri Massis.
In the next number, which appeared in May, *The Criterion* began its experiment with monthly publication, and Eliot had yet again to redefine the review's role. In a retrospect on the foundation of the magazine, Eliot spoke of its purpose as a reactionary questioning of some of the values of the twentieth century:

> It was part of the original programme, in 1922, to revive some of the characteristics of the quarterly reviews of a hundred years ago, which had languished in this century of rapid production and consumption.... With the leisure, ripeness and thoroughness of the reviews of a hundred years ago, THE CRITERION was to join another of their characteristics, a certain corporate personality which had almost disappeared from quarterly journalism; it was to exhibit, without narrow exclusiveness or sectarian enthusiasm, a common tendency which its contributors should illustrate by conformity or opposition. It was to be up-to-time in its appreciation of modern literature, and in its awareness of contemporary problems; it was to record the development of modern literature and the mutations of modern thought. (V, pp.187-8).

*The Monthly Criterion* did not seek to diverge radically from these ideas. It retained its predecessor's regular features, and the "Chronicles" of current music, art, and drama continued to be published every three months, and thus to conserve their quarterly character. The only benefit to be derived from more frequent publication, to judge from Eliot's commentary, was that books would be reviewed "more quickly after publication"; Eliot seems to have had nothing else to say in favour of the change - indeed he eulogised the character of the quarterly magazines. Malcolm Bradbury has written that the brief change from quarterly to monthly was an attempt to increase sales and circulation. The quarterly cost seven shillings and sixpence, and there were complaints at the high price; the monthly
cost only two and six.\(^{10}\) The question of the size of *The Criterion*’s circulation has been a point of critical disagreement. Ackroyd states that "Even in its best days the circulation of the magazine had been limited to some eight hundred subscribers - and by the time it had ceased publication that number had dropped to a couple of hundred";\(^{11}\) Bradbury too puts the figure at 800, and towards the end 600 - "its purchasers were, mainly, libraries", he writes, and there was a large proportion of foreign subscribers.\(^{12}\) Symons wrote that circulation was "said never to exceed 400 copies";\(^{13}\) Eliot wrote in 1950 that the magazine had, "in its palmiest days, some 800 subscriptions." This small number should not necessarily be interpreted as indicating that *The Criterion* was a coterie publication; Eliot wrote further:

"Beyond the libraries and colleges in Japan, India, Egypt, South America and the United States, and some at home, and the unknown individual subscribers in unknown places, it was surprising to find how few names on the list were those of people whose names were known to the editor."\(^{14}\) The lowest estimate is then 400, and the highest 800: whichever of these represents the true figure, the magazine clearly had an extremely small circulation. In the event the cut in price, and the


\(^{12}\) Bradbury, pp.45, 41.

\(^{13}\) Symons, 1967, p.19.

change to monthly publication seem not to have had the desired effect, for the experiment only lasted just over a year, before *The Criterion* reverted to a quarterly.

In his commentary in the number of November 1927, Eliot argued that the interests of men of letters at that time extended the traditional domain of literature: "The man of letters of to-day is interested in a great many subjects - not because he has many interests, but because he finds that the study of his own subject leads him irresistibly to the study of the others; and he must study the others if only to disentangle his own, to find out what he is really doing himself" (VI, p.386). Among the other subjects Eliot mentioned as compelling attention were political organization, economics, education, religion, psychology, biology and physics, all of which received attention in *The Criterion*. Eliot believed that these problems were "occupying the mind of all Europe" (VI, p.387), and he hoped, ironically, that this widespread intellectual effort would "make it possible for us to return more tranquilly to our own business, such as writing a poem, or painting a picture" (VI, p.387). Eliot discussed the necessary extension of the interests of the man of letters, in relation to himself, in texts nearly contemporary with this commentary, such as the prefaces to *For Lancelot Andrewes* and the second edition of *The Sacred Wood*. The discussion in *The Criterion* emphasized that this plurality of interests required the attention, not of a critic in isolation, but of writers working collaboratively in a group, however loosely defined, such as a literary magazine.

The nature of, and the interactions between, the individuals belonging to such a group were among the subjects of Eliot's commentary in June 1928. This was the number when *The Criterion* reverted to quarterly publication, and the
commentary is one of Eliot's most important statements of definition.

The monthly experiment has at least been of great value to the editor, in making more clear to him the inevitable differences of type between a monthly and a quarterly review. Many persons think, and the editor of this review was for a time among them, that the time for quarterly reviews passed with Victorian leisure; they regard the long established quarterlies with indifferent tolerance, as useless survivals; and they allude to what is popularly called 'the general speeding up of modern life' as demanding something more frequent and ephemeral. (VII, pp.289-90)

Eliot felt that the changes in the magazine's character that were necessary for it to continue to appear as a monthly were not changes that he was prepared to make:

"there does appear some reason for opposing some of the tendencies of contemporary life; indeed it may be said at the present time, that if the quarterly review seems obsolete to the popular mind, that is perhaps a sign that the quarterly review is more needed now than ever, and that it is ahead of the times rather than behind them" (VII, p.290). Eliot strikes a reactionary note here, while at the same time approving the idea that one should seek to be ahead of the times. The Criterion's attitude to its own time is a complex issue: its creation has been seen as one of the defining events in the literary history of the period. Michael Levenson has argued: "If we look for a mark of modernism's coming of age, the founding of the Criterion in 1922 may prove a better instance than The Waste Land, better even than Ulysses, because it exemplifies the institutionalization of the movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy."15 There is a distinction to be drawn between Levenson's idea of the modern, and Eliot's idea of the contemporary. Eliot

---

associated the latter with the "popular", to which he was antipathetic, and implicit in the idea of an expensive quarterly in the nineteen-twenties is an élitist function. Part of the authority of this institutionalization, however, derives from its élitism. The tendency of Eliot's modernism, as expressed in The Criterion, was against the tendency of contemporary society.

Eliot had, by this time, come to believe that the monthlies must "fulfil quite different functions from that of The Criterion" (VII, p.291), and having made that realisation, set about defining again "the purpose and the place" of the magazine:

It is desirable to maintain our designation of a 'literary' review, because there is no other label which indicates so briefly the subjects to which this review is indifferent. The term serves to remind us that we are not concerned with matters of passing interest. We continue to publish the best fiction and the best verse that we can find, and to interest ourselves in problems of applied and theoretic literary criticism and the formation and maintenance of standards, and in the study and teaching of literature. But this same critical attitude is extended to all the problems of contemporary civilisation.... The Criterion is concerned with everything that can be examined in a critical spirit. (VII, p.291)

No magazine, however pluralistic in its choice of subjects, and eclectic in its recruitment of contributors, could ever hope to attend to "all the problems of contemporary civilisation", but having made this large claim, Eliot offered some examples of how The Criterion hoped to address these problems. It was interested in politics, so far as the theory of politics "can be dissociated from party politics, from the passions or fantasies of the moment, and from problems of local and temporary importance." It sought to provide "dispassionate examination" of "the philosophies expressed or implicit in various tendencies, such as communism or fascism" (VII, p.291). While this aloofness sounds, in theory, as though it will lead to disinterestedness, in practice Eliot was compelled in his commentaries to engage
with "local" incidents, and often this engagement obliged him, as John Peter argues, "to occupy and then defend a particular position."¹⁶ This is an argument which the present thesis attempts to substantiate, particularly in the last two chapters.

Just as dispassion was required in matters of politics, so it was in matters of religion: "In religious controversies, again, THE CRITERION can take no side. It can only examine the ideas involved, and their implications, their consequences and their relations to the general problems of civilisation; but at the point where intellectual analysis stops, and emotional conviction begins, our commission ends" (VII, p.291). But at the very time that he was making these statements, Eliot was embroiled in an exchange in The Criterion about the Vatican's placing of the works of Charles Maurras on the index of prohibited books. This controversy had both religious and political implications, and in his defence of Maurras, Eliot was not reticent in conceptualising the issue in intensely personal terms. Indeed, as the discussion of this controversy in chapter two makes clear, he felt personal experience to be an important empirical standard against which to measure the ideas of your opponents.

Having cited religion and politics as two of the fields of intellectual inquiry to which The Criterion, as a literary review, would attend, Eliot turned to the matter of its overall coherence:

What unites, we believe, the various writers, both in England and in foreign countries, who constitute what has been vaguely called 'the Criterion group', is not a common adhesion to a set of dogmatic principles, even of literary criticism, but a common interest in what we believe to be the most

---
important matters of our time, which allow the widest variation in attitude and tendency. (VII, p.292)

This is vague, and it is a claim that many magazines could make, or might seek to make, but Eliot believed that these ideas were important in differentiating the magazine from its contemporaries:

It is this, we believe, which distinguishes THE CRITERION from all other reviews; it is neither an indifferent miscellany, nor the organ of one programme or policy of passion or prejudice. Individually, the various contributors (including the editor) inevitably have their own passions and prejudices; as a whole, THE CRITERION is quite disinterested. (VII, p.292).

This is misleading, for the sum of the contributors’ prejudices adds up to the totality of the magazine’s prejudice. The extent to which Eliot, as editor, was willing to publish articles which expressed different views from his own, or writers whose work he disliked, indicates the extent to which THE CRITERION was disinterested, and was genuinely tolerant of controversy.

Eliot's conclusion to this commentary was rather anti-climactic. He believed that a quarterly was more conducive than a monthly to the expression of detachment, as it allowed for more planning of contributions, and thus the polarised problems of "monotony and narrowness", as against "chaotic heterogeneity" (VII, p.293) would be avoided. He was worried that his commentary might "produce an impression of terrifying solemnity and heavy theory", and that readers might be mistaken as to his aim in redefining the magazine’s function. Rather, he asserted that "the problems with which [The Criterion] wishes to deal are those of interest, even of excitement, to the generally civilized, and intelligent, and more or less educated person; and they are, on the whole, problems which most such persons have already in mind" (VII, p.293). The Criterion was not always exciting, perhaps it was not always interesting. Its most compelling articles, those which continue to
stimulate today, are those which clearly signal thoughtful engagement with ideas in circulation at the time they were published, and these provide fascinating insight into the intellectual environment between the wars.

* * * * *

The complete files of The Criterion are currently in the possession of Eliot’s widow, Mrs Valerie Eliot, who is "using them to prepare future editions of T S Eliot’s letters for publication." Consequently they are not available for inspection by students and scholars, and "access to the files themselves will not be possible for some years." When, or if, they do become available for scrutiny, critical discussion of The Criterion will change its focus. These materials will enable a more technical and bibliographical commentary on the processes of its editing and production to be written. It will be possible to portray fully and minutely the mechanics of Eliot’s editorial practices, and to write an account of the magazine with an increased focus on Eliot’s procedures for commissioning, selecting and editing of articles and books for review, and perhaps even to read drafts of his commentaries, and the edited manuscripts of other contributions. Controversies such as the recent one provoked by Anthony Julius’s book T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form, over the authorship of the anonymous review of The Yellow Spot which was published in The Criterion in 1936, will not occur, once the files are available for inspection, and such factual disputes as the authorship of

---

17 Letter to the author from Julian Loose of Faber and Faber, 3 December 1992. Valerie Eliot told me in a letter of 30 September 1993, in response to a proposal for an edition of Eliot’s Criterion commentaries, that all of Eliot’s "articles, miscellaneous and uncollected writings ... are being assembled and prepared for publication."
anonymous reviews can be resolved by recourse to the archives.\textsuperscript{18}

The eighteen volumes of \textit{The Criterion} are a substantial body of writing which warrant more critical attention in their own right than they have received. Even without access to the files, they provide a fascinating guide to Eliot's ideas during a crucial period in his life. This thesis argues that Eliot's engagement in controversy in the pages of the magazine compelled him to develop his ideas at specific historical moments, with the aim of addressing a certain kind of readership. In seeking to explore the interests of writers and the literary magazines for which they wrote in this period, analysis of the issues which provoked attention and debate enables us to identify the critical common ground. These controversies and debates took place in texts which were and are in the public domain.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each of which takes one controversy as its focus. The chapters often depart from their principal subject, and reflect on larger issues of concern in \textit{The Criterion}, but their inter-relatedness should be apparent, and there are shared concerns across the chapters. The first and second chapters of this thesis discuss three writers whom Eliot recommended to readers of \textit{The Criterion} as examples of the tendency which he espoused: classicism. The first traces Eliot's affiliation with classicism in the teens and twenties, and his rejection in the thirties of that nomenclature. It gives an account

of the writings of T. E. Hulme, and discusses his affinities with Eliot, particularly in matters of religious dogma. The chapter also examines Eliot's controversies about classicism with John Middleton Murry, editor of The Adelphi, and with the editors of The Calendar of Modern Letters.

The second chapter relates classicism to Eliot's concept of "the mind of Europe". It examines his idea of the European tradition, and compares his attitude to post-war society with the attitude of Julien Benda. This comparison centres on a discussion of Benda's aesthetics as laid out in his book Belphegor, and the critique of nationalism which he developed in La Trahison des Clercs in explicit antagonism to Maurras. It then examines the affinities between Eliot's religious classicism and the agnostic classicism of Maurras, and describes a controversial exchange in The Criterion between Eliot and Leo Ward, a Roman Catholic pamphleteer who defended the Vatican's decision to place Maurras and the Action Française on the Indexus Expurgatorius.

These first two chapters incorporate further discussion of Eliot's principles of editorship as The Criterion developed. The next chapter explores how Eliot's editorship operated in practice, through a discussion of the evolution of his attitude, and those of other contributors, to one writer in particular: D. H. Lawrence. It assumes (after F. R. Leavis) that Lawrence was one of the "testing" authors of the period, and that the different responses of writers to his work were historically significant and indicative of the predominant concerns of the age. It suggests that Eliot's attitude to Lawrence changed in complex ways which resulted from the development of Eliot's ideas about the relations between literature, morality, and religion. It concludes with a survey of Lawrence's attitudes towards The Criterion
and a range of other literary magazines, as a way of evaluating his ideas about the
place of literary reviews in the larger culture.

One of The Criterion's concerns about Lawrence's work was to defend it
from suppression by state authorities. The fourth chapter is concerned with the
magazine's enduring interest in the issue of censorship, particularly as it issued
from the ideologies of the Church and the state, and affected the work of specific
authors such as Joyce, Lawrence, and Radclyffe Hall. This was a lively issue in the
late twenties. The chapter examines the magazine's discussions of the principles
and practice of censorship, mainly in editorial commentaries, but also book
reviews; and it discusses the effects of censorship on the editorial and publishing
practices of The Criterion and other contemporary magazines. It argues that The
Criterion's critique of censorship was part of a larger opposition to the
interventions of the state in the life of individuals.

The last chapter explores The Criterion's explicit politics. Throughout his
commentaries and other articles, Eliot maintained that the magazine was interested
in political philosophy, but had no interest in political practice. This position is
questioned in the previous chapter, which shows that Eliot challenged the ideas of
the Home Secretary of the time, but it became untenable in the late thirties when
the Spanish Civil War called upon writers to define their political stance. Eliot
declared himself to be neutral, and by examining his editorial articles, and pieces
by other contributors about the Spanish Civil War, particularly book reviews, this
chapter shows that Eliot maintained this neutrality, and that he sought to justify his
refusal to take sides in philosophical terms. The conclusion of the thesis examines
the reasons why The Criterion ceased publication when it did, and discusses Eliot's
retrospective evaluations of the place the magazine had occupied in his life in the inter-war years.

Some of the issues which are of concern in this thesis have long been debated in Eliot studies, such as Eliot's intellectual relationships with Hulme, Maurras, and Lawrence, but John Xiros Cooper has recently made an important point when calling for these issues to be conceptualised differently. "We are used to occupying ourselves with Eliot's literary personas," he writes, "but have yet to come to grips, in any serious way, with the mask of the prose controversialist."^^

This thesis attempts to explore the ways in which controversy and editorship modified the articulation of Eliot's views and beliefs about these issues. In centering discussion on texts published in The Criterion, and on the context of literary journalistic publication, the thesis seeks to focus debate on an exploration of the importance of the magazine in Eliot's life and work. The Criterion was the main outlet for Eliot's intellectual endeavour between 1922 and 1939, and knowledge of his writings in the magazine is crucial for an understanding of his ideas in this period. These writings have received a disproportionately small amount of critical attention, and this thesis argues for a greater awareness of Eliot's attitudes to literary journalism as a medium for the expression and dissemination of ideas. Sustained analysis of Eliot's contributions to The Criterion, alongside other pieces published in the magazine, is indispensable to any account of the evolution of Eliot's career in the period during which he was its editor.

---

Chapter 1: T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, and *The Criterion*’s "classicist tendency"

I. Eliot and classicism

During the twenties, Eliot and *The Criterion* became increasingly interested in the literary and aesthetic attitude known as classicism, and in its principal exponents in Britain, France, and America. Eliot’s interest in, and reading of classicist thinkers during the second and third decades of the century influenced the attitudes and beliefs that he held at the end of the twenties as a critic, and as an editor. Those attitudes and beliefs differed importantly from his position just after the First World War, when his most influential work was published in *The Egoist*, *The Athenæum*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. Eliot’s leaning towards classicism overlapped with his increasingly religious outlook, culminating in his conversion to an Anglo-Catholic Christianity in 1927. Classicism and Christianity combined to inform a critical position different to that which he held at the time of the publication of *The Sacred Wood* (1920). The difference was expressed in a deeper concern with the relation between religious and moral issues, and criticism; and the modulations in Eliot’s opinions about literature and society in this period can be traced through commentaries and other pieces in *The Criterion*. The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the implications of Eliot’s association of *The Criterion* with a "classicist" tendency. It surveys Eliot’s earliest discussions of classicism, evaluates the influence of T. E. Hulme, who was for Eliot the leading English exponent of classicism, and discusses some of the controversies about classicism that were conducted in *The Criterion* and in other contemporary literary
magazines. Much of the contextual discussion in this chapter is important for the
next, in which I look at the relationship between the Eliot and the French writers
Julien Benda and Charles Maurras, particularly in relation to classicism.

In 1928, the second edition of Eliot's volume of essays *The Sacred Wood* was published. In its preface, Eliot stated cautiously that the "problem" which had
preoccupied the essays in the book, written in 1919 and 1920, was "the problem of
the integrity of poetry, with the repeated assertion that when we are considering
poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing." But Eliot
wrote that during the eight years preceding the publication of the second edition, he
had "passed on to another problem not touched upon in this book: that of the
relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times."¹
This is misleading, for these concerns were addressed in *The Sacred Wood*, not
least in the essays on "Imperfect Critics"; the change is a transition in Eliot's
critical consciousness, rather than his critical concerns, so narrowly conceived.² He
recognised that his concern with society and spirituality was qualitatively different
from his earlier, predominantly aesthetic concerns, and that his interest in social
context had intensified. In 1928, Eliot also published the collection of essays *For
Lancelot Andrewes*, and in the preface he wrote about his intention in selecting and
ordering the articles in the book: "I wished to indicate certain lines of development,
and to dissociate myself from certain conclusions which have been drawn from my


² In his essay "T. S. Eliot's critical program," Timothy Materer cites and
discusses examples from early essays on individual poets which demonstrate this
cconcern with the spiritual and social life of the poets' times, for example, "Philip
volume of essays, *The Sacred Wood.*"³ He did not state explicitly to which conclusions he was referring, but in the earlier book, particularly in the famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", he outlined a doctrine of poetic impersonality which implied an objectivist criticism that nowhere acknowledged the need for a transcendent source of spiritual authority. By 1928, he had come to feel the importance of such an authority, and a form of criticism whose spiritual and moral responsibility seemed to be primarily to a concept of literary tradition, rather than to a non-temporal source, no longer represented adequately his concerns as a critic. Terry Eagleton has seen this desire for a rigorous doctrinal position as a consequence of what he calls the ideological insufficiency of empiricism; what Eliot now required was the "sublation" of empiricism into "doctrinal Christianity."⁴

In the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*, Eliot famously described his "general point of view" at the time as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion" (p.ix). This self-description echoes a characterisation of Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*, which Eliot would have encountered in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1913.⁵ It raised terminological problems whose implications Eliot felt compelled to address: "I am quite aware that [the term "classicist"] is completely vague, and easily lends itself to clap-trap"

---


(pp.ix-x). Nonetheless Eliot stated that he was defining his outlook forthrightly and provocatively in order "to refute any accusation of playing 'possum'." This was an encoded phrase understood by Eliot and Ezra Pound, by which they meant being surreptitious about allegiances, and Eliot's statement evinces a desire to name the positions that he occupied. However, in doing so Eliot made himself vulnerable to the caricature of his contemporaries, and labelled himself in a way that he found difficult to escape. The vagueness which he acknowledged was never systematically clarified, at least not by Eliot, and although "classicist" was a common term of description in critical terminology along with the related (and to some extent interchangeable) term "neo-classicist", there were many complexities and problems in its employment, upon which Eliot elaborated throughout his work. In his lengthy discussion in *After Strange Gods* about the opposition between classicism and romanticism, he suggested that in any debate which revolved around such a polarity the "opportunities for systematic misunderstanding, and for futile controversy, are ... almost ideal, and discussion of the subject is generally conducted by excitement of passion and prejudice, rather than by reason" (*ASG*, p.26). By 1933, when he gave the Page-Barbour lectures at the University of Virginia, which were published in book form as *After Strange Gods*, Eliot had come to be dissatisfied with the term "classicism", and its opposite "romanticism", although his models were still binary:

I [wish] simply to indicate the connotation which the term *tradition* has for me, before proceeding to associate it with the concept of *orthodoxy*, which seems to me more fundamental (with its opposite, *heterodoxy*, for which I shall also use the term *heresy*) than the pair *classicism-romanticism* which is frequently used. (p.21)

---

This then is a repudiation of the critical debate which took the last two terms as its centre, and signals the adoption of a new pair with overtly religious resonances. Eliot indicates that a controversy previously centred on aesthetics had progressed to, while simultaneously being incorporated into, an essentially religious frame of reference. In *For Lancelot Andrewes*, classicism had stood separated from, albeit intimately associated with royalism and anglo-catholicism, but in 1933 its concerns had ceded and been assimilated to the more important spiritual and social concerns.

In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot described the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes* as an "injudicious" statement because of "the danger of suggesting to outsiders that the Faith is a political principle or a literary fashion, and the sum of all a dramatic posture" (p.28). This rejection did not mean that he ceased to be troubled by the preface. In 1936 he offered a sort of retraction of his self-description in the preface to *Essays Ancient and Modern*:

> A volume of essays entitled *For Lancelot Andrewes* has gone out of print, after some eight years, and a new edition was proposed. I have taken the opportunity of changing the title, which has served its turn, of omitting the preface, which has more than served its turn, and of omitting two papers with which I was dissatisfied, on Machiavelli and on Crashaw.7

Eliot's rather peevish treatment of his earlier title and preface can be explained by the extent to which he had come to be identified with the positions delineated in it, and by the fact that such a statement inevitably lent itself to parody and distortion. However this rejection did not succeed in changing students' and critics' descriptions of Eliot, and towards the end of his life, in "To Criticize the Critic" (1961), he discussed the way in which writers are always associated with their most quotable statements, irrespective of the historical development of their

---

opinions. He concluded with this:

I will give one instance of a statement which has continued to dog its author long after it has ceased, in his opinion, to be a satisfactory statement of his beliefs. It is a sentence from the preface to a small collection of essays entitled *For Lancelot Andrewes*, to the effect that I was a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics, and an Anglo-Catholic in religion. I ought to have foreseen that so quotable a sentence would follow me through life ....

Eliot's statements in *After Strange Gods* and *Essays Ancient and Modern* indicate that by the thirties, the term "classicist" had become inadequate, and that it served only to diminish and obscure, rather than clarify debate. The end of Eliot's enthusiasm to be publicly associated with a classicist attitude to literature can then be dated to the early thirties. And yet only a short time before, in the year after his baptism into the Church of England, he had made a dramatically public profession of his classicism, and it is necessary to trace the origin of Eliot's allegiance, not least because it informed *The Criterion*’s character at a crucial time.

The question of when Eliot first allied himself with classicism is contentious. The critical assumption was that the key year was 1928, with the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*; but in 1973 and 1974 Ronald Schuchard published two articles which attempted to show that Eliot’s classicist point of view was developed, under the influence of T. E. Hulme, much earlier than this, in 1916. Schuchard demonstrated, quoting at length one of the syllabi for Eliot’s extension lecture course in that year, that Eliot was familiar with many of the

---


tenets of classicism in 1916, and that he had read some of Hulme’s writings. He also cited circumstantial evidence to suggest that Hulme and Eliot could have met on a number of different occasions. This evidence is, however, inconclusive, and Schuchard’s belief that the opening of the numerous restricted letters of the early London period would illuminate the issue significantly has proved unfounded.\textsuperscript{10} This does not take away from the literary historical significance of Schuchard’s argument, which shows that Eliot’s familiarity with Hulme, and his use of some of Hulme’s writings in his lecturing, is evidence that he encountered Hulme’s ideas at a significantly earlier time than had been previously assumed. There is a substantial difference, however, between the syllabus of a course of lectures and Eliot’s writings in \textit{The Criterion}. The former was essentially a survey of current intellectual trends in France: Eliot believed that his students "seemed to consider the subject rather as interesting information than as matter to provoke original thought."\textsuperscript{11} The latter, however, show Eliot assuming a polemical, rather than a pedagogical attitude to the texts. He was not explicating ideas as an exercise in comparative literary history, but recommending classicist texts because of their attitude of mind. In 1916, his explication of French classicism did not necessarily entail an identification of his own position with it. In the annotation to lecture II, "The Reaction against Romanticism" of the \textit{Syllabus of a Course of Six Lectures on Modern French Literature}, Eliot wrote this:

\begin{quote}
The beginning of the twentieth century has witnessed a return to the ideals of classicism. These may be roughly characterized as \textit{form} and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} Schuchard, \textit{PMLA}, p.1091. Eliot does refer in passing to "the interesting T. E. Hulme" as early as 4 April 1915 (\textit{Letters} I, p.94).

\textsuperscript{11} Quoted in Schuchard, \textit{RES}, p.168.
restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government (either as socialism or monarchy). The classicist point of view has been defined as essentially a belief in Original Sin - the necessity for austere discipline.

It must be remembered that the French mind is highly theoretic - directed by theories - and that no theory ever remains merely a theory of art, or a theory of religion, or a theory of politics. Any theory which commences in one of these spheres inevitably extends to the others. It is therefore difficult to separate these various threads for purposes of exposition.

The present-day movement is partly a return to the ideals of the seventeenth century. A classicist in art and literature will therefore be likely to adhere to a monarchical form of government, and to the Catholic Church. But there are many cross-currents. Our best procedure is to sketch briefly the relation of politics, literature, and religion, and then to consider the work of a few representatives of these three interests.\(^\text{12}\)

What Eliot characterized as the ideals of classicism were the ideals he would promote in *The Criterion*, and with which he allied himself in *For Lancelot Andrewes*. But these ideals seem to have remained latent, or to have been suppressed in the intervening years. The intermingling of the concerns of literature, politics, and religion is not predominant in his critical work between 1916 and 1922, partly perhaps because he was constrained by the nature of the reviewing work he was offered during this time.\(^\text{13}\) The nature and degree of Eliot’s commitment to classicism in 1916 that Schuchard argues is not evinced in his criticism. Specifically, his interest in Hulme during these years was limited to occasional and brief appreciative comments about the poetry.\(^\text{14}\) Eliot’s early interest in classicist ideas developed into a form of allegiance which is overt in his writing

\(^{12}\) Quoted in Schuchard, *RES*, p.165.

\(^{13}\) On the importance of this work to Eliot’s career, see Mark Jeffreys, "The Rhetoric of Authority in T. S. Eliot’s *Athenaeum* Reviews," *South Atlantic Review* 57, November 1992, pp.93-108.

from the early twenties onwards, and it was stimulated by the need to react to other currents in contemporary English criticism and journalism.

Michael Levenson has located Eliot's first "public avowal" of classicism in the essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth", a review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in *The Dial* in November 1923, and he suggests that the reason for this avowal was that "having attained an eminent position, [Eliot] decided to give that position a name." Levenson quotes the *Dial* essay, in which Eliot responded to Richard Aldington’s criticism of *Ulysses* which had been published in the *English Review* in April 1921: "'Mr. Aldington and I are more or less agreed as to what we want in principle, and agreed to call it classicism.'" This hesitancy is characteristic of Eliot's rhetoric at this time, and the idea of Eliot and Aldington agreeing to give their principles a name, rather than seeing themselves as members of a movement, is typical of Eliot's developing sense of the contingency of non-religious beliefs, be they literary-critical, aesthetic, or sociological.

The year 1923 was crucially transitional in Eliot's criticism. A month earlier than the *Dial* review he published an essay "The Function of Criticism" in *The Criterion*, which was a response to an article "On Fear; and on Romanticism" by John Middleton Murry. The first section of Eliot's essay made no mention of the specific context which gave rise to its publication; but throughout sections II, III, and IV Eliot sought to engage with Murry's arguments, and he made his allegiance to classicism explicit: "Those of us who find ourselves supporting what Mr. Murry calls Classicism believe that men cannot get on without giving allegiance to

---


16 In *The Adelphi* I, September 1923, pp.269-77.
something outside themselves" (II, p.34). Again his rhetoric - "find ourselves supporting" - might suggest that his position was assumed rather hesitantly; but such hesitancy also allowed Eliot implicitly to assert the provisionality of a name, and it is clear that at this time Eliot was deeply opposed to the romanticism of which Murry, in *The Adelphi*, was the principle English exponent. Opposition to Murry's critical beliefs defined the tone and theme of Eliot's essay, and he quoted Murry extensively. Eliot's essay, and its comments about classicism, were specifically located in a contemporary controversy with the editor of another, rival literary magazine. Mario Praz has suggested that Eliot's "idea of the essence of classicism is largely a polemical one, as it derives from writers who employed that term in order to contrast it with something against which they fought."^17 This sense of Eliot, the critic and editor as polemicist or controversialist is important for considerations of Eliot's classicism.^18

Eliot opened his essay with a reference back to "Tradition and the Individual Talent", although he did not mention the earlier essay by name, and he

---


^18 This is not to suggest that the polemic purpose of Eliot's work diminished the integrity of the views expressed. In his recent book *The T. S. Eliot-Middleton Murry Debate* (Allahabad: Silver Birch, 1994), L. R. Sharma discusses Eliot's essay in the context of a much longer, ongoing exchange between Eliot and Murry. Sharma seeks to show that the controversy was about more than the opposition of romanticism and classicism. He suggests rather that Eliot adopted a classicist position, counter to Murry's romanticism, as a strategy to advance his career (pp.15-7). However, Eliot's concern about classicism lasted into a period when Murry's prestige and influence was insignificant to his career, and he was established as a leading figure in modernist criticism. The specific controversy with Murry, conducted in the pages of *The Adelphi* and *The Criterion*, clarified the issues in the debate, and it was part of a genuine conflict of aesthetic and moral beliefs; in suggesting that "the debate grew out of the ambitions of the two literary men" (p.17), Sharma over-emphasises the journalistic context.
quoted the passage on the relation of "the new (the really new)" to the pre-existing order of the tradition. He reasserted his belief that the tradition was a holistic construct, incorporating the input of individual writers; and this transcendent order led Eliot to the central theme of "The Function of Criticism", that the individual writer, and consequently the individual critic, must be aware of something larger around him: "There is accordingly something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and obtain his unique position" (II, p.32). Eliot rephrased the theme of "Tradition and the Individual Talent", arguing that the true artist must renounce his individuality, and asserted that this must a fortiori be true of criticism, for criticism should be secondary to art, its end being "the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste" (II, p.32). The majority of critical writing ignored these arguments, which seemed to him self-evidently true. At this stage Eliot had not engaged with romanticism or classicism, but rather he was adopting an editorial persona, surveying the contemporary culture. Murry was engaged in a similar project, and Eliot valued him insofar as he realised that critical responsibility entailed commitment to principle:

With Mr. Murry’s recent formulation of Classicism and Romanticism I cannot agree; the difference seems to me rather the difference between the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic. But what Mr. Murry does show is that there are at least two attitudes toward literature and toward everything, and that you cannot hold both. (II, p.34)

Murry associated classicism with Catholicism, and therefore with Latin culture. England on the other hand was romantic. "In England there never has been any classicism worth talking about: we have had classics, but not classicism. And all our classics are romantic. That is to say, the decorum the great English writers
naturally observe is one that they fetch out of the depths in themselves. It is not imposed by tradition or authority."

Against the authority of, implicitly, religious doctrine, Murry asserted the authority of the self. Like Eliot, he saw that romanticism and classicism were more than literary modes, and that their principles had consequences across the range of cultural phenomena. His assertion of an independence that was specific to English culture was absolute, as quoted by Eliot: "'The English writer, the English divine, the English statesman inherit no rules from their forebears; they inherit only this: a sense that in the last resort they must depend upon the inner voice'" (II, p.35). To Eliot, this was anathema, and its assertion in the name of romanticism necessitated the delineation of a classicism in opposition. At the heart of the matter was antagonism to the privileging of the self, which classicism sought to sublimate. Eliot followed Murry in citing the opposition between "Outside Authority" and the "Inner Voice" (II, p.37); the inner voice negated the possibility of a valid criticism for Eliot, because it relegated history, and ignored the "accumulated wisdom" of the tradition, an accumulation embodied in what Eliot described as "the attempt to find any common principles for the pursuit of criticism" (II, p.37). Eliot associated the inner voice, and hence romanticism, with Whiggery, and the politics of the conflict are clear - although Eliot would later criticize the Conservatives, both in government and opposition in the late twenties, his Toryism was essential to the formation of his classicism.

In the last section of the essay Eliot did not mention Murry by name, and withdrew from an explicitly controversial exchange to consider further his ideas about classicism and romanticism. Criticism of Murry was nevertheless present,

---

19 "On Fear; and on Romanticism," pp.274-5.
and it was intensified by a satiric wit:

There is a tendency, and I think it is a whiggery tendency, to decry this critical toil of the artist; to propound the thesis that the great artist is an unconscious artist, unconsciously inscribing on his banner the words Muddle Through. Those of us who are Inner Deaf Mutes are, however, sometimes compensated by a humble conscience .... (II, p.38)

Eliot believed that criticism ought to be similarly disciplined in its rejection of the supremacy of inspiration over labour; this led him to take up an anti-interpretative position: the critic must have "a very highly developed sense of fact" (II, p.39) otherwise "Instead of insight, you get a fiction" (II, p.40). This represents a rather austere critical practice, employing the tools of "comparison and analysis" (II, p.40), refusing the possibility that the opinions of an individual critic in isolation could illuminate the text and insisting rather that it be seen in a continuum.

Eliot ended the essay offering something of what its title had suggested. The function of the critic was not to offer an interpretation of a text which would simply be a meta-fiction, but rather to subjugate himself to the work. He defined a criticism founded on principles of humility and submission to the text, having explicitly accepted Murry's formulation: "'Catholicism ... stands for the principle of unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual; that is also the principle of Classicism in literature'" (II, p.34). Although he was hesitant, it was a rhetorical hesitancy to contrast with Murry's certainties, and the rest of the essay made it clear that Eliot had come to definite and serious conclusions about his position.

The rhetoric of the essay is informed by its being part of a larger polemic, but it is not merely polemic. Classicism may have been amorphous and unsystematic, but it connoted a set of principles to which Eliot made an unambiguous commitment in
The Criterion’s first year.

During 1925 Lady Rothermere, the original financial backer of The Criterion, ceased her association with the magazine. Between the number of July 1925 and that of January 1926, there was an hiatus in its publication. It reappeared as The New Criterion at the beginning of 1926, under the imprint of Faber and Gwyer, for whom Eliot was now working. Eliot opened it with the seminal essay "The Idea of a Literary Review" in which he wrote as explicitly about his influences and intellectual affinities as he did anywhere in his writing. The essay opened with the statement, "The existence of a literary review requires more than a word of justification" (IV, p.1), and he used this beginning of a new phase as an opportunity to give some notion of the "tendency" which informed the position of his own review. He distinguished between a tendency and a programme; a tendency for Eliot was less doctrinaire and therefore more valuable than a programme:

A programme is a fragile thing, the more dogmatic the more fragile. An editor or a collaborator may change his mind; internal discord breaks out; and there is an end to the programme or to the group. But a tendency will endure, unless editor and collaborators change not only their minds but their personalities. (IV, p.3)

A tendency is that thing which gives a magazine its personality, and it is formulated through the controversies in which a magazine’s writers engage. It is not only a matter of point of view, in literature, in philosophy, in politics, but rather must be discernable in its common discursive practices. Eliot was reluctant

---

20 For a discussion of the response of other contributors to Murry, see Margolis, pp.59, 63-7.

21 For information about Lady Rothermere’s relationship with Eliot and The Criterion see Letters I, and Ali, passim.
even to go so far as to define any premises from which this tendency issued, and his unambiguous affiliation with classicism was tempered by hesitancy:

Even in indicating a tendency - far from formulating a programme - I must perforce falsify. I cannot help substituting personal tendencies for those which are impersonal and existing in the outside world .... I believe that the modern tendency is toward something which, for want of a better name, we may call classicism. I use the term with hesitation, for it is hardly more than analogical; we must scrupulously guard ourselves against measuring living art and mind by dead laws of order. Art reflects the transitory as well as the permanent condition of the soul; we cannot wholly measure the present by what the past has been, or by what we think the future ought to be. Yet there is a tendency - discernable even in art - toward a higher and clearer conception of Reason, and a more severe and serene control of the emotions by Reason. (IV, p.5)

Eliot then cited a list of books which he believed exemplified this tendency, although they diverged in perspective: Réflexions sur la violence by Georges Sorel, (1908, translated into English, 1916); L'Avenir de l'intelligence by Charles Maurras (1905); Belphégor by Julien Benda (1918, translated 1929); Speculations by T. E. Hulme (1924); Réflexions sur l'intelligence by Jacques Maritain (1924); and Democracy and Leadership by Irving Babbitt (1924).22 Against these, Eliot cited works by H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell,23 which, Eliot wrote "represent to my mind that part of the present which is already dead" (IV, p.5). Classicism was then not merely one aesthetic choice among many for modern culture - a style in which it could make its own art - it was the only means by which art and criticism would remain vital. Classicism did not only denote the application of Greco-Roman aesthetics in contemporary writing; it must reformulate

22 The importance of these books, as exemplars of Eliot's affinities at this time, has long been recognised by Eliot scholars. See for instance, Ali, p.52; Bergonzi; Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965); Margolis; Materer, p.57.

23 Christina Alberta's Father, St. Joan and What I Believe, respectively.
itself for a modern, constantly changing world.

Eliot's concern about the function and justification of a magazine was a consequence of his increasing sense that the institutions of criticism must be informed by a moral sense. Having identified classicism as the point of view which best helped him make sense of the modern world, he felt the need to defend it and concluded his article: "we must find our own faith, and, having found it, fight for it against all others. And with this I will make no more ado of tendencies" (IV, p.6). Although his position was expressed in a tentative and provisional way, it was firmly grounded in the reading which helped him to "find [his] own faith"; and of the books he cited, Hulme's Speculations has been seen as one of the most important.

* * * * *

II. T. E. Hulme: "the forerunner of a new attitude of mind"

Hulme's writings on art criticism and philosophy are significant in the intellectual history of modernism, although his written output is enigmatically small, and unsystematic in its thinking. He was killed in battle, aged 34, on 28 September 1917, and his theories were never fully formulated, for he published little during his lifetime, and what he did publish, apart from translations, were magazine articles: he was allegedly fond of saying "I am a heavy philosopher, I shall write nothing until I am forty." According to most biographical studies, his thinking,

24 Eliot on Hulme (II, p.231).

during his life, was disseminated mainly through his personal contact with other writers such as Pound, Wyndham Lewis, F. S. Flint and Ford Madox Ford. He was important in the birth and brief development of Imagism in England, although as Eliot wrote in 1953, "literary history has not settled the question, and perhaps never will, whether imagism itself, or the name for it, was invented by ... Ezra Pound or ... T. E Hulme." According to Levenson, the first published use of the term "Imagiste" occurred in 1912, in Pound's preface to The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme, which might suggest that Pound coined the name. Julian Symons suggests that it was Hulme who first "proclaimed the vital importance of the image" in modern poetry. An interesting contemporary account is F. S. Flint's

---


28 Levenson, p.69. Levenson traces the controversy about the foundation of Imagism, and evaluates the rival claims of Hulme, Pound and also Ford (pp.103-5). Hulme's published Complete Poetical Works comprised five short poems published in the New Age of January 1912 (Csengeri, ed., p.2), and as an appendix to Pound's volume Ripostes (October 1912). Karen Csengeri has published eight poems in her edition of the Collected Writings.

29 Symons, 1987, p.34.
"The History of Imagism", which Pound faulted for its lack of attention to Ford.\textsuperscript{30} Flint stated that from 1908, when Hulme founded the Poets' Club, Imagist poems were being written by members of a group which revolved around Hulme. In February or March 1909, Hulme, Flint, and others began to hold weekly meetings separate from the Poets' Club, and "what brought the real nucleus of this group together was a dissatisfaction with English poetry as it was then (and still is, alas!) being written. We proposed at various times to replace it by \textit{vers libre}; by the Japanese \textit{tanka} and \textit{haikai}.... In all this Hulme was ringleader." This group discussed what they "called the Image" and in April 1909 Pound joined them and would later, in his preface to Hulme's complete works, describe \textit{Les Imagistes} as the descendants of "the forgotten school of 1909."\textsuperscript{31}

Hulme, like Pound, moved on from Imagism, and from writing Imagist poetry, and he became more interested in general ideas in aesthetics and the visual arts. He published no verse after 1912, and none of his critical essays after this time specifically address poetry. However his writings about the visual arts and the theory of aesthetics have had significance also for literature and for literary criticism. Christopher Norris sees Hulme as the originator of a critical position which not only influenced Eliot and his contemporaries, but which still has ramifications in the academy today. Discussing what he describes as a "running argument" between the deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller, and "Romantic scholar-


\textsuperscript{31} Flint, p.71. See also F. S. Flint's "Verse Chronicle," in \textit{The Criterion} of July 1932 (XI, pp.684-9). He suggests that in coining the name Pound took the "image" from "T. E. Hulme's table talk," and the "ism" from "notes on contemporary French poetry which [Flint] wrote for Harold Monro's \textit{Poetry Review}" (XI, p.687).
critics like M. H. Abrams", Norris traces their conflict back to Hulme’s formulations on romanticism in *Speculations*:

> T. S. Eliot and the New Critics ... on principle rejected the entire ideology of Romanticism, and ... set out to create an alternative classicist line of descent. What Abrams defends in the name of "High Romantic Argument" is precisely what these critics deplore (after T. E. Hulme) as a species of "spilt religion": the idea that poetry can achieve states of mind transcending the limits of commonplace perceptual experience.

Norris does not develop this line of argument so far as to construct a genealogy whereby Hulmeian, classicist, New Criticism evolves into deconstruction, while late Victorian romanticism becomes late twentieth-century romanticism. In the history of critical theory, the rigour and scepticism of modernist criticism is seen to have been insufficiently aware of the ideologies which were implicit in its position, and only:

> Deconstruction would then be a vigilant practice of textual critique alert to those moments when the drive for aesthetic transcendence creates the kind of timeless, mystified ideal of "tradition" (or "unified sensibility") so potently embodied in Eliot’s critical writings.

Nonetheless Norris is not the only critic to have made an association between Hulme and deconstruction. The parallels have been most clearly expounded by Richard Shusterman, in an article stimulated by the absence of any commemoration of the centenary of Hulme’s birth. He suggests that:

> [Hulme’s] notion of philosophy as an art of purveying attitudes rather than a science achieving truth, his attack on the intellectualist logocentric bias of Western thought, his radical linguistic-based scepticism about achieving truth because of the inevitable distortive gap between reality and any words we use to describe it, and finally, even his advocacy of the written and visual in literature as against the traditional dominance of the oral: all this is extraordinarily suggestive of some of the influential ideas associated with

---

However to see affinities is not to prove influence, and Shusterman is perhaps too eager to identify Hulme as a source or precursor of critical schools, as if to valorise him thereby.

Hulme was important for Eliot because he represented a movement of reaction against romantic emphases on self and personality. Hulme's classicism was intimately related to a religious attitude, and a rejection of what he described as "humanist" values, which denied the existence of an absolute authority. He delineated this position in his most mature work, the pieces which became the opening essay of his book *Speculations* (1924), "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" (1915-16): "Ethical values are not relative to human desires and feelings, but absolute and objective.... Religion supplements this ... by its conception of Perfection [Hulme's ellipsis and emphasis]." He believed that this humanism had been engendered by the Renaissance, and specifically that during the Renaissance, in contrast to the preceding period from the age of Augustine, people had ceased to believe in Original Sin (pp.49-50). The dominant subsequent strains in metaphysics, including romanticism, had their origin in the Renaissance period, for however admirable the heroic representation of the individual in, for instance, Marlowe, "inevitably" the attitudes expressed would "develop into sentimental, utilitarian romanticism" (pp.61-2). In "Modern Art and its Philosophy" (1914, *Spec.*, pp.75-76).

---


Hulme attempted to explain the nature of the contemporary reaction to romantic aesthetics: "what is the nature of that change of sensibility at the present moment? Expressed generally, there seems to be a desire for austerity and bareness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature and natural things" (p.96). In this he was less circumspect than Eliot, for he was keen to prescribe what the new classicist aesthetic, and consequently literature, would be.

The most influential essay in the volume *Speculations* was entitled "Romanticism and Classicism" (1911 or 1912, *Spec.*, pp.113-40). In this essay Hulme expanded all of his central ideas about the relationships between human nature, religion, and metaphysics. He classified his interpretation of the influence that historical changes in these ideas had in literature. The essay opened with this statement: "I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and that the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy" (p.113). Hulme sought here to reverse Coleridge’s privileging of the imagination over the fancy in *Biographia Literaria*, for Hulme’s version of classicism inhered in part in its otherness from, and antipathy towards, romanticism. This has generated some controversy ever since. His biographer Alun R. Jones suggests that the romanticism against which Hulme was in reaction was the mid- and late-Victorian romanticism of Ruskin and Pater, rather than the Germanic-idealist romanticism of Coleridge, although polemically Hulme attempted to present his classicism as an attack on Coleridge, for he was

---

35 For Eliot’s rather blank response to Coleridge’s distinction, see *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), pp.76-9.
seen as the principal theorist of English romanticism. Frank Kermode suggests that the identification of Hulme with classicism is misguidedly founded upon readings of Hulme’s most famous (and anthologised) essay "Romanticism and Classicism", and the bold, non-analytical assertion of anti-romanticism found in that essay, whereas in fact his philosophy is essentially a development of late romantic conceptions of the symbol. Murray Krieger has shown that Hulme, in using the term romanticism to cover a wide range of positions, failed to distinguish between opposing traditions in romanticism, and that his inclusiveness did insufficient justice to their complexities and their similarities to his own position. However, as John Fekete argues, against Kermode, it is "difficult to ignore both the self-image of the modern critics [Hulme-Eliot] as being different from the romantics, and their theoretical self-consciousness in categorizing as classical the chief axis of their work." Hulme’s classicism, and later Eliot’s, is a difficult theory to define discretely, but it constituted a critical identity. Hulme’s inconsistency was a consequence of his unsystematic approach to critical thinking and writing, and often his work sought to be expository or polemic, rather than analytical or evaluative. Throughout his life, he expounded and attacked different positions as his ideas changed, and therefore, as both Levenson and Csengeri have

---

36 Jones, pp.47-8.


noted, it is crucial to date Hulme’s writings accurately, in order to map accurately the evolution and fluctuation of his ideas.

Levenson discusses Hulme’s early "Lecture on Modern Poetry", which was delivered to the Poets’ Club in November 1908, as an example of the misguidedness of labelling Hulme simply as a classicist. In that paper Hulme delineated a poetics opposed to the classicist strain in modernism: "I have no reverence for tradition"; "In all the arts, we seek for the maximum of individual and personal expression." Indeed some of Eliot’s pronouncements in the early twenties, such as "No artist produces great art by a deliberate attempt to express his personality," were intended directly to counter ideas like these. Levenson argues that to describe Hulme as a classicist is to take insufficient account of the development of his thought and the modulations in his position during the years 1908-1917. He moved from his initial interest in Bergson, whom he expounded for English readers in The New Age from 1909 to 1912, through classicism, and at the end of his life arrived at a post-classical position, with a radical rejection of the whole Western humanist tradition, as Levenson argues:

Not only has [Hulme] relinquished a linear view of history in favour of a cyclical theory, but the cycles have been steadily enlarged. "Romanticism" is no longer the name of the dying phase, nor is "Renaissance." It is Western humanism, from its classical origins to its present decline. Any effective alternative must come from outside the European tradition.

Hulme’s classicism did not then consist in a simple privileging of the classical

---

40 Csengeri, "Introduction," to the Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme, p.xv.

41 Further Speculations, pp.68, 71-2.

42 "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," The Criterion, February 1924 (II, p.120).

enacted by means of a return to Greco-Roman forms of art. He rejected the desire for art which followed these models, and their derivatives in European Renaissance humanism:

There are people who, disgusted with romanticism, wish for us to go back to the classical period, or who, like Nietzsche, wish us to admire the renaissance. But such partial reactions will always fail, for they are only half measures - it is no good returning to humanism, for that will itself degenerate into romanticism. ("Humanism and the Religious Attitude", p.62)

Hulme valued primitivistic, geometrical, non-representational art as found in Byzantine, Egyptian, and Indian cultures, because it resisted the impulse to anthropomorphize God:

A satisfaction with appearances is limited to Europe. It is only there that the superhuman abstract idea of the divine has been expressed by banal representation. No knowledge could damp down the Indian inborn fear of the world, since it stands, not as in the case of primitive man before knowledge, but above it. Their art consequently remained geometrical. ("Modern Art and its Philosophy", p.89)

He articulated a recognition that art history and aesthetics have been defined by Euro-centric assumptions, although he did not attempt a systematic critique of the ideology underpinning them, and he attributed this Euro-centrism to mental, rather than socio-historical processes:

The change of sensibility which has enabled us to regard Egyptian, Polynesian and Negro work, as art and not as archæology has had a double effect. It has made us realise that what we took to be the necessary principles of æsthetic, constitute in reality only a psychology of Renaissance and Classical Art. ("Humanism and the Religious Attitude", p.12)

In acknowledging that Hulme repudiated a classical aesthetic in favour of non-western forms in visual art it is important to remember that classicism and the classical are not simply commensurable, and we should be wary of a simple identification of the classicist aesthetic with the use of classical models, or allusions to classical works. Eliot’s attitude differed: he too repudiated "dead laws
of order", but just before he first noted Hulme's work in *The Criterion*, he was expressing a common concern about the diminishing importance of classical education in England, and the concomitant suggestion that England had greater affinities with Teutonic than with Latin cultures:

> Latin and Greek are to be reinstated in public instruction in France; and already there are not wanting interpreters to tell us that this is no doubt excellent for the French. But in England, we are told and shall be told, such a step would be a step backward, an artificial restriction and a barrier to liberal progress. And the difference is explained. The French are "Latins"; the English are Saxons, or - not to put too fine a point on it - Teutons. Such a theory is only one of the many absurd conclusions to which popular ethnology and popular philology may lead us, but it happens to be one of the most noxious of these absurdities. (II, p.104)

In his commentary of April 1925, he wrote that "Neglect of Greek means for Europe a relapse into unconsciousness" (III, p.342). Eliot explicitly promoted the necessity of maintaining the Greco-Latin tradition; for him, Aristotle seems to have been most nearly "the perfect critic". But this position was fully concerned with the contemporary situation, and without drawing excessive attention to it, Eliot indicated the latent politics of his position, which were anti-liberal, reactionary, and dismissive of the "popular". In his first article about Hulme, he later made explicit the association between classicism and anti-democratic politics.

Since his death, Hulme has been treated as an enigmatic figure, and even those who insist that his reputation has been over-inflated have been unable to resist offering their opinions about his influence and significance. His brief life, the relatively unpolished state of his work, and principally his influence on Eliot,

---

44 In "The Perfect Critic", Eliot described Aristotle as "primarily a man of not only remarkable but universal intelligence; and universal intelligence means that he could apply his intelligence to anything" (*The Sacred Wood* [London: Methuen, 1920], p.9). Coleridge was just one of those who suffered by comparison.
combine to suggest that had he lived his significance as a thinker in the first half of this century would be more widely acknowledged, although it seems excessive to go so far as his biographer Alun R. Jones who wrote of Hulme: "he is related to the achievement of the first half of the century in much the same way as Coleridge is related to the first half of the nineteenth" (p.13). In the thirties, some of those who wrote about Hulme sought to put his work in perspective. Pound had been fascinated by Hulme from the time of their first meeting, and he commemorated Hulme’s death in "Canto XVI", which was first published in 1925, in a discussion of the war involvement of various members of the London cultural scene, including Richard Aldington, Henri Gaudier-Brezscia, and Wyndham Lewis:

And ole T. E. H. he went to it,
With a lot of books from the library,
London Library, and a shell buried 'em in a dug-out,
And the Library expressed its annoyance.
    And a bullet hit him on the elbow
... gone through the fellow in front of him,
And he read Kant in the Hospital, in Wimbledon
in the original,
And the hospital staff didn’t like it. [Pound’s ellipsis]

The ironic, counter-elegiac tone suggests that Pound was conscious of his position as a quasi-chronicler, and was anxious to avoid sentimentality or nostalgia in his poem, and rather preferred to celebrate Hulme’s ongoing anti-nationalist commitment to the intellect. In an article in *The Criterion* of July 1932, ostensibly an obituary of Harold Monro, Pound looked back at the pre-war literary scene in London. He did consider Monro’s importance, as an editor, anthologist, bookshop owner and poet, but Pound’s main aim was to impress upon *The Criterion’s*

---

readers his perception of the dynamics of that period. Implicitly referring to the foundation of the Poets’ Club and the subsequent development of Imagism, he wrote:

I don’t know that there is much to be gained by writing or reading criticism of minor epochs, it may on the other hand be the best form of class-room exercise imaginable. You have a period of muddle, a few of the brightest lads have a vague idea that something is a bit wrong, and no one quite knows the answer. (XI, p.586)

This is a suggestive depiction of the level of self-awareness of the innovators or the avant-garde at any given time, and certainly of the proto-modernists. Pound makes no suggestion that whatever school (as one might describe the Poets’ Club) arose out of pre-war debates about poetry had any other agenda than a reaction to what went before.

Pound then introduced an idea that he mentioned on a few occasions in the thirties - the neglect of Ford, and the association of that neglect with the elevation of Hulme:

As a matter of fact Madox Ford knew the answer but no one believed him, certainly Mr. Monro did not believe him. Mr. Hulme is on the road to mythological glory; but the Hulme notes, printed after his death, had little or nothing to do with what went on in 1910, 1911 or 1912. (XI, p.586)

Pound’s repudiation of Hulme is a response to the success of "the Hulme notes, printed after his death", i.e. the collated Speculations. Pound’s implication is that the influence of Speculations during the twenties had led writers and critics (including Eliot) to project this influence back into earlier years, erroneously. Thus Speculations may have had "little or nothing to do with what went on in 1910, 1911 or 1912" because some of the essays in that collection were not published nor even written then, and in this Pound pre-empts subsequent critics’ assertion of the importance of dating Hulme correctly. Hulme’s ideas were in circulation before and
during the First World War, but it is clear that the publication of Hulme’s work in book form made an important difference to his reception, and disseminated his work more widely.

The question of Hulme’s place in pre-war London was a source of debate during the thirties. In January 1939, Pound published a revisionist article, whose title gave some indication of its agenda. “This Hulme Business” was published in *The Townsman*, and in it Pound reiterated the theme that literary historians had over- emphasised Hulme’s importance, at the expense of Ford:

> The EVENT of 1909-10 was Ford Madox (Heuffer) Ford’s ‘English Review’, and no greater condemnation of the utter filth of the whole social system of that time can be dug up than the fact of that review’s passing out of his hands. Its list of contributors should prevent critical exaggeration of our Frith Street cenacle without in the least damaging Hulme’s record.

But Pound was not the only critic who sought to reassess Hulme’s influence. In a review of Michael Roberts’s book *T. E. Hulme* in *Scrutiny* in September 1938, H. A. Mason attacked what he termed “The T. E. Hulme Myth”:

> It is clear from this book if it was not so before that Hulme was of importance almost exclusively as a stimulating influence, and was possibly more valuable in conversation than in his writings. Many of his dicta can be found in different settings in, for example, the work of T. S. Eliot. But these ideas are only valuable when worked out and properly defined. It is by the success of those who are known to have come under his influence that Hulme will be esteemed.

By the end of the thirties Hulme’s significance as a writer and thinker had come to be evaluated in terms of its borrowing and influence; Hulme was considered to be a mediator. But that does not diminish the force of his reconsiderations of the work

---


of other, more original writers, nor does it suggest that his presentation of them did not have its own originality.

* * * * *

III. Hulme, Eliot, and The Criterion

There is an important caveat, before examining in detail Hulme’s affinities with Eliot. With the publication of Michael Roberts’s study T. E. Hulme (1938), Sam Hynes’s edition of Hulme’s previously uncollected work, Further Speculations (1955), Alun R. Jones’s The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme (1960), and most recently, Karen Csengeri’s edition of The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme (1994), it has been possible to read far more of Hulme’s work than Eliot was likely to have read. Ronald Schuchard’s article "Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Toward a Revaluation of Eliot’s Critical and Spiritual Development" shows that while giving Oxford University extension lectures on modern French literature in 1916, Eliot was familiar with Hulme’s poetry, with his translation of Henri Bergson’s Introduction to Metaphysics, and with his translation of Georges Sorel’s Reflections on Violence which included a "Translator’s Preface" in which Hulme discussed some ideas of his own that had developed from his reading of Sorel. But these works, in addition to Speculations, are all that we can be sure that Eliot read prior to his introduction of Hulme in The Criterion, and in tracing lines of affinity between Eliot and Hulme, it is important to be clear that Eliot’s familiarity with

48 For instance, that the classical system of ideas springs from "the conviction that man is by nature bad or limited, and can consequently only accomplish anything of value by disciplines, ethical, heroic, or political. In other words, it believes in Original Sin." (The preface was reprinted in Speculations, pp.249-60, the quotation is from p.256.)
the range of Hulme's work was more restricted than that of later assessors of their relationship.

Eliot published only one piece by Hulme in *The Criterion*, a collection of fragments edited together with an introduction by Herbert Read, entitled "Notes on Language and Style". This opened the number of July 1925, which also contained pieces by Joyce, I. A. Richards, and Lawrence. The "Notes on Language and Style" were very early, unpublished writings by Hulme, dating from 1907; Read published approximately half the collection in *The Criterion*, and he wrote himself that they were "excluded from the volume published as *Speculations*" in part because "their corporate value did not immediately emerge from an extremely illegible script" (III, p.485). Read's introduction is a paraphrase of the "Notes" with a little interpretation, and he attempts to give a brief account of the specific interest for literature of Hulme's ideas. Rather cryptically Read suggests that for Hulme "Poetry, in the broad sense of imaginative literature, becomes the only kind of logic worthy of consideration, and the art of poetry the only science of meaning" (III, p.485). He extrapolates the metonymic relation between poetry and literature from Hulme's work; in fact Hulme's literary criticism, like Eliot's, is predominantly concerned with poetry - he wrote in the "Notes" that "Prose is a museum where all the old weapons of poetry are kept" (III, p.489). The thrust of Read's argument is that Hulme believed that poetry must be as clear, and as precise as the "feeble instrument" language would allow. It is difficult to give an account here of the "Notes" in the form of a summary and evaluation of its arguments for it exists as a collection of aphorisms; but as such it is striking. Its

---

49 Csengeri, ed., p.23.
structure - a succession of statements about poetry and language, such as "Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images" (III, p.490), "Poetry is neither more nor less than a mosaic of words, so great exactness is required for each one" (III, p.497) to cite two of the most suggestive - is provocatively self-assured, and representative of Hulme’s ebullient, dogmatic style. It is futile to conjecture into what kind of final form Hulme might have arranged the notes, or whether he might have given them a more formal structure. In their published form, they represent the initial level of his thinking, and Read would have been transgressing his editorial remit had he attempted to manipulate them into something more systematic.

The number of April 1932 opened with the only full length article on Hulme published in The Criterion, "The Categories of T. E. Hulme", by Michael Roberts, who published a book length study six years later. Roberts’s article is a critique of the confused, and confusing nature of Hulme’s categorisation of different phenomena. It presumes acquaintance with Hulme’s work, and with his intellectual context, particularly that provided by Rémy de Gourmont. Roberts suggests that the terms which Hulme used to classify art and experience were insufficiently thought out, and that Hulme himself never really understood them, with the consequence that he "confuses ethical and aesthetic value" to the extent of identifying them with one another (XI, pp.384-5).

Roberts attacks the emphasis that Hulme placed on the importance of the visual in for instance "Notes on Language and Style". Hulme’s privileging of order - visually exemplified by geometrical art - is satisfied, according to Roberts, only by stasis, and Hulme "confuses a legitimate admiration for structure with a worship
of all that is static, architectural" (XI, p.377). Hulme perceived structure visually, and identified its presence in poetry in visual imagery, which led him to ignore the significance of aural imagery as an agent of coherence. Roberts alleges that Hulme, like Gourmont, was unable to consider that a poem could be a synthesis as well as a sequence, because he believed the accumulation of the visual to be more important than the succession of the aural. One technical consequence of this, according to Roberts, was that Hulme came to believe, and assert strongly that "metaphor is the most valuable element in poetry" (XI, p.380). What Roberts meant by "most valuable element", or understood Hulme to have meant by it (he was not quoting Hulme directly) is unclear. It is ambiguous whether it signifies technical achievement, a satisfaction of aesthetic criteria, or bears a moral weight. Roberts believed that metaphor works in terms of analogical reasoning, but that it necessitated constant linguistic invention, and he suggests that this contradicted Hulme's customary scepticism about the value of progress: "The invention of unnecessary metaphor as practised among some classes in the United States, is a direct attack on the significance of language, yet the writing of Hulme and Gourmont seems to countenance the activity" (XI, p.380).

Roberts attacked Hulme's promotion of classicism on several grounds. He characterised his criticism as being predicated on a denial of the value of change - for change was not necessarily progress - and an assertion that all change was cyclical. Nevertheless, Roberts suggested that Hulme had argued that the new classical-Religious attitude delineated in *Speculations* would itself be unlike anything that had gone before. In positing the absolute truth of the judgements that underpinned his position, Hulme ignored, or failed to recognise that the historical
contingency which he had been keen to expose in the genealogy of the Renaissance and romanticism, was also a determining factor in the construction of classicism (XI, pp.381-2). In its insistence on the permanence of values, classicism was insensitive to the consequences of inevitable material change: as Roberts put it "Man, by existing, irreversibly changes his environment: in some way, however slight, he must change to meet that change" (XI, p.382) and art must evolve in similar ways, as must ethics, even if these changes do not constitute a moral progression. Adopting a pragmatic position, Roberts insisted that "traditional" art and morality can become inadequate to a new material situation; this position is not so much a critique of Hulme, as an ideological opposition. Roberts distinguishes between the adoption of values that are necessary to survive - "utilitarian aesthetics and prudential ethics" (XI, p.383) - and the process by which we come to believe that these values transcend material circumstances. He accused Hulme effectively of making a fetish of a transcendent deity, in which he did not believe spiritually, but rather who provided a site for the inscription of moral authority for aesthetic dogma, thus "Hulme's god is remote, unnecessary and absolute" (XI, p.383). He is unnecessary, for His law is monolithic, and it is impossible for Hulme to engage his belief in such a deity with the quotidian problems of making sense of the world. Roberts concluded by suggesting that Hulme simply uses the term "romantic" in place of "sentimental", and that this implication of equivalence is wilful, and undermines the possibility of order in criticism.

Roberts's essay was a sustained and sophisticated critique of Hulme, published after *Speculations* had been in circulation for some eight years. Eliot had
first drawn The Criterion's readers' attention to Hulme’s criticism in a commentary in April 1924, when he noticed the publication of the book:

The posthumous volume of Speculations of T. E. Hulme (Kegan Paul) appears to have fallen like a stone to the bottom of the sea of print. With its peculiar merits, this book is most unlikely to meet with the slightest comprehension from the usual reviewer: with all its defects - it is an outline of a work to be done, and not an accomplished philosophy - it is a book of very great significance. When Hulme was killed in Flanders in 1917, he was known to a few people as a brilliant talker, a brilliant amateur of metaphysics, and the author of two or three of the most beautiful short poems in the language. In this volume he appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the twentieth-century mind, if the twentieth century is to have a mind of its own. Hulme is classical, reactionary, and revolutionary; he is the antipodes of the eclectic, tolerant, and democratic mind of the end of the last century. (II, p.231)

This is a generous if over-stated description of Hulme. But Eliot had held such opinions for some time; he once described Hulme as "the most remarkable theologian of my generation;" and in 1919 he wrote to Mary Hutchinson that he thought Hulme "a really great poet": "I can’t think of anything as good as two of his poems since Blake." If this were Eliot’s genuine estimation of Hulme’s poetry, it would mean that he placed a large proportion of Hulme’s meagre canon near the summit of English poetic achievement. The reasoning behind such hyperbole is obscure, and Eliot’s main aim in The Criterion was to recommend Hulme as a cultural and aesthetic critic rather than as a poet.51

50 Letters I, n.3 p.94, p.311. Eliot continued this extravagant note in his appreciation: in one of his 1926 Clark Lectures at Cambridge, he described Hulme as "the most fertile mind of my generation;" in part this was, as Ronald Schuchard points out, a joke at the university’s expense, for Hulme had been sent down from Cambridge (Eliot, The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry, ed., intro. Ronald Schuchard [London: Faber & Faber, 1993], pp.82-3).

51 Lyndall Gordon reports that when, in 1929, Eliot’s friend Emily Hale wrote to him, concerned about a lecture she was to give on modern poetry, he sent her a copy of Speculations (Eliot’s New Life [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], p.11).
In the second section of the commentary, entitled "Hulme and Classicism", Eliot associated Hulme with the contemporary French thinkers Charles Maurras, Albert [sic] Sorel, and Pierre Lasserre, and opined that he was "a solitary figure in this country." In comparison with these, Hulme was "immature and unsubstantial" and yet Hulme had "the great advantage of a creative gift", whereas the "weakness from which the classical movement in France has suffered is that it has been a critique rather than a creation" (II, p.231). A classical moment would only be achieved by means of a symbiosis between the tenets of contemporary literary theory, and the practices of its creative writers:

Classicism is in a sense reactionary, but it must be in a profounder sense revolutionary. A new classical age will be reached when the dogma, or ideology, of the critics is so modified by contact with creative writing, and when the creative writers are so permeated by the new dogma, that a state of equilibrium is reached. (II, p.232)

The "classical moment" then, is achieved when "the creative impulse finds a form which satisfies the best intellect of the time, a moment when a type is produced" (II, p.232). But this is a strange kind of formulation, for all that it posits is an ideal of the relationship between high art and the criticism of art. Eliot offers no criteria by which one might judge the best intellect of the time, nor any reason why the intellect should be more important than, or how it was distinct from, aesthetic sensibility in criticism. Eliot evokes a moment of harmony, equilibrium, or stasis, when the creative impulse is restrained by its relationship to criticism, but he offers no definition of a quality in art that could be called classical style, such as he had done in 1916. This lack, symptomatic of Eliot's reticence and uneasiness about programmes, makes difficult any attempt to define Eliot's classicism within a conceptual framework limited by literature or even by aesthetics - even though
Eliot limited himself in this way in *For Lancelot Andrewes*. Eliot’s promotion of Hulme focused on theoretical aspects of criticism, and although one of Eliot’s earliest declared associations with classicism came in a review of *Ulysses*, he wrote in *The Criterion* of the difficulties of labelling creative writers as classicist:

> [T]he movement may claim Paul Valéry, but that elusive genius will hardly allow itself to be placed. It would be as tenable, and as dubious, to claim James Joyce in England. Of both these writers it may as cogently be said that they belong to a new age chiefly by representing, and perhaps precipitating, consummately in their different ways the close of the previous epoch. (II, p.231)

Eliot’s principal encounter with Hulme was through *Speculations*, therefore he would have had little sense of the modulation of Hulme’s work, for the book was a collection of disparate works edited together. Ignorance about the evolution of Hulme’s work has been exacerbated by Herbert Read’s editing of the book, for Read made no effort to establish a chronology of his writings, and in presenting them together, he evaded issues of development, instead seeming to countenance inconsistencies and contradiction. As a consequence, *Speculations* reads as a heterogeneous collection of texts, and Eliot accepts this in describing *Speculations* as "an outline of a work to be done" (II, p.231). Levenson sees this apparent lack of perception as an aspect of the modernist-classicist agenda:

> Eliot is intent to see Hulme as a forerunner of the classical, placing him alongside Maurras and Lasserre. He ignores the attacks on humanism, the defence of geometric art, the Bergsonism; needless to say he ignores the attacks on classicism. He reads Hulme as classical, and this is how Hulme has since been read. Eliot’s interpretation of Hulme amounts to a taming of Hulme .... But before we view this as a weakness of will, we ought to recognize it as strategically apt: it was Eliot’s presentation of the modernist position, after all, which won widespread cultural recognition and assured the legitimacy of the avant-garde. (p.209)

He suggests that Hulme’s essay "Romanticism and Classicism" has been regarded
as "the most mature statement of Hulme's opinions - partly, no doubt, because of 
T. S. Eliot's later embrace of the classical position" (p.87), and makes a convincing 
case that the essay was not in fact a mature work. He dates it to late 1911 or early 
1912, as does Csengeri, on the basis of Hulme's reference in "Romanticism and 
Classicism" to a riot by members of the right-wing, French political organisation 
Action Française, which interrupted a lecture on Racine in Paris, that had taken 
place late in 1910, i.e. seven years or so prior to Hulme's death, before he 
achieved his most developed, if not final position (pp.87-8). Levenson argues that 
Eliot ignores, for instance, the exposition of Bergson in "Bergson's Theory of Art" 
and "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds", essays which were contemporary 
with "Romanticism and Classicism". Thus it may be that through Eliot's 
interpretation of his work, and its subsequent promotion as being classicist, Hulme 
has been misrepresented in the history of aesthetic criticism and of the 
development of modernism in this country; but from Eliot's accommodation of 
Hulme to a specific tendency we can learn something about what was inferred 
from his work at a certain moment.

Eliot's classicism, and the judgements which it informed derived from an 
increasingly religious spirituality. Hulme asserted forcefully throughout his writing 
that the principal dogma by which modern man should live his life - and the only 
corrective to "Romanticism in literature, Relativism in ethics, Idealism in 
philosophy, and Modernism in religion," which he termed in the essay "Humanism 
and the Religious Attitude", the "bastard phenomena" - was belief in Original Sin 
(Spec., p.10). Only the moral responsibility that comes with the recognition of 
human imperfectibility could be a genuine foundation for an ethical, modern
Weltanschauung; this was Hulme’s constant refrain. In his memoir Blasting and Bombardiering (1937) Wyndham Lewis wrote that “no one ever thinks of Hulme without thinking of Original Sin”; more importantly for the question of Hulme’s influence, Lewis went on to write that “No one else in England at the time had even heard of it, or would, I am persuaded, have done so since, had it not been for him.” This second assertion seems over-stated, and we might believe that Eliot would have encountered others apart from Hulme discussing the dogma. In a discussion of Eliot’s conversion to Christianity in 1927, and the ceremonies attendant upon it - baptism, confirmation, and confession - Lyndall Gordon alludes to Eliot’s essay “Baudelaire” (1930). In that essay, Eliot discussed the presence of the consciousness of sin in the work other writers: “It is apparently Sin in the Swinburnian sense, but really Sin in the permanent Christian sense, that occupies the mind of Baudelaire.” But at the end of that essay, he again explicitly linked Hulme and Original Sin. Eliot made the association between a culture that had ceased to believe in Original Sin, and the invalidity of its literature, most strongly in After Strange Gods:

At this point I shall venture to generalise, and suggest that with the disappearance of the idea of Original Sin, with the disappearance of the idea of intense moral struggle, the human beings presented to us both in poetry and in prose-fiction today, and more patently among the serious writers than in the underworld of letters, tend to become less and less real. (ASG, p.42)

Eliot was already moving towards this kind of intense linking of literature and

52 Quoted in Jones, p.69.


spirituality throughout the twenties, before his reception into the Church of England in 1927. Rhetorically the movement found its most dogmatic expression in After Strange Gods, although much of Eliot’s criticism meditates on these kinds of concerns.

In "Romanticism and Classicism", Hulme wrote that the classical view held that man was "intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent" (p.117). This was reflected in literature in that "the classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man" (p.120); the representatives of this classical tradition are "such diverse people as Horace, most of the Elizabethans and the writers of the Augustan age." For Hulme "the other side" was represented by "Lamartine, Hugo, parts of Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne" (p.119). The opposition of these traditions is familiar, and bears resemblance to Eliot’s own preferences - which is not to say that he derived them from Hulme, but rather that in Hulme, Eliot found a thinker whose attitudes were close to his own, and who articulated similar ways of thinking about literature’s relationship to the world. Hulme’s classicism stood for a submission to a higher spiritual authority:

You don’t believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don’t believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience. It is like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion. (p.118)

This is the essence of what Eliot drew from Hulme; there is always the sense in the latter’s work that aesthetics must be the servant of a religious metaphysic, that art should and must be the expression of an orthodox religious weltanschauung;
and Eliot believed that this idea had been rejected in the work of the romantic tradition.

For both Eliot and Hulme it was necessary to recognise that the importance of submission to a higher authority derived from religious principles. Thus humanism, as it developed principally in America, in the work of Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and following them Norman Foerster, was inadequate as a way of viewing the world. As Dominic Baker-Smith suggests, it denoted an ethical view of humanity which Eliot believed was informed by religion, but which was not prepared to accept the dogma. 

Eliot made this objection in his essay "Second Thoughts About Humanism" (1929), at the end of which he cited Hulme’s arguments about humanism from Speculations, and stated his agreement with Hulme’s assertion that humanism shared with romanticism ideas about man’s relation to absolute values. Eliot continued:

it is not enough to chastise the romantic visions of perfectibility, as they do; the modern humanistic view implies that man is either perfectible, or capable of indefinite improvement, because from that point of view the only difference is a difference of degree - so that there is always hope of a higher degree. It is to the immense credit of Hulme that he found out for himself that there is an absolute to which Man can never attain.

In "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" (1928), Eliot had argued that Babbitt had failed to perceive (in Democracy and Leadership) the clear contrasts between humanism and religion, and he remained conscious of this perceived failure in

---


Babbitt. In a commentary in *The Criterion* in October 1933, he wrote about the influence of Babbitt, who had died in July of that year. Eliot wrote mainly about his influence as a teacher and educationalist, and he praised and valued this aspect of Babbitt’s work; of Babbitt’s humanism, however, he wrote that it had been constructed by his followers into a kind of doctrine "for those who cannot ‘believe’ yet who abominate the radical materialism which is offered as an alternative" (XIII, p.118). Eliot continued:

[T]heir ‘humanism’ would collapse like a house of cards the moment the support gives way; and the support which keeps humanism erect is simply the existence in the world of a body of people - however small that body may become - who are convinced of the reality of the Christian supernatural order and of the operation of the supernatural in the world. (XIII, p.119)

Thus, although Eliot linked Babbitt and Hulme when he wrote in 1961, "The influence of Babbitt (with an infusion later of T. E. Hulme and of the more literary essays of Charles Maurras) is apparent in my recurrent theme of Classicism versus Romanticism" ("TCC," p.17), at the time when he was most concerned with links between these writers, he used Hulme’s *Speculations* to mount a critique of another of those books - Babbitt’s *Democracy and Leadership* - with which he had associated it in his list of classicist texts.

Classicism did not only inform what Eliot saw in the world - human imperfectibility - but also how he went about looking at it. Eliot did not define a philosophical system for his version of classicism, and nor had Hulme, who wrote: "Philosophical syntheses and ethical systems are only possible in armchair moments. They are seen to be meaningless as soon as we get into a bus with a

---

dirty baby and a crowd." Shusterman suggests that Eliot's ethics of criticism were pragmatic, and recognised the need to found judgement in a sense of the contingency of the historical moment, and that the publication of *Speculations* encouraged these ideas. This too was Hulme's position: "I make no apology for dragging in politics here; romanticism both in England and France is associated with certain political views, and it is in taking a concrete example of the working out of a principle in action that you can get its best definition." There has been a lot of recent interest in Eliot's relation to pragmatic philosophy, both as developed at Harvard in the first and second decades of this century, and as expounded by contemporary thinkers, but I want to distinguish between a formal, philosophic definition of pragmatism, and an understanding of pragmatism as a way of behaving and responding to events. Eliot's pragmatism as an editor and commentator was articulated as a set of attitudes, subject to the circumstances which led him to make a statement of his views. He wrote to Paul Elmer More, in June 1934: "I am not a systematic thinker, if indeed I am a thinker at all. I depend upon intuitions and perceptions; and although I may have some skill in the barren game of controversy, [I] have little capacity for sustained, exact, and closely knit

---


60 "Romanticism and Classicism," p.115.

argument and reasoning. Eliot identified his work not as a formally philosophic model of argument, but exactly with the practice of criticism and literary journalism. His concerns were not abstract, but responsive and engaged. This responsiveness was, in part, a consequence of his being an editor and being in the position every quarter (and for a short period of The Criterion's production, during 1927-1928, every month), of having to take a stance on a variety of literary, cultural, and political issues.

* * * * *

IV. The Criterion, classicism, and controversy

One consequence of Eliot's promotion of classicism was that The Criterion became involved in controversy with magazines whose tendency was antipathetic. One of these was The Calendar of Modern Letters, which was published between 1925 and 1927. Throughout its publication life, it commended Eliot's influence as a poet and critic, and printed favourable reviews of Eliot's books Homage to John Dryden (1924), and Poems 1909-1925. It also praised The Criterion, and in an article assessing the number of January 1926, particularly Eliot's essay "The Idea of a Literary Review", suggested that it came "nearer than any review we know of to holding its own with the French and German reviews." The anonymous writer of the note referred to Eliot's idea of a tendency, however he or she questioned its avowed plurality: "not even the bulkiest review can be boundlessly eclectic, and as soon as the element of choice is introduced the question of a principle or a

---

62 Quoted in Margolis, p.xv.

programme becomes paramount" (p.432). *The Calendar* became overtly antagonistic to the programme it perceived in *The Criterion*. In April 1927, Bertram Higgins, one of *The Calendar's* editors, denounced "Neo-Classicism" as "the literary version of a reactionary Latin philosophy which is being adapted, in one or two English reviews, into a repressive instrument of literary criticism." Eliot responded to this criticism in *The New Criterion* of June 1927. In the first section of his commentary, subtitled "Politique d’Abord", he discussed the relation of neo-classicism to other currents in thinking. He rejected Wyndham Lewis's "modern time philosophy" which he saw as analogous with Spenglerian fatalism, and claimed for neo-classicism an empowering moral consciousness: "If we are to be qualified as ‘neo-classicists’, we hope that ‘neo-classicism’ may be allowed to comprise the idea that man is responsible, morally responsible, for his present and his immediate future" (V, p.283). This invocation of morality is indicative of the increasing association between different domains of intellectual enquiry in Eliot’s views in *The Criterion* at this time.

In the next section of this commentary, "Neo-Classicism", Eliot engaged explicitly with *The Calendar’s* arguments. As *The New Criterion* had been "the first English review to publish the work of the three or four French writers whose names are most closely associated in the public mind with the ‘reactionary Latin philosophy’ in question" (V, p.284), Eliot assumed that *The Calendar* had indicated

---

64 Bertram Higgins, footnote to "Art and Knowledge," *The Calendar* IV, April 1927, p.58.

it in its criticism. His initial response was to question the premises of *The Calendar*’s objection, and he reiterated his terminological uneasiness: "We have used, and shall continue to use the word ‘classicism’, unsatisfactory as it is - to most people it connotes little more than alexandrine couplets, the painting of David, and the architecture of the Madeleine or possibly the British Museum" (V, p.284). Eliot contested the prefix "neo" as indicative of "some fad or fashion of the moment," but his principal concern was "with the thing, not the name." He questioned whether there could be such a thing as "repressive literary criticism", and described the accusation of repression as:

> the cry of a muddled neo-communist against what he believes to be, to adopt his own jargon, a form of neo-fascism. We have always believed that certain men of genius, such as Mr. D. H. Lawrence, were simply irrepressible and therefore not to be repressed, and we have printed them without attempting to repress them. (V, p.284)

This kind of ironic play on cognate forms of words used by his antagonists was a characteristic strategy of Eliot the controversialist which recurs in his commentaries. Eliot heavy-handedly and parodically repeats "repress", and also "neo", with satiric intent, in order to foreground, and thereby undermine, his opponents’ rhetoric and terminology.

The last paragraph of the commentary touched on the relationship between creative and critical work, and on the relation between early twentieth-century manifestations of classicism, and some of its precedents. To Eliot, it was inevitable that the creative work of "Those persons who find even a little stay and comfort in the word ‘classicism’" would bear little resemblance to the work of Racine, and Dr. Johnson or Landor" (V, p.285). As a consequence of this non-resemblance, opponents denied that those who critically professed classicism genuinely enacted
its precepts. He accepted this position not polemically, but with ironic resignation.

Another of *The Calendar*'s editors, Douglas Garman responded to Eliot in *The Calendar* of July 1927, and characterised Eliot's tone as "augustness ... irritated almost to vulgarity," "an unconsidered semi-political jeer," "irritably patronizing ... old-maidishly maudlin ... inapposite and sentimental". Rather, Eliot's tone seems conscious of its controversial context, and suggests a relish for the fight. The substance of Garman's response was an attempt to refute Eliot's strange assertion that the publication of D. H. Lawrence in *The Criterion* was evidence that it did not, as a journal, have a repressive editorial policy. Garman suggested that:

> it is possible that such criticism [ie neo-classicist criticism], characterized as it is by Mr. Higgins, could have a repressive influence by an over-insistence or an undue appreciation of the dogmas which support neo-classicism.... it is towards the discrepancy between such practical compromises [i.e. the publication of Lawrence] and the absolutist theories brought forward to support neo-classicism that Mr. Higgins's criticism is directed.\(^{66}\)

The thrust of Garman's and Higgins's criticisms, which derived from *The Calendar*'s editorial programme, that all judgements must be based on "the standards of criticism", was that "neo-classicism does not prove itself a fully adequate basis for a critical structure" (p.155), and that the aesthetic, as formulated by contemporary theorists, did not allow of practical application in, for instance, literary journalism and editorship, because it should by rights necessitate that non- or anti-classicist authors such as Lawrence be ignored. But this does not take into account the necessity of pragmatism and compromise as elements of the editorial process. *The Calendar*'s editors were too rigid in demanding that neo-classicist literary journalism should be monolithic and predictable, and that a magazine

---

\(^{66}\) D. M. G[arman], "A Reply to *The Criterion*," *The Calendar* IV, July 1927, pp.154-5.
which allied itself with neo-classicism should print only the work of those who supported the dogma. The development of a magazine’s "tendency" necessitates that that tendency should have its antagonists who will question and challenge its premises, as Eliot had written in "The Idea of a Literary Review", one of the clearest statements of his policy as an editor:

A review which depends merely on its editor’s vague perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ has manifestly no critical value. A review should be an organ of documentation. That is to say, the bound volumes of a decade should represent the development of the keenest sensibility and the clearest thought of ten years. Even a single number should attempt to illustrate, within its limits, the time and the tendencies of the time. It should have a value over and above the aggregate value of the individual contributions. Its contents should exhibit heterogeneity which the intelligent reader can resolve into order. (IV, p.2)

The Calendar’s point of view also failed to take into account the importance of literary as against ideological criteria. Eliot wrote forthrightly and frankly in the book Dante (1929) about this crux: "there is a difference ... between philosophical belief and poetic assent", and later:

We must assume that the reader can obtain the full ‘literary’ or (if you will) ‘aesthetic’ enjoyment without sharing the beliefs of the author. If there is ‘literature’, if there is poetry, then it must be possible to have full literary or poetic appreciation without sharing the beliefs of the poet.

This is a compelling argument, as a theoretical position, although it rests on an idea of the autonomy of literature to which Eliot did not in fact subscribe, and might have never done; he admitted, comparing his enjoyment of Keats, Dante, and Shakespeare: "I can only conclude that I cannot, in practice, wholly separate my poetic appreciation from my personal beliefs." In principle Eliot believed in the possibility of literary "enjoyment" and "appreciation" independent of affinity of

---

belief, although in practice this was problematic. The responses which Eliot cites here, "enjoyment" and "appreciation", are partial elements of the critical process, and they may be subsumed by the "comparison and analysis" which he described as the critic's tools in "The Function of Criticism", into a form of literary criticism which founds its principles on the demand for a closer association between literary valuation and the author's beliefs.

Garman's animadversions were published in the final number of *The Calendar*, and the controversy ended in *The Monthly Criterion* of September 1927 with Eliot's response to him, and a letter from Bertram Higgins. Higgins's letter was perhaps the most judicious contribution to the whole debate; only he offered even a tentative definition of the theory in question:

'Neo-Classicism', as I understand it, is that movement in aesthetical and general thought which seeks to redress the balance of the situation by establishing philosophical method as primary in the process of Art.... As to how far and in what ways I as the writer of that passage am in disagreement with the doctrine and the policies of Neo-Classicism, it would be irrelevant to the purpose of this letter, as it was impracticable in the brief space of the original criticism, to declare; your Commentator decided that the opposition was absolute. But if the above description of Neo-Classicism is a just one, to deny that it is reactionary and repressive is to deny its raison d'être. The aim and hope of Neo-Classicism is to repress certain modern developments of the theory of beauty; and in this its exponents follow the lead of those contemporary French philosophers who aim to repress similar, and in some cases parallel developments in the theory of knowledge. (VI, p.259)

Although Eliot asserted that "it is a good thing that interest should be directed upon the meaning and use of the Protean term 'classicism'" (VI, p.193), he avoided directly confronting the philosophical and critical issues raised by Higgins's position, and sought to refute the implication that classicism was a fixed position, implicitly re-asserting that it was a tendency: "there was never any age or group of people who professed 'classicism' in the sense in which St. Thomas and his
followers professed 'Thomism'" (VI, p.193). He lead into what he considered the central issue, that the argument was not really about aesthetics or literary criticism, but had broader implications:

One of the points to be cleared up is this: whether the term 'classicism' can be used in England as it can be used in France; and whether, in either country, it can be applied strictly to literary or art criticism; or whether it has meaning only in relation to a view of life as a whole. (VI, pp.193-4)

The controversy did not achieve any conclusive positions, and the "general discussions of the matter" which Eliot hoped later to organize in The Criterion did not appear in the guise of a formal debate between antagonists. Eliot was loath to confront the real difficulties cited by The Calendar's editors, although he made his relish for controversy apparent. As his citing of Lawrence implies, his classicism did entail a moral response to other writers, and this is discussed more fully in chapter three. This controversy spanned the period of his confirmation into the Church of England, and his adoption of British citizenship. For Lancelot Andrewes was published just over a year later. The year 1928 was then a culmination rather than a watershed - as readers of The Criterion were aware, classicism did not simply come upon Eliot at this time, and he had been thinking about it seriously for over a decade. In the controversy in The Criterion, Eliot demonstrated a firm sense of allegiance to classicism in opposition to attacks from The Calendar, just as he had against Murry's romanticism, and it may have been an increasing sense of embattlement that lead him to cease playing possum, and to declare his position in For Lancelot Andrewes.

* * * * *

V. Conclusion
The classicism with which Eliot allied himself in the early twenties constituted a different point of view from the religious position that he occupied in 1934, which finally led him to disown the term; there is nonetheless a clear evolution between the two. This chapter has considered the period from 1916, when we can be sure that Eliot knew some of Hulme’s writings, to the publication of *Essays Ancient and Modern* in 1936, and although it has not followed a chronological trajectory, it is notable that, through the twenties, Eliot’s rhetoric became more positive, and even defiant in support of classicism. At the beginning of this period Eliot was establishing himself as one of the major literary critics in London, writing for the most influential journals, meeting other significant figures, and starting his own magazine. But all the time, he was seeking to ground his literary activities in different kinds of theory. *The Sacred Wood* is a kind of aesthetic manifesto, whose application is most persuasive in relation to literature and literary criticism. Eliot began to seek an aesthetic that would provide a principled way of thinking and writing not only about literature but also about larger cultural issues. The publication of *Speculations* in 1924 reminded and reassured Eliot that classicism had its English exponents as well as those in France and America with whom he was already familiar, and shored up the theoretical foundation of his version of classicism. The relationship between Hulme and Eliot is then best understood in terms of affinity rather than influence. After Eliot’s death, Herbert Read (who was a key figure in the discussion of classicism in Britain at this time, being Hulme’s editor, and a polemicist for Julien Benda), looked back to his relationship with Eliot in the twenties, particularly the development of *The Criterion*, and made it clear that it was not a straightforward case of Hulme influencing Eliot so far as to
alter his opinions - after all, as Eliot wrote in a commentary on the works of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, "People are only influenced in the direction in which they want to go, and influence consists largely in making them conscious of their wishes to proceed in that direction" (XVI, p.667). Read framed the issue thus:

I do not think that Hulme's *Speculations*, when they were published in 1924, made any difference to Eliot's political idealism or philosophical faith, but his convictions were immensely strengthened.... [A]s the man who had rescued Hulme from a probable oblivion I had earned Eliot’s deep gratitude.68

Eliot was not philosophically a follower of Hulme, and Hulme’s writing would not allow of such a response. Nor did Eliot use *The Criterion* as a medium for propagation or exposition of Hulme’s writings. Rather the congruence of their opinions confirmed Eliot in his antagonism to romanticism in literature and criticism, and shaped his sense that the boundaries between religion, aesthetics and metaphysics, and politics, were nothing if not fluid.

---

68 Herbert Read, "T. S. E. - A Memoir," in Tate, ed., p.18.
Chapter 2: Julien Benda and Charles Maurras: Classicism and European Ideas

I. "The European Idea"

In an essay from the late fifties about T. S. Eliot's criticism, F. R. Leavis suggested that The Criterion lacked a defining critical principle. Leavis criticised Eliot for "conventionality" of judgement and perception, and he wrote: "It seems to me that there was nothing more adequate behind the Criterion than the general idea of a great European review." The force of this criticism is in the phrase "general idea", with its connotation of imprecision; Leavis believed that The Criterion did not engage with "the real problem, the problem of asserting and vindicating the function of criticism" in the culture of the inter-war years. But for Eliot, the problem of the function of criticism was only one of a number of issues that ought to concern literary magazines. From its inception, he intended that The Criterion should address itself to European affairs, and discuss prescriptively the idea of a common European culture. Throughout the magazine's life, he was aware of the historical moment, and of the plurality of responses which post-war society necessitated:

One of the ideas which characterizes our age may be called The European Idea. It is remarkable first because of the variety of its appearances; it may take the form of a meditation on the decay of European civilisation by Paul Valéry, or of a philosophy of history such as that of Oswald Spengler, or it may appear allied with an intense nationalism as in the work of Henri Massis. It is remarkable second in that it is primarily an appeal to reason rather than an emotional summons to international brotherhood.... It owes its origin probably to a new feeling of insecurity and

---

danger; it goes to prove that the most important event of the War was the Russian Revolution .... (VI, pp.97-8)

In privileging the "appeal to reason" here, Eliot makes a link between the European idea and classicism.

The creation of a review which was genuinely engaged with contemporary European culture and letters was a substantial aim, and in order to promote it Eliot adopted a range of specific editorial practices, and introduced special features. The most obvious was a project Eliot referred to in a commentary in January 1927, the "policy of introducing the work of the most important of those European writers who are not known, and who ought to be known, in this country" (V, p.3). He consistently asserted the importance of publishing continental writers in the magazine, and referred to this in his retrospective evaluations of *The Criterion*: in "Last Words", his final editorial in January 1939, in the appendix to *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, and in the preface to *TheCriterion* reprint published by Faber and Faber in 1967. Other regular features in the magazine which contributed to its European outlook were the "Foreign Reviews", surveying the periodicals published in a diverse range of countries, which were introduced in the fourth number in July 1923, and the "Chronicles" written by correspondents from other countries, such as Max Rychner in Germany, and Antonio Marichalar in Spain, similar in style to the "Music", "Art", and "Broadcasting" chronicles. These were introduced at the beginning of 1926, when the magazine became *The New Criterion*. The intention of these regular features was to make *The Criterion*'s readers aware of intellectual, artistic, and literary developments in Europe, as they were perceived by inhabitants of other countries.
A venture which was more directly collaborative with foreign periodicals was conceived in 1929: *The Criterion* and reviews in four other European countries would run a short story competition, the winning story being published in translation in each of the reviews. It was proposed that this would happen annually, but in fact it occurred only once, and Eliot looked back on the failure of the venture wistfully, writing in "Last Words":

As late as the year 1929, I find that *The Criterion* undertook to co-operate with four other reviews - the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, the *Revista de Occidente*, the *Nuova Antologia*, and the *Europäische Revue* - for the annual award of a prize for a short story, the choice to be made from among writers of each of the five languages in rotation. The first award was made to Ernst Wiechert, for a story 'The Centurion', which was duly published in each of the five reviews: after that the enterprise lapsed. (XVIII, p.271)

His regret at the failure was intensified by the fact that he saw literary periodicals as important agents for social and cultural cohesion amongst the fragmented nations and communities of Europe, as he wrote in a commentary in January 1930:

All of these periodicals [involved in the prize], and others, have endeavoured to keep the intellectual blood of Europe circulating throughout the whole of Europe; and perhaps at no time during the nineteenth century was this circulation so healthy as it is now.... Only so can there be any direction towards that higher community which existed in some ways throughout the middle ages, which persisted into the eighteenth century, and which was only dissolved finally after the Napoleonic wars. (IX, p.182)

Eliot’s historical vagueness must lead to some scepticism as to his intentions in constructing this vision of the past; but the final image of the literary magazines as a community of interest which was aloof from contemporary political events, and unaffected by nationalist politics, is representative of Eliot’s idealism. Of the periodicals with which *The Criterion* collaborated, the *Revista de Occidente* was almost contemporary, and was first published in July 1923. Noticing it in the
October 1923 number of *The Criterion*, "F. S. F." (presumably F. S. Flint) wrote that "Its aims, by a coincidence which, if we have any faith at all, we must accept as significant of the present direction or tendency of intelligence in the older European nations, appear to be much the same as those of *The Criterion*, and there is no doubt that its editor, José Ortega y Gasset, would subscribe to the two notes on 'The Function of a Literary Review' and 'Literature and the "Honnête Homme"' that appeared in our last number" (II, p.109). This suggests that the idea of a common European culture was important not only in Eliot’s mind, but also in the minds of his contributors. Eliot had read the *Nouvelle Revue Française* while in Paris in 1910-1911, and continued to subscribe to it upon his return to America. During the twenties, he contributed five articles, including a commemoration of its editor, Jacques Rivière, upon his death in 1925.

*The Criterion* did not simply report on intellectual developments on the continent, and publish the fruits. Eliot had a vision of European culture, and of the minds that would help, and in the past had helped, to shape it: a vision which David Moody has described as "an ideal conception of its constitutive tradition", to which Eliot remained constant throughout his life. A number of pieces in *The

---

2 See further the "Spanish Chronicle" by Antonio Marichalar in the number of July 1938, devoted to the "Ideas and Beliefs of Jose Ortega y Gasset" (XVII, pp.707-16).


4 A. David Moody, "The Mind of Europe in T. S. Eliot," in Thormählen, ed., p.18 (hereafter, Moody, 1994a). Moody's essay is a timely reflection upon the possible implications of Eliot's ideas for the future of Europe. He distinguishes between the "thought and theory ... expressed in his prose," which he cannot see as having any practical value (pp.22-3); and the sense in which the verbal richness of
Criterion prescribed the means by which this concept of culture was to be promoted. In October 1929 Eliot wrote a short obituary of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, entitled "A Commentary - Of Your Charity", that is illustrative:

Pray for the soul of Hugo von Hofmannsthal. We mention him particularly because he supported and contributed to the Criterion. Hofmannsthal, who is not long dead, was a fine poet and a fine prose writer. He was, during his lifetime, the leading man of letters in Vienna. Not only by his own work, but by his patronage, his influence, and the periodicals which he affected, one of the great European men of letters. Most English readers know him only as the author of the librettos of Strauss's operas, especially Elektra. Those who know German recognise the poet and prose writer. Hofmannsthal was a man of European culture. In some of his verse plays, such as Sobeidens Hochzeit, he showed himself to be saturated in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, which he knew intimately; in some of his later work, he showed an equal intimacy with Spanish drama, with Lope and Calderon. Yet his work was never pastiche. He is one of the writers in German whose work appears as fine after the War as it did before, and whose tendency and influence may be described as 'classical.' And he was a man of great charm and great culture. (IX, pp.5-6)

Situated almost at the exact centre of this passage is the single, short sentence, "Hofmannsthal was a man of European culture." This is central to Eliot's argument. That Hofmannsthal had been the doyen of literary Vienna, that he had written operatic librettos about classical subjects for one of the leading neo-classical composers of the early twentieth century - these are important achievements, but they amount to something which is greater than the sum of its parts. What links them all, and is the central idea in a dense piece of writing resonating with different Eliotic values about communities and tradition, is the idea of a collaborative European culture, transcending historical, geographical, linguistic and cultural frontiers.

Eliot's references to his contemporaries among European writers have

the poetry is itself an enactment of European values and commonality.
generated much debate about influence. William M. Chace has suggested that Eliot was "most influenced, not by individuals, but by the pressure of a historical moment," and that he "was careful to mention certain names favourably in his *Criterion* commentaries. Those names are not to be thought of as influences so much as they are to be considered public notifications of his own course of development." Chace suggests that the list of books which Eliot describes as exemplifying the classicist tendency in his article "The Idea of a Literary Review", "if anywhere, is where we should look for influences on Eliot’s politics." Yet "the pressure of a historical moment" is a rather uneasy and imprecise formulation, and it is hard to know what combination of abstract forces it describes. It is problematic to characterise this period as being obsessed with sweeping ideas such as the decline of western civilisation, or the fragmentation of post-war Europe, because these ideas are so nebulous. It is more productive to attend to what Eliot was writing, and whom he was writing about at this time, to get a clearer sense of the evolution of his critical and editorial position, and the different ways that evolution was influenced by, bore affinities with, or was appropriated from other writers. Edward Lobb, discussing what Eliot drew from nineteenth century writers such as Keats, Coleridge, and Arnold, has suggested that it is more fruitful to think about the relations between their views not in terms of influence, but as "the common perception of a particular problem." This idea of a heterogeneous group which shared certain perceptions is also helpful in the context of a discussion of

---


the affinities between Eliot, Benda, and Maurras. Eliot’s development was shaped by the input of other writers, but influence is a hard thing to define and illustrate; instead this chapter examines Eliot’s response to two writers whose affinity he acknowledged, and analyses the controversy and debate generated by them.

Many of the European writers whom Eliot valued and promoted were little known in Britain at the time. Some were writers of fiction, or poets, such as Marcel Proust and Paul Valéry; others can be loosely characterised as theorists or critics of aspects of contemporary European culture, and amongst these were Julien Benda and Charles Maurras. Eliot’s connections with Benda have not been widely discussed within Eliot studies, and references to him are usually made in passing. This is partly because Eliot himself did not write much about Benda explicitly - Donald Gallup’s bibliography of Eliot’s writings lists only a review of Benda’s book *La Trahison des Clercs* published in the *Cambridge Review* of 6 June 1928. In addition, the final section of the essay "Imperfect Critics" in *The Sacred Wood* responded to the stimulus of Benda’s *Belphégor*. Eliot wrote rather more about Maurras; he translated his "Prologue to an Essay on Criticism" and published it in *The Criterion* in two parts in January and March 1928; dedicated the short 1929 book *Dante* to Maurras, taking the dedicatory quotation from Maurras’s own book on Dante; discussed the *Action Française*, the nationalist, monarchist movement of which Maurras was the leader, in *The Criterion* also in 1928, and wrote two later pieces, one in 1948, and another after Maurras’s death. This is not a great deal;

---

7 Margolis has looked more closely than anyone else at Eliot’s affinities with Benda, see pp.41-5. Louis Menand’s recent review of Julius has quite a lengthy section about Benda and *Belphégor*. He describes that book as "an attack on cultural decadence in the familiar Maurassian and Lasserrean mode" (p.38), but this implies a misleading equivalence between the views of Benda and Maurras.
nevertheless, references and allusions to these writers in essays in *The Criterion* and elsewhere suggest that they were significant contemporary thinkers for Eliot, particularly in the twenties.

Eliot associated the idea of a common European culture with the "classical" tradition. Neither Benda nor Maurras were unambiguously classicist thinkers, and in writing about their relationship with Eliot I am by no means asserting homogeneity in their outlook - indeed, Benda was a profound critic and opponent of Maurras and of the *Action Française*. Eliot situated these two writers within the larger (terminological) controversy about classicism and romanticism in a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* of 28 October 1920, referring to an article about Maurras entitled "A French Romantic" which had been published on 30 September 1920:

I willingly concede the point, contested by Mr. Cyril Falls, that M. Maurras is a "romantic". M. Maurras has been handled very competently by M. Julien Benda in an appendix to *Belphegor*. So much for M. Maurras. It is in attempting to apprehend your critic's definitions of the terms "romanticism" and "classicism" that my intellect is confused and my serenity disturbed. I suggest that the difficulties which veil most critics' theories of Romanticism (and I include Pierre Lasserre [of the *Action Française*] and Irving Babbitt) are largely due to two errors. One is that the critic applies the same term "romantic" to epochs and to individual artists, not perceiving that it assumes a difference of meaning; and the other is that he assumes that the terms "romantic" and "classic" are mutually exclusive and even antithetical, without actually enforcing this exclusiveness in the examination of particular works of art.

Benda had written of Maurras: "The eulogies bestowed daily on the high-priest of

---


the *Action Française* for 'returning to the manners of the classic style' make us smile when we consider his enthusiasm for his own doctrines, the violence of his arguments, and especially the virulent contemptuous tone he uses towards his adversary. These characteristics, the opposite of the order and restraint conventionally associated with classicism, exposed for Benda Maurras's covertly romantic temperament; and Benda argued in *Belphégor* that Maurras's book, *L'Avenir de l'intelligence*, which Eliot was to recommend, embodied "the classic spirit taken as the theme of romantic exaltation" (p.157). The taxonomic difficulties which Eliot identified permeate this controversy, and the lack of any substantial contestation about specific texts or authors is one reason why the issues generated by the conflict were so resistant to any kind of satisfactory closure.

That said, it would be wrong to see this as a controversy confined to the sphere of literature. The criticisms of aesthetic aspects of Maurras's work which Benda termed "romantic" in *Belphégor* developed into a sustained attack on Maurras's politics throughout *La Trahison des Clercs*. Eliot acknowledged the profound differences between the two writers, and in his listing of those works which exemplified the "classicism tendency", he added a caveat, implicitly drawing attention to the eclectic nature of his sources: "Anyone who is acquainted with two or more of these books will understand my use of the word 'tendency', for the theories and points of view are extremely divergent" (IV, p.5). Although they differed in their beliefs, by 1926 Eliot had come to believe that both Benda and

---

10 Julien Benda, *Belphégor*, tr. S. J. I. Lawson, intro. Irving Babbit (London: Faber & Faber, 1929), p.156; hereafter cited as *Bel*. All references are to this translation; Eliot himself had read the text in French, and I refer to it by its French title.
Maurras were representative in differing ways of the modern tendency which he supported, and that an awareness of their work was necessary for a genuinely European intellect.

* * * * *

II. "The French Intelligence": Julien Benda

Julien Benda was a French Jewish intellectual, who is best known for his book *La Trahison des Clercs*, (loosely translated as "the treason of the intellectuals"), a phrase which has continuing contemporary currency, though it is often abused. For Benda, it denoted the descent of the intellectual, who should be aloof and disinterested, into the arena of politics, in the interests of and in complicity with a specific ideology. The book criticises particular European and American writers. More recently, the idea of the treason of the intellectuals has been used, by writers both of the right and the left, to condemn political action (or inaction) on the part of their opponents with which they disagree. Benda's resistance to political classification within a simple left-right binary opposition, and the extent to which the political and the aesthetic overlap in his work, are indicated by recent attempts to appropriate him either as a conservative or a radical thinker. David L. Schalk argues that "when Benda mentions specifics, it is easy to detect a leftist, or at least a liberal political inclination."11 Certainly Benda was overtly left during the Spanish Civil War; I discuss this in chapter five. In an article in the initially misleadingly titled *New Criterion*, the conservative commentator Roger Kimball has attempted to appropriate Benda's anti-nationalism and avowal of political disinterestedness to

---

oppose a diverse range of modern phenomena, whose individual force is rather diminished by being collapsed into one larger evil:

From the savage flowering of ethnic hatreds in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to the mendacious demands for political correctness and multiculturalism on college campuses across America and Europe, the treason of the intellectuals continues to play out its unedifying drama. Benda spoke of 'a cataclysm in the moral notions of those who elucidate the world.' That cataclysm is erupting in every corner of cultural life today.\(^{12}\)

In his discussion of *La Trahison des Clercs*, Edward Timms attempts to portray Benda as implicitly leftist. Thus for Timms, "the account he offers does have Marxist undertones", in that Benda "sees the modern intellectual, who is prepared to sacrifice ethical principles for political influence and practical success, as the servant of the bourgeoisie."\(^{13}\) But critique of the bourgeoisie is not always concomitant with a pro-proletarian position. As David Chinitz has recently shown in relation to Eliot, contempt for the bourgeoisie is an autonomous political position in itself, which can be reflected in affection for non-bourgeois forms of culture, be they popular forms such as the music hall, crime fiction, and sport; or high forms such as poetry or ballet.\(^{14}\) However, Timms also sees Benda as being neither left nor right, a model of inter-war non-engagement, and suggests that *La Trahison des Clercs* "defined the absent centre from which the polarised positions

---


of left and right diverged" (p.20). What I intend to show is that these characterisations do not site Benda sufficiently in the context of the French culture of the early twentieth century, and that they fail to acknowledge that Benda was not primarily a political theorist or philosopher, but rather was a controversialist who adopted positions in reaction to currents in aesthetic and political thinking which he contested.15

Benda’s first appearance in *The Criterion* gave little indication of any of this. It came in the third number of April 1923 with the publication of a short piece entitled "A Preface", which was written in the form of a dialogue between a philosopher who wishes to write stories illustrating his theories about love, and a mentor figure who advises him. The piece was clearly not written specifically for *The Criterion*, and it is rather a puzzling introduction to Benda’s work, being quite unlike the polemic of *Belphégor* or *La Trahison des Clercs*.16 At the end of the piece there was a note, presumably editorial: "M. Benda’s work, especially his two essays on Bergsonism, and his *Belphégor* (one of the most remarkable essays in criticism of our time) will be the object of study in later numbers of *The Criterion*" (I, p.242).17 However no study of Benda ever appeared, apart from a

---

15 Herbert Howarth suggests two reasons why Eliot admired Benda, distinct from the convergence of their ideas: firstly because he was uncompromising, and Eliot often was attracted to stubborn figures like Babbitt, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, or Joyce; and secondly because "Benda knew, said, and sometimes proved in practice, that persuasiveness, lightness, irony are the proper weapons of the controversialist" (pp.182, 185).

16 Margolis suggests that Eliot "may have been disappointed with what he received" (p.42).

17 Benda sent Eliot a copy of his book *Le Bergsonisme ou une Philosophie de la Mobilité* in January 1921 (*Letters* I, n.1, p.392). Piers Gray suggests that by the early twenties, Eliot had been persuaded by Benda’s refutations of Bergson, and
short article "Humanism and the Absolute" by Herbert Read (which I discuss below) which focused not on Bergson, nor on Belphégor, but principally on La Trahison des Clercs.

One of the books which Eliot cited and recommended as representative of the classicist tendency in January 1926 was Belphégor, first published in 1918. It was published in an English translation in 1929 by Faber and Faber with an introduction by Irving Babbitt. Eliot first encountered the work through Ezra Pound, whom he credited with having introduced Benda to England and America. In July 1920, Pound was in France recruiting contributors for The Dial, which was edited by Eliot's old Harvard friend Schofield Thayer, and it appears from a letter of Eliot's, dated 3 July 1920, that Pound had sent him a copy of Belphégor, and possibly asked him to review it. At this time in his life Eliot was not very familiar with Benda's work: although Russell Kirk states that Eliot read Maurras and Benda, "a man of the Right and a man of the Left," during his first year in Paris, 1910-11, it is hard to substantiate this assertion in Benda's case, although Eliot clearly knew Maurras's work at this time. In a well-known statement in a commentary of April 1934, Eliot looked back at the intellectual climate of that time and listed some of the major figures, including Rémy de Gourmont, Charles

---


Péguy, and Lévy-Bruhl, concluding: "over all swung the spider-like figure of Bergson" whose "metaphysic was said to throw light upon the new ways of painting, ... discussion of Bergson was apt to be involved with discussion of Matisse and Picasso" (XIII, p.452). There is no mention by name of either Benda or Maurras, although Eliot did recollect a civil disturbance which he had witnessed, perpetrated by the camelots du Roi, the young members of the Action Française. It seems that Benda's significance for Eliot belongs to a later period, for in 1920, he could barely place him in his memory. In the letter of 3 July to Pound in Paris, Eliot wrote: "I have not yet received the Benda of which you speak. I recall his name as a colleague of Péguy. Is that the same man? I will try to do it as soon as possible but shall be rushed for the next three or four weeks trying to finish polishing the essays for my book [The Sacred Wood]." Ten days later he sent a post card: "Belphégor received and much pleased with it. If you can procure any other of J. B.'s works I will purchase them from you." Eliot then wrote to Thayer, on 10 August 1920, that Benda was a writer whom any editor of an English-language periodical should be pleased to publish, in view of the inferior quality of the work being written in England:

I think Pound has been doing wonderfully well with his French campaign. The Gourmont stuff is a great scoop, and Benda's book is ripping. I hope you can print it in full. There is nothing like the Dial here and I see no reason why it should not have an appreciable English circulation. It is unfortunate that there are not so many good writers here as in France, but there is no reason why you should not get what there are.  

The text of Belphégor appeared in translation in four monthly sections in The Dial, from September to December 1920, and the latter two sections were published in

---

the same numbers as essays by Eliot, "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" and "The Second Order Mind" respectively.

*Belphegor* is a work of cultural critique. Benda argued that contemporary French culture was profoundly corrupted, for it "demands that all works of art shall arouse emotion and sensation: it insists that art shall cease to provide any form of intellectual pleasure" (*Bel.*, p.3). The book is divided into three parts, and the whole of the first part, by far the longest, is given over to listing the various "symptoms" by which this demand, analogous in Benda's view to what was called romanticism, could be diagnosed in French culture and aesthetics. It is structured around a list of ironic premises which Benda extrapolated from contemporary aesthetic thinking, and which he used as a foil for his arguments; so the demands, "That art must be a mystic union with the essence of things," (p.4) or "That the artist shall live the emotion he is dealing with and not rise above it by means of his understanding" (p.55), he argued, were constantly enacted in its literature. In the second section of the book, Benda suggested reasons for the dominance of these kinds of values, citing in particular the influence of Germanicism and excessive patriotism. He asserted that "this aesthetic is not just a fashion, but on the contrary is destined to last and even to grow stronger; saying which, we do not deny the probability of a violent return to classicism. This, however, *will* be a fashion, and indeed will be a particular form, as we have seen, of the desire for the excessive" (p.125). This classicism which, in its excess, is a form of romanticism, is what Benda identified in Maurras's work. The third section of *Belphegor* is a brief vision of the consequences of romanticism for French society. In the description of the pernicious elements undermining culture there are
clear general affinities between the positions of Benda and Eliot; and although some of these reasons - a decline in reading standards, a lack of classical education, for instance - were so routinely cited by aesthetic, cultural, and educational theorists that they are commonplace,\(^\text{22}\) Eliot was so impressed by Benda’s formulation of them that he drew attention to his ideas in *The Sacred Wood*, which was first published only a few months after Eliot first read *Belphégor*.

Eliot concluded his essay "Imperfect Critics" with a section devoted to Benda, entitled "The French Intelligence". Writing about Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt in the preceding section, "A Note on the American Critic", Eliot asserted that because both had paid more attention to French culture than any English critic since Arnold, "they are therefore much nearer to the European current" (*SW* [1920], p.35.) This suggests that what Eliot conceptualised as European culture was necessarily a phenomenon of continental Europe, and therefore that Americans could become more attuned to its underlying consciousness than the English. He drew a distinction between cultural and national identity; the simple linkage of geographical proximity, and habitation of the same continent was insufficient to make the English truly culturally European, unless

\(^{22}\) See Gail McDonald, *Learning to be Modern: Pound, Eliot and the American University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), particularly for her discussion of the educational views and influence of Irving Babbitt. McDonald cites an interesting observation in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century; i The War of the Words* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), that "the decline of Latin and Greek, which had been languages possessed solely by educated men and boys, coincided with the entry of women into the masculine stronghold of the university" (p.78). The resistance to the supposed feminisation of culture which McDonald identifies as misogynistic aspects of Eliot’s writing (pp.78-89), is also present in *Belphégor* (see e.g. pp.79-80, 123).
they had paid attention to the dominant tradition which ran through France.

Eliot suggested that although "they exhibit faults which are definitely transatlantic and which definitely keep them out" of the European current (p.35), nonetheless More and Babbitt shared with the French critical tradition a striving for impersonality: they "have endeavoured to establish a criticism which should be independent of temperament" (p.36). More, however, had other failings which, while they were not the failings of romanticism, militated against the disinterested aims of the literary critic, and he was "led" into these "by his guide Sainte-Beuve".

Eliot suggested that neither More nor Sainte-Beuve was primarily interested in art, and he substantiated this criticism with a description of Sainte-Beuve quoted from *Belphegor*: "on sait - et c'est certainement un des grands éléments de son succès - combien d'études l'illustre critique consacre à des auteurs dont l'importance littéraire est quasi nulle (femmes, magistrats, courtisans, militaires), mais dont les écrits lui sont une occasion de pourtraiturer une âme" (*SW [1920], p.36*). More was not then a literary critic, but rather he was a moralist critic of literary personalities, who applied his criticism to texts which Eliot considered sub- or para-literary. There was a place for such figures in criticism - "the moralist is useful to the creator as well as the reader of poetry" (p.37) - wrote Eliot, but as

---

23 "It is assuredly one of the elements of his success that this illustrious critic devotes so many of his essays to authors whose literary importance is negligible (women, magistrates, courtiers, soldiers), but whose writings provide an opportunity of portraying a soul," (*Bel.*, p.97). Prejudice against women, and women's writing, runs through *Belphegor*, and Benda concludes the second section of the book with the statement "one of the crucial reasons, we believe, why present French society's aesthetic is as we describe it, lies in the fact *that it is entirely created by women*" (p.123). He subverts this argument - quite consciously, it seems - with the immediate acknowledgement that this has often been complained of in previous centuries.
Chris Baldick has recently suggested, although Babbitt and More defined the moral terms of the opposition to romanticism, they did not formulate an opposition founded on the structures and terms of literary criticism. Eliot argued that More and Benda were similar in the moralistic dimension of their critical practices, but "M. Julien Benda has a great advantage over Mr. More; his thought may be less profound, but it has more formal beauty" (p.37), and furthermore "He [Benda] restricts himself, perhaps, to a narrower field of ideas, but within that he field he manipulates the ideas with a very exceptional cogency and clarity" (p.39): Benda was the better critic because he was the better prose stylist.

This essay is an interesting preliminary context for Eliot's discussion and promotion of Belphégor. He related the text to other critical work that was being done in France, as well as in England and America, (just as he would do later in The Criterion), and he was keen to praise it, even at the expense of Babbitt, his former tutor at Harvard. The whole of the next, concluding section of "Imperfect Critics" he devoted to Benda.

In "The French Intelligence", Eliot suggested that "Much of [Benda's] analysis of the decadence of contemporary French society could be applied to London," (p.40) and he quoted a passage from the third section of Belphégor in which the convergence between Benda's critical terminology, and that employed by Eliot in other essays in The Sacred Wood is striking. This concluding section is an apocalyptic vision of French society; Benda cast himself in the role of seer - "on peut prévoir" he wrote - and what he foresaw was a time when French society

---

would repudiate the slight support it presently gave to "ideas" and "organization" in art, and would care only for the "gestes des comédiens, ... des impressions de femmes ou d’enfants, ... des rugissements de lyriques, ... des extases de fanatiques" (SW [1920], p.40). Matthew Arnold was the predecessor against whom Eliot measured Benda as a critic, for both combined literary criticism with aesthetic theory, founded upon a developed sense of the interaction of art with other contemporary cultural phenomena such as religion or nationalism. This is a characterisation of the direction in which Eliot’s criticism was moving in the twenties, of course; and although he did find Belphégor sympathetic at first encounter, Eliot’s own work in 1920 was less concerned than Benda’s with the ways that literature functioned as a symptom of movements in society. His critique of literary culture, while polemical, was far more specifically directed against individual writers, rather than abstract movements of which they were representative. Eliot returned to considerations of Arnold in the twenties and thirties. In January 1925, he marked the publication of a selection of Arnold’s prose with a commentary entitled "The Return of Matthew Arnold". Eliot dismissed him as a literary critic:

Arnold was neither thorough enough, nor comprehensive enough, to make any fundamental alteration of literary values: he failed to ascend to first principles; his thought lacks the logical rigour of his master Newman; his taste is biased by convictions and prejudices which he did not take the trouble to dissect to their elements. (III, p.162)

Parts of his work were still, however, "capable of being a perpetual inspiration", and his task remained to be completed, implicitly by critics such as Eliot.

25 "[T]he comedian’s gestures or the impressions of women and children, the thunderings of lyric poetry and the ecstatic ravings of the fanatic" (Bel., pp.130-1).
The sub-text of Eliot's comparison of Benda and Arnold was a desire to question the value of nineteenth-century English culture, just as Arnold himself had done. In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" - an essay whose title Eliot echoed in 1923 - Arnold had asked: "How much of current English literature comes into [the] 'best that is known and thought in the world'? Not very much, I fear; certainly less, at this moment, than of the current literature of France and Germany." But Arnold's larger project aimed to dissolve these nationalistic considerations: "after all, the criticism I am really concerned with, - the criticism which alone can help us for the future ... - is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great federation."26 Although they were engaged in similar kinds of tasks, Benda had nonetheless a great advantage over Arnold, for the latter was constrained within the discursive possibilities of his age, within "a language less fitted for criticism than the English of the eighteenth century" (SW [1920], p.40). Moreover, Arnold was disadvantaged by the unworthiness of his opponents, indicated by inability to formulate ideas, and he "lacked the active resistance which is necessary to keep a mind at its sharpest" (p.41). What Arnold lacked, according to Eliot, was the context of controversy. Eliot's comparison here is not really between the two thinkers, Arnold and Benda, but between two cultures or two nations, mid-nineteenth-century England, and early twentieth-century France. The latter was a society in which culture and cultural criticism were mutually reinforcing. Eliot's argument is predicated upon a concept

---

26 In Lectures and Essays in Criticism, ed. R. H. Super with the assistance of Sister Thomas Marion Hoctor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp.283-4, 284; cited by Lobb, p.76. Eliot’s idea of a "community" of European intellectuals, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, recalls this, but also interestingly transforms Arnold’s concept of a "federation".
of national essentialism which maintained that "the follies and stupidities of the French, no matter how base, express themselves in the form of ideas" (p.40); like Benda, like Arnold, Eliot privileged a culture which venerated ideas, and recognised how they must be distinct from the emotions. The construction and maintenance of this opposition, seminal in essays such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "The Function of Criticism", most clearly set apart a classicist from a romantic culture, and a classicist from a romantic critic:

a literary critic should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art - and these (as I have already hinted) are, when valid, perhaps not to be called emotions at all. Coleridge is apt to take leave of the data of criticism, and arouse the suspicion that he has been diverted into a metaphysical hare-and-hounds. His end does not always appear to be the return to the work of art with improved perception and intensified, because more conscious, enjoyment; his centre of interest changes, his feelings are impure. In the derogatory sense he is more "philosophic" than Aristotle. For everything that Aristotle says illuminates the literature which is the occasion for saying it; but Coleridge only now and then. It is one more instance of the pernicious effects of emotion. ("The Perfect Critic", pp.11-2)

Eliot posited the existence of an organic relationship between Benda and his culture. Contemporary France "facilitates the task of the creative artist" (p.41) by enabling the work of critics such as Benda who generated a circulation of ideas.

Benda was a destroyer of the reputations of writers of "second rate or corrupt literature." In taking this responsibility on himself, he freed creative artists from its onus. Eliot turned his attention from the moral dimension of Benda’s work, in which he had previously been most concerned, to Benda’s influence in aesthetics. His description of the role that Benda fulfilled referred back to the introduction to The Sacred Wood, in which he described Arnold as the destroyer of the uncritical, a task for which he was in fact too talented: "he wasted his strength, as men of superior ability sometimes do, because he saw something to be done and no one
else to do it" (p.xi). Benda fulfilled a task in society, and in that society this was not futile, for there was a sufficient community of ideas for his work to be understood. In Arnold’s society there was so much else to do that Arnold never had time for literary criticism, and yet because of the scarcity of men of ideas, the task needed endlessly to be repeated; and the situation was the same in 1920: "The creative artist in England finds himself compelled, or at least tempted, to spend much of his time and energy in criticism that he might reserve for the perfecting of his proper work: simply because there is no one else to do it" (p.41).

Eliot first responded to Belphégor as a work of diagnosis within the field of aesthetics; but it was to have different implications for him later, in developing his understanding of the spiritual dimensions of aesthetics and literature. In "Notes - The Function of a Literary Review", his first editorial comments published in The Criterion of July 1923, he asserted:

> It is the function of a literary review to maintain the autonomy and disinterestedness of literature, and the same time to exhibit the relations of literature - not to "life," as something contrasted to literature, but to all other activities, which together with literature, are the components of life. (I, p.421)

This formulation was influenced by a tradition of cultural criticism of which the most recent English exponent was Arnold, but which was carried on by writers like Benda in France. In his increasing commitment during the twenties to a morally informed aesthetics, this sense of literature’s autonomy within culture diminished, and both the task he saw for himself, and the position he reached, were informed by Belphégor.

In his later work La Trahison des Clercs, Benda exhibited a similar, fatalistic belief in cultural decay, but his focus moved from aesthetic culture to
politics, and particularly the individual responsibility of the intellectual. Benda had introduced incidentally in *Belphégor* the theme which dominated *La Trahison des Clercs*: the political role of literary figures, and the ways in which poetic rhetoric was exploited in the interests of nationalism. Benda saw it as characteristic of his society that concomitant with the demand that art be emotive or "pathetic", it should exalt the nation state:

> the emotional power of patriotic lyricism has been increased a hundredfold by the very clever modern trick of associating it with other forms of lyricism which have no real connection - that of race, keeping faith with the dead, national determinism, and historical romanticism. (*Bel*, pp.87-8)

Benda criticised his contemporaries for drawing on sources of artistic inspiration, certain of which Eliot would have privileged, though conceptualised rather differently. He suggested that certain subjects were not "among the legitimate subjects of lyric writing," and listed writers who fetishized and aestheticized a particular moral or ideological idea: Nietzsche and "the supremacy of war morality," Barrès and will-power, Bourget and tradition, and Maurras and "culture, intellectual discipline, and reason" (pp.90-1). Certain of these ideas - tradition, discipline, reason - were central to Eliot’s ideal of a trans-national European culture; where Benda, and Eliot, differed in their understanding of these ideas from Maurras is in their impulse to universalism, contrasted with the latter’s nationalism.

Eliot and Benda shared scepticism about the effects of nationalism. In a commentary subtitled "The Future of the Roman Empire" in *The Criterion* of April 1926, Eliot wrote about Mussolini’s use of the concept of the Roman Empire as an ideological spur in contemporary Italy. He expressed indifference to the practicalities of politics: "the Roman Empire does concern us, but whatever use
may be made of that idea in Italian politics as an incentive to Italian action is a
local matter which does not concern - in either way - those persons who are
interested primarily in European ideas" (IV, p.222). The myth of Roman history,
and of the pan-European culture deriving from Rome, was more important for Eliot
than specific contemporary developments in Italy, and by some means the history
of ideas transcended material history. Indeed the possibility of this transcendence
was integral to Eliot's notion of post-War European reconstruction:

a small number of intelligent persons are aware of the necessity to
harmonize the interests, and therefore to harmonize first the ideas, of the
civilized countries of Western Europe. We are beginning to hear mention of
the reaffirmation of the European tradition. It will be helpful, certainly, if
people will begin by believing that there is a European tradition; for they
may then proceed to analyse its constituents in the various nations of
Europe; and proceed finally to the further formation of such a tradition. (VI,
p.98; [emphasis added])

Eliot asserted the fact of continuity between the Roman Empire and contemporary
Europe, an idea of continuity which he was to develop throughout his life. He
wrote in his April 1926 commentary that there was a "continuity of impulse from
Rome to the present day" which suggested the key ideas of "Authority and
Tradition", although neither of these suggested the doctrines and practices of
Mussolini. The idea of Rome was "in fact the European idea - the idea of a
common culture of western Europe" (IV, p.222), and its values were universally
applicable, rather than simply constitutive of the cultural memory of Italy. But just
as western Europe had supposedly shared in the flowering of this common culture,
so it was party to its decline or even disintegration. Part of The Criterion's
purpose, having diagnosed that there was problem, was to analyse its causes and
consequences, and Eliot concluded this section:

In this number of The New Criterion we publish an essay by the editor of
La Revue Universelle, M. Henri Massis [a member of the Action Française], in which the author states the problem as it appears to a Frenchman, and in which he states his own conclusion. In England, in Germany, in Italy or Spain, the problem may appear under a different light. We hope to obtain contributions to the same discussion from men of equal eminence and of different nationalities. (IV, p.222)

Eliot gave space to nationalistic writers, but ensured that their ideas were offset by other perspectives. It was through this kind of specific engagement with the writings of his contemporaries that current ideas of culture, and of Europe, became a topic of controversy within the magazine’s pages.²⁷

In a discussion of the whole of this piece, and specifically Eliot’s critique of Mussolini, Moody analyses Eliot’s mythification of history in the interests of contemporary ideology: "This was to set aside the actual Rome, and indeed the historical Roman Empire as well; and to invoke in their stead the ideal Rome of Virgil and Dante - an empire founded not upon Caesar, but upon divine Love." Moody sees this as exemplifying the fact that Eliot was no practical politician, but rather was a "philosopher who took a certain interest in politics."²⁸ This privileging of a certain epoch, often the distant past, in order to shed a new (and often critical) light on the present and the recent past, was a common critical strategy in the period, and Hulme, for one, developed his critique of romanticism out of an opposition to all cultures after the Renaissance. Eliot employed a myth of the

²⁷ Eliot acknowledged Benda’s influence in his formulation of this issue in a letter to Bonamy Dobrée on 12 November 1927: "Oh I suppose the only thing to be done about W. Civilisation is to think as clearly as one can. The first thing is to understand the disease, if there is a disease. Benda is rather sound in this way." Quoted in Bonamy Dobrée, "T. S. Eliot: A Personal Reminiscence," in Tate, ed., p.75.

history of European culture as a way of figuring origins that is characteristic of modernist discourses of history; as Russell A. Berman frames it: "On the level of ideology the present is rejected as liberal, rational and capitalist, while an image of a wholesome and thoroughly stable past is unfolded: Eliot’s seventeenth century, Pound’s China ..." But Eliot too knew that ideas about history were contingent upon the ideologies of historians, and in a review of La Trahison des Clercs he wrote: "The judgement of any historian must depend both on the degree of his prejudice and (I am afraid) upon our moral judgement of the prejudice itself." This is a gracefully ambiguous statement, which alerts the reader to both the subjectivity of the historian, and the subjectivity of history itself. The reader of history judges the historian, just as the latter makes judgements on the supposed evidence. Eliot was not merely a myth-maker, and his idea of Europe was not only grounded in the gilded past; he was manifestly conscious of writing about the past, and about Europe, at a specific historical moment in the aftermath of the First World War. In a commentary entitled "The European Idea" in August 1927 he wrote:

Nine years after the end of the War we are only beginning to distinguish between the characteristics of our own time and those inherited from the previous epoch. One of the latter was Nationalism. We have been for nine years reminded, by the facts and fancies of the press, of the growth of the

---


spirit of nationalism, of the greater number of nationalities, and of the multiplicity of the reasons which all these nations have for failing to get on with each other. Instead of a few 'oppressed minorities', the oppressed minorities seem to be almost in a majority; instead of a few potential Sarajevos, we seem to have dozens.... (VI, p.97)31

For Benda, the influence of Enlightenment ideas about communities of knowledge led him to believe that resurgent twentieth-century nationalism destroyed such cultural communities. In La Trahison des Clercs, he offered a critique of the nationalist exploitation by governments of history and myth, in the first two sections of the book, which were entitled "The modern perfecting of political passions" and "Significance of this movement - Nature of political passions".32

Benda believed that French society in the first three decades of the twentieth century was being eroded by "those passions termed political, owing to which men rise up against other men" (p.1). He divided political passions into three chief types, racial, class, and national, of which the most pernicious was national passion, which he believed had swept through Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like Eliot, Benda criticised Mussolini explicitly, and exposed the rhetorical strategy underpinning Mussolini's political statements. National passions were strengthened at the beginning of the century, wrote Benda, because of the determination of the peoples to be conscious of their past, more


32 La Trahison des Clercs was translated into English in 1928 by Richard Aldington, and initially published in Britain as The Great Betrayal (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1928), and in America as The Treason of the Intellectuals; later, the American title was adopted. (In bibliography of Niess. Page references are to the 1928 Routledge edition.)
precisely to be conscious of their ambitions as going back to their ancestors, and to vibrate with 'centuries-old' aspirations, with attachments to 'historical' rights. This Romantic patriotism is also a characteristic of patriotism as practised by popular minds (by 'popular' I mean here all minds governed by the imagination ....) (p.16)

Benda ironised the rhetorical strategies used by the state to promote nationalism amongst the people, exposing the exploitation of a vague sense of nationalist historical antagonism. He saw nationalism as an advanced form of egotism, and believed that the association of the national interest with the individual interest was a means by which nationalism was legitimised, and indeed glorified. He used religious rhetoric ironically to expose nationalism: "Not only does national egotism not cease to be egotism because it is national, but it becomes 'sacred' egotism.... political passions are realism of a particular quality, which is an important element of strength in them: They are divinized realism" (p.26).^^

Benda voiced much contempt for nationalism. His own work, however, 

---

^^ In a note at the beginning of The Great Betrayal Aldington wrote: "I should add that the words 'real' and 'realism' are nearly always used in this book as the antithesis to 'ideal' and 'idealism'" (p.vi). Writing about Benda's work in a journal called The Realist, Herbert Read contrasted idealism, not with realism, but with cynicism, and defended Benda against the oft-levelled charge that he was a cynic: Benda's writing was informed by "an idealism, in fact, as disinterested and disingenuous as that of his master Spinoza". ("Julien Benda: A Critic of Democracy," The Realist I, May 1929, p.19.) Read also described Benda as a "realist", and in describing Belphégor as "the rallying point of classicism in modern criticism" wrote: "The war has come and gone, but its final effect will be to reinforce the doctrines of Belphégor. For the classicist is also a realist, and the war has left behind a generation of realists who have not yet made themselves felt. When realism and classicism at last join forces the eclipse of romanticism and sentimentalism will be complete" (p.22). The opposition constructed by Read is then between realism and sentimentalism. Benda used the term "realism" in a different way, analogous to pragmatism (which Read described ironically as "the religion of the new order" [p.25]), and expressed contempt for it throughout La Trahison des Clercs, for it exalted the local, specific, contingent "real" at the expense of the universal; his opposition to pragmatism, founded on his reading of Spinoza and Montaigne, amongst others, and on his opposition to Nietzsche was fundamental (see for instance Trahison, p.99ff).
particularly *La Trahison des Clercs*, was profoundly, and almost obsessively anti-German. For specific examples of the exploitation of historical mythopoëia, he cited the governments of Germany and Italy:

> Those who wish to estimate the increase of violence given to national passion by this solemnizing of its desires [ie a patriotism generated by consciousness of the past] have only to observe what has happened to this feeling among the Germans, with their claim to be carrying on the spirit of the Holy Roman Empire, and among the Italians since they have set up their aspirations as the revival of those of the Roman Empire. There once again the leaders of the State find in popular sentimentality a new and excellent instrument for carrying out their practical designs, an instrument they well know how to use. (p.17)

This antipathy to Germany extended into non-political realms. Benda largely attributed the decline of contemporary aesthetic and metaphysical values to the displacement of the "metaphysical cult of the universal", as expounded in the Greek classics, by the "veneration for the individual" in German philosophy, particularly citing Schlegel, Nietzsche, and Lotze (p.79). The one exception to this antagonism to German thinkers was his avowed admiration of Kant, whom he saw as "an isolated, embattled adherent of Enlightenment and classicist values."³⁴ Benda believed that the purpose of this displacement was to strengthen the sense of German national identity, and to shore this up with a vernacular philosophical tradition. The core of his argument was that in failing to resist and expose this kind of nationalist project, European intellectuals had neglected the traditional responsibility of the "clerc" which was to act as a conscience for the nation, and to undermine such political opportunism. *La Trahison des Clercs* is an engaged critique of those intellectuals who rationalised essentially political practices, and

who abrogated the traditional responsibility of the intellectual - disinterested, objective moral criticism.

Eliot responded to Benda's ideas in a review, "The Idealism of Julien Benda", published in *The Cambridge Review*, and while he praised the book's "lucidity and concision", and reiterated his admiration for Belphégor, he was sceptical about the later book's premises and conclusions. Eliot suggested that to condemn dogma *per se* was to abrogate another kind of responsibility. In response to Benda's criticisms of Péguy and Barrès, he argued that the displacement of intelligent thinking from abstract to practical affairs was not the key issue: "when M. Benda merely seems to say that such writers are dangerous because they have tackled politics, and applied to affairs a sensibility appropriate only to literature, I should say that their sensibility is wrong altogether" (p.486). Benda's critique was too inclusive and unspecific: "It is ... fallacious to group all the intellectuals who may be accused of doing somebody else's business, or of pandering to popular political passions, into one category; as an examination of M. Benda's instances will show" (p.487). And although Eliot believed that the intellectual should not engage with the practice of politics, he did not believe that this withdrawal necessitated a void in the intellectual's political ideas. Indeed such a void would be undesirable for it implies a complete severance of the speculative from the practical which is itself impossible, and leads, in M. Benda's implications, to an isolation which may itself be a romantic excess.... What he does not see is that his own brand of classicism is just as romantic as anyone else's. (p.488)

Thus Eliot's criticism of Benda resembled the latter's critique of Maurras, and was precisely responsive to Benda's excess, his lack of classicist restraint in argument. This excess was a consequence of his idealism: "the ideal that he holds up to
contemporary men of letters" wrote Eliot "seems to me to be infected with romance" (p.485). Eliot here is pragmatic in opposition to this "romance"; while he concurred with Benda's "general diagnosis" in *Trahison*, he believed that it was insufficiently specific in its criticisms, and further that it undermined the possibility of the achievement of its own agenda. He concluded:

The only moral to be drawn, therefore, is that you cannot lay down any hard and fast rule of what interests the *clerc*, the intellectual, should or should not have. All you can have is a standard of intellect, reason and critical ability which is applicable to the whole of a writer's work. (p.488)

The review can be read as interestingly self-reflexive. Eliot himself was an intellectual who ventured increasingly into fields of interest outside his original expertise. Although readers of Eliot might seek to bring the same standards of "intellect, reason, and critical ability" to readings of the whole of his work, our interest in his different kinds of writing - his socio-cultural, literary, or religious criticism, his drama, his poetry - varies, as does the value we place upon these genres, or the intellectual assent we are tempted to give to them. Eliot could not avoid becoming embroiled in a "question which would require a definition of those terrible terms romanticism and classicism" (p.488) - and his exasperation at the parameters of this debate in 1928 is evident. But in his response to Benda, Eliot called for a re-centring of that debate in practice, rather than theory, in identifying its literary and political consequences in texts and discourses. The ideas of classicism and romanticism were too easily manipulated by factions, and instead of attempting to define these terms, and implicitly to continue a debate about their connotations, the necessary project of the disinterested "clerc" was to expose their exploitation, and the exploitation of all intellectual discourse, and implicitly to deconstruct the ideological motivations behind their use.
III. Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*

Charles Maurras was the leader of a Royalist, right wing, political organisation, the *Action Française*. He has been seen as one of the most significant European influences on Eliot's politics, and critics who have written on Eliot's attitude to fascism usually quote from Eliot's article, "The Literature of Fascism", the famous formulation: "Most of the concepts which might have attracted me in fascism I seem already to have found, in a more digestible form, in the work of Charles Maurras" (VIII, p.288). (This article concentrated on the practice and theory of fascism in Italy, and sought to draw intellectual distinctions between the Italian experience and the doctrines of the *Action Française*. ) William M. Chace has suggested that "It is through Maurras that Eliot was to be introduced to a school of continental thinking that helped to define his entire intellectual life" (p.129).

Kenneth Asher's thesis is equally embracing: "Simply put, it seems to me that from beginning to end, Eliot's work, including both the poetry and the prose, was shaped by a political vision inherited from French reactionary thinkers, especially from Charles Maurras."35 Both of these seem to me to overstate Eliot's debt to Maurras, and in so doing to ignore the importance of Benda's critique.

In the previous chapter, I began this discussion of classicism by citing Eliot's tri-partite self-definition in the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928). This definition derives from the "classique, monarchique, catholique" ideology which Maurras had been promoting since the beginning of the century, primarily

---

through the newspaper *L'Action Française*; Eliot’s appropriation of it has been seen as "an attempt to construct a systematic Maurrassian model or myth of English cultural history." Eliot had first hand experience of the *Action Française* during his time in Paris in 1910-1911. Unfortunately, very few of Eliot’s letters from this period (only four between 1910 and 1914) have survived to be published, and scholars are thus deprived of a vital resource in giving an account of this period of his life.

In December 1926, Maurras and the *Action Française* were condemned by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, at the instigation of the Pope Pius XI as "athées ... anti-chrétiens ... anticatholiques," and many of Maurras’s writings were placed on the Roman Catholic *Indexus Expurgatorius* of proscribed books. In his commentary opening *The Monthly Criterion* of November 1927, Eliot cited the condemnation as one of the three most significant events of the previous ten years (the others being the Russian revolution and the "transformation of Italy") which had compelled the man of letters to attend to subjects outside his own competence. The importance of, and the link between these events was that they "compel us to consider the problem of Liberty and Authority, both in politics and in the

---

36 Torrens, p.312.

37 Bergonzi, p.116.

38 Nancy D. Hargrove’s essay in Thormählen, ed., pp.33-57, is an interesting and suggestive portrait of the intellectual and cultural activities of the time, derived from a range of contemporary sources.

39 Torrens, p.312.

organization of speculative thought. Politics has become too serious a matter to be left to politicians" (VI, p.386).

As Asher points out, Eliot's statement in the preface to For Lancelot Andrewes, coming after the condemnation, enacted a measure of ideological solidarity with Maurras even while the latter was a controversial figure (p.56).

During the first half of 1928, Maurras, the Action Française, and their attitude to Christianity and to the Roman Catholic church in particular, became the subject of a controversy in The Criterion, the principal disputants being Eliot himself, and Leo Ward, a Roman Catholic author and pamphleteer. Eliot's article, "The Action Française, M. Maurras and Mr. Ward", in The Monthly Criterion of March 1928, was a response to Ward's book The Condemnation of the 'Action Française'. Eliot was concerned about the justification of "the condemnation by the Vatican of an important intellectual movement" (VII, p.195), especially as it applied to the "morality and moral influence of a contributor to this number of The Criterion" (VII, p.196).

As well as attempting to refute Ward's arguments, Eliot used the context of the controversy to praise Maurras as a man of letters, asserting that he had "written as fine prose as any French author living," and more politically that "if anything, in another generation or so, is to preserve us from a sentimental Anglo-Fascism, it will be some system of ideas which will have gained much from the study of Maurras" (VII, pp.196-7). Quite what this hybrid Anglo-Fascism

41 Eliot was referring to the second part of Maurras's "Prologue to an Essay on Criticism"; this essay was his only contribution to the magazine. It had been written in 1896, and yet curiously Eliot decided to disinter and translate it. Torrens suggests that: "Eliot ... chose to translate the old Maurras essay shortly before his own discourse on Dante because it mirrored his long-standing concern for keenness of sensibility at the same time as it reminded readers and writers of the need for lucid control over one's impressions" (p.316).
denoted is unclear, and Eliot was wrong in his belief that Maurras would become a significantly influential figure in England.\(^ {42} \)

Leo Ward's main contention, which he reiterated throughout his two contributions to the debate in *The Criterion*, was that the *Action Française* sought to de-Christianize contemporary French culture, while espousing and exploiting the forms of religion. Maurras was avowedly agnostic, but Eliot expressed guarded admiration for his position: "His attitude is that of an unbeliever who cannot believe .... The peculiarity of Maurras's agnosticism (or atheism if you like) is that he recognises that he has much more in common, in the temporal sphere, with Catholics than with Protestants or atheists" (VII, p.197). Ward had suggested that Maurras, for pragmatic political reasons, had suppressed his agnosticism and ceased to make anti-Christian statements publicly because the majority of supporters of the Royalist cause were Catholics. According to Ward:

Maurras perceived long ago that France needs above all to be held together and stabilized, especially by monarchical and authoritarian institutions. Nothing is so fissiparous as mysticism and individualism. Christ was the Mystic and therefore Individualist *par excellence*. He is therefore the most dangerous of disruptive influences. France therefore must be de-
Christianized. But the Roman Church (which Maurras regards as Græco-Latin and not necessarily Christian) is systematic and institutional and cohesive. Therefore he would establish the Church as a social glue seeing that no better way can be found of de-Christianizing France. (VII, p.364)

This is Ward's summary of his view of Maurras; unless they had read Ward’s book, as Eliot had, readers of The Criterion would not have come across it until Ward’s reply to Eliot’s first article was published in June 1928. Ward believed that although Maurras was anti-Christian he saw that the Church could be used as a force for social control and the promotion of Monarchist ideology. Maurras’s anti-romanticism caused him to attack "mysticism in general" (VII, p.365), and to insist on "the external machinery of the Church and its aesthetic grandeur to the exclusion of its spiritual purpose" (VII, p.366). Eliot countered this contention suggesting that Ward had abused the evidence by quoting Maurras selectively and out of context, particularly from an early work by Maurras, Le Chemin de Paradis, a book which Eliot did not "defend, if one presumes it to be a manual of conduct."

However he did attempt to minimise the implications of its attack on the Church on the grounds that it was "the tiresome but harmless bumptiousness of a young Frenchman of that epoch" (VII, p.201). Eliot’s principle counter to Ward’s contention in his book that Maurras had an anti-Christian influence was his personal testimony, with which he concluded his first contribution:

I felt a reluctance to meddle with a matter that concerns primarily another Communion than mine, and with a matter that concerns another nation than mine. What decided me was Mr. Ward’s suggestion that the influence of Maurras, indeed the intention of Maurras, is to pervert his disciples and students away from Christianity. I have been a reader of the work of Maurras for eighteen years; upon me he has had exactly the opposite effect. This is only the evidence of one; but if one can speak, is it not his duty to
testify? (VII, p.201)^3

Eliot’s claim that he felt reluctant to meddle with a matter that concerned another nation than his own seems, in its acknowledgement of the local and the contingent, to run counter to the consistent implication of other statements that there is a community of ideas which should transcend national boundaries. Beside the relativist perspective implied in this acknowledgement, his personal testimony is a weak response, which lacks authority.

Ward’s response to Eliot, along with Eliot’s reply, and Ward’s final rejoinder, were published in the number of June 1928. In addition to summarizing his position Ward showed that Eliot had not refuted his main contentions, and further showed that certain doctrines of the Action Française ran counter to orthodox Christian teaching in inspiring "thousands among the Catholic youth of France with a spirit of real racial and class hatred" (VII, p.371).^4 Although Eliot had written that "Mr. Ward does not appear to be interested either in the political aspect or in the literary aspect" of the papal condemnation (VII, p.196), Ward’s conclusion clearly showed that he was concerned with the political consequences of Maurras’s ideology. He suggested that Eliot was misguided in believing that such an ideology might be a solution for English problems, for Maurras’s theories - as Eliot stated - had specific application in France. Ward believed that Eliot’s

---

^3 Eliot appended to the article a bibliography of texts relevant to this controversy, including La Trahison des Clercs, of which he wrote: "This is the most important statement of the case against Maurras that has been made by any Frenchman who is not Roman Catholic. It is an important book, which must be dealt with separately; and M. Benda’s case against Maurras is only incidental to his main thesis" (VII, p.203).

^4 For Maurras’s racism, and its associated antagonism towards romanticism, Jews, Marxists, and democrats see McClelland, pp.30-1.
allegiance to Maurras was an unfortunate consequence of his interest in continental ideas:

I am wholly unable to believe that any fruitful inspiration is to be derived from what Mr. Wyndham Lewis has well described as 'the senseless bellicosity of the reactionary groups of the Action Française type'. As a sincere friend of the MONTHLY CRITERION I can only hope that it is in no danger of becoming a refuge where French philosophies go to when they die. (VII, p.372)

Eliot's reply to Ward is unpersuasive. He seemed reluctant to engage with Ward's contention that Maurras's acknowledgement that "Catholic Christianity is essential to civilisation," still allows the Church simply to be conceptualized as a secular institution with a secular agenda, i.e. social cohesion. Eliot nuanced his previous testimony, making an implicit admission about his own political agenda: "I never supposed that M. Maurras could influence towards Christianity anyone who was not influenced towards his political theory" (VII, p.375), thus as long as the particular individual has "any tendency towards interior Christianity", their allegiance to Maurras would not be put in jeopardy. Eliot concluded his reply making reference to his recent controversy with The Calendar of Modern Letters concerning neo-classicism: "By other critics than Mr. Ward THE CRITERION has been called an organ for a 'Frenchified' doctrine called neo-Thomism" (VII, p.376). In his rejoinder Ward was more forceful than Eliot, though hardly conclusive. But he asserted that the Action Française represented a political as well as spiritual threat to the Papacy, in that Catholicism was becoming increasingly identified with the reactionary ideologies of such groups, and therefore "a firm stand on the part of the Papacy was both legitimate and necessary" (VII, p.378).

Eliot closed the controversy, realising that it had run its course, and that the differences between Ward and himself were irresolvable. He had brought the issue
to his readers’ attention, and made an unambiguous statement about his own allegiances; furthermore the debate enacted Eliot’s belief in the inter-relatedness of French and English culture, and of the necessary relations between religious and secular authority. However, as Roger Kojecký has written: "Despite the show of learning he made in the Criterion debate on the papal condemnation, he does not appear to have studied the political writings of Maurras particularly closely. Always aware of Maurras’s excesses, he primarily valued his literary work, and in a general way the rationalistic elitism and royalism." Vanessa Davies seeks to posit 1928 as a watershed year in which "the real commitment to French thought which the review had demonstrated at its inception" declined into ideology because of a "preoccupation with the writings of Maurras." However, in view of the fact that Eliot only published two articles by Maurras in the magazine, this rather overstates the case. It is unlikely that the rather narrow premises of the debate would really have enhanced anyone’s understanding of the force of movements such as the Action Française in contemporary society, nor the antagonism towards it of writers such as Benda; nor does it shed light on the extent to which Maurras’s anti-semitism influenced Eliot. However, the controversy can be seen as an important political event in The Criterion, for even though Eliot had written that he had been "expressing [his] personal views, and that THE CRITERION is not committed to these" (VII, p.375), it is clear that The Criterion’s political

---


philosophy was associated in the minds of some of its readers with Eliot.

Eliot remained an admirer of Maurras almost until the end of the latter's life, even during the time that Maurras was imprisoned in France, convicted of war-time treason. In 1948, he contributed a "Hommage à Charles Maurras" to the newspaper *Aspects de la France et du Monde*, and in a talk in 1955, shortly after Maurras's death, said:

I have sometimes thought that if Charles Maurras had confined himself to literature, and to the literature of political theory, and had never attempted to found a political party, a *movement* - engaging in, and increasing the acrimony of the political struggle - if he had not given his support to the restoration of the monarchy in such a way as to strengthen instead of reducing animosities - then those of his ideas which were sound and strong might have spread more widely, and penetrated more deeply, and affected more sensibly the contemporary mind.\(^{47}\)

It is unclear what Eliot wanted here. Maurras was an ideologue, and he was also a political activist. He never confined himself to literature, or simply to writing. These statements indicate, at best, an error of judgement on Eliot's part. At worst, they demonstrate a wilful ignorance of the part that ideas such as those put forward by Maurras had played in the genocide and destruction of the previous decade.

Maurras was a supporter of the Vichy government,\(^{48}\) whereas in June 1940 Benda was compelled to flee Paris, and his books and notes were confiscated by the German army.\(^{49}\) That Eliot could have suggested that Benda and Maurras shared even a "common tendency" is surprising, and his conjunction of the two was potentially misleading. The incidental criticisms of Maurras in *Belphégor* are

---


\(^{48}\) Nolte, pp.80-7.

\(^{49}\) Schalk, p.44.
developed in *La Trahison des Clercs* into a lengthy sustained attack, and the book closes with Benda using Spinoza as a stick with whom to beat Maurras. And yet what they shared, in addition to an avowed anti-romanticism, was a common intellectual attention to the state of French culture, and an interest in the principle of social organisation. Their aims, their conclusions, their methods, and their practices were all different, but their engagement and their area of interest were common. It might seem as though Eliot yoked the two almost arbitrarily, but this yoking indicates the potential for intellectual development which he discerned in conflict.

* * * * *

IV. "A very ‘catholic’ canon"

Eliot’s interest in Maurras led to his becoming an object of satire and mockery amongst some of his English contemporaries - even Leo Ward, who was seriously engaged with Maurras’s work, at times employed an ironic tone. One of these satirists was Richard Aldington who was a member of the original grouping around *The Criterion*. Throughout the second and third decades of the century, when his involvement with London literary journalism coincided or overlapped with Eliot’s, he was a scholar and translator of European and primarily French literature, publishing versions of, for instance, *The Decameron*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and Euripides’s *Alcestis*, as well as *La Trahison des Clercs*. During the twenties Aldington and Eliot fell out, and the former, having been assistant editor, ceased to be associated with the magazine.\(^50\) In 1931 Aldington published a novella, *Stepping Heavenward*, which purported to be a biography of the early years and intellectual

\(^{50}\) See Ali, pp.23-6, for details.
development of an American mystic, Jeremy Pratt Sybba, (or Cibber). This is a
lampoon of Eliot, not very thinly veiled, and during the course of it, Aldington
ridiculed Eliot's admiration of Maurras during his time in Paris:

Yet intense and arduous as his studies were, he found time to become an
enthusiastic and ardent follower of Monsieur Charles Maurras, defender of
integral Nationalism, Monarchy, and Catholic Discipline. Since Cibber was
not French he could not be regularly enrolled among the Camelots du Roi,
but his touching personal devotion to the great doctrinaire earned for him
the nickname of "the Master's Orderly Man".

He satirised the eclecticism of Eliot's intellectual sources, and the response of
those French writers whose work Eliot admired: "In France, Monsieur Julien Benda
said in a manifesto that Cibberism was one more example of the regrettable
influence of Monsieur Bergson; and Monsieur Bergson said in an interview that
Cibber ought to read a little philosophy.\(^{51}\) Whether Benda or Bergson really did
say these things is uncertain, and not as important as the hints which this lampoon
offers about Eliot's place in London literary culture. Aldington's personal
disaffection is a unique factor, but his was not the only mocking response.\(^{52}\)

Wyndham Lewis satirised Eliot's editorship for its lack of a thorough
commitment to the aesthetic-political principles which it claimed to espouse,
principles which Lewis mocked in turn:

\(^{51}\) Richard Aldington, *Stepping Heavenward* (Florence: G Orioli, 1931), pp.65,
113.

\(^{52}\) Eliot wrote of these events, much later: "Richard was very sensitive, not to
say touchy, in some ways and I am afraid that with good intentions, but clumsy
lack of imagination, I hurt his feelings once or twice very deeply indeed. After that
I saw nothing of him and he wrote a cruel and unkind lampoon of me and my wife
who died some years later, and of friends of mine such as Lady Ottoline Morrell
Kershaw and Frédéric-Jacques Temple (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern
As to the *Criterion*, that is a very ‘catholic’ canon: it is a very broad, and indeed loose-minded affair, where the politics of *la vieille France* jostle the disintegrating tenets of ‘super-real’ psychoanalysis: it did at one time perhaps make an effort to supply the Anglosaxon intelligentsia with something as logically inflexible as the French periodicals of political *action*; but not only was that a difficult undertaking - for Anglosaxony is inveterately ‘liberal,’ and to get together a team of writers not ‘tainted’ with liberalism would be no easy matter: but Mr. Eliot himself was not sufficiently interested.\(^5\)

Lewis here implies that although Eliot was at this time extremely dogmatic in his pronouncements - *Men Without Art* was nearly contemporary with *After Strange Gods* - his editorial practices were less systematic and more heterogeneous. He asserted that Eliot should have been more dogmatic even than he was, and he linked the concept of systematic dogma with the principle of critical sincerity, stating that Eliot was "*pseudo everything*". Lewis’s own discussion of the romanticism-classicism controversy, to which he devoted a whole chapter of *Men Without Art*, did not really clarify the issues any further, and he had to admit "in the matter of these terms classic and romantic, even with such an intelligent critic as Hulme, back we are once more, upon the instant, among the confusions ... There is no avoiding that, it seems. The terms are strictly unusable" (*MWA*, p.203).

During the twenties Edgell Rickword expressed serious intellectual opposition to classicism, but in looking back at the impetus behind the foundation of *The Calendar of Modern Letters* - as a reaction to *The Criterion* - his tone became rather mocking, and he said: "*The Criterion* was a bit of a rag-bag. Eliot dug up a lot of old French critics, of an earlier generation, all pseudo-classicists.

That was probably the result of his having been at the Sorbonne before the war.\footnote{Alan Young and Michael Schmidt, "A Conversation with Edgell Rickword," \textit{Poetry Nation} I (1973), pp.78-9.}

This antagonism to French classicism and to Eliot’s espousal of it generated a mockery of Eliot himself. Eliot was a critical authority in London at this time, but there were those who ridiculed his allegiances, and his interpretation of them.

Herbert Read was not an Eliot-mocker, and just as he earned Eliot’s gratitude through promoting Hulme and preventing him from falling into obscurity, so also he was a promoter of the work of Julien Benda. His own critical and political ideas, however, veered much more towards a position which he identified as consciously antagonistic to Eliot’s: "When he announced in the preface to \textit{For Lancelot Andrewes} (1928) that he was a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics, and an anglo-catholic in religion, I could only retort that I was a romanticist in literature, an anarchist in politics, and an agnostic in religion.\footnote{Read, in Tate, ed., pp.26-7.} This anomaly attracted Wyndham Lewis’s attention, and his satire is worth quoting at length, for although it was published at a time when Eliot was engaged in rethinking his public espousal of classicism, it is an interesting contemporary response. Lewis suggested that Eliot’s relationship with I. A. Richards deteriorated around the time of the publication of \textit{The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism} (1933), however:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Eliot is still very civil, outwardly, to his honoured colleague: but this is no longer a case of the ‘detachment’ one has to expect in the ordinary way, as a characteristic attitude on the part of this ‘royalist, classicist and catholic’ for all those (from that standpoint) decidedly \textit{shady} figures by whom he is surrounded, and by whom he has been so faithfully supported: for instance, his recognition of anomaly, as proved by his uneasy attitude to
\end{quote}
Mr. Herbert Read (psychoanalyser and dutifully sex-dissector of William Wordsworth - how this scandalized Babbitt! - who asked me whether Read was really approved by Eliot in this romantic Freudian foray! ...) Mr. Eliot, as skipper of the Criterion, always has the air of glancing a little sardonically askance at this first mate, as though he had got on board while he wasn’t looking, and was not quite a sufficiently orthodox seaman to be entrusted with the navigation of such a ship - as indeed he is not (solely from the purist standpoint - he would be an excellent mate, or for that matter skipper, of some other ship - and if you are to be a purist, you must at least take care a little in such matters) - at least he is not the man, it is pretty clear, if the Criterion is to fly the royal ensign, and steer according to classical canons to a pseudo-Roman port! - But I have dealt already with that sort of central absurdity in Mr. Eliot’s position in the matter of his paper - that strange organ of Tradition: and so long as his colleagues do not blow the gaff, or over-conscientiously drag out all these damaging contradictions into the light of common day, all is well, and Mr. Eliot, sardonic but decorous, goes peacefully his pseudo way! (MWA, pp. 94-5)

Again Lewis is criticising the discrepancy between Eliot’s pronouncements, and his editorship; but again Lewis was far more dogmatic in his demands for adherence to classicism, and to a systematic editorial principle than Eliot, or than any editor could be in practice. In seeking to publish the best work of the time an editor necessarily publishes the work of authors with whom he or she is not in personal or critical sympathy, but this does not preclude the possibility of a magazine possessing a "common tendency which its authors should illustrate by conformity or opposition" (V, pp.187-8), the model which Eliot offered for The Criterion. Eliot did not believe that The Criterion should expound the programme of any one doctrine, but rather he wanted the most important issues of the day to be debated by informed contributors: "THE CRITERION is not a ‘school,’ but a meeting place for writers, some of whom, certainly, have much in common; but what they have in common is not a theory or a dogma."56 The discrepancy between this liberal,  

pluralist idea and the actual tone of the magazine is the measure of his success or failure as an editor.

In the twenties the magazine represented a range of views, and in December 1928 - probably coincidentally in the same number in which Eliot's "The Literature of Fascism" appeared - Read published an article "Humanism and the Absolute" in The Criterion, which was the basis of a pamphlet he published in 1930, entitled Julien Benda and the New Humanism. Just as Eliot had been in his essays on "Imperfect Critics" in The Sacred Wood, Read was interested in the affinities between Benda's work and that of American new humanist critics such as Norman Foerster, Irving Babbitt, and Paul Elmer More. Read published the article with the subtitle "The Texts of a Debate", i.e. as a set of unresolved propositions, rather than seeking a dogmatic closure. He summarized the position of the American humanists, as articulated in Foerster's book, American Criticism, and then summarized what he described as Benda's "confession of faith", extrapolated from Benda's reply in La Nouvelle Revue Française of October 1928 to criticisms of La Trahison des Clercs. Central to this faith was the tenet "Civilization requires that the morality of the clerks should influence, but should not be influenced by, the morality of the laymen" (VIII, p.272). The clerk's morality was explicitly not pragmatic or contingent, and it entailed "honouring ideal or disinterested values. Such values are conceived without relation to the conditions of real existence; they are universal, abstract, eternal or infinite." It was in these last that Read centred the

---

57 For detail about these criticisms and other responses, see Martyn Cornick, "Catalyst for intellectual engagement: the serialization of Julien Benda's La Trahison des clercs in the Nouvelle Revue Française, 1927-1932," French Cultural Studies 4, 1993, pp.31-49.
debate: "What do we mean by ideal or disinterested values? How do we arrive at them; from whom or from where do we receive them?" (VIII, p.273). This extended the issue to the relationship between human conceptions of value, and divine authority; and contrary to Foerster who "nowhere makes it clear that he accepts [the] complete severance of things divine and things human" (VIII, p.275), Read quotes Benda’s idea, which the latter saw as shared by the Eleatics, Plato, Aristotle, the Alexandrians, Christian theology, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel: "all have made God an absolute, the word thus implying a rupture of continuity between what it designates and the world of sensible and changing things" (VIII, p.274). For Benda, Spinoza frames the issue acutely: "Between the infinite and the finite there is a difference, not of degree, but of essence" (VIII, p.275). Read allied himself with this opinion, and asserted a congruence between Benda and T. E. Hulme, insofar as both believed that it was contemporary culture’s unwillingness to recognise this discontinuity - which Hulme saw embodied in "Original Sin" - which gave rise to "most of our errors" (VIII, p.276).

This article signalled a shift in the mediation of Benda’s ideas through *The Criterion*. Read’s article is not concerned with literature, except in the broadest sense, and Benda has shifted from being the jaunty aestheticist of the first phase of his reception, through the cultural politician engaged with Maurras, to a troubled metaphysician and theologian. This development led to Benda’s second and last piece in *The Criterion*, a difficult, closely argued "study for a system of metaphysics" entitled "Of the Idea of Order and the Idea of God," published in October 1930. It is explicitly contra-humanistic; Benda quotes the same sentence from Spinoza as above, as exemplifying an idea that will generate hostility towards
his system on the part of humanist thinkers (X, p.84). Stylistically, this piece has structural affinities with *Belphégor*, to which it makes implicit and explicit references, and it is similar to Benda’s other work in its concern with order and hierarchy. However, compared with *Belphégor* or *La Trahison des Clercs*, there is a shift of focus, from the condition of the larger collective culture - which is the province of aesthetic theory and cultural politics - to a theological speculation on the metaphysic of the individual soul, and its relation to God. Benda was still concerned with the relationship between art and other cultural phenomena, commenting - and this has affinities by extension with Ward’s analysis of Maurras’s pragmatic concept of the function of the Roman Church - that "men conceive the idea of order with regard to practical things, things, I mean, which need to be ordered in order to flourish and be strong, and only afterwards transport such an idea into the region of aesthetics" (X, p.92). But - like Eliot over the course of the preceding decade or so - between *Belphégor* and this essay Benda’s concerns had changed, and Read’s article had already drawn the attention of *The Criterion*’s readers to the change. The implications of classicism’s demand that humanity submit to higher authority necessitated a more or less formal theology, which Benda was attempting to explore.

**V. Conclusion**

*The Criterion* itself attempted to be an enactment of the pan-European values which Eliot held in the inter-war years, at least for most of its existence. It did not simply report on international communication between European men of letters, but was in purpose and practice a forum for that communication, almost to the end of
its life. In the appendix to Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, Eliot discussed explicitly the function of literary reviews, particularly The Criterion, in the culture. The magazine had been published with "the assumption that there existed an international fraternity of men of letters, within Europe: a bond which did not replace, but was perfectly compatible with, national loyalties, religious loyalties, and differences of political philosophy." Here, as elsewhere, Eliot figured a community which transcended the reality of quotidian international affairs. More practically, although he was antagonistic to them in principle, Julien Benda had seen that it would be extremely difficult for these different loyalties and philosophies to be either transcended or suppressed or ignored, and Eliot never really appreciated the value of this insight, as his review of La Trahison des Clercs indicated. Eliot recognised, somewhat mournfully, that it was the influence of politics which brought about The Criterion's end in 1939: he attributed the magazine's falling short of its own ideals to "the gradual closing of the mental frontiers of Europe" (p.116), by which he meant of course the worsening international relations in the years leading up to the Second World War. He was rather vague about this - perhaps seeking to be tactful because the talks were being broadcast to Germany. The root cause was the "cultural autarky", that "followed inevitably upon political and economic autarky;" Eliot saw the nations of Europe gradually ceasing to feel themselves to be part of a larger unit: "The blight fell first upon our friends in Italy. And after 1933 contributions from Germany became more and more difficult to find. Some of our friends died; some disappeared; some

merely became silent" (p.116). These silences and disappearances float rather freely in Eliot's discourse, without attribution to cause or consequence, and in his reluctance to engage more explicitly with the historical effects of Italian Fascism and German Nazism, Eliot can be seen as being evasive about the relationship between the individual and politics. His evasion tries to suggest that if the paucity of contributions from abroad were not directly a consequence of historical events, then ideally there might have been contributors still able to work, but who could not be found, and thus the community of intellectuals did still exist.

Some critics have preferred to dismiss the complex web of issues embedded in the relationship between classicism and the mind of Europe. For Bergonzi, Maurras "and other intellectuals of the French Right" were a pernicious influence who led Eliot "to adopt for a while the absurd intellectual red herring of 'classicism' which ... merely brought him into bad company" (p.83); and Peter Dale Scott has recently described Eliot's affinities with Maurras and Hulme as "perverse loyalties ... which his mature style never quite escaped." But these responses, attempting to recuperate Eliot from the reactionary politics associated with classicist intellectuals, represent a failure to see the importance of this group of thinkers in Eliot's intellectual affinities during the second and third decades of the century. Bergonzi's assertion that classicism was "a quagmire of exotic and potentially sinister intellectual influences, from which [Eliot] was happy to escape before long into the more temperate embraces of the Anglican church" (p.84) misses the point. In the idea of classicism Eliot perceived the twin ideas of order and authority, of which he wrote unmathematically in December 1928: "Order and

authority are good: I believe in them as wholeheartedly as I think one should believe in any single idea" (VIII, pp.287-8). They combined with Eliot's increasing spirituality to lead him to the Church, not as an escape, but as a conscious progression. An opposite view to Bergonzi's is held by critics such as Chace and Asher who see classicism not as a pernicious distraction, but as central to Eliot's ideas. They over-state the influence of Maurras, but they do recognise that it is problematic to attempt to separate influences and issues into discrete domains such as religion, literature, or politics in Eliot's work. None of them acknowledge that Benda was a significant counterpoint to Maurras in the formulation of Eliot's classicism in the twenties.

The assertion of the necessity of order and hierarchy had implications for literature, and for politics. Many classicists were anti-democratic: Chace goes so far as to write: "What links Eliot's 'classical' writers together, then, is a common appeal, not to Hellas, but to Lacedæmon; democratic principles are, in one way or another, scorned; the repulsive masses are almost beyond hope; liberalism is a threat to all things civilised" (p.131). Writing in The Criterion of April 1924, in a different context, Eliot employed a rhetoric in describing democratic culture similar to that which he used in his critiques of romanticism. He was so absorbed in his polemic against certain aspects of contemporary society that a notice of a performance of King Lear by the Phoenix Society became an occasion for Eliot to launch into a diatribe against democracy. "It is commonly said, we suppose on the authority of Charles Lamb, that King Lear is not a play to be acted," he reported, and then condemned this opinion as symptomatic of a literary culture which had an "aversion for the work of art" and preferred such "derivative" forms as the reading
of dramatic texts. This was for Eliot an example of "that meanness of spirit, that egotism of motive, that incapacity for surrender or allegiance to something outside of oneself, which is a frequent symptom of the soul of man under democracy" (II, p.235). Eliot cites Lamb as his authority with heavy-handed irony; his tone seems excessive in the context of a dramatic review and perhaps this is an example of Eliot failing to conceptualise cultural phenomena as discretely as he might. It also shows how deeply associated literature, aesthetics, and politics were becoming for him in the mid-twenties. As a classicist Eliot was pessimistic about the future of culture precisely because of humanity's self-reliance and resistance to submission, and he was deeply opposed to the romantic tendency which he believed promoted this. Eliot believed that amongst his English contemporaries, John Middleton Murry was the major theorist and exponent of this tendency, and D. H. Lawrence the writer whose work most exemplified it, and it is to the reception of Lawrence in *The Criterion* that this thesis now turns.

I. Introduction: "the most interesting novelist in England"²

In his commentary in *The Criterion* of June 1927, Eliot engaged in debate with the editors of *The Calendar* over the issue of neo-classicism. In response to their claim that neo-classicism was being adapted "into a repressive instrument of literary criticism,"³ Eliot cited *The Criterion*’s publication of D. H. Lawrence: "We have always assumed that certain men of genius, such as Mr. D. H. Lawrence, were simply irrepressible and therefore not to be repressed, and we have printed them without attempting to repress them" (V, p.284). Douglas Garman responded to this in *The Calendar*: "When the writer says, ‘We have always assumed that certain men of genius, such as Mr. D. H. Lawrence, were simply irrepressible and, therefore, not to be repressed’, he conveys at least the implication that such geniuses are less repressible than they should be."⁴ Garman is right to point to the ambivalence of Eliot’s position. The exchange also raises the question of why and how a magazine editor might repress one of his contributors, although the prospect of this seems rather nonsensical, as Garman wrote: "The possibility of a serious paper attempting to repress the work of an author whom it publishes is too childish to consider" (p.154). Neither side was clear as to what form this repression might

---

¹ This quotation is taken from Eliot’s essay "To Criticize the Critic," p.24.
⁴ D. M. G[arman], "A Reply to *The Criterion*," p.155.
have taken, and the question went unanswered.

A further question raised by this exchange is why Eliot chose to cite the publication of Lawrence as an example of *The Criterion*'s tolerant policy towards contributors. Lawrence certainly was no neo-classicist, but many of the magazine’s writers were not. While acknowledging Lawrence’s "genius", Eliot managed to imply that *The Criterion* was not supportive in principle of Lawrence’s work, for his intention was to indicate that the expression of this genius was contrary to *The Criterion*’s tendency, and that this was common knowledge: the publication of Lawrence, then, was *per se* a demonstration of its tolerance and catholicity.

However Eliot’s use of the term "men of genius" is unsettling and vague, for it figures Lawrence not as an author, but rather as an exemplary, token figure of controversy. In the Lawrence memorial number of the *New Adelphi*, June-August 1930 (which was the last number that John Middleton Murry edited), the incoming editor Max Plowman contributed an article entitled "The significance of D. H. Lawrence" in which he asked: "How is it that people are to be found ready to drink as milk the opinions of critics who speak of Lawrence as a ‘genius’ only to confer upon that word attributes of degradation and contempt?", and this seems to me to

---

5 Having said that, Lawrence wrote to his agent, Curtis Brown on 10 January 1925: "By the way, The Contemporary Magazine - Cobden-Sanderson’s quarterly - say they would like something of me in every issue, and I like them, so will you let them have any little thing they want." It is likely that Lawrence was unaware at this time that Eliot was editor of *The Criterion*, which is why he identifies it with its publisher, Richard Cobden-Sanderson. (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence V*, Mar 1924 - Mar 1927, eds. James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], p.193.)

6 Lawrence himself wrote with rueful irony in an "Autobiographical Sketch": "In the early days ... they were always telling me I had got genius, as if to console me for not having their own incomparable advantages." (Quoted in F. R. Leavis, *For Continuity* [Cambridge: Minority Press, 1933]), p.111.
frame the issue acutely. A kind of duality seems to be operating, and genius is
not, in and of itself, wholly positive, a theme which Eliot developed in *After
Strange Gods*.

During the period of *The Criterion*’s publication, the issue of what
Lawrence represented engendered much controversy, and Eliot has been
represented as being simply antagonistic towards him. However, his attitude was
more flexible and complicated than that, and this affected the publication and
treatment of Lawrence in *The Criterion*. This chapter seeks to trace how Eliot’s
role as editor of *The Criterion* specifically affected his response to Lawrence, and
in order to contextualise this, some attention is paid to his reception in other
contemporary literary magazines. The introduction briefly looks at significant
occasions throughout his life on which Eliot mentioned Lawrence; subsequent
sections explore Eliot and *The Criterion*’s response to Lawrence’s death; reviews
of Lawrence in the magazine; the major period of Eliot’s attention to Lawrence, in
the early thirties; and one of Lawrence’s contributions to *The Criterion*, in the
context of sexual politics. The concluding section discusses Lawrence’s attitude to
*The Criterion* and other little magazines of the twenties, in order to discover what
function and status Lawrence believed they had in his own career.

William H. Pritchard has recognised the ambivalence at the core of Eliot’s
attitude to the publication of Lawrence in *The Criterion*. He writes that Lawrence
provided a "dramatic challenge ... to Eliot’s deepest personal style of life. He might
and did publish Lawrence’s work in the *Criterion*; all the more reason then why it

---

7 Max Plowman, “The significance of D. H. Lawrence,” *New Adelphi* III, June-
August 1930, p.251.
must be made clear how different were the objects of their respective allegiances.  

Between 1924 and 1929 eight pieces by Lawrence were published in *The Criterion*. There were, however, very few critical or editorial articles devoted exclusively to him, and it is necessary to look at other contemporary writing by Eliot to inflect our sense of Lawrence's reception in *The Criterion*. These texts illustrate that Eliot changed his mind substantially about Lawrence several times during his life.

In 1922, just before *The Criterion* was first published, he wrote quite admiringly about Lawrence for an American audience:

> One writer, and indeed, in my opinion, the most interesting novelist in England - who has apparently been somewhat affected by Dostoevsky, is Mr D. H. Lawrence. Mr Lawrence has progressed - by fits and starts, it is true; for he has perhaps done nothing as good as a whole as Sons and Lovers. He has never yet, I think, quite surrendered himself to his work. He still theorizes at times when he should merely see. His theory has not yet reached the point at which it is no longer a theory, he still requires (at the end of Aaron's Rod) the mouthpiece for a harangue. But there is one scene in this book - a dialogue between an Italian and several Englishmen, in which one feels that the whole is governed by a creator who is purely creator, with the terrifying disinterestedness of the true creator. And for that we can forgive Mr Lawrence his subsequent lapse into a theory of human relationships.

Eliot is good natured here, though not uncritical. Certain aspects of his response, such as the emphasis on the necessity of "surrender" and "disinterestedness", show

---


9 "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman" (Oct 1924, III, pp.15-42); "The Woman Who Rode Away I" (July 1925, III, pp.529-42); "The Woman Who Rode Away II" (Jan 1926, IV, pp.95-124); "Mornings in Mexico" (June 1926, IV, pp.467-75 ); "Flowery Tuscany I" (Oct 1927, VI, pp.305-10); "Flowery Tuscany II" (Nov 1927, VI, pp.403-8); "Flowery Tuscany III" (Dec 1927, VI, pp.516-22); "Mother and Daughter" (April 1929, VIII, pp.394-419).

clear affinities with the classicist criticism he would delineate in "The Function of Criticism", and it is significant that he differentiates one classicist moment from the rest of Lawrence's work. The larger issue that he identifies, the tension between the novelist and the theorist, has been consistently raised in Lawrence studies. At the very end of 1922, Eliot wrote to his brother Henry: "There is very little contemporary writing that affords me any satisfaction whatsoever; there is certainly no contemporary novelist except D. H. Lawrence and of course Joyce in his way, whom I care to read." Thus even after he had read *Ulysses*, Eliot endorsed Lawrence without hesitation, whereas the lack of hesitation about Joyce which seems to be denoted by "of course" is compromised, "in his way" suggesting that this is not quite Eliot's way. This private linking of the two in praise represents a rather different attitude to F. R. Leavis's later characterisation of Eliot's position in his book *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955).

Five years later, in an essay entitled "Le Roman Anglais Contemporain" published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* of May 1927, Eliot repeated his opinion that *Sons and Lovers* was the best of the novels, and in ascribing to Lawrence "a descriptive genius second to no writer living" alluded again to the same passage in *Aaron's Rod* which had earlier attracted his attention. However, a substantial shift in Eliot's attitude to Lawrence had occurred in terms of what he saw and responded to in the work. Eliot's tone became censorious and hyper-critical: "even if one is not antagonized by the appalling monotony of Mr. Lawrence's theme, under all its splendid variations, one still turns away with the judgement: 'this is not my world, either as it is, or as I should wish it to be'." These new concerns, and this new

tone, are more interesting for what they intimate about Eliot's state of mind than they are as critical thinking about Lawrence:

> When his characters make love - or perform Mr. Lawrence's equivalent for love-making - and they do nothing else - they not only lose all the amenities, refinements and graces which many centuries have built up in order to make love-making tolerable; they seem to re-ascend the metamorphoses of evolution, passing backward beyond ape and fish to some hideous coition of protoplasm.¹²

As Leavis asked, "Surely the rejection of Romantic Love, Love as the Absolute, does not necessarily lead one to this?"¹³ What is striking here is Eliot's disgust not just at literary representation, but at sexuality itself.

In the early thirties, in texts such as *After Strange Gods* and his review in *The Criterion* of John Middleton Murry's *Son of Woman*, Eliot became more antagonistic, and his criticism of Lawrence was no longer literary - as it was exclusively in the piece in *The Dial* - but was directed towards Lawrence’s morality. Eliot included this disclaimer in *After Strange Gods*: "I am uncertain of my ability to criticise my contemporaries as artists; I ascended the platform of these lectures only in the role of moralist" (*ASG*, p.12), which is a curious position for the editor of a literary quarterly to adopt, even bearing in mind the plurality of interests designated by the term literary. During the thirties, Eliot’s writing became more involved in religion, and with religious organisations, and one of his pieces of writing on Lawrence sprang directly from this involvement. This was the introductory chapter of a book entitled *Revelation* (1937), published by Faber, in

---


¹³ *For Continuity*, pp.156-7.
which seven theological thinkers discussed the meaning of revelation in modern society. Eliot explored the idea in direct relation to Lawrence. His criticism of Lawrence began from the rather simplistic premise that Lawrence's antipathy to orthodox Christianity was engendered by his early bad experiences of Congregationalism - what Eliot called elsewhere "the vague hymn-singing pietism which seems to have consoled the miseries of Lawrence's mother" (ASG, p.39) - and that as a consequence of these experiences Lawrence was unable to conceptualise an alternative way of living as a Christian. By extension from this, Eliot suggested that Lawrence was typically unable to conceive that of which he had no experience, and further was unconscious of his own ignorance. Eliot frequently attacked Lawrence with the charge that he was ignorant, and in this instance he accused Lawrence of ignorance of the tradition, which Eliot here figured spatially, rather than historically:

Lawrence, even had he acquired a great deal more knowledge and information than he ever came to possess, would always have remained uneducated. By being "educated" I mean having such an apprehension of the contours of the map of what has been written in the past, as to see instinctively where everything belongs, and approximately where anything new is likely to belong; it means, furthermore, being able to allow for all the books one has not read and the things one does not understand - it means some understanding of one's own ignorance.\(^{14}\)

The cartographical image has a rhetorical force, but the passage is not very cogent. One of the aims of education is to free oneself from the false seductions of the instinct, as Eliot had expounded in his review of *Son of Woman*, and it is hard to see what kind of allowance one could make - or Lawrence could have made - for the books one has not read. Beyond a rather simplistic humility, it is difficult to

---

understand what attitude one could usefully or beneficially adopt.

Eliot averred that in spite of his handicaps, Lawrence at least did not make the mistakes of humanism, which Eliot delineated in his critique of the humanism of Babbitt: "He was aware that religion is not, and can never survive as, simply a code of morals" (p.33). Indeed, his opposition to modern society led Lawrence to seek a world which would not simply be grounded in belief, but "in which life would be a kind of religious behaviourism" (p.32). Lawrence may not have been orthodox, but he was, as Eliot recognised, religious.\textsuperscript{15}

Eliot reiterated some of these ideas in 1951, in the short preface he wrote to a book entitled \textit{D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence}. In this he called for a body of Lawrence criticism free from the constraints imposed by personal acquaintance, repeating the hope of A. Desmond Hawkins in his laudatory July 1937 \textit{Criterion} review of Lawrence's \textit{Phoenix}: "The mass of shoddy memoirs having passed away, there is some likelihood of a more intelligent evaluation of Lawrence" (XVI, p.752). But having acknowledged that he himself had had no personal acquaintance with Lawrence, he did not feel constrained from describing him as "an impatient and impulsive man," who often went wrong from "ignorance, prejudice, or drawing the wrong conclusions in his conscious mind from the insights which came to him from below consciousness." Nonetheless, Eliot asserted the need for Christians to

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15} In tracing some parallels in their work, C. E. Baron has gone so far as to ask: "did Eliot recognise in Lawrence's writings a religious earnestness which presented a challenge which \textit{Four Quartets} is (in part) a specifically Christian attempt to match and surpass?" ("Lawrence's Influence on Eliot," \textit{Cambridge Quarterly} V, 1971, p.248). Other confluences in their thinking and writing are traced (less convincingly) through verbal echoes by John Zubizaretta, "T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence: The Relationship and Influence," \textit{English Language Notes} 31 1993, pp.61-72.}\]
engage with Lawrence’s work, and to do so, not with any presumption of moral
authority, but with humility:

[Lawrence’s] strictures upon Christianity (and indeed upon Buddhism) are
often ill-informed; at other times they go straight to the heart of the matter;
and no Christian ought to feel sure that he is religious minded enough, to
ignore the criticism of a man who, without being a Christian, was primarily
and always religious.¹⁶

Towards the end of his life, Eliot used the 1961 lecture which was
published as "To Criticize the Critic" to look back on some of the issues and
controversies which had occupied his attention, and to reflect upon his own sense
of what he had achieved in his criticism. Revealingly he wrote: "Perhaps my
judgement is less assured about writers who are contemporary or nearly so, than
about writers of the past" which shows some insight on Eliot’s part into the
dynamics of criticism, but leaves other things uncertain, because of the ambiguous
meaning of "assured". About his contemporaries and younger figures in poetry,
Eliot wrote, his valuation had remained consistent throughout his life:

There is however one contemporary figure about whom my mind will, I
fear, always waver between dislike, exasperation, boredom and admiration.
That is D. H. Lawrence.

My opinions of D. H. Lawrence seem to form a tissue of praise and
execration. The more vehement of my ejaculations of dislike are preserved,
like flies in amber, or like wasps in honey, by the diligence of Dr. Leavis;
but between two passages which he quotes, one published in 1927 and the
other in 1933, I find that in 1931 I was wagging my finger rather
pompously at the bishops who had assembled at the Lambeth Conference,
and reproaching them for 'missing an opportunity for dissociating
themselves from the condemnation of two very serious and improving
writers' - namely, Mr. James Joyce and Mr. D. H. Lawrence.¹⁷ I cannot
account for such apparent contradictions. ("TCC", p.24)

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Foreword," to Fr. William Tiverton, D. H. Lawrence and

¹⁷ See Eliot’s essay Thoughts After Lambeth (London: Faber & Faber, Criterion
Miscellany no.30, 1931).
Eliot referred, topically, to his having been ready to appear for the defence in the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, picking up the anti-censorship theme of *Thoughts After Lambeth*. But he concluded: "my antipathy to [Lawrence] remains, on the ground of what seems to me egotism, a strain of cruelty, and a failing in common with Thomas Hardy - the lack of a sense of humour" (p.25). As we shall see, this more or less repeats, thirty years further on, the criticisms levelled in *After Strange Gods*. Eliot's intention in repeating them is unclear. He suggested that he had endeavoured in "To Criticize the Critic" to confine himself to comment on his literary criticism, but his most forceful writings about Lawrence rarely employed a literary critical tone.

Eliot's final published comment on Lawrence occurred in the preface to *The Criterion* reprint of 1967. He wrote nostalgically about the range of authors that the magazine had published: "I am proud of having published work by D. H. Lawrence, and by Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce and Ezra Pound." Why he should pick out these four from among a broad range of anglophone modernist writers is not clear; perhaps this endorsement was still influenced by the climate of opinion subsequent to the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* controversy. But certainly the active endorsement of "pride" at having published represents a very different position, in retrospect, from the passive engagement of not attempting to repress.

Eliot changed his mind about many issues and authors. Perhaps there is a distinction to be drawn between the public Eliot, who sought to be a disinterested editor who published the best work of the time, and the private man, whose

---

personal tastes and opinions came into conflict with his public role. Stephen Spender, a contributor to *The Criterion* in the thirties, shared this ambivalent feeling, and sought to speak for the younger authors and poets of his age, who had been importantly influenced by Eliot, when he wrote in recollection:

> We were divided in our views about Lawrence because although we were agreed that he was one of those very rare writers who can make the reader feel alive beyond the surroundings of his room and his armchair - we were also agreed that Lawrence’s main purpose in writing was to recommend behaving in a Lawrentian way. While I for one, felt romantically drawn by this, most of my friends felt differently.  

But Eliot’s impatience and perplexity was not a private matter that could be easily suppressed for the sake of editorial disinterestedness: he expressed judgements about Lawrence publicly, and although they had no personal relationship there seems nevertheless to have been antagonism which came out in controversy conducted in public documents. Lawrence himself was conscious of some antipathy on Eliot’s part, and associated Eliot with a diverse range of critics, editors, and journalists when writing to John Middleton Murry on 20 May 1929: "The animal that I am you instinctively dislike - just as all the Lynds and Squires and Eliots and Goulds instinctively dislike it - and you all say there’s no such animal, and if there is there ought not to be ...."  

Eliot’s response to Lawrence attracted the attention of F. R. Leavis, and much of Leavis’s 1955 book *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* addresses and attempts to

---


mount a critique of Eliot’s role in the evaluation and placing of Lawrence. For Leavis, Lawrence and James Joyce "were pre-eminently the testing, the crucial authors" and through one’s response to them, various other critical allegiances could be predicted. If, Leavis wrote, "you took Joyce for a major creative writer, then, like Mr. Eliot, you had no use for Lawrence," and vice-versa. Lawrence was a significant and controversial author, whose work was indeed the locus of moral, theoretical, and literary debates, and who has been a "test" for twentieth-century criticism; Leavis contends, at the beginning and at the end of the book, that Eliot consciously and intentionally inhibited critical recognition of Lawrence.

At times, in writing about Lawrence, Eliot’s tone was indeed so antipathetic that the existence of a body of commentary on Lawrence’s life and work is surprising, and one wonders why Eliot and The Criterion did not simply ignore him. The existence of this commentary substantiates what Eliot said on a number of occasions: that he believed him to be an important writer, but a writer whose ideas were profoundly opposed to his own. With the exception of those sections of After Strange Gods which discuss Lawrence’s ideas, and the review of Son of Woman, Eliot’s comments on Lawrence are not widely known; often he referred to Lawrence in the context of an essay on a larger question. Eliot did not dismiss

---


23 See pp.18, 303.
Lawrence’s significance, nor his achievement; in fact, the struggle to understand Lawrence’s weltanschauung, and to find some kind of reconciliation with his opinions, occupied him throughout his life.

* * * * *

II. Eliot and Lawrence’s obituary

The death of an author can provide, for those engaged with that author’s work, the occasion for retrospection over his or her career, and an opportunity to assess his or her importance for one’s own time, perhaps in the form of an obituary article. In the introduction to D. H. Lawrence: Novelist, Leavis pointed out, indignantly, that Lawrence had received "(unlike [Robert]Bridges and Harold Monro) no obituary notice in The Criterion" (p.11). This absence, amid Eliot’s opening commentary articles in the number for April 1930 (the first number after Lawrence’s death), might not be noticed unless, like Leavis, one were looking for it. (It contrasts starkly with The New Adelphi, which devoted its number of June-August 1930 to Lawrence. On the end dust-wrapper of this number of The New Adelphi there is an advertisement for The Criterion, so presumably the latter’s publishers believed there was some common readership, with common interests). The Criterion had, however, established something of a tradition for itself of marking the deaths of significant men and women of letters and the arts, and devoting some comment to the occasion. In the third number of the magazine, a whole page was given over to a notice of the death of Katherine Mansfield. The text was enclosed within a heavy black rectangle on the page, and it concluded "A study and appreciation of her

---

work will be reserved until the appearance of her collected works; at the moment we can only register our conviction of the loss to English letters" (I, p.307). Other commemorative articles included Eliot's famous and moving tribute to Marie Lloyd (I, pp.192-5), an obituary of W. P. Ker (II, p.103), commentary articles devoted to Joseph Conrad (III, p.1), F. H. Bradley (III, pp.1-2), Jacques Rivière (III, p.344), and Thomas Hardy (VII, p.193). This tradition continued throughout the thirties, and Eliot indicated the purpose of these obituaries at the end of a commentary in the number of October 1936: "Concerning Gilbert Keith Chesterton the present writer has nothing to add to a few paragraphs contributed to The Tablet a week or two after Chesterton's death. But as Chesterton also had contributed to The Criterion, his death also should be mentioned in these pages" (XVI, p.69). It is at least curious that Lawrence's death should have gone unnoticed at the time, particularly as many more articles by him had been published than by any of the other writers. Leavis infers this as a deliberate snub to Lawrence. But Eliot was engaged in an obituary debate about Lawrence in another magazine, in the well known exchange with E. M. Forster in The Nation and Athenæum. A sympathetic obituary of Lawrence, signed "O. M.", was published in that paper on 22 March 1930, and Forster responded with a letter the following week:

Now [Lawrence] is dead, and the low-brows whom he scandalized have united with the high-brows whom he bored to ignore his greatness. This cannot be helped; no one who alienates both Mrs Grundy and Aspatia can hope for a good obituary Press. All that we can do ... is to say straight out that he was the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation. The rest must be left where he would have wished it to be left - in the hands of the young.

25 On the evidence of letters from Lawrence that are quoted in the obituary, it can be deduced that this was Ottoline Morrell.
Eliot responded in the following issue of 5 April:

I am the last person to wish to disparage the genius of Lawrence, or to disapprove when a writer of the eminence of Mr. Forster speaks "straight out." But the virtue of speaking straight out is somewhat diminished if what one speaks is not sense. And unless we know exactly what Mr. Forster means by *greatest*, *imaginative*, and *novelist*, I submit that this judgement is meaningless. For there are at least three "novelists" of "our generation" - two of whom are living - for whom a similar claim might be made.

Forster's reply, published on 12 April, was as modest and generous as Eliot had been mean-minded and pedantic:

Mr. T. S. Eliot duly entangles me in his web. He asks what exactly I mean by "greatest," "imaginative," and "novelist," and I cannot say. Worse still, I cannot even say what "exactly" means - only that there are occasions when I would rather feel like a fly than a spider, and that the death of D. H. Lawrence is one of these.

Leavis quotes much of this exchange in *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, and reacts angrily to Eliot's tone, writing that "the sour primness on such an occasion, and with such an intention, still shocks, a quarter of a century after Lawrence's death" (p.11). He justly expected Eliot to be more generous on such an occasion; to quibble about semantics at this time, about a writer who had been a contributor to *The Criterion*, seems rather to be buying urbaneity and imperturbability at too high a price. For Christopher Ricks, this exchange is an example of the tension in criticism between theory and principle: the former is defined in relation to the latter by its desire for a greater degree of exactness and elaboration. Eliot is here cited as an exemplar of the theoretical turn, and Ricks attributes the tone of Eliot's response to his "philosophical proclivities" which were, in this instance, "disabling,

---

26 *The Nation and Athenæum* March, April 1930, XLVI, p.888; XLVII, p.11; XLVII, p.45.
not enabling; as Forster implies, different occasions require different degrees of precision, and sometimes it is as well to resist the attraction of exactness. Ricks’s implication is that Eliot demonstrated a lack of taste, and that he invoked a kind of philosophical argument that depended upon linguistic considerations, when these were not appropriate. In commenting on the death of Joseph Conrad in October 1924, Eliot had himself been far less concerned with such considerations:

No periodical which professes a devotion to literature could neglect to associate itself with the general regret at the death of a writer who was beyond question a great novelist, and who possessed the modesty and the conviction which a great writer should have. Conrad’s reputation is as secure as that of any writer of his time: critical analysis may adjust but it will not diminish. He is now a permanent subject for critical study .... (III, p.1)

It might be argued that Eliot qualified his arguments here more than Forster would later do - certainly he resisted using the superlative, and he discussed Conrad’s value in terms of his reputation, and how that compared with the reputations of his contemporaries. But one could respond to Eliot’s description of Conrad as being "beyond question a great novelist" in precisely the same terms as he later responded to Forster: what do "great" and "novelist" mean "exactly"? Furthermore, how could such judgements ever be sustained by argument and explanation rather than by assertion? How is it possible that between 1924 and 1930 the term "novelist" became so imprecise as to be unusable in relation to Lawrence, although the two contexts are very similar? Ricks’s criticism of Eliot’s tendency towards philosophy slightly misses the point in not acknowledging that this is not necessarily, or not exclusively, a meta-critical issue, and in failing to state that the

—

subject of the criticism plays a part in motivating the tone. Eliot was prepared to publish, in an editorial piece, a judgement of Conrad which in another, later context he would have been constrained to condemn as meaningless; but he felt unable to resist censuring Forster (who had also been a contributor to *The Criterion*) when the latter wrote such a judgement about Lawrence. What is at stake is not then Eliot’s judgement, but his judgement of Lawrence, and the effect of this judgement on his criticism.

The first mention of Lawrence’s work in *The Criterion* after his death came in an article by John Heywood Thomas, entitled "The Perversity of D. H. Lawrence", which was published in October 1930. Thomas began his article with a short reflection on Lawrence’s death and on the wider importance of his work, which had liberated Thomas (and, as his use of the third person plural suggests, he thought himself in some way representative) from the influence of George Bernard Shaw:

D. H. Lawrence has died before we could tell him how much we admire the profound seriousness of his work, how much we owe to him for teaching us that there is only one serious question, and that compared with this, all other questions - the social, political, religious questions which have so exercised the leaders of this age - are mere frivolous trivialities.

---

28 Leavis interpreted the title of this article (Thomas’s sole contribution to the magazine) as a snub in itself (*D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*, p.11).

29 Criticism of Shaw also figured largely in Eliot’s editorial commentaries at this time, and he wrote satirically of Shaw’s lack of radicalism, and of the sterility of his political thinking: "What Mr. Shaw and his friends do not seem to understand, in spite of the highly cultivated changeability of their human nature, is that the old contrast between Capitalism and Socialism is hardly going to suffice for the next forty years. It is not true that everyone will be born into the world either a little Capitalist or a little Socialist; and some persons even suspect that Socialism is merely a variant of Capitalism, or vice versa; and that the combat of Tweedledum and Tweedledee is not likely to lead to any millennium" (X, pp.714-5).
We had felt the usual calf-love for Shaw. We had learned with him to pooh-pooh the body....

But in the end we realized the shallowness of this philosophy.... We were disgusted with the commonplaceness of a world where nothing momentous could ever happen, and we turned with deep satisfaction to D. H. Lawrence. (X, p.5)

Thomas was lyrical, as was perhaps appropriate for the occasion: "We loved him for the crystalline hardness of his dark soul" (X, p.6), but also naive, and damns Lawrence with the kind of praise that seems unlikely to have convinced the readers of *The Criterion*: "He had courage: he could bear to regard the problems of adolescence as eternal, not as a passing disease which time or a cup of tea could cure" (X, p.6). But one and a half pages was the extent of Lawrence’s obituary in *The Criterion*, and the substance of Thomas’s article is a study of Lawrence which presumably had already been accepted for publication, or commissioned, before his death.

Thomas identified a tension in Lawrence’s work which has always informed Lawrence studies: that between philosophy and aesthetics, between the prophet and the man of letters. He suggested that the prevailing tendency in his time had been to privilege the latter, and to obscure the difficulties and contradictions generated by the co-existence and mutual inter-dependence of both strands. Boldly, Thomas claimed: "This essay, on the contrary, is based on a recognition of the essential unity of Lawrence’s work. It treats him as a man of letters: true, but exclusively as man of letters who is at the same time a prophet; it is a study of the literary aspect of a prophecy" (X, p.7).

In contradiction to the prevailing attitudes to Lawrence up to this time, which had made it difficult for Lawrence to find publishers, Thomas alleged that "a certain lack of sensuality is the cause of some of the most characteristic, and
perhaps the most disturbing, features of Lawrence’s work" (X, p.7). To Thomas, Lawrence was in fact simply a solipsistic quasi-romantic, and "Whatever he writes about - 'skies, trees, flowers, birds, etc.' - one thing alone is his preoccupation, the state of his own soul" (X, p.7). As a consequence, Lawrence did a kind of violence to his subjects, and to language: "His symbolism is a forcible wrenching of things into his own orbit" (X, p.8).

Thomas believed that Lawrence was so keen to extrapolate an overarching principle of life in his writings, that sometimes he seemed merely impatient "with the obvious significance of things" (X, p.10); and he "seems to regard the world as a sort of message in code, still to be deciphered. He will not understand the obvious; he looks underneath and is pleased when he can find there something which contradicts, or in some way or another annihilates, the obvious" (X, pp.11-2). But Thomas’s insistence on the obvious makes his criticism less than obvious, and his comments on sections of three of Lawrence’s poems - "Cypresses", "Almond Blossom", and "Hibiscus and Salvia Flowers" - simply indicate antipathy towards particular Lawrencean uses of metaphor. It is unclear from Thomas’s argument why and how Lawrence’s poetics were particularly illegitimate, contrary, or perverse.

Lawrence’s mode of characterisation further exemplifies the perverse strain for Thomas; and the characters themselves act perversely:

in the end it is an unconscious, indefinable, impersonal force that impels them to act as they do. The Woman Who Rode Away had obvious reasons for riding away: her husband was a fussy little tyrant, always up and doing, a hard-headed business-man who regarded her simply as one of his possessions, and who must have made her life pretty unpleasant in hundreds of concrete little ways: the only grievance Lawrence allows her, however, is that 'her husband had never become real to her', and it is for this reason that she leaves him. (X, p.13)
But Thomas's reading is perverse, and obtuse. It is precisely Lawrence's desire and ability to write about unconscious motivation - and to resist making the unconscious seem more knowable or "obvious" than it can be - that makes his work so significant. The focus of Thomas's criticisms is not the obscurity of Lawrence's discourse, the language he used to describe unconscious, unarticulated motivation; had it been, this section of his argument might have been more perceptive. Rather the terms which Thomas uses, and his seeming resistance to the possibility of unconscious motivation, make him seem merely reactionary.

"The real trouble," for Thomas, however, "is that Lawrence is too conscious of his age; he is too anxious to disturb its complacency. Its matter-of-factness annoys him" (X, p.16). And yet this anxiety to disturb was itself a positive. Lawrence had developed a philosophy in conflict with perhaps the "most characteristic product" of the age: Fabian Socialism. "It is an age which considers it quite permissible and legitimate for a man to lay down his life in the cause of higher wages, but would see no point in his shedding a drop of blood to abolish the censorship, shall we say, or to defend the privileges of Parliament" (X, p.16). Thomas adopted a tone which might be described as Eliotic or Bendaesque, and he offered a critique of a society with decayed and now inverted moral values; his was an apocalyptic vision of an irredeemable society. But Lawrence too opposed the mores of this society, and Thomas cited as an example Lawrence's thinking about marriage, that it must be "'something beyond'" the individuals involved, "'a third thing'" (X, p.17) whereas Fabian materialism simply reduced the union to a "'good-pal' intimacy", and did not subscribe to "the reality of the spiritual"; its ideal society was attainable on earth through "the collaboration of men." (Thomas's
characterisation of Fabianism invokes many of Eliot's objection to the self-
dependency of romanticism, and in his review of *Son of Woman*, Eliot would in
turn caricature such worldly interests.)

It was important to Thomas not to go too far: "we must be careful not to
make a champion of Lawrence" (X, p.17); for although he essentially opposed the
same anti-spiritual creed which Thomas opposed, nevertheless Lawrence did not
stand for anything positive with which to replace it, and rather than seeking social
solutions in austerity and order Lawrence had made a "religion of mere irrationality
and impulsiveness. His Soul is as a dark forest whence his impulses come and
whither they return, mysteriously and uncontrollably, as if at the bidding of strange
gods" (X, pp.20-1). Thomas concluded "he seems to be founded on a belief in the
supremacy of the soul: but his soul is a mere negative quantity; its reality emerges
only in conflict with concrete things and with himself, and its progress is the mere
horror of standing still" (X, p.22).

In spite the length of his article, and the range of texts which he addressed,
Thomas did not make his position clear. The opening suggested that the article
would be a thorough and original appraisal of Lawrence, sympathetic whilst being
fully aware of the complexities of his cultural engagement. But when he addressed
Lawrence's antagonism to modern society, Thomas seemed unwilling to endorse
Lawrence's opposition, and afraid to concur with his judgement, whilst
simultaneously joining Lawrence in criticising a range of social phenomena. The
article lacks unity and conclusiveness. It seeks to construct relationships and
oppositions between disparate groups of thinkers, but says little that is particularly
cogent about Lawrence as a writer of his time - and, although it does refer to two
pieces by Lawrence which appeared in *The Criterion*, it barely serves as an adequate obituary.

***

III. Reviewing Lawrence

Thomas's article was only the second substantial piece of writing about Lawrence in *The Criterion*. In the seven and a half years between the first number and Lawrence's death, only one review of Lawrence's work was published in the magazine. During this period, his output was substantial, and included *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1923), the short story collection *England, My England* (1924), the novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), and the two volumes of *Collected Poems* (1928), to name only four. The selection of books for review is one of the most important tasks that a literary magazine editor has to perform, and Eliot addressed the issue of *The Criterion*’s reviewing policy in several of his editorial pieces, as the magazine changed from a quarterly to a monthly, and then reverted to a quarterly. In the January 1927 number he wrote:

The reviews in *The New Criterion* appear to be of particular interest to its readers; but when we have reviewed very few books, the choice must appear sometimes capricious; in increasing the number, we hope not only to review nearly all the important books of the year which fall within our scope, but to provide a more detailed commentary upon the intellectual life of the time. (V, pp.2-3)

In the next number (which did not appear until May) Eliot's opening commentary in the now *Monthly Criterion* was subtitled "What books should be reviewed?:

The selection of books for review - and even the shortest notices represent a very careful selection - is regularly one of the most difficult of editorial problems. We should always be glad to receive from readers reminders of omissions, or suggestions. But we have sought always to avoid the perfunctory review; a long notice should be either a review of an authority by an authority, or a review of an important book by someone whose
opinions on that book are likely to be interesting or valuable. (V, p.188)

Three years later, Eliot reviewed at length John Middleton Murry’s biography of Lawrence, *Son Of Woman* and one wonders in which of the latter two categories he placed himself. If as an authority on Lawrence, then it is bizarre that he should have been so frank in the review as to acknowledge that he had not read at least two of Lawrence’s books; and if his comments were intended to suggest that he saw *Son of Woman* as an important book then "interesting or valuable" serves as a rather inadequate description of Eliot’s opinions. His final statement on the subject of reviewing policy was published in the January 1930 number:

> it is the function of a quarterly review to review at leisure, and to allow its reviewers ample time to present their mature views upon any book worth reviewing.... When some important books are ignored altogether, the reader must remember that we aim to review adequately those books which we do review, rather than to give a complete survey of the best of the season. (IX, p.184)

The paucity of substantial reviews of Lawrence in this period is not, then, necessarily a slight, or an indication that Eliot thought Lawrence’s books unimportant; but in the choices made about books to be reviewed, editorial discrimination is exercised.

The one review that was published in the years before Lawrence’s death was by Bonamy Dobrée, a frequent contributor, of the story-collection entitled *The Woman Who Rode Away*.30 It appeared in the number of September 1928. Dobrée

---

30 The publication history of the title story of this collection is quite illuminating about the process of publishing short stories in literary magazines in the twenties. According to an August 1924 letter to Lawrence from Nancy Pearn (who worked for Lawrence’s English agent, Curtis Brown), the story had been initially taken by Hutchinson’s, who would "publish the story in their new monthly mag. ‘Woman’," and would pay £40, but they would have to cut "to bring the length nearer to their average." Lawrence replied, ‘I wish I knew what Hutchinsons wanted to cut from ‘The Woman Who Rode Away’ - and how much. I don’t quite
resisted the temptation to offer a reductive summary of Lawrencian philosophy, and instead attempted an analysis of the changes in Lawrence’s aesthetics and poetics. Thus an early work, *Sons and Lovers*, "though it contains much that is authentic Mr. Lawrence, and nobody else, is perfectly orthodox in form and general treatment," and Dobrée perceived that there had been a "struggle to make the idea rise out of the image," therefore "[t]he characters are characters in the ordinary sense; any idea that may be latent in Mr. Lawrence, or in his vision of them ... grows naturally out of the characters" (VIII, p.139). Dobrée contended that by the mid-twenties, realism in characterisation had ceased to be one of Lawrence’s objectives: "All his characters in this book, I think without exception are humours."

The "value", "coherence", and "validity" of the stories depended now upon the poetic qualities of the prose, not in the sense of prose rhythm mimicking the rhythms of poetry, "but in the sense that the image and the idea are born together."

The struggle to achieve this was too evident in *Sons and Lovers*, but was now easily accomplished. However, this new aesthetic detached emotion from reality:

> Now, more and more in Mr. Lawrence’s work, the idea comes first and has to be clothed in flesh and blood. All his characters in this book, I think without exception, are humours; not of course, Jonsonian humours, but Lorentian [sic] ones, however much the mere physical likeness, or certain intellectual aspects, may be faithfully copied from figures in real life. (VIII, p.139)

The title story was a site for the interplay of psychological or anthropological fancy having my stories cut: they aren’t like articles. But if you can guarantee the cut is small and insignificant I agree." However Hutchinson’s wanted to cut it "drastically", so Curtis Brown took the manuscript back, and Nancy Pearn wrote to Lawrence on 13 December 1924 to tell him that *The Criterion* would run it in two parts and pay about £20. Part I appeared in *The Criterion* of July 1925, and the longer part II in *The New Criterion* of January 1926, after the six months hiatus in publication during which the magazine moved from Cobden-Sanderson to Faber and Gwyer (*Letters of D. H. Lawrence* V, pp.109, 110, 180).
signifiers which were no longer identifiable with plausible figures from real life, its second part an experiment in "anthropology applied to modern life" (VIII, pp.140-1). The didactic, philosophising tone which Dobrée perceived in Lawrence’s work diminished its human significance: "In art, the direct statement of an idea is fatal - perhaps ideas in themselves are fatal" (VIII, p.140), and the reader is no longer able to sympathise with, or remain interested in, the drama of the story, for "the mind wanders off into metaphysical speculation" (VIII, p.141). Dobrée identified and hesitantly commended Lawrence’s attempt to explore the workings of the unconscious in his fiction, and he conceptualised this in quasi-Lawrencean terms - "he is trying to get at something which is more primitive not only than mind, but than physical impulse" (VIII, p.141) - without subjecting these ideas to any interrogation; thus he reviewed Lawrence’s stories within the parameters that Lawrence had established - the dialectics of primitive and civilised, physical and spiritual. In his conclusion, he endorsed Lawrence’s aesthetic in a similarly uncritical way. The stories must, Dobrée suggested, be read symbolically, as poems: "As prose, that is, as logical, structural, descriptive writings they are often ridiculous; that is to say their prose meaning, like the prose meaning of most good poems, is simply none at all, beyond one that it is not worth while to bother about" (X, p.141). It seems curious that Dobrée did not have more to say about the aesthetic failure implicated in this generic confusion.

In the eight years of *The Criterion* subsequent to his death, the magazine paid rather more attention to Lawrence. In the October 1930 number (that in which John Heywood Thomas’s essay appeared), Eliot published John Middleton Murry’s review of Lawrence’s tale *The Escaped Cock*. Murry acknowledged that the book
would be found offensive by some, but denied that there was any offence or outrage intended, and for Murry the tale had "the significance of a final declaration. It is his last will and testament: not a fragment, but a total statement" (X, p.184). Murry believed that the tale was the culmination of Lawrence’s thinking about the person of Jesus - a different thing, obviously, from Lawrence’s thinking about Christianity and religion. Murry represented Lawrence as a deeply unorthodox spiritual thinker, and the tale as a parable about the supreme importance of love between individuals: "Lawrence thought that the mission of Jesus was a surrogate, a compensation. He tried to give to all mankind the love which he could not give to one human being" (X, p.184); in his life, Jesus had cheated "himself with an illusion of universal love to stop the craving of his heart" (X, p.186). The review was a strange piece for Eliot to have published; it was far from orthodox in its representation of Christianity, and more than that, its argument was contorted and confused, and produced such comparatively meaningless statements as: "If Jesus had, during his mortal career, been conscious that the cause of his being what he was, and doing what he did, was what Lawrence believes it was, why, then, that mortal career would have been an utterly different thing - perhaps rather more like Lawrence’s own career" (X, p.185).

Murry’s own interpretation of Christian teaching was at the least heterodox: "Was not the essential of his message that the world did not need saving, but that men needed saving from their own subjection to it" (X, p.185). Christianity is transformed into an anti-materialist romantic idealism; "as I understand his message," Murry wrote, "it was simply that men needed to achieve the vision of the spirit, to lift themselves beyond the flux in which they were immersed. In this
sense the world can always be saved, and for ever needs to be saved: simply
because it is man's duty to be man, and not lapse from the humanity that has been
painfully won for him" (X, pp.185-6). Jesus's message for Murry was "simple" - it
involved an elevation of humanity. Lawrence saw Christ only in terms of love, and
did not perceive the necessity for humility that Murry emphasised. "Love,
tenderness, fulfilment, between a man and woman - that is the utmost that life can
hold. Because Jesus lacked it, he became a Saviour; denied the possible, he strove
for the impossible" (X, p.186).

There are many layers of interpretation and representation in Murry's
review, for he was discussing not only the character of Jesus in Lawrence's tale,
who is a mythic character, resurrected as a human being, but also his idea of the
figure of Jesus in Christian theology, and Lawrence's idea of this Jesus:31

Lawrence's dream becomes more than a dream; it becomes the subtlest
anatomy, the indefeasible uniqueness of a once living and loving man. That
his soul yearned for contradictory things - for the perfection of isolation in
the spirit and the perfection of communion in the body; for a dual and
simultaneous consummation which the nature of things seems to deny - this
may be to some the evidence of his weakness, of that incurable romanticism
which, we are assured, is the source of all our woes. I am on the side of the
romantics. They may not be wise. They beat themselves to death against the
bars of the cage of life. But it is they who feed the flame of human
aspiration, and make live that impulse to surpass ourselves by which alone

31 The intermingling of these different Jesuses is at the least confusing, and
Eliot satirised this confusion in a commentary of April 1932: "Anyone who has
followed attentively the progress of Mr. Murry's theological writings cannot fail to
be struck by the inevitability of his present position. It was Mr. Murry who first
perceived the extraordinary resemblance between Jesus Christ and D. H. Lawrence;
and it was Mr. Murry who first assigned to Judas Iscariot, with sympathy and
comprehension, his proper rôle in the drama. It was obvious from Mr. Murry's next
book that God Himself was under notice to quit; and it is only with relief that we
observe that he has finally vacated Mr. Murry's premises" (XI, p.468). See also
Eliot's review in The Criterion of Murry's book The Life of Jesus (V, pp.253-9), in
which he described Murry's theology as "the familiar gospel of Rousseau: the
denial of Original Sin" (p.255).
we are saved from lapsing back into forgotten life-modes. (X, p.187)

Thus Christianity, and in part its dogma as interpreted by Lawrence, becomes for Murry the legitimation for his own romanticism.

For Murry, *The Escaped Cock* "assuredly belongs" "in the great and most momentous art" (X, p.187). In the final paragraph of his five page review, he described the tale as "the swan-song of the greatest spirit of our time" (X, p.187). It stood as "a reassertion of Lawrence's love of the world against his hate of it," the latter having been articulated in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. But of course neither of these two novels were available in England:

That it remains practically unprocurable is a thousand pities. For it has the simplicity of a great parable; able to move the hearts of those whose minds cannot comprehend it, able to make them feel why, since the death of Lawrence, 'the universe is cold for me and for many men'. (X, pp.187-8)

Murry's review ended, resting its assertion that *The Escaped Cock* was Lawrence's final redemptive stroke on two novels that could hardly be bought in England. It represents a moment of private ecstasy, unshared because unshareable, Lawrence's work withheld from the people, and sequestered for a cabal of initiates. Few readers of *The Criterion* could read these books, which would have the effect of hampering the propagation of Lawrence's ideas. We might question Eliot's motives in publishing this article, for there is a sense in which Murry's views were, in the austere context of *The Criterion*, self-parodic, and that the review would do little to enhance either Murry's standing or Lawrence's. A more generous speculation about Eliot's motives would be that the publication of a review of a book which was controversial, and had been subject to censorship, indicates that despite his scepticism about Lawrence's ideas, Eliot was prepared to offer Lawrence some
support against the censorship, even though Murry's model of the censored artist as romantic victim implied a rather different conception of the operation of censorship from that which motivated his own opposition.

* * * * *

IV. "'rotten and rotting others'": Lawrence, heresy, and discipleship

In *The Criterion* of July 1931, Murry's views about Lawrence received more exposure, and were subjected to explicit critical scrutiny, when Eliot reviewed his book *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*. But this review is primarily important and interesting in that it constitutes Eliot's most extensive single piece of writing about Lawrence.

Eliot suggested that Lawrence "never succeeded in making a work of art" (X, p.769), and that this "relative failure" meant that he also failed as a prophet; throughout literary history, some of the most successful artists had been those with axes to grind, and Eliot listed Isaiah, Virgil, Dante, Dickens, George Eliot, and Flaubert. Lawrence was unable to transcend the inherently personal aspect of the prophetic impulse, to "ériger en lois ses impressions personnelles" (X, p.769), Rémy de Gourmont's maxim, quoted by Murry, and cited by Eliot in his review.\(^{32}\) This failure had not been the inevitable end of Lawrence's development however, and Eliot mentioned a number of passages in the novels and tales where Lawrence had succeeded in transcending his self, in *The Rainbow, Aaron's Rod*, and "a short story called *Two Blue Birds* which has no relation to Lawrence's own emotional disease, and in which he states a situation which no one else has ever put" (X,

---

\(^{32}\) As he acknowledged, Eliot had also quoted this statement himself. It was the headquote to "The Perfect Critic," p.1
p.770). These moments were not the focus of Murry’s book, and in turn they are not the focus of Eliot’s review; conversely he was interested in the moments when Lawrence was most absorbed in himself. Eliot argues that Murry’s book showed the centrality of the emotional dislocation generated by the "‘mother-complex’" (he argued that the common designation of "‘Œdipus complex’" is inappropriate), and that Lawrence himself was "pretty well aware of what was wrong" (X, p.770). And yet, "I find it difficult to believe that a family life like that of Lawrence’s parents is peculiar either to a particular class or to a particular age," Eliot wrote:

Such family life, with such consequences to a sensitive child, can hardly have taken place only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. What is peculiar to the time is the way in which Lawrence tried to deal with his peculiarity. That is what is modern, and it seems to me to spring from ignorance. (X, p.770)

Here then is the charge that Eliot repeatedly made against Lawrence, and he took the opportunity to expand it, and to offer some definitions:

When I use the word ignorance I am not contrasting it with something which is popularly called ‘education’. Had Lawrence been sent to a public school and taken honours at a university he would not have been a jot the less ignorant; had he become a don at Cambridge his ignorance might have had frightful consequences for himself and for the world, ‘rotten and rotting others’. What true education should do - and true education would include the suitable education for every class of society - is to develop a wise and large capacity for orthodoxy, to preserve the individual from the solely centrifugal impulse of heresy, to make him capable of judging for himself and at the same time capable of judging and understanding the judgements of the experience of the race. (X, p.771)

This reformulates the idea of the tradition in the language of social morality, and foreshadows the vocabulary of After Strange Gods. The constraints upon the

---

33 His correspondence indicates that Eliot too was familiar with the burden of maternal expectation. As Kenneth Asher puts it: "All too well Eliot understands the lifetime effort to shrug off the mortmain of overbearing maternal solicitude and how this shapes Lawrence’s corpus" (p.74).
individual, and not just the individual artist, have now become as much social and spiritual as literary, and the concept of "the judgements of the experience of the race" clearly has developed from Eliot's idea of "the consciousness of the past" explored in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (SW [1920], p.52). However, identifying contexts for these comments in Eliot's work does not explain the predominant antagonism of his tone.

Eliot argued that Lawrence's thinking was not a necessary consequence of his early environment, and implied that Lawrence chose to be heretical:

He would probably have been always an unhappy man in this world; there is nothing unusual about that; many people have to be unhappy in this world, to do without things which seem essential and a matter of course to the majority; and some learn not to make a fuss about it, and to gain, or at least strive towards, a kind of peace which Lawrence never knew. (X, p.771)

Lawrence was then temperamentally unsuited to the life that Eliot would have wished him to have lead. Eliot did not expand upon the nature of the "kind of peace" he mentioned, but in light of the objections he made in a subsequent paragraph to Lawrence's use of Christian terminology "to set forth some philosophy or religion which is fundamentally non-Christian or anti-Christian" (X, p.771), he probably had in mind some form of orthodox Christianity. As a heretic, Lawrence was also guilty of influencing Murry and Aldous Huxley, two writers with whom Eliot had worked at The Athenæum,34 but whom he now described as Lawrence's "two principal disciples."35 Eliot censured them: "The variety of


35 The representations of these characters in certain satirical texts from this period, such as Huxley's Point Counter Point, and Lawrence's "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", suggest that relations between Huxley, Lawrence, and Murry
costumes into which these three talented artists have huddled the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in their various charades, is curious and to me offensive" (X, p.771). He described the religious background of the three as a "shadowy Protestant underworld" and invoked in opposition his own experience "outside the Christian Fold", in Unitarianism, although the Son and Holy Ghost were not objects of Unitarian belief, nonetheless "they were not to be employed as convenient phrases to embody any cloudy private religion" (X, p.771). Thus while Eliot would write elsewhere, during the thirties and after, of his regard for Lawrence as a religious thinker, when addressing the specific issue of Lawrence’s beliefs, he was clearly barely tolerant of them. Lawrence’s "ignorance" was, however, only in part a consequence of his neglect of Christian teaching. His "whole philosophy of human relations ... is his hopeless attempt to find some mode in which two persons - of the opposite sex, and then as a venture of despair, of the same sex - may be spiritually united" (X, p.772.). Eliot equated the drives in Lawrence’s work - towards greater intimacy between individuals for instance - with the same drives in his life: "His struggle against over-intellectualized life is the history of his own over-intellectualized nature" (X, p.772).

William H. Pritchard expresses shock that Eliot should have admitted in this review of *Son of Woman*, whilst quoting a passage from *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, that he had not read that novel. But Eliot’s acknowledgement that *Lady* were rather more complex than this.

---


37 Pritchard, p.138.
Chatterley's Lover was "one of the novels which I have not read" (X, p.772), in the context of a long piece on Lawrence, is not uncharacteristic of his ironic reviewing style. His comments in After Strange Gods make it clear that he read it not long after. At the end of his review, however, he was content to concur with Murry's judgement about another book of which he was ignorant, writing:

> There remains, however, one book, which I have not read, but which I judge from Mr. Murry's account to be worthy of the importance which Mr. Murry assigns to it: Fantasia of the Unconscious. It would appear that in this book Lawrence reached his culmination, and that his subsequent work marks chiefly decline and collapse. (X, p.773)

This dismisses Lawrence's output in the last seven or so years of his life. It is particularly bizarre in that although Eliot had a great deal of respect for Murry as a literary editor,\(^\text{38}\) he was antipathetic towards his aesthetics, as well as towards his theology. He must have known something of the complexities of Murry's relationship with Lawrence during the twenties: as Geoffrey West stated rather cryptically in his April 1933 review of Murry's Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence, Lawrence's Letters, Last Poems, and collection The Lovely Lady and Other Stories, "That Lawrence and Mr. Murry stood in a special relation to one another, both personally and impersonally, the former's own letters make clear" (XII, p.502).

Clearly this "special relation" influenced Murry's assessment of Lawrence's work. It was irresponsible of Eliot to praise a book which he had not read with the knowledge of the personal prejudices involved, and to endorse Murry's judgement so unquestioningly.

The review of Son of Woman was, in the main, disparaging about

Lawrence; however, as Ronald Bush has shown, in places there is also a suggestion of empathy. He argues that Eliot’s attitude to Lawrence is more complex than the antagonism that has often been posited, and that in *After Strange Gods*, Eliot articulates very different attitudes to Lawrence: that the "attack" which that book undeniably contains was motivated by Eliot’s "strong personal identification with Lawrence", and that passages such as that in which Eliot acknowledges Lawrence’s atypical "perception of the simple distinction between the spiritual and the material" hint at the existence "of a substantial buried deposit of fellow feeling that emerges in his other writing of this period." This other writing includes passages from the Turnbull lectures delivered at Johns Hopkins University in 1933, such as that in which Eliot "argued that Lawrence was more on the side of the angels than the apes" (p.195). Bush considers the review of *Son of Woman* to be "the most revealing" of Eliot’s statements about Lawrence. He argues that although Eliot is overtly critical, even hostile, towards Lawrence, there is fellow feeling, and although "Eliot writes from the perspective of an orthodox Anglican ... he writes in the cadences of 'there but for the sake of God go I’" (p.197). Eliot lamented Lawrence’s failure to perceive certain truths about human relationships:

> What a pity that he did not understand the simple truth that of any two human beings each has privacies which the other cannot penetrate, and boundaries which the other must not transgress, and that yet human intimacy can be wonderful and life-giving: a truth well known to Christian thought, though we do not need to be Christians to understand it. (X, p.773)

In the context of Eliot’s empathy with Lawrence, this sounds compellingly and

---


sincerely autobiographical. To it, Eliot added the provision that "the love of two human beings is only made perfect in the love of God" (X, p.773), a truth of which he believed Lawrence was always ignorant. But he also added an extraordinary footnote to the last assertion: "To many human pairs, of course, common tastes, or a common interest, as in Tariff reform or the enfranchisement of African Natives, may appear an excellent substitute" (X, p.773). In its sardonic dryness, this simply reveals unwillingness to tolerate anything outside the boundaries of his dogma. Rather than a valid satire upon modern materialism, this statement is little more than a caricature of any position other than Eliot's own; but it is, perhaps, also a way of deflecting attention from his confessional demeanour.

During the period between the publication of this review, and the delivery of the Page-Barbour lectures, Eliot clearly had read Lady Chatterley's Lover, for his criticism of that novel in the lectures was central in his response to its author. After Strange Gods is an odd and controversial book, which has been deeply troubling; it is also the text most cited by critics examining Eliot's attitude to Lawrence. However, the book is not simply a tirade against Lawrence, and it is necessary to pay attention to Eliot's explicitly evaluative statements. At the beginning of the book, Eliot wrote of the writers whom he had chosen to illustrate his ideas about the place of heresy in contemporary society: "I am sure that those whom I have discussed are among the best .... The extent to which I have criticised the authors whose names find place, is accordingly some measure of my respect for them" (ASG, p.11). In the light of what follows, this avowal is perhaps perverse. But in his writing about opposition and controversy, Eliot implies that the relationships between individuals, and groups, who are firmly committed to a set of
ideas - although those ideas be opposed - are intellectually and morally stimulating. This was true of criticism and it was true of politics. In *The Criterion* of July 1930, he wrote, in response to the pervasiveness of compromise in British socio-political life, that at least the Tories and the Communists might feel "a sense of moral relief at having something positive to fight" (IX, p.590). In *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism* (1933), he wrote:

> Sometimes a critic may choose an author to criticise, a role to assume, as far as possible the antithesis of himself, a personality which has actualised all that has been suppressed in himself; we can sometimes arrive at a very satisfactory intimacy with our anti-masks.41

*After Strange Gods* is a book whose tone, in relation to Lawrence, often seems irate and polemical, but that tone is not merely gratuitously and personally oppositional. We might also see it as enacting, as well as being stimulated by, the problematic nature of a critique that Eliot felt to be morally necessary.

In the second lecture of the series, Eliot made some general remarks about tradition, and about excessive individualism, which he clearly intended should be applicable to Lawrence’s writing:

> What is disastrous is that the writer should deliberately give rein to his 'individuality', that he should even cultivate his differences from others; and that his readers should cherish the author of genius, not in spite of his deviations from the inherited wisdom of the race, but because of them. (ASG, p.33)

When he turned specifically to Lawrence, his first attack was on the amorality of Lawrence’s characters: "What I wish chiefly to notice at this point, is what strikes me in all of the relations of Lawrence’s men and women: the absence of any moral or social sense" (pp.36-7). "The characters themselves, who are supposed to be

---

41 Quoted in Baron, p.238.
recognisably human beings, betray no respect for, or even awareness of, moral obligations, and seem to be unfurnished with even the most commonplace kind of conscience" (p.37). These criticisms depend upon an excessively narrow definition of concepts of "moral or social sense" and "conscience". It seems unnecessary to attempt to refute them specifically, for they seem so little attuned either to Lawrence, or to what criticism of Lawrence's work can usefully do, that to do so would be redundant. Denis Donoghue has written that in After Strange Gods Eliot "believed that the moral law was absolute, and that it must take precedence over all other considerations, at whatever cost;" but the privileging of absolute morality can distort one's sense of how literature works, and the sense that Eliot is somehow simply missing the point indicates that the cost is too great.

Eliot did acknowledge that he was not seeking to give an objective account of Lawrence's work, but rather that his interest was in Lawrence's heresy:

"Lawrence is for my purposes, an almost perfect example of the heretic. And the most ethically orthodox of the more eminent writers of my time is Mr. Joyce. I confess that I do not know what to make of a generation which ignores these considerations" (p.38, my emphasis). Earlier, Eliot had explained that he did not use the term "heretic" in the conventionally theological sense of that word (p.31), and he chose not to be explicit about the semantic relationship between his meaning and the conventional one. However, as I discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the terms "orthodox" and "heretic" had come more or less to supplant "classicist" and "romantic" in Eliot's models of opposition, and the stress on the

---

perils of individualism that permeated After Strange Gods indicates that the opposition between orthodoxy and heresy had, in its specific application, evolved out of an embattled defence of the classicist idea of tradition.

Eliot resumed the attack on Lawrence in the third lecture of the series. He attributed to him three groups of faults: i, a "lack of a sense of humour, a certain snobbery, a lack not so much of information as of the critical faculties which education should give, and an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking"; ii, a propensity for "commonly [drawing] the wrong conclusions" from his "profound intuition"; and iii, that to which Eliot paid most attention, "distinct sexual morbidity" (p.58). But he portrays Lawrence's upbringing in a way which Leavis, and others, have shown to be radically false, and misrepresentative of the intellectual environment of Eastwood:43 "The point is that Lawrence started life wholly free from any restriction of tradition or institution, that he had no guidance except the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity" (p.59). Eliot argued here that Lawrence's emotions were excessive, and he was subject to "violent prejudices and passions"; lacking "intellectual and social training [he] is admirably fitted to be an instrument for forces of good, or for forces of evil; or as we might expect, partly for one and partly for the other... an untrained mind, and a soul destitute of humility and filled with self-righteousness, is a blind servant and a fatal leader" (p.59). This fear of the potential of Lawrence's influence lurked behind many of Eliot's statements, and

---

offers a more plausible explanation than simple antipathy for the excessive and insistent disgust of a formulation such as "'rotten and rotting others’", or the account in *After Strange Gods* of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*:

> the social obsession which makes his well-born - or almost well-born - ladies offer themselves to - or make use of - plebeians springs from the same morbidity which makes other of his female characters bestow their favour on savages. The author of that book seems to me to have been a very sick man indeed. (pp.60-1)

In an editorial commentary written from the United States of America in *The Criterion* of April 1933, Eliot alluded to the commitments that necessitated his being abroad: "Being at present engaged in the attempt to give a course of lectures on contemporary literature, I feel that the modern temper is something that I ought to inform myself about" (XII, p.468), and he surveyed a number of representative modern tempers, and the implications for a writer of achieving success in the modern period:

> To any writer, once he has attained a certain notoriety, comes temptation.... Any writer, who arrives at some success, discriminates between three classes of disciples: those who will go the whole way with him (number usually zero); those who will go part of the way with him; and, lastly, those who will adopt some catchword and go in the opposite direction. Ordinarily, one knows that a Leader may be defined as that one of the Gadarene Swine which runs the fastest. But the real Leader is the one who does not look back to see whether there are any followers. Perhaps D. H. Lawrence lived long enough to discover that he had none. (XII, p.472)

Lawrence, and the issue of Lawrence’s influence as a social thinker rather than as a literary artist, occupied a great deal of Eliot’s thought in the early thirties. The last sentence of this passage betrays more Eliot’s fears about the extent of this influence than the conviction of its impotence which it seems to articulate. The lack of substantial development of the arguments in *After Strange Gods* beyond the initial violent assertion, and the book’s waywardness, suggest that Eliot faced many
difficulties in constructing a coherent critique of Lawrence, and that the models
into which he attempted to fit him were insufficient.

* * * * *

V. Lawrence’s contributions to The Criterion: "The Woman Who Rode Away" and
sexual politics

Eliot’s attitude to Lawrence, as articulated in the key texts of the early thirties, is
complex and ambiguous. But it is difficult to draw any conclusions whatsoever
about Eliot’s attitude from the nature and the quantity of Lawrence’s contributions
to The Criterion, although Lawrence’s correspondence indicates that both he and
his agent felt that his work was valued by The Criterion, at least in the early
twenties.44 None of the published pieces was overtly argumentative, or in the nature
of a manifesto. The fact of Eliot’s publishing them at all does not prove or even
suggest very much - as an ambitious editor, Eliot presumably wanted contributions
from well-known writers. As The Criterion did not publish extensive
correspondence, it is hard to know what kind of reactions Lawrence’s publications
provoked in The Criterion’s readers. In After Strange Gods, Eliot censured
Lawrence for his cruelty (p.36), but it appears that he was not so scrupulous when
accepting Lawrence’s stories for publication. The first of these to be published,
"Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", is a thinly veiled lampoon of Murry, whom
Lawrence sardonically invited to read the story in The Criterion.45 The story is

44 On 14 July 1924 Nancy Pearn wrote to Lawrence: “The only likely place, as
I see it, for "JIMMY AND THE DESPERATE WOMAN", is "The Criterion" ....
"The Criterion" has a high standing among the "highbrows". And on 6 September
she confirmed that The Criterion would publish the story and pay £18 “which will
prove to you, knowing their limited finances, how keen they were to have the
story” (Letters of D. H. Lawrence V, n.1 p.86).

about the seduction, by a successful London literary editor, of a disillusioned miner's wife who has sent some poems to his magazine. It is not a subtle story, nor is the satire as embedded in the larger narrative as it is in other texts by Lawrence, such as *Women in Love*. It is precisely an example of the strain of cruelty in Lawrence's characterisation, as in different ways are other Lawrence stories which were published in *The Criterion*, "The Woman Who Rode Away", and "Mother and Daughter".

Part of Eliot's critique of Lawrence focused on his "feminism". He wrote in "Revelation" that "The most objectionable feature of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is surely the view of the male as merely an instrument for the purposes of the female" (p.30) and gender relations were certainly an aspect of Lawrence's work that other contemporary critics saw as important. In *Paleface*, a book whose comments on Lawrence Eliot endorsed, Wyndham Lewis wrote that "A glorification of the Feminine principle, naturally, is a great feature of the writing of Mr. D. H. Lawrence." A sustained contemporary commentary on this issue, including comment on a Lawrence story first published in *The Criterion*, "The Woman Who Rode Away", was published in an essay, "The Later Period of D. H. Lawrence", by Peter Quennell. Quennell was a contributor to *The Criterion*, but the

---

46 The charge of cruelty can be levelled back at Eliot, who wrote with rather callously thoughtless irony in his July 1931 review of *Son of Woman*, nearly a year and a half after Lawrence's death: "It is so well done it gives me the creeps: probably these matters matter no longer to Lawrence himself; but any author still living might shudder to think of the possibility of such a book of destructive criticism being written about him after he is dead" (X, p.769).

47 *ASG*, p.58; *Revelation*, p.30.

Lawrence essay was written for the second volume of *Scrutinies* edited by Edgell Rickword, previously editor of *The Calendar of Modern Letters*. Quennell argued that in his later novels, Lawrence had given voice to the "overwhelming exhalations of his worser [sic] and female self."\(^{49}\) *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was "the ne plus ultra of sentimental female anarchism," and in general, Quennell perceived in

Mr Lawrence's later novels and stories a *feminist* bias, unmistakable and very often grotesquely pronounced. Take, at random, *The Woman who Rode Away*, *St Mawr*, and the egregious *Lady Chatterley*. The gist of the subject-matter is identical. We are shown a woman, mature, disillusioned, and bitterly impatient of male society. We watch the process of emancipation. She casts off her fetters under our astonished eyes. She renounces the "life of the spirit" (a phrase for Mr D. H. Lawrence synonymous with the most rancorous terms of abuse) and recommences, after adventures and vicissitudes, the triumphant life of the womb - all this to the accompaniment of corybantic drummings and with the devoted assistance of some small, dark, and as far as possible *anonymous* Indian, coal-miner, or ostler, a mere dependency, a mere parasitic attachment of the big, blonde female creature ... (p.126)

This discourse is reminiscent of Eliot's allusions to Lawrence's "plebeians" and "savages" in *After Strange Gods*. If we apply Quennell's reductive summary to the title story of *The Woman Who Rode Away* (taking this as an exemplary text) he sees the tale as a story of female emancipation, with the male characters as "devoted assistants" in the process. But this seems profoundly misguided. Just as the woman, when she is being prepared for sacrifice is merely a "mystic object" to the Indians, rather than a "personal woman", so for Lawrence she functions as a representation - of western culture, of modern civilisation, and of an abstract concept of the feminine. At no point is she anything but subject to the Indians'

---

will, and she is constantly guided by male characters; even at the beginning of the
tale it "was one of the young gentlemen", mining engineers, guests of her husband,
who put the idea of visiting the Indians into her mind. She escapes from the "dead,
thrice-dead little Spanish town forgotten among the mountains" where she lives,
not to Quennell’s "triumphant life of the womb", rather to a ritual sacrifice, during
which she is disenfranchised even from sensing what is going on: "Presently they
gave her a drink from a cup, which she took gladly, because of the semi-trance it
would induce" (IV, p.118). However, the tale ostensibly attends to a woman’s
exercise of will, and it is this, in addition to the use of female protagonists in the
three texts that he cites, which presumably prompted Quennell to ignore the force
of the symbolism and latent sexual politics, and to describe them as texts with a
feminist bias. We can read this as a more or less overtly displaced expression of
his own anti-feminism. He simply disliked Lawrence’s later work; like other critics
of his own time and since, he believed that they indicated that "Mr Lawrence’s
once enchanting and compulsive talent" had come "near to a perpetual and
complete eclipse" (p.125). This dislike enabled him to articulate his anti-feminism.
Quennell’s conclusion was that Lawrence’s interest in human relationships, his
"lively emotional curiosity" had "hardened into the tenets of an incontrovertible
sexual dogma" (pp.136-7), which privileged the feminine over the masculine at all
levels. Associated with the feminine was a non-Western, non-Caucasian code of
belief, thus Lawrence’s "haphazard but superbly adroit manner of telling a story",
had suffered "irremediable harm", not only because of "a feminine receptivity and
impressionability" that had become dominant in his work, but also because of his
"exuberant sexual and racial sentimentalism" (p.136).
The mythopoeic rhetoric that Lawrence employed when writing about American Indian religion in "The Woman Who Rode Away" expressed a different kind of ignorance to Quennell's racism and anti-feminism, but ignorance nonetheless. He encoded his Western perceptions of their way of life in a fundamentally Westernised discourse, employing the same binary symbolism of sun and moon, for instance, that he had been using to represent human relationships since *The Trespasser*. Lawrence attempted to assimilate the Indians to a dogma of human relationships that he had been expounding throughout his writing career, and neither Quennell nor Eliot seemed to have any sense of the distortions brought about by such a Eurocentric exercise. Quennell's point of view betrays his own racist and sexist ideology.

"The Woman Who Rode Away" has in recent years generated critical response diametrically opposed to Quennell's reading. Kate Millett's critique is the most devastating. She has argued that "the story is Lawrence's most impassioned statement of the doctrine of male supremacy and the penis as deity" and that "in a number of ways it resembles commercial hardcore [pornography]"; that the woman's death is "astounding in the sadism and malice with which it is conceived". She concludes:

> The act here at the center of the Lawrentian sexual religion is coitus as killing, its central vignette a picture of human sacrifice performed upon the woman to the greater glory and potency of the male.... The conversion of human genitals into weapons has led him from sex to war. Probably it is the perversion of sexuality into slaughter, indeed, the story's very travesty and

---

Tony Pinkney is strongly influenced by Millett’s reading, which he develops into a deconstruction of the story’s ostensible premise, which Quennell had been unable to see through: “the grim irony of this process [the sacrifice of the woman] is that it all takes place under a rhetoric of the recovery of the ‘feminine’ (the sensuous, intuitive, mythic Indian mode of awareness) from the ‘masculine’ (the over-conscious, mechanistic West).”^52 Thus Pinkney and Millet both see the tale as radically anti-feminist, and more, as masquerading hypocritically as a parable about the culture clash between modern and ancient civilisations. The contrast between Quennell’s response to the tale and more recent response is illustrative not only of the development of Lawrence criticism, but also of a deep discrepancy in the understanding of “feminism” between male critics of the twenties, and contemporary pro-feminist critics.

Eliot’s attack on Lawrence’s "feminism" shared certain discursive similarities with Quennell’s, but it is impossible to know whether he interpreted "The Woman Who Rode Away" in a similar manner, or what kind of response he had to its gender ideology. Nowhere in his work is there such a sustained reading of a single Lawrence text with which it might be compared. There are clearly a number of opposed and mutually incompatible readings of the gender ideology of "The Woman Who Rode Away", and whether Eliot endorsed any of them is unclear. It would have been possible, I think, for Eliot to be editorially neutral in


this matter, for publication of a text does not indicate an endorsement of its ideology, particularly in relation to creative work. Until there is access to Eliot’s *Criterion* correspondence from this time, it will remain impossible to draw definite conclusions about the place of these texts, and their publication in *The Criterion*, in Eliot’s assessment of Lawrence.\(^{53}\)

\* * * * *

VI. "That stewed T. S. Eliot quarterly"

Lawrence was physically distant from the controversies over his work, and the magazines in which he was published. For most of the twenties, he was living abroad, in America, and then Italy and France. Although he saw his agents and publishers socially, when they visited him, most of his business was conducted by mail, and the collected volumes of his letters are full of references to his periodical work - stories, reviews, short pieces of non-fiction prose such as the series "Mornings in Mexico" and "Flowery Tuscany", or argumentative writings such as the essays "Art and Morality", and "Morality and the Novel". His main concerns

---

\(^{53}\) A recent essay which addresses the ways in which Eliot’s response to Lawrence is informed by sexual politics is Laura R. Severin’s "Reading T. S. Eliot reading D. H. Lawrence: The Significance of Gender," *Centennial Review* 37, 1993, pp.355-68. Severin argues that with the exception of the texts from the early thirties, Eliot in fact served as Lawrence’s promoter, because they shared a religiously informed, masculinist ideology. She suggests that in *After Strange Gods*, Eliot chose to attack Lawrence’s story, "The Shadow in the Rose Garden", precisely because it was about the establishment of female identity separate from the male. She does not mention the publication of "The Woman Who Rode Away" in *The Criterion*, which might have a place in her argument that Eliot implicitly colluded in Lawrence’s fantasies of male power, and attacked him when he diverged from this line. The principal failing of the essay is that Severin does not develop her statement "On the issue of gender, Eliot and Lawrence found common ground" (p.356) much beyond the initial assertion. Her extrapolation of a gender ideology from a Lawrence text, and her contention that in praising/condemning that text Eliot is necessarily endorsing/ criticising its gender ideology need, I think, to be far more circumspect.
were when his work would be published, in which magazines it would appear, and, of course, how much he would be paid.

At the beginning of his career Lawrence was first introduced to literary London through Ford Madox Hueffer, founding editor of *The English Review*. Six of Lawrence's poems were published in the November 1909 number of the magazine and "within a couple of months, Lawrence was attending literary parties in Hampstead where he met figures like H. G. Wells, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound."\(^{54}\) Through the agency of the magazine editor, it was a brief step for Lawrence, from the obscurity and dissatisfaction of a teaching job in Croydon, to acquaintance with some of the leading literary figures of the time, and it was through the people that he met as a result of these contacts that his career as a writer was launched and sustained. But by the mid-twenties, England, and London in particular, had long been hateful to him. In a letter to John Middleton Murry, written on 14 March 1924, three days after Lawrence had arrived in New York from England, he wrote:

"I haven't much respect for New York: but a machine is perhaps less distressing than a dying animal: London."\(^{55}\) Lawrence never again stayed in England for longer than a few months at a time, though he came to Britain in the summers when it was warm, spending time with his family and friends. At the end of his life he did not (and could not) publish his last novels in England: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was privately published in Florence in July 1928, and *The Escaped Cock* by the


\(^{55}\) *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* V, p.16.
Black Sun Press in Paris in September 1929, but to a large reading public his name was still familiar, not simply on account of his notoriety, but also through his journalism. In 1928 and 1929 he published a series of short articles in the mass-circulation newspapers *The Evening News*, *Sunday Dispatch*, and *Daily Express* with titles such as "Oh! for a new Crusade" and "Women Don't Change". Writing to Bernard Falk, editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, in February 1929, he said:

I'd rather write for the *Sunday Dispatch* than for the highbrow papers and magazines. Though the thought of the godless Sabbath public makes me shiver a bit, I still believe it has more spunk than the 'refined' public. It comes back with some sort of response, even if it gives one gooseflesh. Lawrence’s preference was motivated in part by financial considerations. The newspaper articles could be "written in an hour and a half," and he would be paid £25 for about two thousand words. The material that he published in the little magazines was of a different kind; they could not pay well, but at least they could provide an outlet for his work, albeit not to a mass public. Apart from his occasional worry about work being cut, he was prepared to devolve responsibility to his agent, as he wrote to Catherine Carswell on 18 May 1926, advising her about her own work:

About the story, I don’t really know the magazines myself, because Curtis Browns do all my work.... I know the *New Criterion* in London, and could send your story there. And if we dare, I’m sure Curtis Brown, both in London and New York, would try to place your story, if I asked them. I find them really very good, they take a lot of trouble, and charge 10%. But are you bound to Pinker? If you are, you can’t even legally place your things yourself without paying him his percentage. If you’re not, then let

---


58 Letter to Dorothy Brett, 24 November 1928, quoted by Worthen, p.154.
me introduce you to Curtis Browns [sic] people: his magazine girl, Nancy Pearn, I find quite golden.59

*The Calendar of Modern Letters* began its first number in March 1925 with the first part of Lawrence’s story "The Princess", publishing the second and third parts in its next two numbers. For this Lawrence received £3/3 per thousand words, i.e. £53/11 for a story of seventeen thousand words.60 *The Calendar*’s pay rates clearly had not improved eighteen months later, when Lawrence wrote to Nancy Pearn from Florence on 1 November 1926:

*The Calendar*, like most other little magazines, seems to have a swelled head and a shrivelled pocket. I don’t care a button whether I do a review for them or not: I call it charity work, at the price, and with all the pompous conditions. But if they send a book along, I’ll review it, *if it interests me*. That’s my only condition.61

This is characteristic of his impatient but generous tone when writing about the magazines at this time. In the early years of Murry’s *Adelphi*, Lawrence was prepared to let his work be published there at less than the market-rate, and wrote to Curtis Brown on 17 November 1924: "I heard from Middleton Murry, that he cant [sic] afford the price you ask for the article ‘The Hopi Snake Dance’. If he really wants that article, you might let him have it at his own price, as he says he has it in print. If his *Adelphi* is going to live."62 Money could not be the main issue in dealing with the little magazines; they provided an outlet for work that could not be published more profitably in newspapers for reasons of length, primarily, but


which needed to be published in a periodical, before being collected into a book. Lawrence did get tired of the ethos of the magazines, and their coterie spirit: "personally, little magazines mean nothing to me: nor groups, nor parties of people. I have no hankering after quick response, nor the effusive, semi-intimate backchat of literary communion." Writing to S. S. Koteliansky about Murry and the Adelphi on 11 January 1926, Lawrence went so far as to add the following postscript: "Damn all magazines - except for the bit of money they pay." However, Lawrence did not actually condemn all the magazines. His story "Sun" was published in New Coterie in Autumn 1926, and on 7 November 1926 he wrote to its editor, Charles Lahr, after receiving a copy of the magazine, and complimented him: "the Coterie is very amusing. I like its tone: and nobody airing their opinions is a relief. Will you please put me down for a years subscription. I enclose cheque for ten shillings." However, about The Criterion Lawrence was ambivalent. He wrote to Murry on 17 September 1923, to congratulate him on his attack on a New Statesman reviewer in the Adelphi article "On Fear; and On Romanticism", the article which provoked Eliot's essay "The Function of Criticism": "One has to be an absolute individual, separate as a seed fallen out of the pod. - Then a volte face, and a new start. Takes some risking. - This classiosity

---


is bunkum, but still more, cowardice. Son todos acobardados. But when he wrote to the magazine’s publisher, Richard Cobden-Sanderson, from Oaxaca, Mexico on 1 December 1924, having received the number of October that year, which contained his story, "Jimmy and the Desperate Woman", he was rather complimentary:

The copy of The Criterion wandered in today - the first time I have seen the production. I like Mr. Bain’s ‘1789’ very much: the spirit of the thing. I feel inclined to cry aloud: Thank heaven somebody else feels that way. And I like that about Newman, though the style is a bit misty.

Anyway I am so relieved that The Criterion has got some guts, and isn’t another Adelphi or London Mercury. I hope you’ll print me again, and that I may meet you when I come to London.

That a magazine should have "guts" was important to Lawrence. The oscillations in Lawrence’s feelings towards the London magazine culture, whether they were feelings of antagonism or admiration, reflected to some extent his feelings about Murry. Later in the twenties Lawrence’s tone became dismissive when corresponding with his friends about The Criterion. Writing to Earl and Aachsah Brewster on 7 February 1929, he mentioned his most recent publication in the magazine: "For stories and things, I’ve not done much. There’s one - ‘Mother and Daughter’ - in the next Criterion - if anybody lends you that expensive and stewed T. S. Eliot quarterly."

With the exception of his attitude to the Adelphi, Lawrence did not express

---

66 "They are all frightened." The Letters of D. H. Lawrence IV, June 1921 - Mar 1924, eds. Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton, and Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.500. This letter was cited by Leavis in his critically revisionist article, "T. S. Eliot as Critic," p.184, in which he asserted that the attack on "classiosity" was aimed at Eliot.


consistently strong opinions about any of the magazines, and his initial enthusiasms were not sustained in his correspondence. Lawrence was mildly interested in the personalities behind them: "What are those people like, on the Calendar? Do you know them?" he asked Koteliansky at the beginning of 1926, but he was physically and intellectually distant from their organisation. To the magazines, and their writers, however, Lawrence, was very interesting; to some, he was anathema, but too important to ignore, and for others he was a hero, the future of English literature; for all, he was a key figure. Eliot’s attitude to him was at least ambivalent; but for all his conservative mistrust of Lawrence’s views and values, Eliot maintained the classic liberal values of tolerance, and debate (an example of this is his publication of an article which I discuss at greater length in the next chapter, André Malraux’s "Preface to the French Translation of Lady Chatterley’s Lover"). Many people in England had long been intolerant of Lawrence, and his books subjected to restriction and censorship, most notoriously Lady Chatterley’s Lover. Eliot’s support of Lawrence against those whom the latter called the "censor morons" perhaps indicates more about his attitude to censorship than it does about his attitude to Lawrence, but both were writing at a time when censorship was widely practised and affected the publication of all kinds of texts, including literary magazines; the next chapter examines that climate, and The Criterion’s response to it.

---


Chapter 4: *The Criterion* and censorship

I. Introduction

Censorship was a subject of concern in *The Criterion* throughout the magazine’s publication. A range of censorship issues were discussed by Eliot in his editorial commentaries, and in articles by other contributors, and support was offered to authors who were subject to censorship. Eliot had been wary lest the magazine should appear controversial in its early stages, writing to Ezra Pound on 22 July 1922: "I hear good report of the progress of Cantose [sic]. If the *Dial* refuses please let me inspect, but probably unwise to make the paper too conspicuous at first, if the rape of the bishop is an integral part."¹ In later years, however, *The Criterion* implicitly challenged the attitudes and practices of different censoring agencies through the attention that it paid to and the publication of controversial authors such as Pound, Joyce, and Lawrence. Eliot engaged in controversy with a range of institutions which had the legal or religious authority to employ tools of censorship, principally the magistracy, the government, and the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, and his writings reflect this range. The main focus of Eliot’s opposition to censorship, however, was his criticism of the press, a medium which, Eliot believed, wielded excessive influence on public opinion and morality. Different institutions exert their influence in different domains, and Annabel Patterson has listed "the chief categories of censorship" as being "political,

¹ *Letters I*, p.548.
religious, and moral (the latter referring primarily to sexual morality).^2 Most of the controversies discussed in this chapter arose out of the suppression of texts on grounds of sexual morality, or the related issue of verbal obscenity, as those were the primary, though not exclusive, concerns of the agents of censorship in Britain at this time. Eliot's statements about censorship, and his actions as editor of The Criterion, express a range of attitudes, and differing degrees of opposition to it; they are also examples of occasions on which his theories - of editorship, of society, of authorship, for instance - modulated into practice.^3

In September 1928, Eliot wrote that the principle of the suppression of books could only be considered on two grounds: (i) morality, which was the province of the church, or (ii) public order. He asserted that in practice, however, "most 'censorship' of books in Britain and America springs neither from religious dogma nor from a clear conception of public order" (VIII, p.3). Rather, censorship was imbued in political culture, and had simply become a tool of social control which it would be futile to oppose a priori; as Michael Holquist put it recently in his introduction to a number of PMLA devoted to the topic of censorship: "To be for or against censorship as such is to assume a freedom that no one has.


^3 The need to define what was meant by the term "censorship" occupied Eliot and his antagonists in their controversies. I have borrowed the following broad definition from Sue Curry Jansen, which covers the range of incidents discussed in this chapter. Jansen suggests that censorship "encompasses all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images, and other messages through a society's channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority" (Censorship: The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge [New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], n.1, p.221]).
Censorship is. One can only discriminate among its more or less repressive
effects."^ Eliot’s discussion of the issues revolved around investigations of the
premises and consequences of acts of censorship, rather than its theoretical
justification as a facet of social policy. He was not against the idea of censorship
per se, arguing for the possible existence of a distinction between "a reasonable
censorship and an unreasonable one" (VIII, p.3), and writing that the "general
question of censorship is, we think, a question of expediency rather than principle,
when it is not the censorship of a Church" (VIII, p.4). But he strongly believed that
it should not be an ordinarily accepted or formally established branch of
government, and he wrote in December 1928:

> At the moment of writing this Commentary we hear rumours of fresh
> activity in the censorship of books. The Home Secretary has let fall a hint;
> there has been some correspondence in The Times: what is disquieting about
> this correspondence is that there appear to be persons prepared to defend
> the institution of the Censorship, which we should have thought patently
> indefensible. (VIII, p.185)

Although he accepted the fact that some forms of censorship were always operative
in society, rather than condemning them out of hand, he was, like many other
writers, sceptical about the legal operation of censorship, and adopted a similar
position to that adopted by such notable liberals as Virginia Woolf and E. M.
Forster on the issue. He certainly expressed far more opposition to censorship than
the vast number of reviewers and journalists of his time; Ian Hamilton’s suggestion
that a "brief anthology of [Eliot’s] responses to ... censorship ... would make fairly

---

^ Michael Holquist, "Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship," *PMLA*
109, 1994, p.16.
sinister reading these days" is not borne out by the evidence of his writing.\(^5\)

The most intense interest in censorship in *The Criterion* occurred in the late twenties, and this chapter concentrates on articles from this period. Donald Thomas has suggested that during the late 1920s and early 1930s, "the moral censorship of literature was, if not stricter, at least more obtrusive than it had been for some considerable time. To many people this appeared to be the work of Sir William Joynson Hicks, who was appointed Home Secretary in 1924 and who had no illusions about pornography or controversial literature of alleged merit."\(^6\) Joynson Hicks's name cropped up quite frequently in *The Criterion* in these years. Eliot was aware that censorship practices are affected by the morality and ideology of political parties and governments: pondering the possible consequences of a change of government in the forthcoming general election at the end of 1928 (which Joynson Hicks's Conservative party were indeed to lose), Eliot implied that although Joynson Hicks's leaving office would in itself be a good thing, it would not necessarily bring about a change for the better, because of the nature of the political process:

> even if the present Home Secretary should not remain in that post, even if the Conservative Party were to lose its majority, something may have started which will take its own course; and we should not be wise to trust any of the political parties to oppose it, if a popular press and fanatical influences had once been aroused in its favour. (VIII, p.185)

---

\(^5\) Hamilton, p.73. His statement is contradicted by Stephen Spender, who has written that Eliot "had views which were courageous at the time about censorship" (*Eliot* [London: Fontana, 1975], p.225). Spender was a contributor to *The Criterion*, and would have been aware of the contemporary climate of censorship, and of what Eliot's opposition to it represented.

At this time Eliot was extremely critical of the Conservative party. In July 1929, after the Conservative Government had been voted out of office, he published a commentary subtitled "Second Thoughts on the Brainless Election", and wrote:

The Conservative Party has a great opportunity, in the fact that within the memory of no living man under sixty, has it acknowledged any contact with intelligence.... It has, what no other political party at present enjoys, a complete mental vacuum: a vacancy that might be filled with anything, even with something valuable. Will it, during its holiday, be inclined to take any notice of the fancies of men who like to think, and do not want to hold office of any sort? We are ready to place a bet on the negative. (VIII, p.579)

His profounder objection was not to the policies of the Conservative party, and their lack of any foundation in ideas, but to the ways in which democratic government was exercised, particularly as it could be manipulated by the press. Christopher Ricks has described newspapers as "the one enemy to which [Eliot] never relented", and certainly throughout the censorship controversies in The Criterion Eliot’s paid attention to the role of the press in shaping political and moral opinion.

In his commentaries on a range of issues related to censorship, Eliot almost always led from an event such as the suppression of a particular text, to a general discussion of censorship: in this, he re-enacted his approach to Dante, "I begin with detail, and approach the general scheme." As with all controversies, those about censorship developed from specific incidents, and the discussion of these subjects in The Criterion was often contingent upon acts of the law and the government.

This chapter discusses a number of censorship controversies which occurred over a

---


8 Eliot, Dante, p.11.
period of time. The first three sections attend to three particular authors, Joyce, Lawrence, and Radclyffe Hall; the next looks at debates about the censorship of films, and the last section focuses on Eliot's critique of those aspects of censorship which were motivated by secular rather than religious concerns. The following table is a select chronology of events and writings discussed in this chapter. Unless otherwise indicated, articles listed were published in *The Criterion*, and written by T. S. Eliot.

1919: Parts of *Ulysses* published in *The Egoist*. Between April and July, the Pelican Press took over the printing of *The Egoist*.
1922: October, Valery Larbaud, "The 'Ulysses' of James Joyce".
1925: July, Joyce, "Fragment of an Unpublished Work".
1927: October, "The Cinema Quota". *Cinematograph Films Act*.
1930: January, "A Note on the Press". April, "Censorship and Blasphemy"; "Censorship and the Films".
1934: January, Michael de la Bedoyere, "Censorship: More or Less?" October, Christopher Dawson, "Religion and the Totalitarian State".
1935: "Religion and Literature" published in a collection entitled *Faith that Illuminates*.

* * * * *

II. "one more episode in a national scandal": difficulties in publishing James Joyce

Editors of literary magazines in the second and third decades of this century found
that their attempts to publish Joyce’s work were hampered by the interference of various kinds of censorship. As Richard Brown has outlined recently, the publication history of Joyce’s texts was chronologically disjointed, throughout his writing life, because of censorship, and it was impossible for British readers to read trade editions in the order of their composition. Sections of *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939) were published as individual books by Faber and Faber in the early thirties, but the first trade edition of *Ulysses* (1922) was not published in Britain until 1936-1937, when it was brought out by John Lane and the Bodley Head.

Before this, sections of *Ulysses* had been published in Britain throughout 1919, in *The Egoist*, of which Eliot was assistant editor between June 1917 and its closure in December 1919. The first of these instalments was accompanied by an editorial note: “As printing difficulties have made it impossible to publish *Ulysses* in full in serial form, a series of extracts from it will be printed in THE EGOIST during the next few months. The form in which the work is written - chapters for the most part complete in themselves - favours such a procedure.” The note implies that while the published extracts in themselves might be uncensored, the printers had refused to set what the editors had wanted to publish, which would be the novel in

---


10 Anna Livia Plurabelle (1930), Haveth Childers Everywhere (1931), Two Tales of Shem and Shaun (1932).


its entirety. Brown discusses this problem, and the printers' caution, which has been a recurring issue in the history of literary censorship in the twentieth century:13 *The Egoist* had a number of printers in its lifetime, and one of these, W. Lewis, initially refused to print those numbers of the magazine containing Joyce's work, because he objected to aspects of the first chapter of *Ulysses*. Eventually, Lewis told Harriet Shaw Weaver, the magazine's editor, to find another printer.14 He did, however, print sections of *Ulysses* in the numbers of January-February and March-April 1919, but after this he refused to continue, and the printing was taken up by a different firm, the Pelican Press, with significant changes in layout, typography, and frequency of publication.15 In its final number, *The Egoist* published a "Notice to Readers" announcing cessation of publication "in journalistic form", and proffered the following as one reason:

[W]e have had to contend against what has proved a very serious handicap to the adequate serial publication of Mr Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. By that condition of the English law which makes a printer liable alongside the author and the publisher of a work, we have in working practice in England a printer's censorship much more drastic than that of the official literary censorship itself.... [A]s we have at last found a printer willing to make an uncut copy of the text, we have decided to abandon its further serial publication and to publish instead the entire work in book form as soon as it is itself completed.16

Another magazine to encounter problems with their printers when attempting to

---

13 In *Offensive Literature* (London: Junction Books, 1982), John Sutherland writes that "printers are notoriously strait-laced - even Penguin in 1960 had trouble on this score," i.e. in publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (p.10).

14 Brown, pp.250-3.

15 There was a brief hiatus in publication of *The Egoist* after Lewis's Complete Press ceased to print the magazine. The Pelican Press printed numbers of the magazine for July, September, and December 1919.

publish Joyce was *The Calendar of Modern Letters*. The editors wished to have a part of the "Work in Progress" in the first number. Sylvia Beach tells the story in her memoir, *Shakespeare and Company*, of how a section of the work was initially offered to Wyndham Lewis to publish in *The Enemy*, but having read it, he rejected it, and instead published a violent attack on the piece. Following this:

The next editor who asked for "A. L. P." [Anna Livia Plurabelle] was a young Englishman named Edgell Rickward [sic]. He was preparing the first number of his new review, *The Calendar*. He wrote offering "the hospitality of our pages to Joyce, the greatest power of the present generation".

I promised him "A. L. P." but warned him that he would have to wait for it until after Mr. Eliot had published in the *Criterion* a piece that came earlier in the work. He said he would tell the subscribers, who had come in flocks on hearing that the *Calendar* was bringing out in its first number an extract from Joyce's new book, to hold on.

The *Criterion* appeared, and I packed off "A. L. P." immediately to the *Calendar*. I got a delighted letter of acknowledgement from the editor; then a mortified, crestfallen one. The printers had refused to set up the passage beginning "two boys in their breeches" and ending with "blushing and looking askance at her". Very respectfully, the *Calendar*’s editor asked Mr. Joyce’s permission to delete this passage from his text.

Very reluctantly, I replied that Mr. Joyce regretted the inconvenience over his contribution but could not discuss any alteration of his text - and would Mr. Rickward please return it.17

In July 1925, *The Criterion* published a "Fragment of an Unpublished Work". This fragment would become chapter five of *Finnegan's Wake*, but it was not a section likely to cause any offence.18 It does not serve as an example of a courageous stand against philistinism, and clearly was not so significant as *The Egoist*’s struggles.

Eliot was fortunate that *The Criterion*’s printers, Hazell, Watson, and Viney, did not react to Joyce as other British printers had done. But from an early stage, Eliot


was prepared to stand up in other ways for Joyce, whom he had described in a
letter to Schofield Thayer of the Dial, on 30 June 1918, as the "best living prose
writer". After the United States Post Office had confiscated copies of the May
1919 issue of the Little Review, which contained the "Scylla and Charybdis"
section of Ulysses, he wrote to John Quinn:

I have just received from Pound in France a copy of your admirable
defence of Ulysses (May L. R.) with the suggestion that it should be printed
in the Egoist when and if I receive permission from you. I hope to get this
permission. The affair is only one more episode in a national scandal. I
should like to do everything I can about it over here. The part of Ulysses in
question struck me as almost the finest I have read; I have lived on it ever
since I read it. You know the trouble the Egoist came up against with
printers in attempting to print Ulysses here.19

In The Criterion of December 1928, Eliot wrote about the way in which censorship
could stimulate the sales of a controversial novel - the "banned in Boston"
phenomenon - and of the effect this had on considered literary appraisal. He cited
Ulysses as an example of the pernicious effects of censorship: "A good book, a
conscientious work of art, may become popular for the wrong reason; a bad book,
a pinchbeck apery of art, may be equally popular for the wrong reason. Censorship
has made impossible a critical estimate of Joyce's Ulysses for at least a generation"
(VIII, p.187). In the early thirties, Eliot corresponded with Joyce as to the
possibility of Ulysses being published by Faber and Faber, having been unbanned
in the American courts in 1933.20

As a literary editor, Eliot wished to make clear his support for Joyce. In the


20 See the Letters of James Joyce, III, ed. Richard Ellman (London: Faber &
Faber, 1966), pp.289-301. Eliot and Joyce also corresponded about the possibility
of serial publication in The Criterion (Kojecký, p.93).
first number of *The Criterion* in October 1922, he published an article by the French critic Valery Larbaud, entitled "The 'Ulysses' of James Joyce", which he had translated, some thirteen months before his famous review "*Ulysses, Order and Myth*" appeared in *The Dial* of November 1923. Eliot wrote to Pound about the publication of this early defence on 9 July 1922: "What about the article on Impressionism which you promised (no need to boost Joyce [sic] as I am reprinting part of Larbaud's essay as testimony that the Review approves of J. J.)?"^21 This "testimony" was an exposition which attempted to demonstrate how a comprehension of the narrative and mythological analogies that *Ulysses* shared with *The Odyssey* was fundamental to understanding the novel. As such, it did not explicitly address the issue of the novel's censorship in Britain, perhaps because in the author's home country it was freely available. Rather, it sought to rescue *Ulysses* from repetitive and constraining debates about Joyce's obscenity, and to focus critical attention on literary historical aspects of the text. Nonetheless, Larbaud did conclude:

> Among all the points which I ought to deal with, and have not space to deal with here, there are two on which it is indispensable to say a few words. One is the supposedly licentious character of certain passages - passages which in America provoked the intervention of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. The word "licentious" is inappropriate; it is both vague and weak: it should be *obscene*. In *Ulysses* Joyce wished to display moral, intellectual, and physical man entire, and in order to do so he was forced to find a place, in the moral sphere, for the sexual instinct and its various manifestations and perversions; and, in the physiological sphere, for the reproductive organs and their functions.... His intention is neither salacious nor lewd; he simply describes and represents; and in his book the manifestations of sexual instinct do not occupy more or less place, and have neither more nor less importance, than such emotions as pity or scientific curiosity.... The English language has a very great store of obscene words and expressions, and the author of *Ulysses* has enriched his book generously.

---

21 *Letters* I, p.538
and boldly from this vocabulary. (I, pp.102-3)

In this passage, Larbaud invoked two classic arguments that are employed in defence of authors against censorship: (i), that a text, in being realistically descriptive and representative, must depict things which may be interpreted as obscene, but because this obscenity is intrinsic to the text’s mimetic objective, the author has the licence to write what he thinks fit; and as long as (ii), in doing so, the author’s intention is not pernicious, there could be no justification for any interference with or indeed objection to the text. The argument from intention, theoretically and legally, has always been contested; in the law of libel in Great Britain, the test of obscenity has been what may be reasonably inferred from a piece of writing, rather than what is intended.22

Eliot, however, believed intention to be an important consideration, more important than artistic merit, which other opponents of censorship often invoked as their primary argument:

It is not quite relevant to ask whether the book [in this case, Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*] is a ‘work of art’, on the grounds that ‘works of art’ should not be censored. No one knows whether the book that he wants to write is going to be a ‘work of art’ or not; and if we were told in advance that our book would be tolerated if contemporary criticism considered it to be a work of art, and that it would be suppressed if it was not a work of art, we should not feel encouraged to write at all. If there is to be any discrimination, otherwise censorship, then the intention of the author should count for more than his success. (VIII, p.2)

Arguments on the grounds of literary merit were not taken into legal consideration in Great Britain until the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, which repealed and

---

22 Annabel Patterson points out that in the United States of America, the criterion of intention only began to come into consideration in 1934, during judicial deliberation in the trials of *Ulysses* (p.904).
modified the original Act of 1857, became law. It allowed expert witnesses for the first time to defend a publication as "being for the public good on the ground that it is in the interests of science, literature, art or learning." An additional reason why Eliot did not believe that the criterion of merit was particularly compelling was because more than that was at stake: "It is not a question of 'art' but of public liberties" (IX, p.2), he wrote in October 1929. The specific occasion for the adoption of this stance was his response to the Home Secretary who, in 1928, via the magistrates' court, had brought about the ban on *The Well of Loneliness*, and whose defence of his action the following year was the subject of Eliot's commentary. As I discuss further below, few of those who defended *The Well of Loneliness* did so on grounds of its artistic merit - indeed most were largely unwilling to do so - and, as Eliot pointed out, the invocation of the argument on either side of any dispute about any text evaded the broader issue of the individual author's rights.

* * * * *

III. "'the uncritical spirit of our race': the suppressions of D. H. Lawrence

Lawrence is a key figure in the history of literary censorship during the second and third decades of this century. His novels, and other works, were subject to different kinds of interference and censorship, from different agencies, real and imagined - commercial libraries, publishers, publishers' readers, the magistracy, the press, his

---

23 Eliot was one of the experts called upon to advise the committee considering the modifications to the Act, and gave his evidence, with E. M. Forster, on 30 January 1938. See the Report from the Select Committee on Obscene Publications (London: HMSO, 1958), pp.14-21.

own commercial instinct. The recent Cambridge edition of his third novel, *Sons and Lovers*, includes about ten per cent more text than the first English edition, in which cuts were made by Edward Garnett, in order to make the novel publishable by Duckworth. Another publisher, Heinemann, had already rejected it, explaining that "its want of reticence makes it unfit, I fear, altogether for publication in England as things are. The tyranny of the Libraries is such that a book far less outspoken would certainly be damned (and there is practically no market for fiction outside of them)."\(^{25}\)

The Bow Street Magistrate ordered Lawrence's next novel, *The Rainbow*, to be destroyed under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 on 13 November 1915, six weeks after its publication. One of the reviewers who called for its suppression was the *Star's* James Douglas, who was later to be instrumental in the suppression of *The Well of Loneliness*. Mark Kinkead-Weekes has written that it is "impossible to exaggerate the effect on Lawrence himself, on his conception of his audience and therefore on the nature of his work, of the destruction of *The Rainbow* in the England of 1915."\(^{26}\) The reputation that Lawrence acquired as a result of this censorship made it extremely difficult for him to find a publisher for his next novel, *Women in Love*.

The attempted prosecution of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the subsequent decensorship of that book in 1960 has been a *cause célèbre* in the liberalisation of

---


attitudes to literature in the second half of the century. Lawrence was not anxious to conform to society’s prevailing mores about the representation of sexuality in order to ease the publication of his work: John Middleton Murry wrote in The Criterion of "that Lawrence - sometimes real enough - who took a sardonic pleasure in outrage" (X, p.184). As Damian Grant acknowledges, "The very nature of Lawrence’s writing meant that he offended the sensibilities of many different groups of people in different ways." Various aspects of Lawrence’s texts have been found offensive, including his pacifism, his alleged proto-Fascism, his obscenity, and his representations of sexual behaviour. But it is important to acknowledge that an inherent component of tolerance - the antithesis of censorship - is that readers should necessarily be offended by what they are asked to tolerate, and that if they are not offended, their attitude to the text in question is not tolerance: there is, after all, nothing tolerant about condoning that which we find inoffensive, that of which we approve. Lawrence’s work continues to offend, in spite of David Trotter’s assertion that "Lawrence probably scandalises more highbrows than lowbrows these days, but not as many as he bores." In the Times Literary Supplement in July 1990, Tom Paulin asked whether Lady Chatterley’s Lover is not "a racist tract which exults in male violence", and described it as "sadistic porn" that contains "many viciously obscene passages". He wondered, "Perhaps there’s good cause for prosecuting the novel under the Race Relations

---

27 See Hyde.


Act?" (rather than the Obscene Publications Act). In phrasing his objections to the novel in this way, as a series of questions or hypotheses, Paulin rhetorically hesitates in committing himself wholeheartedly to the judgements that he makes, and his opinions appear to be illiberally iconoclastic for the sake of being so. His sense of offence over-determines his response to the novel.

Eliot was offended by some of Lawrence’s ideas, and expressed this in The Criterion; nevertheless, he was very clear about the nature of his objections, which were essentially religious and moral, rather than artistic, and his moral objections never amounted to countenancing any suppression of Lawrence’s works. Late in his life, he was prepared to act as a witness for the defence at the Chatterley trial, although he was not called. In The Criterion of January 1933, he published André Malraux’s "Preface to the French Translation of Lady Chatterley’s Lover". Malraux’s article was not concerned with the novel’s representation of sex, or its language, and it did not quote any examples of Lawrence’s eroticism; nor did it discuss the book’s legal status in England. The article represents a refusal on Malraux’s part to discuss the book sensationalistically, as a symbol of sexual morality outside the law; rather he asserted that the novel should be discussed in the context of the literary history of eroticism and love, as an examination of their place in the understanding of human subjectivity: "It is not a question here of escaping from sin, but of making eroticism a part of life, without its losing that force which was its debt to sin. It is a question of giving it all that hitherto was given to love, of

---


31 Sutherland, pp.20-1.
making it the means of our own revelation" (XII, p.217). Malraux discussed Lady
Chatterley's Lover in literary critical rather than sociological terms. This was
contrary to the conventional parameters of discussion, and can be seen as an attempt
to free the novel from its socio-legal history.

In the number of October 1929, Eliot's commentary was concerned with
two instances of censorship. The first three pages were devoted to Sir William
Joynson Hicks's revisionist article in the Nineteenth Century on the suppression of
The Well of Loneliness, an article satirically labelled "Lord Brentford's Apology".
Eliot devoted the next page to the suppression of Lawrence's paintings, which had
taken place by court order, during the summer. One aspect of his response to this
suppression was to portray it as an example of British philistinism, a stance that he
had previously adopted in relation to the censorship of Ulysses. In Lawrence's
case, Eliot used an example from Matthew Arnold, a conscious and willed
archaicism on his part, making reference to an earlier, imperialist, national culture:

Mr. Mead the magistrate, has meanwhile exhibited the British sense of fair
play, by ordaining that Mr. D. H. Lawrence's paintings shall no longer be
exhibited, but need not be destroyed.... Here again, we are not interested to
decide whether Mr. Lawrence's paintings are masterpieces or daubs. We
learn that features of these paintings were 'unnecessarily developed', and
we must accept the Marlborough Street Theory of Necessity.... We have not
seen ... Mr. Lawrence's [paintings]. Mr. Lawrence is a British subject, one
of half a dozen writers whose work commands respect in foreign countries.
We are reminded of three sentences of Matthew Arnold:

'Occasionally, the uncritical spirit of our race determines to perform
a great public act of self-humiliation. Such an act it has recently
accomplished. It has just sent forth as its scape-goat into the
wilderness, amidst a titter from educated Europe, the Bishop of
Natal.' (IX, pp.4-5)

Eliot was having a joke at everyone's expense here, not least his own. The
employment of this kind of witty irony might seem to be inappropriate in the
context of an attack on the infringement of civil liberties, but these qualities of
tone enact a detachment which was common in Eliot’s writings about the operation
of censorship by legal and governmental authority, which did not diminish the
moral force of his objection. Indeed, satirists have always used irony to counter
censorship and oppression, directly and indirectly, and it is not necessary that a
protest sound earnest for it to be sincere. If the meaning of the parable from
Arnold is not entirely obvious, the association of censorship with the diminution of
civilisation indicates how grave Eliot thought such instances of censorship to be.
His ambivalent jocularity was, in part, a consequence of the self-consciousness he
felt in invoking Arnold, but nonetheless the suppression of Lawrence’s paintings
did represent to him "a great public act of self-humiliation". He again rejected the
idea that suppressed cultural artefacts should be defended in the discourse of
artistic evaluation, but focused on a third consideration: the idea of a nation
identified and formulated by its cultural consciousness, which must in part be
defined by its liberal attitudes towards art. This is a recognisable strand in the
debate, alongside civil liberty, artistic merit, and intention. The practices and
parameters of censorship needed always to be checked by these considerations.

In the twenties and thirties, Faber and Faber published a series of pamphlets
under the umbrella title "Criterion Miscellany". Number five in this series was
Lawrence’s *Pornography and Obscenity*, a text in which he meditated on a range
of issues and their implications for sexual mores, with a clear recognition that he
was engaged in a controversy of some contemporary importance, and that his
principal foe was the former Home Secretary. He introduced a different dimension
to the intentionist debate:
One essay on pornography, I remember, comes to the conclusion that pornography in art is that which is calculated to arouse sexual desire, or sexual excitement. And stress is laid on the fact, whether the author or artist intended to arouse sexual feelings. It is the old vexed question of intention, become so dull today, when we know how strong and influential our unconscious intentions are.32

Few others in these controversies showed themselves to be aware of developments in psychology and psychoanalysis, although *The Criterion* published several articles and reviews dealing with related subjects.33

The shoddy and philistine treatment meted out to Lawrence by the police and courts during the last summer of his life was due to the prevailing current of prurience among the press and the magistracy. Neither of these institutions had much regard for questions of merit or intention, whether conscious or unconscious - a disregard which Eliot satirised as "the Marlborough Street theory of necessity" - nor for the civil liberties of the artist, but rather they wished to elevate their own powers. Philip Trotter, who ran the Warren gallery where Lawrence's work was exhibited, wrote that:

> It became clear as the case proceeded that Mr. Mead [the octogenarian magistrate at Marlborough Street] was taking his chance of getting level with his senior colleague, Chief Magistrate Sir Chartres Biron of Bow Street, whose handling of *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928 had raised the stature of that Court a cubit or two.34

Thus Lawrence's paintings were prevented from being exhibited, and books

---


reproducing the paintings were burnt. Lawrence himself associated these actions with English philistinism, which perhaps accounts for why he wrote in Italian the following vituperation to Laurence Pollinger of Curtis Brown, on the day after the magistrate handed down his verdict: "I hear the pictures are to be returned, the books burned. Ma questi Inglesi sono scimmie, bruciano il proprio gallo che non canti più. Ebbene, non farà nemmeno alba laggiù. Paese di scimmie senza palli, che finisca nel fango! Basta!" In spite of Eliot's ambivalent attitude to aspects of Lawrence's thinking, it is clear that there were affinities in their ideas about the cultural relation between censorship and English philistinism, and about the potentially deleterious effects on writers and writing of a cultural consciousness that they identified with "Englishness".

* * * * *

IV. "Do We Need a Censor?": Jix, Radclyffe Hall, and obscenity

The next pamphlet in the series of "Criterion Miscellanies", ironically, was entitled *Do We Need a Censor?* and was written by the former Home Secretary, William Joynson Hicks, now ennobled Viscount Brentford, and commonly known by the sobriquet "Jix". He made it clear that he had had no truck with any arguments about artistic merit during his time in office:

> I was told by a correspondent to some periodical who was pleading the case for a book that I had 'banned', that I had not the intelligence to appreciate its merits. The merits of the book may be as great as its admirers claim - and I confess I found it to contain much that, from a purely literary standpoint, excited admiration - but surely its merits were not strictly material to the issue; it was the demerits of the book that I was asked to

---

35 "But these English are apes, they burn their own cock so that it crows no more. Well, there won't ever be dawn over there. Country of apes without balls, that will end up in the mud. Enough!" *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* VII, pp.413-4.
consider - not whether it possessed something of greatness, but whether it would tend to corrupt and deprave the public mind.\textsuperscript{36}

He argued further in his pamphlet, against those who disapproved of the treatment of books under his administration, that they did not realise the extent of the trade in pornography, nor could they have been aware of the nature of the material: "In the course of my administration at the Home Office I had to place an embargo on pictures coming into this country of such a character that, whatever artistic merit they might possess, I am quite sure that not one hundred people in the country would be prepared to support or even excuse them" (p.12). However, this kind of crude, hyperbolic appeal to the consensus as a means of justifying the suppression of cultural artefacts is a typical rhetorical strategy used by political regimes to legitimise their judgements. Paradoxically, it enables the further exercise of power by a self-legitimating faction through the decisions of an individual. Neil Sammells frames the issue in terms of the individual's rights in society: "censorship is about the power of collective interests over individual interests; it is an attempt to silence the dissenting voice;"\textsuperscript{37} he describes the position of writers such as Joyce and Lawrence, some of whose work was offensive to many people. The collective interest of a society is not automatically invested in the sensibility of an indeterminately large majority of people, and the claims of a government always to represent that interest are inevitably suspect. The society's future is not best served by being shaped by the narrow agenda of the present.

\textsuperscript{36} Viscount Brentford, Do We Need a Censor? (London: Faber & Faber, Criterion Miscellany no. 6, 1929), p.19, quoted in Thomas, p.304.

\textsuperscript{37} Neil Sammells, "Writing and censorship: an introduction," in Hyland and Sammells, eds., p.2.
There are different names given to the group whose interests are privileged, and the individuals who constitute it - the collective interest, the consensus, the ordinary man or woman - but this group is seen always to express itself through a vague "public opinion". Lord Brentford argued elsewhere that:

The ultimate decision whether a book is or is not obscene rests, of course, with the courts, and it has been said that the present system whereby a police magistrate can decide the fate of a book is to treat the calling of author with less than proper respect.... I would suggest that on the whole public opinion is fairly accurately reflected in the courts of summary jurisdiction, and as the public attitude of mind to any particular question changes, so changes the attitude of the courts. There is already a far greater freedom in literature now than there was when the [Obscene Publications] Act of 1857 was passed, and dozens of books are published each year which thirty or forty years ago would have been the subject of informations under the Act.^^

This last claim, that liberalisation of attitudes to books, and other texts, evolves progressively over time, is reiterated by authorities and by others who attend to these issues - to the extent that it is unclear how much each successive liberalisation achieves, and what qualitative difference it makes. Liberalisation of the law towards written material is only ever relative, and grounded in contingency, rather than absolute principle. In his commentary of September 1929, Eliot satirised Viscount Brentford's assertions: "He seems to say at this point; be patient, and before long you will be able to publish anything you like" (IX, p.3). In England in the twenties there were many who believed that the extent of Jix's liberalisation was insufficient, and their attitudes to the standards of obscenity were certainly not reflected by public opinion, nor by the courts of summary jurisdiction.

*The Criterion's* most sustained period of engagement with Viscount

---

^^ Viscount Brentford, ""Censorship of Books," Nineteenth Century and After CVI, August 1929, p.210. Viscount Brentford used parts of this article in his subsequent pamphlet, *Do We Need a Censor?*
Brentford occurred during the controversy over the censorship of *The Well of Loneliness*. Eliot opened the number of September 1928 with a commentary tellingly subtitled "Of British Freedom": "As we go to press, in the dull month of August, we have the reports of the suppression - or rather, the 'withdrawal from circulation' - of Miss Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*" (VIII, p.1).  

Eliot discussed the novel's critical reception, citing reviews in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Daily Herald*, which were favourable, or at least tolerant, and suggested that "It was, we think, rather more favourably reviewed than it deserved." His own critical appraisal of the novel was that "Its literary merit is not so great as the author hoped it might be" and he believed that Radclyffe Hall had tried, but failed "to write something which should be both a literary masterpiece and a monument of special pleading for the social status of the sexual invert." He disliked the book, writing "it is long, it is dull, it is solemn, and it is not well written" (VIII, p.2); and he criticized its "philosophy" extensively. 

But when he turned to one of the popular newspapers, his attack on its response was unmistakable:

> the matter would probably have stopped, with a modest sale and some success of approval, but for the prompt action of the editor of the *Sunday Express*. This gentleman found the book to be a menace to morality; and instead of bringing it privately to the notice of the Home Office, gave it a generous advertisement by public denunciation in his own columns. And so the publisher sent a copy to the Home Secretary, who asked that the book be withdrawn from circulation. (VIII, p.1)

---

39 Having been suppressed on its publication in 1928, *The Well of Loneliness* was not republished in Great Britain until 1959 (Leigh Gilmore, "Obscenity, Modernity, Identity: Legalizing *The Well of Loneliness* and *Nightwood,*" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, 1994, p.604). The book is still subject to restriction in the British Library in London, and must be read at the table nearest the issue desk in the North Library, a table which carries signs instructing "Reserved for readers using special books".
The attack is ironically phrased - "prompt action", "menace to morality", "generous advertisement" - parodying the newspaper’s rhetoric and vocabulary, and alerting *The Criterion*’s readers’ attention to the self-publicising excess of the newspaper’s actions, and the ambiguity of its motives. Eliot disliked *The Well of Loneliness* Hall’s novel, but in the face of this attack, his defence of its right to unhampered circulation was unambiguous, and he described the response and the influence of *The Sunday Express* as "a degradation of civilisation" (VIII, p.3).

Virginia Woolf reacted to the novel similarly to Eliot, and her diary entry for 31 August 1928 sheds some light on Hall’s response to the suppression of her novel:

Morgan was here for the weekend; ... One night we got drunk, & talked of sodomy, & sapphism.... This was started by Radclyffe Hall & her meritorious dull book. They wrote articles for Hubert [Henderson, editor of *The Nation and Athenæum*] all day, & got up petitions; & then Morgan saw her & she screamed like a herring gull, mad with egotism & vanity. Unless they say her book is good, she wont [sic] let them complain of the laws.40

In a letter to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf went so far as to write that Radclyffe Hall "wont have any letter written about her book unless it mentions the fact that it is a work of artistic merit - even genius. And no one has read her book; or can read it: ... So our ardour in the cause of freedom of speech gradually cools, and instead of offering to reprint her masterpiece, we are already beginning to wish it unwritten."41 In demanding that the novel be defended on the grounds of its literary merit, rather than because of her civil rights as an author, Hall assumed a position

---


contrary to Eliot's. But a more important aspect of the case for Eliot was that the novel's fate seemed to be determined by the popular press, and in initiating the legal process that would eventually bring about the novel's suppression, the Home Secretary was following exactly the demands of a newspaper. The Sunday Express's reaction against the novel had been led by its editor, James Douglas, who wrote on 19 August 1928:

I have seen the plague stalking shamelessly through great social assemblies. I have heard it whispered about ... [and] thrust upon healthy and innocent minds. The contagion cannot be escaped. It pervades our social life.

What, then, is to be done? The book must at once be withdrawn. I hope the author and the publishers will realise that they have made a grave mistake, and will without delay do all in their power to repair it.

If they hesitate to do so, the book must be suppressed by process of law.42

The combination of the demands of the popular press, and the subsequent exercise of the law, at the instigation of the government, was what most occupied Eliot. He expressed his concerns most succinctly in a letter to The Nation and Athenœum: "I do not like the book, but I agree [with a previous letter from Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster] that it is perfectly decent; and I see no grounds for the suppression. I wish only to suggest that some more organized protest might be made, before the practice of suppression by these means - articles in Sunday newspapers - becomes an established custom."43 He questioned the authority of those who set themselves up as the guardians of morality - a commentary on the subject in September 1928


was sub-titled "Censorship by What Authority?" - and in several numbers of *The Criterion* during 1928 and 1929, he engaged in controversy with the former Home Secretary, in whom the greatest authority had been invested. (This controversy was not exactly an exchange between two parties; commenting on the article by Lord Brentford in the *Nineteenth Century*, published a year after the initial suppression, Eliot acknowledged the obscurity of the magazine which he edited: "Lord Brentford answers, with perfect honesty and almost 'disarming ingenuousness' some of his critics; he does not answer the criticisms, or respond to the proposals, made in *The Criterion*, of which we are sure he has never heard" [IX, p.1].)

Lord Brentford's account of the events which led to the suppression of the novel validated Eliot's objections:

Soon after this book [*The Well of Loneliness*] was published there was an outcry in a section of the Press, and without any word or action on my part the publishers sent me a copy of the book, asked me to read it, and offered to abide by my personal decision and to withdraw it from circulation if I thought the best interests of the public would be served that way.44

He complained that there was no other course of action for him to take, and, in the circumstances, this was perhaps the case. But one reason for this was the inherently subjective definition, in law as well as in the popular perception, of the term obscene. The allegation of obscenity, and consequently the meaning of that term, was at the centre of the controversy. But no allegation of obscenity could justly have been made in relation to the language used in *The Well of Loneliness*, unlike, for instance, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, nor on the grounds of sexual explicitness in its apologia for homosexuality. As Katrina Rolley points out, Hall's style was "deliberately archaic"; the text "rarely mentions inversion by name, and sex

44 Viscount Brentford, "'Censorship of Books'," p.209.
remains largely theory rather than practice: the physical consummation of Stephen [the female protagonist] and Mary’s love is reduced to the now immortal line ‘and that night they were not divided’. Nonetheless, Sir Chartres Biron, the magistrate in charge of the case, found the book to be obscene in law on the grounds that "[homosexual] practices are defended or ... held out to admiration", and "the actual physical acts of the women indulging in unnatural vices are described in the most alluring terms." The first of these judgements had, in the context of prevailing attitudes towards homosexuality in the twenties, a morally opprobrious force, whereas today it could be read as neutrally descriptive. But the second statement is a self-reflexive, literary critical judgement about the book’s erotic achievement masqueradng as a moral and legal opinion. As a literary judgement, its force derives from the adjective "alluring", an adjective which reflects upon the reader, and this usage suggests more about the individual reader’s response than it does about the book; indeed, it is an admission of the magistrate’s susceptibility to the cryptic portrayal of lesbian sexual practices, rather than an indictment of Radclyffe Hall’s use of erotic language. It has no external reference as a judgement, for it refers to the perception of the reader rather than to the objectives of the text’s representation. That the magistrate did not recognise that he was privileging one sense or meaning of the text is clear. In common with every censor, he believed that meaning in language is stable and objective, rather than subject to interpretation. Censors require this stability, for they "must presume that they are able to anchor the senses they desire, for otherwise interdiction would make no

45 Rolley, pp.224, 221.
46 Quoted in Dickson, p.165.
The definition of the term "obscene" was so problematic that *The Criterion* published it within inverted commas. The Obscene Publications Act of 1857 had "designated obscenity as an effect rather than a cause or an inherent wrong." Lord Brentford offered his understanding of the term: "It is a misdemeanour at common law to publish any indecent matter tending to the destruction of the morals of society and to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influence." He was citing almost exactly the phrasing of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, who had refined the 1857 Act in his judgement in *Regina v. Hicklin* (1868): the decision must be made whether "the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall." In themselves, these definitions do not clarify key terms such as "indecent" or "immoral influence", nor do they illuminate the processes whereby the innocent might be depraved or corrupted. Eliot believed this absence of precision seriously weakened an already weak argument:

> when [Lord Brentford] shows us that he has thought out for himself what public morals ought to be; when he convinces us that he really knows what the words mean when he talks glibly of books 'debauching the young,' or 'corrupting,' we may be inclined to give him the attention that we would give to any serious undergraduate. Has he really spent much time considering how the young are debauched, or how human souls are corrupted, and how much books have to do with it? (IX, p.3)

---

47 Holquist, p.19.

48 Gilmore, p.606.

49 Viscount Brentford, "'Censorship of Books'," p.208.

50 Quoted in Hyde, p.3.
Eliot's queries amounted almost to a critique of the basis of the English common law of obscenity, and Lord Brentford's use of legalese language throughout his article served only to reinforce the ambiguities of the case. Eliot's response (in the commentary "Lord Brentford's Apology") to Jix's revision of the case provided *The Criterion*’s readers with a fairly just summary of Jix’s position, and forcefully articulated a call for the priority of conscience over political dogma, and a principled position over a series of ad hoc judgements:

> the Home Secretary, being a Home Secretary, has no time to think what he, as an individual, thinks about it, or how his opinion, as an individual’s, weighs against that of other individuals who are distinguished not by being cabinet ministers but because of what they have done as individuals. (IX, p.2)

In neither of the specific cases of censorship which occupied the commentaries of September 1929 - *The Well of Loneliness*, and Lawrence’s paintings - did Eliot base his arguments on a priori assumptions about whether, or what kind of censorship should be operative, or what texts should be subject to it. However, he believed that the government’s modus operandi, which lacked any foundation in ideas about the "relation of art and morals, and morals and religion" (IX, p.3), was so unsystematic and unprincipled as to be unjustifiable. He attacked Lord Brentford for being so unconcerned with these deeper lying concerns that he took action only when called upon to do so, usually by the press. Eliot concluded that the Home Secretary should only move to censor a text when his own conscience, and judgement of obscenity, led him to do so - this at least would be consistent, and might induce a sense of responsibility in the censor:

> He admits that there *are* ‘pornographic productions’ which even a Home Secretary can detect without prompting! and neither we nor anyone else has ever objected to his ‘movements’ against such. But there are apparently other productions, in the case of which the Home Secretary cannot move
because he does not trust his own opinion, but only moves because he takes
the opinion of the penny press, or of any busybody who chooses to protest,
and finally of Mr. Mead. But the late Home Secretary has admitted that
there are ‘admittedly’ pornographic productions; which is what we have
contended; so we suggest that Home Secretaries should confine themselves
to ‘moving’ against what is ‘admitted.’ (IX, pp.2-3)

Eliot satirically makes play with cognates of the two basic forms "move" and
"admit" here, and gives his readers to understand that "move against" is a
convenient euphemism for "suppress" or "censor".

The definition of the term "censorship" itself was at issue, and in the
controversy over The Well of Loneliness, with the connections between the various
institutions of state, this was particularly so. Eliot argued, when the suppression of
the book first became the subject of comment, that "We are not, in this instance,
immediately concerned with the question whether there should be a censorship or
not" (VIII, p.3). He was not avoiding this central issue - precisely whether there
should be a censorship or not - nor was he suggesting that the case of The Well of
Loneliness did not have wider implications for freedom of literary expression.
Rather, he was acknowledging that each case of censorship had to be treated
individually as an infringement of civil liberties, and in terms of its specific
consequences. In his pamphlet, Lord Brentford wrote:

I would emphasise, first of all, that there is in England no censorship of
books. If I understand the word rightly, censorship, whether of books,
pictures, films or stage plays and the like, implies a scrutiny by some
central authority of the whole output, with a view to the discovery and
suppression of such as offend against the standard for the establishment of
which censorship is imposed.51

But both he and Eliot realised that the sheer number of books published would
have made such a form of censorship impossible in the early twentieth century,

51 Viscount Brentford, Do We Need a Censor?, p.9.
although the mechanism was workable, and indeed was employed, for stage plays and for the cinema. Eliot would probably have tolerated far more intervention in the area of the cinema, and was quite happy with the institution of the Lord Chamberlain, although unconcernedly ignorant of what he actually did: "The censorship of the theatre, so far as we know, seems to work pretty well" (VIII, p.4). But he believed that "the censorship of books is almost beyond human powers to carry out well. A great deal of annoyance is caused to a small number of people; and, on the other hand, books which we regard as maleficient have passed unmolested" (VIII, p.4). Aside from these pragmatic considerations, Lord Brentford’s definition of how censorship operated was too narrow to be representative of most people’s experience. Eliot suggested that he perhaps did not "understand the word rightly", and had sidestepped the issue, for although he had offered the formal definition of a censorship, in fact censorship practices operated in many different ways. As Neil Sammells writes in the introduction to Writing and Censorship in Britain, censorship is broadly "the repressive intervention of authority, its presence traced most clearly in the operations of law."\(^\text{52}\) The term "censorship" denotes any interference with the publication, or distribution, or any kind of dissemination of a text, by some kind of external agency. Books were, and still are, free from instituted external regulation in this country. The cinema, however, was regulated through the external agency of a formal censorship, as it still is today, by the board of film classification.

\* \* \* \* \*

V. The censorship of films

\[^\text{52}\] Sammells, p.1.
Eliot’s concerns about the censorship of films were very different to his concerns about the censorship of books or the theatre, because he believed cinema to be a debased art form, indeed not art at all, for it lacked "that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art" (I, p.194). This statement comes from the well known article in the second number of *The Criterion* in which Eliot commemorated the death of Marie Lloyd, whom he considered to be the "greatest music hall artist in England" as well as the "most popular" (I, p.193). He asserted: "It is true that in the details of acting Marie Lloyd was perhaps the most perfect, in her own style, of British actresses. There are - thank God - no cinema records of her; she never descended to this form of money-making" (I, p.193). Three months later, he returned to this theme, taking the death of the actress Sarah Bernhardt as an occasion for a discussion of the artistic possibilities of the theatre, and the reasons for its decline. The main reason was that "the stage - not only in its remote origins, but always - is a ritual, and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art" (I, pp.305-6). The article continued with the following parenthesis:

(In the cinema, which has perpetuated and exaggerated the most threadbare devices of stage expression, the failure is most apparent. It is a delusion of cinema producers, apparently, that the film, merely because it is a series of photographs, is a realistic medium. The egregious merit of Chaplin is that he has escaped in his own way from the realism of cinema and invented a rhythm. Of course the unexplored opportunities of the cinema for eluding realism must be very great.) (I, p.306)

Eliot’s antipathy to the cinema did not diminish as film developed as an art form. In his commentary of October 1927 entitled "The Cinema Quota", he discussed the Cinematograph Films Act of that year, which sought to encourage the production
of films in this country by obliging cinemas to exhibit a certain number of British films as a proportion of their schedule.\textsuperscript{53} Eliot included the following extraordinarily high-handed attack on cinema as popular culture:

the recent discussions about Cinema Legislation and film ‘quota’ ... must assume great importance even for those who care nothing for films and have no faith in its [sic] possibilities of art. It is not merely a question of protecting an industry which we could possibly do quite well without. It is a question of what happens to the minds of the thousands of people who feast their eyes every night, when in a particularly passive state under the hypnotic influence of continuous music, upon films the great majority of which have been confected in studios of the Hollywood type. (VI, p.290)

The obvious implication is that Eliot believed that the country could well do without a film industry of its own, were it not for the fact that without it, all films would be of "the Hollywood type". His antipathy to the cinema derived from a deeper antipathy to the quest for realism, and to the cinema’s perceived unwillingness to acknowledge that its techniques were better suited to non-realist subject matter.\textsuperscript{54}

As a consequence of his animosity towards the cinema, Eliot was less concerned that its freedom from interference should be protected: "The censorship of the theatre, so far as we know, seems to work pretty well; the censorship of

\textsuperscript{53} Jeffrey Richards, \textit{The Age of the Dream Palace: cinema and society in Britain, 1930-1939} (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.30. I am indebted to this book throughout this section. In 1926, only five per cent of films shown in Britain had been made here, but in the period 1933-38, the quota was set at twenty per cent (p.35).

\textsuperscript{54} In October 1933, however, \textit{The Criterion} published an article by the Russian film-maker V. I. Pudovkin, "Acting - the Cinema v. the Theatre," which argued the opposite point of view: "There is a colossal wealth of real material awaiting recreation in the art of the cinema. The more we develop that art, the more we can draw upon the inexhaustible store of reality" (XIII, p.6). Pudovkin made a film entitled \textit{Mother} which the British Board of Film Censors refused to license for exhibition in this country on political grounds (Richards, p.95).
films might be better indeed if it were more severe" (VIII, p.4), he wrote in September 1928. In fact, films were far more strictly censored than plays at this time, and the constraints on the use of obscenities, and the representation of sexuality, more severe.\(^{55}\) Eliot’s attitude provoked the following response in a letter from a reader, Alan M. Boase:

> Since the *Criterion* continues to draw attention to the dangers of a new censorship of books, and since, three months ago, you dismissed the question of the censorship of films with the simple wish that it were more stringent, it may be as well to point out how ill advised is the expression of this opinion, at all events, in the way you state it....
> 
> ... to ask for more censoring of films without first asking that this censoring should be more intelligent and less arbitrary, is most unwise. (VIII, pp.501, 503)

In April 1930, Eliot again devoted a section of his commentary to "Censorship and the Films", stimulated by a letter to *The Times* from George Bernard Shaw, in which Shaw sought to bring to attention the refusal to license a documentary film about the perils for men and women of coming to London believing that its streets were paved with gold, only to find themselves homeless or lured into White Slavery. Shaw concluded:

> I know, of course, that as the series of considered moral judgements for which the public look to the Film Censor are absurdly impracticable, his business reduces itself to the enforcement of a few rules of thumb through which any unscrupulous person can drive a coach and six, though they are intolerably obstructive and injurious to conscientious authors.\(^{56}\)

Eliot suggested that Shaw was ambiguous about whether there should be any film censorship, but that "he ought to agree that an intelligent censorship would be a good thing" (IX, p.384), and further that there should be a discussion as to whether

\(^{55}\) Richards, pp.111-4.

"an intelligent censorship is possible; and if not, whether the effects of a stupid censorship are any worse than those of no censorship at all" (IX, p.384). Implicitly, Eliot supported a flawed censorship of films rather than complete deregulation, and saw the conflict as representative of a larger struggle between those who instinctively reacted against any form of control, "the old English Radicals - sometimes ‘Socialists’ in name, but more Radicals in spirit - for whom Freedom, for anything and from anything, is an innate idea," and those who were crippled by inertia, "the timorous folk who defend, or accept, the actual state of things because the alternative generally presented to them seems very much worse" (IX, p.384). This opposition did not only obtain in the matter of the censorship of films, but in all matters of state interference; perhaps Eliot believed it was valid in this case to present the issue in terms of a simplistic binary opposition because he was more tolerant of the censorship of films than of other forms of censorship and state intervention. Eliot's final commentary on the cinema was published in July 1932, and he returned to the relationship between the theatre and the cinema. By this time the cinema was no longer just debased art, but a crucial aspect of the undermining of the basis of society by modernity:

[The] purpose [of films is] to provide day-dreams. We know well enough what day-dreaming means, and what it can lead to, in individual psychology. But it is now a disease of society....

... the need for the theatre, in one form or another, will never, unless civilisation not merely alters but disappears, be supplied by the cinema. (XI, pp.679-80)

For Eliot the cinema was a destructive form of entertainment, because it prevented
meaningful interaction between the audience and the art form.\textsuperscript{57}

After 1930, until the middle of the decade, when the deepening international crisis drew his attention back to the press, and to the publication of manifestos, censorship was lower on The Criterion's agenda. Eliot used his commentaries in this period mainly to discuss international economics, and the relations between economics, politics, and ethics, particularly as they threw light on the development of communism, believing that "not only individual and social psychology, but also economics and sociology, are no longer to be ignored by literary criticism" (XI, p.676, July 1932). But censorship did not cease to exercise Eliot's thinking, nor that of other contributors. In January 1934, an article "Censorship: More or Less?" by Michael de la Bedoyere was published. This article too was primarily concerned with the censorship of films, this being a topical issue because of recent political activity. It differed from Eliot's contributions in that it was a longer consideration of the sociological principles behind censorship, and of the ways that censorship expressed prevailing ideas about the relationship between the state and the individual. De la Bedoyere called for the devolution of authority from central government to more localised sites of responsibility, expressing a Tory conception of the state, seeking constantly to diminish its influence - "the end of social organization is the good life of the individual" (XIII, p.259) - while simultaneously adopting an extremely patronising attitude to those citizens whose cinema culture was affected by the practices of the censor. De la Bedoyere's article was informed by the assumption that the cinema was primarily a recreation of the lower classes.

\textsuperscript{57} For a discussion of the aesthetics of the cinema in The Criterion, see the documentary film-maker John Grierson's review of Rudolf Arnheim's Film, published in July 1933, (XII, pp.696-9).
indeed of "slum dwellers". This was a distorted understanding of the cultural situation in the mid-thirties. Jeffrey Richards’s book, *The Age of the Dream Palace: cinema and society in Britain, 1930-1939*, demonstrates that cinema-going was "the most popular form of entertainment in Britain in the 1930s" (p.11), and that while it was most popular amongst the working class, nevertheless all sections of society went to the cinema.

De la Bedoyere argued that any consideration of film censorship ought to take into account the morality of the predominant audience, and his prejudiced assumptions about the class-base of the audience defined his attitude and tone: "People who have been brought up in slums are less morally affected by the conditions of that life than others would be. It may be for this reason frankly pornographic films would have less effect on them than on those whose sexual education has been normal" (XIII, p.255). He did not acknowledge that the parameters within which he defined this morality were simplistic and elitist, but suggested, employing circular logic, that "the fact that the slum dweller needs the recreation provided by the cinema is in itself a plea for healthy films and for some kind of censorship. Others can stay away if they want to and find some substitute, but these people have few substitutes" (XIII, p.258). Healthy, non-pornographic films, and some kind of censorship: this was one prescription offered in *The Criterion* for the regulation of cinema. De la Bedoyere outlined the forms that this censorship might take by patronising his readers, as well as those who dwelt in the slums:

The clue, then, to the nature of censorship and to the kind of censor will be found by remembering that life is a long education. Who are the natural censors for children? Those whose natural duty it is to make children
gradually less self-insufficient. Parents, first and foremost, guardians and teachers next, all adults with whom they come in contact lastly. The State can only step in where these fail. (XIII, p.262)

The lesson to be drawn was that the proper operation of censorship necessitated that everyone should be prepared to submit to their superiors in society, and that the "ideal scheme of film censorship would therefore include the State, the Churches, the Universities and the trade itself" (XIII, p.267), the main work being done by representatives of the Churches and the Universities. Richards writes that it was precisely religious and educational groups, along with a loosely defined conglomeration of "moralists", who predominantly constituted the anti-cinema lobby in the thirties (pp.48-60). But according to de la Bedoyere, these were the most suitable, perhaps, to "grade films as suitable for children only, for adults only, for students, for town, for country, for Catholic, for Protestant, for Europeans, for Indians, for Nordics, for Latins" (XIII, p.268).

The poor quality of argument, the sense of disengagement from the conditions of real life, and the paternalistic tone of this article, signal a deterioration in the level of comment and analysis on the censorship in *The Criterion* since the late twenties. De la Bedoyere’s article was characteristic of a shift in *The Criterion* in the thirties towards increasingly dogmatic positions, with a concomitant antagonism to the institutions of secular authority and regulation within the social state. It is clear from Jeffrey Richards’s account that the production of films was extensively regulated by the British Board of Film Censors, indeed he describes this regulation as "a coherently organized form of social control" (p.107). Furthermore, this organization had strong links with the government, links which served to obstruct the production of films which were
thought to be politically controversial, i.e. subversive in any way of the status quo. Eliot was antipathetic to film as an art form, and *The Criterion*'s objections to the cinema industry's self-regulation, and to the possibility that this might be more formally an extension of elected government, derive not from a liberal opposition to censorship, but from opposition to secular moral authority. Having said that, Eliot was not promoting ideas that were atypically reactionary about the cinema and censorship. What was strikingly reactionary however, was that although *The Criterion* was interested in the cinema, and published the work of informed practitioners in the cases of John Grierson and V. I. Pudovkin, in its general tone, the magazine seemingly disregarded the centrality of the cinema in British popular entertainment in the late twenties and thirties. It simply associated films with the mass, and had not caught up with the profound social change that the cinema's popularity represented.

* * * * *

VI. Church, state, and the fourth estate

In societies which are not subject to authoritarian political regimes, most debates about censorship of books have revolved around ideas and definitions of obscenity, rather than political subversion. During the late twenties in Britain this was certainly the case. One objection that was raised against those who were prepared to allege obscenity was that they did so arbitrarily or inconsistently: Lawrence suggested that "Obscene means today that the policeman thinks he has a right to arrest you, nothing else."[^58] Eliot believed that self-appointed censors were often hypocrites, and pointed out that those sections of the press which were preoccupied

[^58]: D. H. Lawrence, introduction to *Pansies* (1929), quoted by Grant, p.211.
with "obscenity" were also most likely to be those which titillated their readers
with sexual representations of women: "We have seen lately the daily press, which
offers to its readers a small amount of news and an extensive space of bathing
beauties, direct its readers to 'obscene' books and 'obscene' picture shows, and
then exult in their condemnation" (IX, p.5). Newspapers distorted values, and were
responsible for obstructing their readers in the exercise of independent thinking and
judgement. The humorous crescendo of the following passage does not undermine
the profound seriousness of Eliot's intended criticism:

It is true that the common newspaper reader no longer consciously asks his
paper to provide his opinions for him; but that would be a superior state of
consciousness to what actually exists. What the reader allows his paper to
do for him is to select what is important and to suppress what is
unimportant, to direct his mind with shallow discussions of serious topics,
to destroy his wits with murders and weddings and curates' confessions, and
to reduce him to a condition in which he is less capable of voting with any
discrimination at the smallest municipal election than if he could neither
read nor write. (IX, p.184)

For Eliot, the pernicious tendency of the popular press permeated its writing
on every subject. He was so antipathetic towards newspapers that his commentaries
covered not only the press's misrepresentations of individual topics, but also the
ideological framework which underpinned a whole series of journalistic
judgements, such as the connection between those papers which called loudest for
the suppression of books, and the Conservative party (IX, p.5). Eliot rued this
connection, and the possibility that the Conservative party might fill its ideas
vacuum with policies drawn from the pages of the press, because no newspaper
had that disinterestedness that is necessary for the generation of political ideas. In
October 1929, he wrote that the "first requisite of any political movement which
may hope to influence the future, should be indifference to success and loyalty to
slowly formed conviction" (IX, p.5). He associated the abuse of disinterestedness with the ideologies and agendas of those who called for increased censorship of written texts, and in April 1930, he went so far as to call for what almost amounted to an inverted censorship, which would check the influence of the press: "We should like it to be impossible for an editor or a writer to use the public press to call attention to any work which he professes to consider to be deserving of suppression" (IX, p.383).

Eliot's attention to censorship modulated during the thirties from opposition to individual acts of suppression, to questioning the abstract principle of censorship, as it represented the state's interference in what should be the domain of the individual, or small groups of individuals, acting in good conscience. This, essentially, was also the focus of de la Bedoyere's argument, (although he thought the good conscience of most individuals insufficient) and it became a theme running through *The Criterion*. In July 1933, Eliot's commentary contained a critique of the electoral system, in so far as it bounded the individual's enfranchisement:

We are led to believe that a Parliamentary election is the most important occasion on which we may exercise our Right; whereas it should matter much more to us - and we are much more competent to decide - who should manage our own village than who should manage Parliament. We are taught, in every modern nation, to worship the nation first, the district second, and the local community third, and the family last; whereas we are only capable of understanding the nation through its relation to the family.

A social system which has no explicit moral foundation, in which the Church, rather than the brothels, is tolerated, ... may yet have moral consequences and influences upon the individual. (XII, p.645)

Eliot was himself resolutely urban, writing jocularly in April 1938: "I should myself find it as difficult to live in the country as to give up smoking - more difficult, for my urban habits are of much longer standing than the habit of
smoking: they are, indeed, pre-natal" (XVII, p.482). In light of this, his idealisation of the "village" rings rather hollow; but the abstract principle of devolving responsibility remains pertinent.59

The number of October 1934 opened with an article, "Religion and the Totalitarian State", in which Christopher Dawson attempted to delineate some of the developments of "Totalitarian democracy", and its relation to other forms of totalitarian government. He touched on censorship, and argued against excessive state intervention in other domains:

We have already secured the nationalization and public control of Broadcasting, and I believe the time is not far distant when similar methods will be applied to the control of the Press, and the Cinema. It is obvious that a Totalitarian State, whether of the Fascist or the democratic type, cannot afford to leave so great a power of influencing public opinion in private hands, and the fact that the control of the popular Press and of the film industry is often in unworthy hands gives the state a legitimate excuse to intervene. The whole tendency of modern civilisation is, in fact, to concentrate the control of opinion in a few hands. (XIV, p.11)

This manifests a naive inability, which was perhaps historically specific, to distinguish between the different operations of different kinds of government.

Elsewhere in The Criterion at this time, the effects of censorship on the lives of citizens in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were being more closely considered, in the reviews of foreign periodicals, and the "German Chronicles".60 However,

59 Similarly, in view of the fact that July 1933 was the very month of Eliot’s formal separation from his wife (Ackroyd, p.202), his privileging of the family is more assertive, and less considered about what actually constitutes a family, than one might expect.

60 From the twelfth volume of The Criterion (October 1932 - July 1933) onwards, the reviews of German periodicals by A. W. G. Randall, and the German chronicles by Max Rychner, always at least mentioned the effects of national socialism on German society, including the suppression of Jewish, liberal, and Marxist intellectuals, and the restraints imposed upon periodicals. The tone of these articles was not, however, always as engaged and oppositional as one might expect.
concerns about the British government's drive to centralisation were common amongst The Criterion's contributors, Eliot not least; (other organizations also caused concern - Dawson cited Hollywood). In his essay, "Religion and Literature" (1935), Eliot wrote:

With what is inaccurately called 'censorship' in this country - with what is much more difficult to cope with than an official censorship, because it represents the opinions of individuals in an irresponsible democracy, I have very little sympathy; partly because it so often suppresses the wrong books, and partly because it is little more effective than Prohibition of Liquor; partly because it is one manifestation of the desire that state control should take the place of decent domestic influence; and wholly because it acts only from custom and habit, not from decided theological and moral principles. (EAM, p.101)

This reiterates two themes which Eliot had originally touched on in commentaries in the twenties, firstly that: "It is right to protect a man against his neighbours; but the reminder to Censorships is, that there is a very fine line of discrimination between the morality of protecting a man against his neighbours and the immorality of protecting him against himself" (VIII, p.381); and secondly that

For instance, in the following passage, Randall seems to be unaware of the disquieting connotations of the word "purged", and of the real consequences of state intervention: "Although purged of its liberal and Jewish tendencies this review [Die Neue Rundschau] remains faithful to the celebrated writers with whom it will always be connected in the history of German nineteenth and twentieth century literature" (XV, p.366). Randall fails to recognise the significance of Nazi censorship and suppression: he detects the absence of certain types of writing, but claims that the magazine's overall tendency remained similar to its pre-Nazi manifestation. Rychner was far more alert, and in April 1936, he located the exclusion of intellectuals from access to publishing in the context of explicitly anti-Semitic state policy: "Hundreds of intellectuals have been deprived of the possibility of expressing their views. No writer who is not a member of the Reichsschrifttumskammer can hope for publication. Only Arians [sic], i.e. those who are not Jews, can belong to this state-instituted professional body" (XV, p.489; cited in Julius, n.45, p.221).

61 This essay was first published in a volume, Faith that Illuminates edited by the Reverend V. A. Demant, a contributor to The Criterion.
censorship in practice had no regard for principle and consistency - that it was not "reasoned" (VIII, p.3), but dictated by convention. In theory, a censorship operated by governmental organizations ought to transcend custom and habit, and it should embody the moral consensus of the time. But as I discussed above, the consensus is a problematic concept, and it is unlikely to amount to more than the totality of contemporary prejudice: as Eliot wrote "we find in practice that what is 'objectionable' in literature is merely what the present generation is not used to" (EAM, p.94). Consequently the present generation - or its most vocal constituents - should be prevented from wielding so much influence as to bring about the suppression of books so easily.

Censorships ostensibly found their parameters and their idea of consensus in the concept of "l'homme moyen sensuel" which Annabel Patterson defines as "the person of normal sexual interests, a standard invoked in evaluating cases of alleged obscenity as a reasonable (but imprecise) alternative to either prurience or virgin innocence."62 This is a concept which liberals such as Virginia Woolf were happy to employ: "Any man or woman of average intelligence and culture knows the difference between the two kinds of book [the intentionally pornographic and the incidentally indecent] and has no difficulty in distinguishing one from the other", she wrote in 1929.63 Practically, the decision as to whether a book should be prosecuted was often made by the Home Secretary, and whether it should be suppressed was made by a magistrate. Lord Brentford attempted to justify this,

62 Patterson, p.905.

63 Virginia Woolf, "The 'Censorship' of Books," Nineteenth Century and After CV, April 1929, p.446.
arguing:

The Government has a general responsibility for the moral welfare of the community, which is traceable partly perhaps to the peculiar relationship existing between the Church and the State, and partly also to the duty inherent in all Governments of combatting such dangers as threaten the safety or well-being of the state. In regard to obscene publications this responsibility has devolved itself upon the Home Secretary.64

There is a notable absence of agency here, no explanation is offered as to how such a devolution came about, nor is there any sense that an explanation of the situation might be considered desirable or necessary. Contrarily, Eliot believed that the responsibility should have devolved upon the Archbishop of Canterbury, as a representative of the other party in that peculiar relationship. In the evaluation of obscenity and morality, such a devolution was more reasonable, as he explained in a commentary in September 1928:

if a book is ... an ‘offense against morality’, then it is primarily an offense against the Church, if there is one. And if the Established Church were really ‘established’ instead of being merely tolerated, the proper source of authority in the suppression of immoral or obscene books would be, not the Home Secretary, but the Archbishop of Canterbury. The suggestion to place such matters in the hands of a small curia of prelates sitting at Lambeth may appear preposterous, but it is at least logical. If we urged such a proposal, we should be denounced as mediæval obscurantists and enemies of liberty; yet no one questions the single authority and responsibility of the Home Secretary or the Public Prosecutor. The present Home Secretary may or may not happen to be a good judge of such matters; but no one supposes that Home Secretaries are chosen primarily because they possess these qualifications. Nor can we discover at present any consistent doctrine concerning immorality or obscenity, since periodicals and cheap books of patently pornographic appeal are freely exhibited in certain little shops.

(VIII, pp.3-4)

But this solution was specific to Britain. In December 1928, Eliot wrote a commentary, "The Censorship: and Ireland", stimulated by a protesting article by W. B. Yeats in The Spectator of 29 September 1928, which made common cause

64 Viscount Brentford, Do We Need a Censor?, p.10.
with liberal Irish writers. Eliot's commentary was a response to the Irish Censorship of Publications Bill of 1928, which became law the following year. The Irish censorship was distinguished from the British in that it provided for "a Censorship Board of five members to assess publications" prior to their distribution. Eliot argued that the "Bill which is before the Irish Legislature is associated with the power of the Roman Church: if the church wins this victory in Ireland it must inevitably lose ground in England" (VIII, pp.186-7). He was not so religiously dogmatic as to believe that the church could legitimately employ censorship as a tool of its authority without the possibility of serious consequences, and he recognised that the church too might simply become an agent of repression: "Its enforcement would reduce Ireland to barbarism" (VIII, p.186).

Eliot's comments on pornography show that he countenanced the idea that certain books should be restricted, and The Criterion's purpose in attending to censorship was not simply to have bluntly opposed its operations, but to stimulate debate, and to have a discussion about what kinds of censorship operated in society, and how these might be rationalised and improved. Eliot was firmly opposed to the tyranny of an under-conceptualised, unreasoned, secular morality imbued with the prejudices of ministers of state, members of the magistracy, and the intrinsically commercial interests of the press. The combination of these, and the frequent meeting or overlapping of their particular interests, constituted for Eliot an infringement of the rights of individual citizens, and therefore an attack on

---

65 See also W. B. Yeats, "Our Need for Religious Sincerity," The Criterion April 1926, (IV, pp.306-11).

Censorship issues were the subject of extended attention in *The Criterion* during the late twenties because censorship was a prevalent and pernicious force in the culture of the time. Quentin Bell has described the late twenties as a time when the Home Secretary was "trying to cudgel the British public into purity," and part of Eliot's objection to censorship was to this sense of being cudgelled, or compelled to do something, or to adopt a position, by an agent of authority whom he did not respect. The foundation of Eliot's objection was his commitment to the liberties of citizens - in this case writers and readers - and his commitment to the need to take action to defend these liberties, rather than to abnegate one's responsibilities. The defence of civil liberties entailed the tolerance of books of which one severely disapproved. In 1928, Eliot wrote in the American periodical, *The Forum*:

> In any discussion of the frankness and realism, as it is called on the one hand, or the "filthiness," as it is called on the other, of contemporary literature, I think that the whole point is lost if the discussion is restricted to the question of propriety and decency. So far as my own work goes, I happen not to have a taste for such methods as those of Mr. Joyce or Mr. Lawrence, but I consider that merely a question of method, so that it is hardly more than a trifling accident that Joyce and Lawrence are censored and I am not. A certain number of books (not by Joyce or Lawrence) are produced which I deplore; but it is for the greater good that they should be allowed to circulate and sink by their own weight.

The suppression of books would then simply become an effect of the tastes and sensibilities of the reading public, and the collective interest would be best served

---


As editor of The Criterion, Eliot revised and reformulated his position on a number of occasions, but this passage, from his commentary "Censorship and Blasphemy" in the number of April 1930, encapsulates his concerns:

On the subject of the 'censorship' of literature - we must continue to employ this useful word, although, as Lord Brentford has reminded us, there is no 'censorship' - THE CRITERION has pursued the middle path. We have no wish to see the Home Office powers in relation to genuine pornography abolished; and unless these powers were a little too wide, in black and white, they would probably be no power at all. We only object, and shall continue to object, to the inclusion of particular works in this category; and we were and are alarmed by the ability of the popular press to draw attention to books in such a way that the Home Office is obliged to take action. (IX, pp.382-3)

This summarised the major censorship issues which Eliot had addressed in his Criterion commentaries over the past few years, issues which stretched back at least to his experience of the publication of Joyce: the proliferation of different kinds of censorship, and the semantic instability of the term; the definition of pornography and obscenity; the powers of the state and of the media; and the freedom of the published text. He reiterated that The Criterion took the operations of censorship seriously, and would be vigilant in opposition. In the face of a pervasive censorship culture, directed by an authoritarian - if frequently satirised - Home Secretary, Eliot maintained a strong and consistent position in defence of the liberties of writers and readers, not only through his editorial discussions of specific acts of censorship, but also through support for and publication of writers who had been suppressed. Censorship was an issue which Eliot felt legitimated the practical political engagement of intellectuals, and the pragmatic approach he had developed as an editor guided his interventions in the controversies that censorship occasioned.
Chapter 5: Politics and commitment:  
The Criterion and the Spanish Civil War

I. "Authors take sides"?

In June 1937, eleven months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a group of British and European writers, including W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender (who were occasional contributors to The Criterion in the thirties), published a pamphlet under the auspices of the magazine Left Review, entitled Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War. The pamphlet contained 148 responses, initially gathered by Nancy Cunard from British and Irish writers, to the questions:

Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain?  
Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism?1

This pamphlet is a key document in the history of the response of British and Irish writers to the Spanish Civil War, and of the trends of political opinion among thirties authors. This is not simply because of the opinions expressed in the pamphlet, although these are clearly important, as indicating the dominant pro-Republican consensus which brought about its production; but also because of parallel issues, such as the belief among writers that the publication of this kind of document constituted in itself an intervention in political events.

The existence of this left consensus meant, however, that there was no published acknowledgement in the pamphlet that some writers had chosen not to respond to the questionnaire at all, and had remained silent when asked to take

---

1 Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War (London: Left Review, 1937), n.p.
sides, such as James Joyce and E. M. Forster; or that George Orwell, for instance, had responded with disgust at its premises, as he told Spender on 2 April 1938:

I notice that you and I are both on the board of sponsors or whatever it is called of the SIA [Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista]. So also is Nancy Cunard, all rather comic because it was she who previously sent me that bloody rot which was afterwards published in book form (called *Authors Take Sides*). I sent back a very angry reply in which I'm afraid I mentioned you uncomplimentarily, not knowing you personally at that time. However I'm all for this SIA business if they are really doing anything to supply food etc, not like that damned rubbish of signing manifestos to say how wicked it all is.3

A "Publisher's Note" was printed before the responses which explained: "It has proved impossible to include all the answers received ... in no instance has an Answer been omitted on grounds of 'policy'. (As the reader will see at first glance, the overwhelming majority of authors are 'FOR THE GOVERNMENT,' and so it happens that all the answers omitted fall under the same head.)" The basis for omission was then perhaps its editors' judgement as to the eminence of the respondent; but this note is misleading in its failure to mention those whose response fell outside the three possible categories.

The responses were published under three headings: "For the Government", "Neutral?", and "Against the Government", and the majority (127) came in the first category. Eliot's brief response was one of 16 published in the second: "While I

---


3 George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Vol. 1 An Age Like This 1920-1940*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), p.312. Ezra Pound too disagreed with the premises of the questionnaire, but his reply was published: "Questionnaire an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think; too lazy to investigate the nature of money, its mode of issue, the control of such issue by the Banque de France and the stank of England [sic]. You are all had. Spain is an emotional luxury to a gang of sap-headed dilettantes" (n.p.).
am naturally sympathetic, I still feel convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities." He raised two issues which were central in controversies about the involvement of British writers in the Spanish Civil War. First, he identified that there might be a tension between the individual's perspective and the demands of the larger group. This tension might be construed as a class struggle, as Valentine Cunningham suggests: "The issue seemed crystal clear, at first anyway. Not to be on the Republican side was to settle for a bourgeois individualism and its tyrannies over against unity with the workers." The second and more important issue raised by Eliot's response was his refusal to take sides in a domain where the possibility of being neutral seemed to have been precluded by the originators of the pamphlet. Their preamble to "the question" began: "It is clear to many of us throughout the whole world that now, as certainly never before, we are determined or compelled, to take sides. The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do." The "Neutral?" responses were published in a section whose punctuation questions its own possibility. Cunningham suggests that the question mark appended to the heading "Neutral" demeaned the neutral position itself, and that this was intended, because "neutrality, equivocation - the hesitations of a liberal like [Geoffrey] Grigson seriously worried about Communism, an Orwell who had learned that Spanish politics were exceedingly messy, a pacifist

---


5 Writing about the questionnaire in 1945, the Christian Socialist Douglas Goldring suggested that the results were printed "without comment" (*The Nineteen Twenties* [London: Nicholson & Watson, 1945], p.110); however the question mark can be seen as a covert comment, indicating the pamphlet's binarist assumptions.
like Vera Brittain, a Christian like T. S. Eliot, intent however un-neutrally on achieving the Christian Third Way - were not acceptable.‘Eliot’s response dissented from the questionnaire’s rhetoric of compulsion, which figured the Spanish war as involving clear oppositions, and therefore clear choices. Kevin Foster, following Paul Fussell, has expanded on the nature of this rhetoric: "With its gross dichotomies, its simple Manichean conception of the moral and political options, its demand for total alliance or opposition, ‘the question’ is a testament to the potency of ‘the versus habit’." Fussell’s idea of "the versus habit" describes a mind-set derived from the experiences of the First World War. In his own discussion of the ramifications of this instinctive binary thinking, Fussell in turn quotes Orwell, from "Inside the Whale":

> The thing that, to me, was truly frightening about the war in Spain was not such violence as I witnessed, nor even the party feuds behind the lines, but the immediate reappearance in left-wing circles of the mental atmosphere of the Great War.... All the familiar war-time idiocies, spy-hunting, orthodoxy-sniffing (Sniff, sniff. Are you a good anti-Fascist?), the retailing of incredible atrocity stories, came back into vogue as though the intervening years had never happened.

In phrasing the questions in a way that required that they be answered yes or no, the compilers of the pamphlet were attempting to compel writers to make stark choices. They were unable to suppress dissent from their premise entirely, but in failing to acknowledge certain responses they disguised its extent. *Authors Take

---


Sides is a key text, but part of its significance inheres in its misrepresentations.

However oppositional and domineering the posture of the sponsors of the Authors pamphlet, the choice made by some of those writers had implications only in the discourses of the conflict. The Spanish Civil War is remembered in part as a conflict which attracted the active participation of writers and intellectuals, but only a few of those who declared themselves to be "For" or "Against" the Spanish government were or became combatants in the war. Of course, some did, and five British or Irish writers - Julian Bell, Christopher Caudwell, John Cornford, Charles Donnelly, Ralph Fox - were killed in the conflict. But others, such as the poets Cecil Day Lewis and Jack Lindsay, never went to Spain during the late thirties; to take sides on the Spanish Civil War did not necessarily entail taking part in the fighting. George Orwell is perhaps the best known of those British writers who did fight, on account of his later reflection on his experiences of the conflict, Homage to Catalonia (1938). Orwell himself was seriously injured, having been shot in the throat; he came to reject not only the atmosphere that gave rise to questionnaires and manifestos, but also specifically to reject the questionnaire as a political act.

Cyril Connolly, later editor of Horizon, took sides in the pamphlet, writing rather tritely: "It is impossible ... to remain an intellectual and admire Fascism, for that is to admire the intellect’s destruction, nor can one remain careless and indifferent. To ignore the present is to condone the future." But his response to Spain is better remembered for a passage in his book, Enemies of Promise, which was published

---


10 Cunningham, 1988, pp.442, 455.
in the year after *Authors take Sides* in which he analyzed the variety of prose styles to be found: "A hundred and fifty answers to a question that is not elastic must of necessity exhibit a certain sameness, but anybody reading through them must have been struck less by the uniformity than by the poverty of the diction, the clichés, the absence of distinction, or of any phrases that could be used as slogans, despite the sincerity of the contributors."\(^{11}\) Connolly's discussion of the pamphlet was oddly focused on aesthetic concerns, and evinced a disregard for the ideas and beliefs being conveyed, being obsessed rather with their expression. Cunningham argues that Connolly's literary analysis was not "the action of a dilettante or the pursuit of some obscene irrelevance," but rather that

> [this reaction] to textual matters, to manner, tone, style, this stress on cultural and critical relevance ... [was] only acknowledging that Spain - so literary in any case to start with - existed for every reader of a book or an article about it, for everybody who saw the film *Spanish Earth*, for everybody who noticed a propaganda poster or cartoon or who heard a radio talk about the war, Spain existed *also* (and in most cases existed *only*) as text, as image.\(^{12}\)

If one's experience of Spain never went beyond the level of text, how necessary, or valid, or relevant was one's intervention in the war? In the responses to *Authors Take Sides* for instance, the conflict is confined to discourse, however much propaganda value the questionnaire had. In recognising this, critics have subsequently figured literature as a valid site in which a displaced form of conflict was played out. Kevin Foster has written that the "semiotic of the Spanish Civil War, in line with the 'versus habit' and its binary reasoning, firmly locked together systems of political, moral, and aesthetic signification. The mutual substitution of


discourses expedited the transformation of a political cause into a moral and aesthetic crusade" (p.21). Spender believed not just that writing was a form of action, but that action was a form of aesthetic, and he was still able to write in 1939 that "where the issues are so clear and direct in a world which has accustomed us to confusion and obscurity, action itself may come to seem to be a kind of poetry to those who take part in it." Eliot and *The Criterion* provided a dissenting voice which saw the issues not as clear and direct, but as obscure and indirect, and sought to keep the discourse of action separate from the discourse of text, and the real conflict distinct from the simulacra of pamphlets and controversies, just as, after his experience in Spain, did Orwell. In their different ways of registering dissent from the premises of the questionnaire, as a paradigm of the political environment, they disagreed with most respondents; the full numbers of those who were ambivalent are unclear. Traces of the *versus* habit remain in recent criticism of the writing and writers of the conflict, not least in antipathy towards Eliot’s stated neutrality. This chapter examines writing about the Spanish Civil War in *The Criterion*. It engages with a number of critics who have written about Eliot’s response, and cast doubt on his avowals of neutrality. It seeks to show that although Eliot’s attempt to remain aloof from politics might seem to have been an inadequate response, his unwillingness to express support for the Republican cause, is not evidence that he was covertly pro-Franco; rather he was thoughtful about the implications of neutrality, and sought to ground his position philosophically.

---

II. Non-intervention and neutrality

One of the reasons why the organisers of the questionnaire believed neutrality to be a problematic position was that the policy of non-intervention that was pursued by the British government was *de facto* to the advantage of the Nationalists. Franco's July 1936 putsch had sought to depose with force the Popular Front government which has been democratically elected in February, and it had done so with the support of the armies and governments of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, in clear defiance of the international Non-Intervention Agreement. The support which the Republic received from the Soviet Union was not sufficient to compensate for the military intervention of the Axis powers. Writers on the left believed it was their duty to see beyond the politicking of the British government to the principles and consequences of policy decisions, campaigning amongst other things for the lifting of the embargo on the export of arms to the Spanish government. They signified this commitment to intervention in their texts, as Margot Heinemann, one of those left activists, wrote recently: "The reviews and advertisements in *Left Review* alone show the unprecedented extent to which writers became involved in practical action and the campaign for solidarity, despite the British Government’s policy of so-called non-intervention - which in practice amounted to helping Franco to strangle the Republic." Edgell Rickword, in one of the most bitterly satirical poems of the

---


15 Margot Heinemann, "*Left Review, New Writing* and the broad alliance against Fascism," in Timms and Collier, eds., p.129. (Hereafter, Heinemann, 1988a.)
war, blamed the British government's non-intervention for the deaths of Spanish children:

A hundred children in one street,
Their little hands and guts and feet
Like offal round a butcher's stall
Scattered where they'd been playing ball -
Because our ruling clique's pretences
Rob loyal Spain of her defences
The chaser planes and A-A guns
From which the prudent Fascist runs.  

A non-interventionist response was seen simply and hypocritically to condone the status quo. By contrast, in his first comment on the Spanish Civil War in The Criterion of January 1937, Eliot explicitly advocated the maintenance of the British government's policy:

Some people have agitated for the raising of the embargo on the export of arms to the Spanish Government. But at this stage of the game, I suspect that those who 'support the popular demand that the ban on the export of arms to the Spanish Government be lifted' are really asking us to commit ourselves to one side in a conflict between two ideas: that of Berlin and that of Moscow, neither of which seems to have very much to do with 'democracy'.

Irresponsible zealots who have advocated 'intervention' on one side or the other - who advocate, that is to say, the overt supply of arms - will never be deterred by considerations such as these .... (XVI, p.290)

This encapsulates issues which troubled him, and to which he would return - irresponsibility, extremism, the dubious imperative of commitment. I suspect that his mimicry of the language of popular journalism - "at this stage of the game" - was intended to satirise that register of language and argument, as ironic comment on the urgency of the pro-interventionists.

Eliot's neutral response to the Authors questionnaire, and to larger issues

---

16 Edgell Rickword, "To the Wife of any Non-Intervention Statesman (March, 1938)," in Poems For Spain, p.76.
raised by the Spanish Civil War has provoked a range of adverse comments ever since. William M. Chace has described it as "enervating in its mixture of formal correctness and moral antisepsis." Denis Donoghue wrote in 1977 that it is "still possible that neutrality was the wisest position to hold" as "Most of the rhetoric lavished upon Left and Right now appears silly", but he nonetheless felt that "Eliot's version of neutrality is chilling, because it is facile in the assumption of a perspective far beyond the fray." Cunningham has suggested that neutrality was simply a screen for pro-Francoism, and that this justified the rhetoric of opposition: "the right-wing sympathies of so-called neutrals were indeed clear: whether in T. S. Eliot's stodgy polemics in the Criterion or Percy F. Westerman's lively non-interventionist yarn for boys, Under Fire in Spain. Hence the posture of the famous Left Review pamphlet of 1937, Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War." In his anthology of Civil War prose, Spanish Front, Cunningham has further argued about these "stodgy polemics": "If one looks at the accumulating political and critical journalism of T. S. Eliot, his fence-sitting position can be seen wobbling more and more towards the side of Franco and the Right." (However, a consultation of Donald Gallup's Bibliography shows that Eliot's dual preoccupation in his journalism outside The Criterion between 1936 and 1939 was with religion and drama.)

---

17 Chace, p.174.
Cunningham has written extensively on the literature of, and literary responses to, the Spanish Civil War; his most sustained engagement with Eliot's editorial writings came in one of the earliest of these pieces. Cunningham begins with an investigation of *Authors Take Sides*, particularly the ideological manoeuvres behind the construction of the "Neutral?" category. He cites the periodical *Night and Day* (edited by Graham Greene) as an example of genuine neutrality, in part a result of its "indifferentism". When he turns to *The Criterion*, his analysis of Eliot's position is often sympathetic to Eliot's premises: "It is evident that Spain became for Eliot not only the apotheosis of all he'd ever preached about extremism, but also the battleground over which he worked most strenuously to establish the honourableness of taking no side" (p.61). But he is reluctant to take Eliot's avowal of neutrality in the questionnaire at face value: "Neither Eliot, nor the Criterion was, of course, indifferentist. But can Eliot's stance on Spain be categorized ... as a neutral one?" (p.55). The conclusion at which Cunningham arrives is that "Eliot wasn't, as every reader of the Criterion would know or suspect, neutral, [although] he might, with Pound, just be credibly 'Neutral?" (p.65); however, this "false" neutrality is "a richly devious and complex stance" (p.65). Cunningham states his view explicitly on this point: Eliot was not neutral in any real sense of that term, rather, he was covertly sympathetic with Franco. The evidence he adduces is varied: Eliot's disdain for the manifestos of leftist intellectuals (pp.55-7); his élitism, involving the rejection of collective

---

interests, conceptualised as the mob or the mass (pp.57-8); his thorough-going antipathy to communism (p.62). The accumulation of these is sufficient to swing the balance of probability for Cunningham.

The most precise analysis comes at the climax of this piece, in a close reading of a passage from one of Eliot’s commentaries; this is a passage which has attracted critical attention, and Donoghue, as well as Cunningham, takes it as the locus of his critique, although their conclusions differ. The commentary, unlike any other, was clearly dated "November 18th, 1936", and published in The Criterion of the following January:

Now an ideally unprejudiced person, with an intimate knowledge of Spain, its history, its racial characteristics, and its contemporary personalities, might be in a position to come to the conclusion that he should, in the longest view that could be seen, support one side rather than the other. But so long as we are not compelled in our own interest to take sides, I do not see why we should do so on insufficient knowledge: and even any eventual partisanship should be held with reservations, humility and misgiving. That balance of mind which a few highly-civilized individuals, such as Arjuna, the hero of the Bhagavad Gita, can maintain in action, is difficult for most of us even as observers, and, as I say, is not encouraged by the greater part of the Press. (XVI, pp.289-90)

Cleo McNelly Kearns contextualises Eliot’s reference to Arjuna with the following summary:

The Gita consists of responses to questions directed by Arjuna, on the battlefield, to Krishna, his divine charioteer, who, in recognition of the disorder of the world, is acting as a saviour of mankind. The occasion of the questioning is the immediate and agonizing problem of whether Arjuna should engage in battle against his own family and friends, to whom he has deep ties of love and duty. His cause is, without question, just; the issue is whether the killing and destruction involved are worth the pain and anxiety of killing one’s own kin, either in terms of harm done to others or in terms of the salvation of one’s soul.22

---

For Donoghue, Eliot's reference to the Bhagavad Gita is "exorbitant if not gratuitous"; in The Dry Salvages Eliot's reference to Arjuna is commensurate with the poem's intensity, but in the Criterion commentary "the reference to Arjuna is not earned, it is set down on a page which has done nothing to justify it. The moral superiority which it claims cannot appear as anything but bleak indifference, pointing not to the grandeur of the Quartets but toward a lesser work of this period, The Family Reunion ...."23 Donoghue reads the text of the reference, and finds it distasteful and pretentious; but this might simply be a matter of taste, and just because Donoghue finds it to be excessively high-minded in this context, that does and did not necessarily diminish its force as a philosophical nuance for all readers of The Criterion. Christopher Ricks has argued of this passage that it "deserves respect even from those who believe that Eliot misjudged the Spanish Civil War."24 However, Ricks in turn seems to be offering a rather backhanded judgement of someone whose political misjudgments - if they were such, and Ricks does not ally himself explicitly with those who believe that Eliot got it wrong - have been so extensively judged.

Cunningham has been one of Eliot's most consistent judges on this issue, and he extrapolates the subtext of the Arjuna passage, in order to concentrate on the "fratricidal"25 nature of the conflict in the Gita:


24 Ricks, 1988, p.252.

25 This is Helen Gardner's word, in her book The Composition of 'Four Quartets'. It is emphasised in the Spanish context by Christopher Ricks, in his review of that book, "Intense Transparencies," Times Literary Supplement, 15 September 1978, p.1008, in turn cited by Cunningham, 1980a, p.64. It was also used of the conflict at the time, for instance by John Middleton Murry, in his
What is implied, altogether consciously or not, is that Eliot won’t oppose Franco, because the European Fascists are cousins and benefactors. Utilizing Arjuna as the model of a ‘highly civilized’ disinterest cannot be other than an admission not merely that [Charles] Maurras and his ilk are Eliot’s intellectual benefactors, but that for all its wire-drawing and intellectual demarcation disputes his Lancelot Andrewsism, his merry Andrewsism, is first cousin to the Fascism the Left Review wanted him to denounce. Taking sides against Franco would be to smite his friends. In implying so, Eliot was de facto depositing himself on the same side as the Daily Mail and the Tablet and all the other crude anti-Communists whose pronouncements he kept on professing himself disconcerted by. It was the side where he was always suspected of belonging.26

As I show later, Eliot did denounce the supporters of Franco on a number of occasions, most notably in defence of Jacques Maritain. But this is the least of the problems of Cunningham’s argument, which takes far too much for granted, besides its unsatisfactory climax.

Ostensibly, he is drawing out the most precise nuances of the Arjuna reference, in an attempt to elucidate it fully, and to give it due weight. However, the question of how much Eliot was consciously implying in invoking the Gita is more important than Cunningham’s cursory treatment of it suggests; the rhetoric of persuasion which is evident in this passage, and of which the most notable trope is Cunningham’s "cannot be other than", is insufficient to sustain an argument which strains the reference to the Gita, by mapping it directly onto the Spanish situation. Eliot was not projecting himself onto Arjuna, but offering him as an ideal exemplar; even if he were making so close an identification, and the Franco-ists were seen as familial, Kearns demonstrates nonetheless that Eliot-Arjuna sees the fight against them as a just one. The first part of the sentence, "That balance of

26 Cunningham, 1980a, pp.64-5.
mind which a few highly-civilised individuals, such as Arjuna, the hero of the
*Bhagavad Gita*, can maintain in action, is difficult for most of us even as
observers," would carry a similar meaning if the reference were excised: Eliot does
not depend on the *Gita* to make his argument, and therefore to interpret his
argument predominantly through its allusion is ultimately misleading, for it makes
the reference bear too much weight.

None of the articles in which Eliot discussed the Spanish Civil War sustain
Cunningham’s ascription of covert sympathy with Franco’s putsch, and in aligning
Eliot with the right on this issue, Cunningham misrepresents his position as
expressed in *The Criterion*. Ian Hamilton also doubts the genuineness of Eliot’s
avowals of neutrality in his response to Spain. He presents a bleak picture of
Eliot’s politics at this time, asserting that a "brief anthology of [Eliot’s] responses
to, say, the Spanish War, Fascism, slum clearance, censorship etc., would make
fairly sinister reading these days." To Hamilton "It was fairly obvious that Eliot
would take the clerics’ side during the Spanish Civil War - this was for him barely
a matter of politics at all"; but he provides no quotation or analysis of material
from *The Criterion* to substantiate his contention, although his book is about the
context of literary journalism. Katharine Bail Hoskins acknowledges that Eliot was
publicly neutral, and suggests that Eliot’s writings express "a nearly equal distaste
for both parties" in the conflict; indeed, that "his impartial criticism of both sides is
consistent with his stated refusal to take part in ‘these collective activities’"; but
she is unable to resist the ascribing to him implicit political alignment: "If, as
seems likely, Franco’s Spain came closer than Negrín’s to Eliot’s idea of a

---

27 Hamilton, pp.73, 76.
Christian society, he did not publicly say so."\(^{28}\) We can assume that if Hoskins had had access to private statements to this effect - in the form of letters, most feasibly, or anecdote - then she would have cited them as evidence. As it is, speculation about what Eliot may or may not have felt about Franco and Negrín is irrelevant. The important issue is how Eliot employed *The Criterion* as a public forum for engagement in controversy.

* * * * *

III. Eliot and the contexts of the left

Those who have accused Eliot of being implicitly pro-Franco, as well as not explicitly anti-fascist, write frequently from an overtly left perspective which is not simply opposed to right-wing political opinion, but is keen to demonise those who dissent from the premises of a left-right division - in Eliot's case, through asserting the necessity of a neutral position. Eliot was conscious of this: "People are annoyed by finding that you are not on their side; and if you are not, they prefer you to surrender yourself to the other: if you can see the merits, as well as the faults, of the parties to which you do not belong, that is still worse," he wrote in 1937 in a review of Wyndham Lewis's *The Lion and the Fox*.\(^{29}\) In his defence of Lewis we might detect some self-consciousness about his own position, and prescience about

---


the ways in which he in turn would be represented.

For writers on the left, the thirties is remembered as an age of collectivist activity, when intellectuals worked with and for the causes of the workers, with the Spanish Civil War as its moral and emotional climax. For Cunningham, "Spain provided ... a situation where the dreams and aspirations of the thirties generation of critics and writers could be tested." For Heinemann, who was there at the time, "To study [Left Review and New Writing] provides a context for the most characteristic thirties writing." But it is unclear what aspect of the literary culture "the most characteristic" represents, and it is an idea which is largely determined or constructed retrospectively. We might ask further how far such a drive to homogeneity seeks to marginalise, and succeeds in marginalising other thirties discourses, specifically those of the non-left periodicals. Should a committed left-wing criticism be comfortable with classifying literary culture in this way, and with privileging two little magazines without taking into account the genuinely popular literary culture of the time? This is to say nothing of the place of those writers who were explicitly pro-Franco, such as Edmund Blunden, Roy Campbell, Wyndham Lewis or Evelyn Waugh, or of another Roman Catholic writer, the ambivalent Graham Greene.

For Heinemann, The Criterion was far from characteristic, and she asserts

---


31 Heinemann, 1988a, p.113.

that by 1936, "Eliot in *The Criterion* was publicly denouncing all the anti-Fascist movements then gathering strength among writers and intellectuals" (p.123). This reading does not, however, convey the complexity of Eliot's response. Eliot's public statements in the magazine, his editorial commentaries, addressed a range of issues during this crucial year, and he did indeed express scepticism about the reasoning and methods of some of the thirties political movements, and their spokespersons. His commentary in the January number opened with the assertion:

*The Criterion* has never undertaken, but has rather avoided the discussion of topical political issues, however extensive. There are enough other periodicals, of every shade of opinion, which exist primarily for such discussion.... If - what is often doubted - there remains any place for quarterly reviews in the modern world, their task is surely to concern themselves with political philosophy, rather than with politics .... (XV, p.265)

This is a distinction which Eliot had been attempting to maintain throughout the magazine's life. Political discussion is allowed when it becomes essentially a textual matter. Invoking Julien Benda's idea of the intellectual as ultimately responsible citizen, Eliot demarcated the magazine's domain of interest: "whenever any collection of intellectuals, of *clercs*, takes upon itself to issue a manifesto at some moment of crisis, then I think that it is within our province to discuss, not so much the crisis itself, as the opinions of the intellectuals about it" (XV, p.265).

This last distinction clearly serves as a model for the forthcoming conflict in Spain, although it is questionable how far such a distinction is tenable, in that the opinions of commentators, the controversy and debate generated by a crisis, become part of the experience of the crisis. This January commentary attended to three manifestos issued by different parties in France in response to the Abyssinian situation. Eliot did not identify by name any of their sources, only ascribing them
to the right, the left, and the Catholics. Far from condemning the left, Eliot addressed an implicit audience whom he assumed would do so, and argued that in this instance "The principle of justice affirmed by the intellectuals of the Left is at least analogous to Christian justice. And to say that to maintain Christian principles, in a crisis such as that which has called forth these various declarations, is to weaken our defences against communism, is a confession of cowardice" (XV, p.269). Thus he defended the left against its antagonists on the instinctively communist-phobic right.

In his next commentary of April 1936, Eliot had nothing specific to say about the intellectuals' response to international events, but considered the relation between Christianity and communism at a theoretical level. He returned in the July number to the issuing of manifestos, and complained:

There would seem to be no subject today on which more words can more easily be expended to less purpose, than that of the ethics of War and Peace. Waves of discussion rise and fall in the correspondence columns. Neither the musterings of Canon Sheppard, nor the downright knot-cutting of the Bishop of Durham, nor Mr. Aldous Huxley's quotations of Lactantius and Tertullian, get us any forwarder. (XV, p.663)

The bulk of this commentary was given over to a consideration of the concept of a just war, stimulated by the Bishop of Durham's reflections on the subject. There is nothing to suggest that Eliot was seeking to condemn the left's protests against the increasingly antagonistic and militaristic international situation. In his final commentary of the year, in October, Eliot was again concerned with the concept of issuing manifestos as a political act, and he was stimulated by the receipt of a number of pamphlets, the most significant being one entitled War and Writers, which was sponsored by the International Peace Campaign. He complained:

One would prefer to deal with questions that are soluble, and discuss
subjects on which understanding is possible. But one is impelled, by the receipt of manifestoes [sic] to be signed by 'artists and writers', as well as by scientists and other intellectual workers to pursue reflexion on the subject of peace and war.... Artists and writers are exhorted to efforts of various kinds in the cause of peace. So far, I have not been invited to sign any manifesto in favour of war; but I do not doubt that if a war broke out in which there appeared to be any reason for Britain's participation, manifestoes to this effect would at once be offered for signature. (XVI, p.63)

In a sense this foreshadows the *Authors Take Sides* scenario, in so far as the sponsors of that questionnaire were keen to emphasize the necessity of taking part, and to suggest that the international dimension and consequences of the Spanish Civil War offered a "reason for Britain's participation". Heinemann has suggested that "much of the poetry of the period expresses bitter frustration, shame and anger at the part we as a nation were playing, both because it was seen as an ignoble conniving with fascist aggression and because it could only mean doom for Britain and the hastening of a world war." But Eliot was sceptical about the necessity for foreign interventions, and about the manifesto's privileging of writers' responses to war:

> While I am not insensible to argument in favour of anything which will help me to ply my own trade to the best of my ability, the assertion that 'modern war and preparations for war are hostile to the arts, and most of all to writing' (I do not understand why most of all to writing), seems to me almost trifling when the issue is so serious. (XVI, p.65)

(One might add that the outpouring of writing during the Spanish Civil War showed that the argument that war was hostile to the production of art was misleading). He reiterated his point in a different way a year later, when the issue had shifted from how individuals would cope in a time of war, to what form of

---

peacetime government was best for the production of art: "It is as disagreeable for the ordinary stock-broker or workman to be conscripted into waging war as it is for the artist. What democracy frequently does, is to allow the artist, or self-supposed artist, to pursue his self-imposed task in peace, at the price of starving" (XVII, p. 82).

In April 1937, he complained again about what he saw as excessive issuing of manifestos:

It has now become almost obligatory for every intellectual to issue some public statement of opinion on the subject of Peace. Mr. Aldous Huxley’s strange little pamphlet has at last drawn the fire of the *Left Review* crowd, in the form of another little pamphlet by Mr. Day Lewis. Mr. Lewis writes in a chirpy and come-off-it style in contrast to Mr. Huxley’s more orthodox elegance (I wish that either of them could write as well as Mr. Russell at his best). The demerit of this kind of pamphleteering warfare is, that each side believes that it has established its own case when it has demolished at least a part of the enemy fortifications. (XVI, p.472)

Eliot’s comments on these texts were not, as Heinemann states, attacks on their anti-fascist political positioning, nor did Eliot’s argument, in this instance, issue from a right-wing position. Rather, he was drawing attention to what he saw as the futility of constantly issuing textual responses to the threat of war, and the semantic emptiness of the various declarations. That the pamphlets were issued by the left is not irrelevant, and Eliot’s objection to their methodology, rather than their ideology, rather misses the point that pamphlets are by their nature partial and advocatory. Another pamphlet on which Eliot commented invited its signatories to declare that they would

---

34 Aldous Huxley *What are you going to do about it?*, Cecil Day Lewis, *We’re not going to do nothing*.

35 A reference to Bertrand Russell’s *Which Way to Peace*, which Eliot had recommended in his commentary in the previous number.
'employ to the best of our ability and with all possible diligence every legitimate means at our disposal to deprive of power every political leader, professional politician or publicist of whatever category who, whether by word or action, shall do anything to promote or accentuate international misunderstandings and unrests or who shall in any way conduce to a state of warfare between any nations anywhere or at any time.' (XVI, p.67)

Eliot rightly objected: "it pledges one to do no more than is the duty of every person without making any pledge. In its general acceptability lies its weakness" (XVI, p.67). His conclusion was that only one group of pacifists were "occupying an impregnable position" (XVI, p.67-8), by which he meant, presumably, a position that was informed by a philosophical and ethical rigour, deriving from a tradition of writing and thinking. This group was the Christian pacifists: "Those who believe that the word of God revealed to man is uncompromisingly and without exception opposed to the taking of human life may be wrong, but they cannot be confuted. They hold a respectable position, in that they oppose, not the incidental evils of war, but war in itself as an evil; they do not maintain that it is dreadful to be killed, but that it is a deadly sin to kill" (XVI, p.68).

I have quoted at length from Eliot's commentaries in 1936 in order to show that the hostility of some recent criticism over-simplifies the implications of his writing, and that it tends to exaggerate the presence of opposition to left-wing causes, movements, and histories in Eliot's texts. None of the commentaries constitutes what Heinemann describes as a public denunciation, which is not to say that they are not sceptical. The larger issue is that it is problematic to situate Eliot in a left-right opposition in relation to these issues. His texts are obviously not unambiguous, and are susceptible to sub-textual readings; but it is necessary to recognise that however sceptically Eliot's overt avowals of detachment and neutrality are read, they do not add up either to condemnations of anti-fascism, or
to support for rightist political leaders.

* * * *

IV. "The just impartiality of a Christian philosopher"

Eliot developed the reasoning and justification of the neutral position he adopted in a number of his editorial commentaries in *The Criterion*. The first occasion was in the number of January 1937. He opened by dissociating himself from overt political comment: "Those who would like to believe in the progress of political institutions can take no honest satisfaction either in events in Spain or in the opinions and sympathies which these events have tended to arouse in this country" (XVI, p.289). Eliot saw in the situation not a great welling-up of collective responsibility leading to a clear sense of political direction, but rather a "deterioration of political thinking, with a pressure on everyone, which has to be stubbornly resisted, to accept one extreme philosophy or another" (XVI, p.289).

Just as thinkers on the left did, Eliot saw the conflict as "an international civil war of opposed ideas", and believed therefore that the clearest thought was necessary. This engagement with ideas was jeopardised, he believed, by the partisanship of the newspapers and magazines, which sought to "hasten" the "disintegration" of the "precarious balance of ideas in our heads", according to their different tendencies.

Eliot made an extended plea for philosophical neutrality in the face of pressure from the popular press, articulating here the most forceful and clearest statement of his position. In the passage cited above (XVI, pp.289-90), he proffered Arjuna as an exemplar, and invoked some of the central ideas of his critical and social thinking: disinterestedness, humility, civilisation, and a commitment to a non-Western tradition of literary exemplum. His position may seem excessively
detached, even evasive, but this is acknowledged implicitly in the resonantly Eliotic notion of the "ideally unprejudiced person". He recognised that no one was ideal, and no one unprejudiced, and still he refused the demands of realpolitik, asserting that a recognition of human failings entailed "reservations" on the part of those who felt compelled to take sides. In his commentary of July 1936, which would have gone to press well before the Francoists' coup, he had written about the concept of a just war, and argued that although Christians may engage in a just war, "Unfortunately, very few people are ever in a position to be possessed of adequate knowledge to be able to decide whether a particular war is 'just'" (XV, p.663). The idea of compulsion which Eliot explicitly disputed was employed by the sponsors of the Authors Take Sides pamphlet, who argued that "we are determined or compelled, to take sides." There were few "reservations" and little "humility and misgiving" on the part of most of those who responded to the questionnaire, and a discourse of certitude was encouraged and quickly established. But Eliot believed that knowledge sufficient to justify even humbly taking sides was inaccessible to those who had little experience of the situation. In a contemporary fragment, unpublished until 1960, Simone Weill wrote from her own experience that it was difficult to come to honest conclusions even for those who were in Spain at the time: "In the howling gale of civil war, principles get completely out of phase with realities, every sort of criterion by which one might judge actions and institutions disappears, and social transformation is left completely to chance. So how can one report something coherently on the strength of a short stay and some fragmentary observations?"  

36 Tr. Valentine Cunningham, and quoted in Spanish Front, pp.xxx-xxxi.
informed was a pressing issue for some. To others, the deposition of a socialist government which had been democratically elected with a popular mandate, by a putsch of right wing generals, made the issue starkly clear. Franco’s actions had been constitutionally illegal, and yet nowhere did Eliot indicate his acknowledgement of this. It might seem that the cost of Eliot’s conscience was too high, and that to be neutral in the face of what many people believed to be happening, and the obvious injustice of the coup, was inhumane. Donoghue pertinently asks whether Eliot’s argument "raises a doubt about the merit of pursuing the study of political philosophy if it must retire at the first touch of a political situation."\textsuperscript{37} To Kenneth Asher "it seems at least fair to say that from his supernaturalist vantage point, important political distinctions inevitably became blurred."\textsuperscript{38} Eliot’s position is undoubtedly difficult, insofar as doing nothing might be seen to be the easiest course, rather than the most thoughtful, and doing nothing for ethically committed reasons questions common assumptions about the nature of commitment, i.e. that it entails action, as well as contemplation. Eliot’s guide, argues David Moody, was the potentially "frigid" principle that "while the pure intellectual analysis of the philosopher may terminate in emotional conviction, emotional conviction should not interfere with his analysis."\textsuperscript{39} Ricks’s analysis is the most sympathetic. He suggests that the Arjuna passage "bears witness to one form which conviction may legitimately though unexpectedly take. Such balance of mind can be distinguished both from the unmisgiving fervour that is partisanship


\textsuperscript{38} Asher, p.86.

\textsuperscript{39} Moody, 1994b, p.323.
and from the unperturbed tolerance that is indifference. Ricks identifies a complex and ambiguous middle ground, a difficult position with which to sympathise; this might be one reason why Eliot has been the subject of adverse criticism on this issue.

Eliot was concerned that the interests of Christianity in society should be the predominant focus of thought. But this concern did not mean that his sympathies were automatically with the clerics and the established Church in Spain. He saw that

The victory of the Right will be the victory of a secular Right, not of a spiritual Right, which is a very different thing; the victory of the Left will be the victory of the worst rather than of the best features; and if it ends in something called Communism, that will be a travesty of the humanitarian ideals which have led so many people in that direction. And those who have at heart the interests of Christianity in the long run - which is not quite the same thing as a nominal respect paid to an ecclesiastical hierarchy with a freedom circumscribed by the interests of a secular State - have especial reason for suspending judgement. (XVI, p.290)

This passage shows that it is misguided to assert that Eliot instinctively allied himself with the ecclesiastical right. Eliot was not so naive as not to recognise that the ideological links with the Roman Catholic church which Franco established had secular as well as religious implications for the government of Spain, in terms of authority, hierarchy and social control. The individual must be eventually responsible to and for his (implicitly religious) conscience, which is very different from an affiliation with an institution, however venerable. Eliot could not, in good Christian conscience, commit himself to either side and he was not convinced that those who could, and did, were acting in a fully responsible way.

In his search for the via media, Eliot attacked both left and right. An

---

40 Ricks, 1988, p.253.
explicit attack on the left came in the penultimate number of The Criterion, in October 1938. In the bulk of the commentary Eliot was not so much denouncing the causes of the left, but rather the principle of taking sides. He spoke out in defence of a fellow neutral who, significantly, had been the object of an attack by the right. He asseverated that "those who have approved the independent and courageous position of [Jacques] Maritain should have the opportunity of affirming their approval" (XVIII, p.58). The French Roman Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, one of Eliot’s 1926 exemplars of classicism, had delineated a neutral position in his introduction to Alfred Mendizabal’s book Aux Origines d’une Tragédie. His main purpose was to refute the Nationalists’ argument that their cause amounted to a holy war, and he argued passionately against their hypocrisy:

> In the name of the holy war, this [White, i.e. Nationalist] Terror is doing its work under the signs and standards of religion, and the Cross of Jesus Christ shines as a symbol of war over the agony of those who have been shot; and neither the heart of man nor his history can put up with that.\(^{41}\)

Maritain acknowledged that the conflict was deeply embedded in the history of Spain, particularly in the history of its class politics, and the relations between the majority of the population and the Church. Conscious that he was an outsider, and as a Christian, he wrote:

> It is no business of a foreigner to take sides in this civil war: he has not sufficient information to guide him, or direct experience of the matter, or any of the needed qualifications. We must stigmatise it as highly unbecoming the way in which party passions have in every country exploited the Spanish tragedy in order everywhere to raise the level of hate. (pp.42-3)

---

As a consequence of his articulation of these ideas and values, Eliot reported, "Señor Serrano Suner, General Franco’s Minister of the Interior, attacked M. Maritain very violently in a speech which is reported in *La Gaceta Regional* of Salamanca .... What inflamed Señor Suner’s anger appears to have been, primarily, M. Maritain’s refusal to admit the assertion that the war of the Franquistas is a ‘holy war’" (XVIII, p.58). This attack strengthened Eliot in his antipathy to the practice of politics, and the ideologies of politicians:

The importance of Señor Suner’s outburst need not be exaggerated. He is not the first politician to utter foolish and intemperate words; a politician can be quite efficient at his job without having much intellectual ability; and a person of that type, in the midst of a civil war, would have to be a very superior person indeed to appreciate the just impartiality of a Christian philosopher. (XVIII, p.58)

This last description represents a deep endorsement of Maritain on Eliot’s part; this endorsement and the public stand made in support of Maritain’s beliefs indicate that Eliot was genuinely attempting to develop a neutral position, and that it was not simply a case of his suppressing his sympathies with the Nationalists. Further, Maritain provided Eliot with the rigour and clarity of argument which the latter felt was necessary to maintain non-commitment in the face of assaults, directed at its absence of moral justification, from the left.

Eliot then shifted his focus in the commentary, from defending Maritain from the right, to using Maritain’s arguments to produce a critique of the strategies of the left. He asserted that *The Criterion*’s "concern should be rather with that part of the public which is inclined to attribute all the ‘holiness’ of this war to the party of Valencia and Barcelona [i.e. the Republic], and which, though not likely to express its views so immoderately as Señor Suner, would hardly find M. Maritain’s philosophy any more acceptable" (XVIII, p.58). Eliot differentiated between the
parties of the left whom he was addressing. His argument was not with "the small
number of communists", but with "the larger number of the heirs of liberalism,
who find an emotional outlet in denouncing the iniquity of something called
‘fascism’" (XVIII, pp.58-9):

The irresponsible ‘anti-fascist’, the patron of mass-meetings and manifestoes [sic], is a danger in several ways. His activities, when exploited by a
foreign press, are capable of nourishing abroad the very ideas which he so
violently repudiates; they confuse the issues of real politics with misplaced
religious fanaticism; and they distract attention from the true evils in their
own society. (XVIII, p.59)

Thus Eliot made a stand for neutrality, and expressed solidarity with others of the
same mind in Europe, while trying to ensure that that stand could in no way be
interpreted as expressing partisanship.

Eliot’s political philosophy at this time was a commitment to the principle
of non-engagement, a refusal to take sides. This derived in part from a sense of the
necessary relativism of the Christian to secular matters which he articulated in the
essay, "Catholicism and International Order":

of one thing I feel more and more sure, and that is that the Catholic cannot
commit himself utterly and absolutely to any one form of temporal order. I
do not mean by this that he must remain aloof, or refuse to champion any
cause or adopt any course to which reason, sensibility and wisdom converge
to point; but that his attitude must be always relative, that he must never
devote the same passion to any Kingdom of this world that he should
render to the Kingdom of God. ¹⁴²

In the course of a telling analysis, "The Christian philosopher and politics between
the wars", Moody sees the essence of Eliot’s position as a "defence of detachment
against all committed ‘sides’," ¹⁴³ and he shows how Eliot’s commitment to a non-

¹⁴² EAM, p.128.

¹⁴³ Moody, 1994b, p.323.
temporal ideal of society and government, and his striving for a transcendent perspective, may make his writings on contemporary events seem abstract and at times inhumane. One positive political consequence of this detachment was that Eliot resisted the inter-war temptations of allegiance to either fascism or communism. Edward Timms has summed up the situation thus: "So strong was the sense of disillusionment with capitalism and democratic politics, which were blamed not only for the horrors of the [First World] war but also for the post-war economic malaise, that many of the finest minds were drawn towards ideologies which promised more radical solutions - communism at the one extreme, Fascism at the other." But Eliot, who recognised the truth of this analysis, was resistant. Foreseeing the imperative to commitment that would characterise the thirties, he wrote in April 1929: "If, as we believe, the indifference to politics as actually conducted is growing, then we must prepare a state of mind towards something other than that facile alternative of communist or fascist dictatorship" (VIII, p.380). That alternative clearly would be in some way founded in Christianity, and its development culminated in the lectures which constituted *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939).

* * * *

V. The war and the press: mediation and understanding

In *The Criterion* in July 1937, Eliot wrote about the polarities generated by the Spanish conflict and he reflected on the ways in which propaganda about the war was promulgated in print culture, focusing on ideological distortions in the Roman

---

Catholic press:

The situation in Spain has provided the perfect opportunity for extremists of both extremes. To turn from the shrill manifestoes of the Extreme Left, and the indiscretions of the Dean of Canterbury, to the affirmations of Mr. Jerrold and Mr. Lunn, is only to intensify the nightmare. On the First of May *The Tablet* provided its explanation of the destruction of Guernica: the most likely culprits, according to *The Tablet*, were the Basques' own allies, their shady friends in Catalonia. (XVI, p.670)

Eliot is here holding up *The Tablet*'s explanation of the destruction of Guernica as a prime example of the manifest untruths and gross propagandist misrepresentations that came out of the war. He describes the distortions of right wing writers as an intensification of the "media nightmare"; and it may be that he intended his comment "according to *The Tablet*" to imply a sufficiently eloquent expression of his distaste for, and distrust of the pro-Nationalism of English Catholics.

There were many atrocities, of which the destruction of Guernica is the prime example, the reporting of which was manipulated and distorted by one side or the other for propaganda purposes. Many certainties were generated about Spain, only later to be shown to be false, and throughout, Eliot sneered at partisanship on either side. The suggestion has been that Eliot criticised the anti-Fascists more than the pro-Franco faction, thus revealing his covert sympathies. However, this was more a consequence of the predominantly left-wing tendencies of the writers and periodicals in that part of the literary culture which Eliot found most interesting. These tendencies were often articulated in the "new" periodicals, anthologies, and serial publications of the thirties. Frank Chapman opened his review of *New

---

45 Maritain too was concerned to explode the myth perpetrated by the Franco-ists that the Basques themselves were responsible for the destruction of Guernica, but had attempted to blame the Nationalists and their German allies, in order to gain the sympathy and support of neutral countries (p.35).
I with a discussion of the claim of novelty: "'New is an adjective always much in favour, and there is sometimes a tendency to regard it as containing a virtue of its own. Within the last two or three years we have had New Signatures, New Country, New Verse, in all of which the stress is, a little consciously, on the adjective, but which all have had something new, in a valid sense, to offer us" (XVI, pp.162-3). These four publications were not all equally political, and none of them was as overtly political as Left Review. But those with whom Eliot took issue must have seemed to him the most important and articulate spokesmen of the dominant left consensus among writers. He was, however, wary of the subsumption of the individual intelligence by collective emotions: "The great danger at the moment seems to me to be the delusion of the 'Popular Front', which is so seductive to the intelligentsia of every country" (XVI, p.474) he wrote in April 1937. Part of its danger lay for Eliot in its seductiveness, its ability to sedate feelings of responsibility.

The responses of most British people to the Spanish Civil War were formulated by an extraordinary proliferation of texts - poetry, novels, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, posters, theatre, film, painting, broadcast etc. (The statistics of production are fascinating. The editor of a recent anthology of Spanish Civil War material, Alun Kenwood, states that roughly 8500 poems about the war were published between 1936 and 1939 in the Republican popular press, and that most of the 3400 contributors were anonymous; Kenwood sees this anonymity as a marker of the "solidarity and community inspired by the Republican cause." Since the end of the war, in the Spanish language alone, more than 900 novels have been
published about it.)

Eliot reacted against this mediation, as did other contributors to *The Criterion*. In July 1937, Geoffrey Tandy considered the use of radio as a propaganda tool by foreign regimes broadcasting to England:

> If one has a number of conflicting versions of the same event it is sometimes possible to arrive at a kind of highest common factor by elimination. Sometimes, as in the reports from the opposing parties in the Spanish civil war, the discrepancies are so great as to leave no common factor at all; but even then it is possible to know that one must look elsewhere for the truth about a very horrible state of affairs. (XVI, p.680)

In his commentaries, Eliot returned often to the theme of the banality and bias of the comment and analysis in the press. In January 1937 he wrote that:

> The present danger for us, as individuals in this country, is that the precarious balance of ideas in our heads may be upset by one or the other extreme view, according to our individual backgrounds and temperaments. As I have suggested, the greater part of the Press not only does nothing to restrain this disintegration, but actually tends to hasten it: by simplifying the issues in very different and very imperfectly understood countries, by resolving emotional tension in the minds of their readers by directing their sympathies all one way, and consequently encouraging mental sloth.

> One might think, after perusing a paper like *The New Statesman*, that the elected Government of Spain represented an enlightened and progressive Liberalism; and from reading *The Tablet* one might be persuaded that the rebels were people who, after enduring with patience more than one would expect human beings to be able to stand, had finally and reluctantly taken to arms as the only way left in which to save Christianity and civilization. (XVI, p.289)

In July 1938 he offered an idea of what might constitute a responsible press:

> a mere increase of the number of columns devoted to affairs abroad will not help much, if the news therein is always selected and presented in such a way as to justify a particular policy at home. What we need in the Press is not merely more foreign news, but presentation of foreign opinion, and unbiased explanation of how the foreigner comes to hold this opinion. (XVII, p.689)

The reporting of the Spanish Civil War provoked sardonic ire and hostility in Eliot,

---

for he believed that a responsibility to the truth was impossible to sustain in the popular press, and that distortion had become such a natural part of newspaper journalism that it was accepted. The discourse of newspapers was frequently as tendentious, Eliot believed, as the discourses of the pamphleteers and issuers of manifestos, without acknowledging the polemical or controversial intention. It was already difficult for observers to know or find out the truth about the Spanish Civil War, and this situation was exacerbated by the press.

* * * *

VI. Writing and reviewing responses to the war

Eliot returned to the issues of mediation and representation at the beginning of the Second World War, when he wrote a poem entitled "A Note on War Poetry" at the request of Storm Jameson, for inclusion in her anthology London Calling. The poem opens with the forthright statement: "Not the expression of collective emotion / Imperfectly reflected in the daily papers", which answers the implied question "What is war poetry?" It considers the possibility of a valid poetry of war, and focuses on the issue of the representability of individual experience. From its opening assertion, it engages with the relationship between the individual and the community. Only a poem issuing from "the point at which the merely individual / Explosion breaks // In the path of an action merely typical," a poem engendered by experience of action, could even begin to transcend "the expression of collective emotion" of which much poetry of war, and of overt political protest consists. The voice of the poet may be "merely" individual, and the experience "merely" typical,

but it is only through this emphasis on the private and ordinary that the experience of war, "a situation / ... which may neither be ignored nor accepted", could be sufficiently and honestly conveyed.

Much of the poetry of the Spanish Civil War took an opposed line to this, in its emphasis on the collectivity of experience. During the course of the war, *The Criterion* published only one poem directly concerned with the conflict, and that was "Casualties" by Blanaid Salkeld, which appeared in the number of October 1937 (XVII, p.53). As is the case with much of the poetry published in the magazine, its quality is indifferent. Its theme is a commemoration of the deaths of those killed in action, exploring the possibility of memorialising them in poetry. The poem particularly commemorated the death of Charles Donnelly, who was a contributor to *Left Review*, and one of the five communist writer-volunteers killed fighting for the Spanish government.48 As is typical of much of the war’s verse and criticism, the poem seeks to subsume assumptions about the separateness of action and text, or conflict and writing, in the wholeness of experience. Salkeld discusses the collectivity of poets’ work as a species of conflict in a rather tenuous way, and in the end, her poem turns on a pair of rather feeble puns, which link the fighting back to poetry through wordplay:

    My verity of verse
    Is nothing else
    But rattle of light shells
    With no kernel,
    Since Dublin boys have striven, and are

---

48 On Charles Donnelly see H. Gustav Klaus, "‘The sore frailty of this lasting cause’: Some Celtic Versions of Spanish Civil War Poetry," *Irish University Review* 21, Autumn-Winter 1991, pp.277-82; and Donagh MacDonagh’s elegy "He is Dead and Gone, Lady ... (For Charles Donnelly, R. I. P.)," in Cunningham, ed., 1980b, p.175.
Knit to that alien soil, where war
Burns like the inception of a star.

This was the only piece of writing published in the magazine that engaged directly with the experience of the death of combatants. Most articles, other than the commentaries, were responses to other kinds of text, and *The Criterion* published reviews of the varying texts which proliferated out of the war, rather than sections of the texts themselves. There were many such articles in *The Criterion* which attended or made reference to the Spanish Civil War, evidence of a preoccupation with it among *The Criterion’s* contributors.

There is an important distinction between Eliot’s editorial politics as can be interpreted from his commentaries, and his editorial politics as demonstrated through the selection of articles and reviews for publication. It is difficult to draw conclusions from the latter. A leaning to the right in *The Criterion* during the late thirties was evinced in the sympathetic way in which right-wing periodicals such as *The British Union Quarterly, The Right Review* and *The Examiner* (although the last at the expense of the first) were dealt with by the reviewer of British periodicals, Hugh Gordon Porteus. Porteus gestured towards even-handedness in a way that enervates, rather than stimulates: "What to say about the *Right Review* I really do not know. I seem at the moment to be the only person willing to say anything at all; and what I have had to say publicly is stuck up prominently on all the publications of the house of Potocki, as though it might help the sales" (XVIII, p.170). (According to this account, *The Right Review* attempted to appropriate *The Criterion’s* endorsement, however its editor, the avowedly anti-Semitic, self-styled Count Potocki of Montalk, censured Eliot for abdicating his responsibilities as a
publisher: "Left wing literary slime is encouraged by a firm of which one of our official Royalists (T. S. Eliot) is a director ... how much further can decadence go?"  At this time Faber and Faber published several books by writers sympathetic to the Republican cause, including Auden's "Spain" which was first published as a one shilling pamphlet to raise money for Medical Aid for Spain, and English Captain, a memoir by Tom Wintringham of his service in the International Brigades. Wintringham was one of the founders of Left Review, a member of the Communist party, and for a time the Barcelona correspondent of the Daily Worker, the Party organ.

Porteus attempted to affirm his even-handedness through references to Julien Benda, whose phrase "la trahison des clercs" enjoyed much currency during the thirties. During the course of the Spanish Civil War, Benda was one of the French delegates at the Second Congress of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture which met in Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris in July 1937 (and was reported in Montgomery Belgion's "French Chronicle" in the number of January 1938 [XVII, p.285]). Charles Hobday states that Benda "rejected the view that a writer should hold aloof from politics as a distortion of the theme of his book La trahison des clercs [sic]." He quotes from Benda's Congress speech that was reported in Left Review in September 1937:

'There is here a gross and more or less deliberate equivocation which is to confuse politics, defined in my book as submission to the basest individual interests, with morals, that is with the defence of the highest moral values, principally those of justice and the rights of man, which include the rights

---


50 Hobday, pp.159, 180.
of all nations to a free existence.\footnote{Hobday, pp.189-90.}

In spite of this unambiguous pronouncement, contemporary writers continued to misinterpret Benda's book, and Porteus was one of these: "If the 'clercs' neglect their responsibilities, we shall just be reduced to bellowing partisan slogans at each other, and must resign ourselves to behaving like rival kennels of mad dogs", he wrote in October 1937 (XVII, p.195). The phrase was also invoked by a writer in the Roman Catholic periodical *Blackfriars*, and cited by Porteus in his review of English periodicals in *The Criterion* of April 1938: "We entirely agree with [the *Blackfriars* writer] in seeing 'a perilous treason of the clerks in the unqualified partisanship of Right or Left on the part of the élite.' And that is why some of us, who are not partisans of either believe that qualified criticism of both is to be encouraged" (XVII, p.597).

Porteus addressed the issues of partisanship and neutrality throughout his reviews:

For the observer who wishes to remain neutral - and it is not a comfortable position to maintain - the periodicals of greatest value will be those which dig deepest for facts, pleasant or unpleasant in their relation to editorial policy. Those periodicals which acknowledge no policy at all, the neutral observer will incline to suspect. The frankly partisan organ, in other words, requires reviewing; the insidiously propagandist organ, which proffers selected facts and cloaks them in impartial language, requires exposing. (XVI, p.764)

While he was able to detect the presence of ideological distortion elsewhere, Porteus was secretive (or ignorant) about the influence of his own political tendencies on his reviewing. He initially describes one periodical, *The Dublin Review*, as "extremist partisan", but he later qualified this:
There are always informed articles by experts, and when these are on topics not too closely connected with the Church there is little that could be stigmatised as partisan. In the last few numbers there have been, for example, some of the best-informed articles on Spain that it would be possible to come by, and they have not been the one-sided surveys that might reasonably be expected in the circumstances. (XVI, p.764)

In October 1937 he asserted the necessity of disinterestedness:

> Seven or eight years ago it was possible to discuss with a certain degree of dispassion, in the *Criterion*, the relative merits of Fascism and Communism. To give here a sympathetic appraisal of Fascism to-day, or to accord it the attention it deserves, would be to put the *Criterion* on the black list, to be black-balled by 'all decent-thinking people'. That is surely a disquietening feature of our intellectual life. (XVII, p.194).

But Porteus was himself as ideologically inclined as he accused the left of being, and, as is the nature of ideologues, failed to see this. He identified "an immense sinistral push, on all fronts - as observable in the Press, in Home and Foreign policy, in great anti-Fascist rallies, in the rapid multiplication of cosy left-book-club cells, etc." (XVII, p.193) but curiously asserted that *The British Union Quarterly* "is not merely a Mosley propaganda organ, [but rather] provides a forum for people who wish to meet and speak as they would be strongly discouraged from doing elsewhere" (XVII, p.195). Among the contributors to this last, he mentioned Pound and Lewis, in a clear attempt to gain credibility for *The British Union Quarterly* by bringing them to the attention of readers of another periodical to which they both contributed. Thus, he used his reviews of periodicals, ostensibly a neutral survey, to promote certain publications which were clearly political.

In April 1938, Porteus reviewed the recent numbers of English periodicals, and commented extensively on "the special double numbers of *New Verse* and *Twentieth Century Verse*, devoted respectively to Mr. W. H. Auden and Mr. Wyndham Lewis" (XVII, p.591). Porteus generally praised the content and the
function of these two magazines, but he objected to the "complacent acceptance" of
an item "condemned to brief mention on the back cover" of New Verse. That item
was what Porteus described as "the Spanish Manifesto for Tame Authors." He
commented, employing a quasi-Eliotic terminology and style of argument:

The pamphlet, Authors take Sides on the Spanish War, contains 148 replies to an amusingly inept questionnaire on Spain. This too should make interesting reading in 1948. A prize-fighter's views on ballet, or on Bach, could not be solicited to better purpose, or to conclusions more foregone.... Few of these authors show any more knowledge of Spain than might be expected of a hurried daily browser of the News Chronicle, accustomed to a leisured Sunday chuckle over the Observer. The number of those capable of the most elementary humility, in the face of a little learning, of reticence, in the face of propagandist clichés, of caution, in expression, even of common sense, is terrifyingly small: if this is indeed the cream of our intelligentsia. (XVII, pp.593-4)

The ironic hyperbole of Porteus's jokes is a strategy shared with Eliot's
commentary style, and his concluding emphasis on self-abnegation was a
characteristic Criterion position: Eliot himself wrote at an earlier time: "You must
have humility, and you must have conviction. Humility and conviction should
express our attitude towards the past and towards the future" (XIV, p.89); (although
the aggressive condescension and patronising tone of some of his comments show
scant evidence of his own humility.) Porteus surveyed some specific replies to the
questionnaire, and with a rare wit commended Eliot's reply "[t]o Mr. Empson's
care." Eliot's reply was indeed ambiguous: he was an avowed monarchist, and that
he should describe himself as "naturally sympathetic" with the Republican cause
would be surprising, although this seems to be his meaning. It may have been that
he was expressing a natural sympathy with the desire of the sponsors of the
pamphlet to do something meaningful, rather than with the cause itself: Porteus
does not sustain the inquiry.
Porteus shared Eliot’s scepticism about taking sides, and asserted that he himself was neutral. His neutrality, however, seemed to have extended to sympathetic appraisal of right wing periodicals far more than to discussion of those of the left. The publication of the work of a right-wing writer like Porteus did not mean that Eliot was pro-Franco, just as printing work by a Communist pro-Republican such as Hugh MacDiarmid, or Stephen Spender, or a poem by Blanaid Salkeld commemorating the Republican dead, did not ally him with that side.

There is no detectable dominant political affiliation in *The Criterion’s* reviews of texts about the Spanish Civil War, indeed it was in this section of the magazine that the contributors’ individual tendencies became most apparent. For instance, in his review of *New Writing I*, Frank Chapman commented on that magazine’s editorial policy in relation to the periodical culture:

I take it that, although there is no definite bar on anything but Fascist writing, left-wing authors will have preference. There is no reason why they should not when only such periodicals as *International Literature* and *Left Review* are open to them, and when our daily press serves the forces of Fascism so well. To join no party seems, now, a sign of weakmindedness, and yet, as is obvious in this volume, to give oneself up entirely means, in many cases, a suppression of personality that, in writing, results in what can only be called insincerity, often humourless and, at its worst, smug. (XVI, p.163)

Chapman recognised that a certain amount of partisanship was necessary for balance, but was unconvinced that that balance had been found.

*The Criterion’s* contributors sought to assess the literary culture not only through its periodicals, but principally through its new books, and many of the books which were engendered by reaction to, and experience of, the Spanish Civil War were reviewed in the magazine. The writer, "C. K. C.", of a laudatory April 1937 review of *The Spanish Tragedy* by E. Allison Peers, offered a non-partisan
perspective on the history of Spain in the thirties. He concluded: "Professor Peers
rightly proclaims the Second Republic as dead. Its founders too - tragically for
them - must have come to the same conclusion. They, with Professor Peers, cannot
prophesy; with him, they can only wait and suffer" (XVI, p.572). This is by no
means an unambiguous endorsement of the Republic’s policies, but does seem to
articulate some sympathy with its intentions. A review by Edwin Muir in October
1937 of Auden’s poem "Spain" was concerned about the poem’s complicity with a
discourse that emphasised the necessity of violent action as the most appropriate
response. He quoted a notorious phrase, which Auden later revised, and eventually
removed:

‘the deliberate increase in the chances of death,
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder.’ (XVII, p.150)

Muir suggested that the second line was not really characteristic, and that although
Auden unambiguously committed himself in that line to fighting "as the only
means left of remedying the present state of society", the rest of the poem was
restrained and reluctant in the face of violence.\(^2\) Muir admired the poem’s sincerity
and talent, but sought to distance himself from its assumptions: "I am out of
sympathy with its point of view, for I am not convinced that murder, necessary or
unnecessary, is the only choice left us" (XVII, p.150). He made no mention in his
short review of the couplet in "Spain" which follows that quoted above, that seems
to respond to some of the objections to, and criticisms of, the part played by

\(^2\) Orwell too objected to the phrase, "necessary murder", and wrote in "Inside
the Whale" that "It could only be written by a person to whom murder is at most a
word. Mr Auden’s brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of
person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled" (quoted in
Cunningham, 1980b, p.71).
writers and intellectuals made not only by Eliot, but also by Orwell, and towards the end of the Spanish war by many who, becoming disillusioned, had lost their early fervour:

To-day the expending of powers
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting.

However, it is clear that "the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting", images of the location of the conflict in the alternative spaces of text and discourse, were for some writers important sites for the contesting of the Spanish Civil War.

Muir's piece also contained a review of Federico García Lorca's *Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter and other Poems*. His tone was relatively detached reporting Lorca's death, but he does show awareness of the Hispanic literature and culture of the conflict: "Lorca seems to have been the best living Spanish poet until Franco's followers executed him last year. Their reason for doing so cannot be discovered from this book, for Lorca seems to have been a traditional poet and a Catholic.... One can believe ... that he was a great poet cut down in his prime by an act of stupid hatred" (XVII, pp.153-4). Muir's hesitancy - Lorca "seems" to have been the best living Spanish poet, one can "believe" that he was a great poet -

---

53 In his July 1938 review of Rudolf Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism* Herbert Read, one of Eliot's long-time collaborators sought, like Orwell, to dispel the myth of a unified left: "The [book] is short and polemical; it has been inspired by the necessity of explaining to a public that had almost forgotten the existence of such people the presence of two and a half million anarchists in Spain. But for the outbreak of the civil war, the public would still be kept in ignorance of the fact that among the varieties of socialism is a practical alternative to marxism. Such a conspiracy of silence has been possible because almost everywhere, except in Spain and South America, the socialist press is entirely in the hands of marxists, or of socialists committed to an authoritarian and bureaucratic organization of society" (XVII, p.767).
and his non-description of the political motives surrounding Lorca's death - "an act of stupid hatred" - seem now rather imprecise, as if Muir is uneasy about expressing any more forceful response, or is warily acknowledging the limits of his own knowledge. It is interesting to compare his comments with the Lorca memorial in the March 1937 number of *Left Review*, which also marked the death of another writer, the young Cambridge Communist John Cornford. To Edgell Rickword, at this time *Left Review*’s editor, the deaths of Lorca and Cornford cement anew the bond of humanity between the nations. These men have re-established with their blood that unity between the creators of beauty and the masses of the people, for lack of which culture has become a petty play-word in the mouths of an isolated sect. By facing the enemy where he is strongest and most terrible, they have shown us, who have perhaps ignored earlier warnings, who and what he is. In Spain to-day, for all who wish to see, the human future lies at stake.\(^{54}\)

The tone of this could hardly be further from that of *The Criterion*. Eliot’s measured editorial voice must have been less inspiring, but it might also have seemed more authentic to the position of those remaining in Britain as spectators than the mythopoeism of *Left Review*, which to be fair, was informed by its editor’s experience of having visited Spain, and witnessed the hostilities.

In January 1938, F. McEachran reviewed in *The Criterion* another eyewitness account, Franz Borkenau’s *The Spanish Cockpit*, and it is clear from the reviewer’s comments that both he and the author had formulated their opinions and judgements upon experience and observation. Borkenau was a supporter of the Republic, and his book is an appraisal of the workings of government, based on observations during two stays in Spain, August and September 1936, and January

---

\(^{54}\) Unsigned editorial, "For Culture against Fascism - ;," *Left Review* III, March 1937, p.65.
and February 1937, which charts a marked decline in the early revolutionary ideals on the Republican side. McEachran provided the following summary of Borkenau’s prognosis: "the masses, who care nothing for the Marxist dialectic nor for any philosophy imposed from above, may be indifferent to a [Government] victory which is not theirs and so revert to the old apathy, especially if the victory, not inconceivably, is effected by a [Soviet] military dictatorship" (XVII, p.349).

McEachran himself, who was pro-Republic, and pro-Anarchist therefore anti-Soviet, advocates local devolution, and increased subsidiarity. He wrote of having been impressed by a plan he had encountered in Spain, during his visit in April and May 1937, for a "federal peninsula with ample local autonomy for Catalans, Basques, Asturians and other regional groups" (XVII, p.350).

In her April 1938 review of the anthology The Year’s Poetry, 1937, Janet Adam Smith argued that even those of the year’s poems which refer to Spain (including poems by Herbert Read and Stephen Spender) "do not depend on sympathy with one side or the other, but on a feeling that is characteristic of our age, that the value of human life is greater than that of any ‘cause’" (XVII, p.523). Smith’s assertion that the individual’s interest superseded that of the community was the opposite of much of the rhetoric of the thirties, and her liberalism conflicts with the doctrine of necessary commitment. It may have been that by this stage of the conflict Smith believed that disillusion with taking sides had become the dominant poetic response, a view of which she certainly would have been disabused by reading Rickword’s poem "To the Wife of any Non-Intervention Statesman", dated March, 1938.

---

55 Esenwein and Shubert, p.248.
In July 1938, *The Criterion*’s lead review was John Middleton Murry’s piece about Alfred Mendizabal’s *Aux Origines d’une Tragédie*. He articulated a remarkable congruence of opinion with the attitude later taken by Eliot, and both were united in their praise of Maritain. Murry described Maritain’s preface as a searching exposition and a noble vindication of the basic principles of Christian political philosophy, as they must be applied by an honest Christian thinker to events in Spain. As was to be expected, he has been violently attacked for his attitude by those ‘political’ Catholics for whom it is self-evident that General Franco’s forces are waging ‘a holy war’. M. Maritain firmly denies the very possibility of ‘a holy war’ in a purely profane civilisation like our own .... (XVII, p.719)

Murry emphasised the importance of Maritain’s Catholic world view on his perception of events in Spain. His conclusion was that "probably there is no more urgent need than the universal acceptance by Christian minds of some fundamental principles of moral theology and an agreement on their application to the problems of modern politics" (XVII, p.721).

*The Criterion* did not have a dominant "line": Eliot’s line was to denounce lines. The magazine published work by contributors who associated themselves with a spectrum of positions: pro-Republicans, neutrals, and writers who aligned themselves with the pro-Franco faction at one remove. But the fact that the editor and one of his most senior contributors, though known to hold disparate views on other matters, and in the past to have engaged each other in notable controversies, argued at different times and in different contexts for the same principle or belief, does indicate the possible existence of a common set of assumptions and discourses. In this controversy, that "line" derived its conceptual framework primarily from the politically neutral philosophy of Jacques Maritain.

* * * * *
VII. Conclusion

In the week following Eliot's death in January 1965, the journalist C. L. Sulzberger devoted his "Foreign Affairs" column in the New York Times to the subject, "T. S. Eliot - Intellectuals in Politics". Sulzberger quoted extensively observations that Eliot had made to him in person on the role of the intellectual in politics. As Sulzberger recollected, Eliot was ambivalent about the extent to which writers should be involved in politics, and framed the issue in terms of responsibility:

The writer does not necessarily limit himself to taking an interest in the infringement on the freedom of other writers. He has the responsibility of any decent citizen of another occupation. Acts of tyranny invite the protest of anyone.

But there are some issues we cannot easily comprehend. For example, during the Spanish Civil War I felt the less foreign interference there was on one side or the other the better it was. That point of view now seems rather out of date. So many fictions have been given currency. One's duty as a writer is essentially to protect writers in other countries, men like Dery or Pasternak. The writer has a responsibility to express his views on injustices to other writers - as such.

Of course, the writer has other responsibilities qua human being, not purely as a writer. It is not good enough for a writer simply to sign letters drawn up by someone else. That is a cheap way out. But there are occasions when a writer should accept any opportunity to express his views.56

Eliot was careful to hedge around the issues. He did not resolve the question of whether or not writers should limit their political interventions to those occasions on which the liberty of other writers is being threatened; nor did he clarify what occasions might justly provoke comment from writers. His acknowledgement that his point of view on the Spanish Civil War "now seems rather out of date" does not necessarily mean that he himself believed that it was so. This was not a renunciation of his previous position, nor an articulation of a retrospective desire.

---

that he had taken sides: after all, "out of date" is a rather impersonal kind of rejection.

In October 1937, he had expressed scepticism about the self-privileging of those whom he described as "self-supposed" artists, by which he meant all artists, and he wrote forthrightly about the necessary circumscriptions on the politicisation of the artist:

Any attempt to determine the political conditions necessary for the successful cultivation of ‘art’ is likely to turn out to express only the slightly disguised political sympathies of a particular group of ‘artists’. No one can object to ‘artists’ banding themselves together for the purpose of advancing political tendencies with which they sympathize; but they can only legitimately do this as human beings, or at most as representatives of a particular movement in art: They have no claim to speak in the name of ‘Art’ in general. There are artists of equal distinction holding opposite political views, and there are some who are not interested in politics at all. Whatever their views, it is not their distinction as artists, but only their general intelligence, that gives them authority to hold and propagate political views. (XVII, p.83)

This was clearly a response to the pro-left ideas gathering strength among writers of the time. It was Eliot's distinction as an artist that had brought him the editorship of The Criterion and it was this editorship which gave him the position of authority from which to propagate his political views. It may be that Eliot's general intelligence was too general when the issue was so specifically political.

In his commentaries on Spain, Eliot argued that the likelihood of being, or becoming prejudiced in the context of the propaganda and emotion which Spain generated was great, and that being compelled to take sides - to choose one of two allegiances - was not the only way, nor should the issue be so framed. Principled neutrality was the position he felt it necessary to take, and he articulated it consistently. In retrospect, it appears that Eliot saw the issues less clearly than many other writers did, and was less decisive about the injustice of the
pronunciamento than he might be expected to have been. In this he was no more at fault than the bulk of the British people, including the government of the day. The political situation led Eliot into commenting on matters about which his knowledge was insufficient, and the distinctions which he had drawn, during the twenties, between the practice and theory of politics, and The Criterion's affirmation of the separateness of these domains, no longer seemed to be attuned to the political mood. Eliot's attitude to the practice of politics was however, significant for its consistency, and he attempted to maintain a constant position, whereas in other controversies, the flexible and pragmatic evolution of his ideas was notable. The increasing pressure of politics on writers and on literary culture, and the impossibility of confining the political to the domain of theory, as the magazine had sought to do, was what brought about the end of The Criterion in 1939.
Conclusion: the end of *The Criterion* and after

Publication of *The Criterion* ended in January 1939, sixteen years and three months after it began. For a literary magazine with a very small circulation, this longevity was, in itself, no small achievement, many of its contemporaries were much shorter lived. Eliot was its only editor, and in his final editorial piece, "Last Words", he explained why he believed that a journal such as *The Criterion* could only be identified with one editorial figure:

I am convinced that *The Criterion* is not the kind of review which can be taken up and continued by one editor after another. Another man might make something better of it, but he would have to make something very different; and in so doing he would be handicapped rather than aided by *The Criterion*’s tradition. If a similar review is needed, then it will be far better for someone else to start a new review with a new title. New conditions will very likely require new methods and somewhat different aims. (XVIII, p.269)

Any continuation of *The Criterion*, Eliot suggested, would then bear a similar relationship to the magazine as Eliot thought it had borne, at least in its early days, to *Arts and Letters* (XVIII, p.270).¹ Eliot had thought for a time that Michael Roberts, an editor and anthologist, as well as a *Criterion* contributor, might have succeeded him; after Roberts’s death, he wrote in 1948: "He would have been an admirable editor of a review of ideas: indeed, had *The Criterion* continued, he was the only man junior to myself of whom I could think for the editorship."² However, that succession did not take place, and with Eliot’s decision to cease publication,

---

¹ See *Letters* I, pp.461, 467, 547.

the magazine closed. Some time before he wrote "Last Words", the importance of *The Criterion* in Eliot's life and work, and the importance of his participation in it, were acknowledged and institutionally recognised. In April 1932, Eliot's brother, Henry Ware Eliot, deposited a whole run of the magazine up to that time (forty-four issues) with other materials, in an archive to be held at Eliot House, Harvard University. This thesis acknowledges that *The Criterion*’s character and development were always subordinate to Eliot's ideas. In a journal of larger circulation and more popular audience, it might have been possible for another editor to take over, within the confines of the journal’s established tradition, but *The Criterion*’s existence was contingent upon Eliot's participation. 

Eliot foresaw the magazine's cessation some time in advance of its happening, and his last three editorial articles raised the question of how *The Criterion*’s project might be continued, and what the future held for literary reviews. In July 1938, he wrote: "when I enumerate the periodicals that I read regularly, and the opinions of which I take seriously, I find that with the exception of *The Times* they are all periodicals of, I imagine, considerably smaller circulation than either *The Spectator* or *The New Statesman*" (XVII, p.687). This might suggest some antagonism towards the popular print media, but it is also evidence of Eliot’s sincere belief that the exchange of ideas in society depended upon small, even coterie publications. He went on:

I question whether, in these days, the highest level of criticism can be hoped for in periodicals of more than a very small circulation.... I doubt whether a high standard can be expected from any paper to which the popularity of its reviews is of commercial importance. So far as culture

---

depends upon periodicals, it depends upon periodicals which exist as a means of communication between cultivated people, and not as a commercial enterprise: it depends upon periodicals which do not make a profit. (XVII, p.690-1)

It was easy for Eliot to write this, from the comfort of his office at Faber and Faber, with the security of the "complete editorial freedom" (XVIII, p.270) that their financial support of The Criterion provided. Disdain for profitability is only possible when one is heavily subsidised, as the editors of The Calendar of Modern Letters discovered. This magazine ran from 1925-1927, first as a monthly, then as a quarterly, but it ended for lack of money. Its editors explained this and concluded the final issue with a piece entitled "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning": "We have decided to scuttle the ship, rather than to have the leaks periodically stopped by a generous patron, because the present literary situation requires to be met by a different organization, which we are not now in a position to form."^4 In October 1938, Eliot published further ideas about the relation between profit, circulation, and intellectual merit: "the periodicals for which an intelligent man is glad to write, apart from financial compulsion, those in which he finds himself in the most congenial company, tend to be those which cannot pay adequately or cannot pay at all; and these indeed are likely to be subsidised in some way, or run at a loss to somebody" (XVIII, p.61). This was precisely the position of the magazine he had edited: in 1950, with the benefit of eleven years of hindsight, he described The Criterion as having "panted for seventeen years with the aid of artificial respiration", and suggested that a "serious review" could never keep going without

^4 Unsigned, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," The Calendar IV, July 1927, p.175.
Eliot concluded his editorial comments in *The Criterion* considering the "probable future of the literary review" (XVIII, p.273): "It will not be the large organs of opinion, or the old periodicals; it must be the small and obscure papers and reviews, those which hardly are read by anyone but their own contributors, that will keep critical thought alive, and encourage authors of original talent" (XVIII, p.274). This emphasis on the marginal is rather pessimistic. In asserting that literary magazines would be insular and inward looking, Eliot accepted that literary culture had become fragmented, and that common ground barely existed any longer. What common ground could there be between periodicals "which hardly are read by anyone but their own contributors"? Eliot’s 1939 vision of the culture of literary journalism was tremendously diminished from the ideas about a pan-European community of related and interacting periodicals which he put forward in the twenties.

In bringing *The Criterion* to an end, Eliot considered possible futures, but his "Last Words" are primarily about why he felt that *The Criterion* had come to its end. He attributed what he perceived as a decline in the magazine’s quality in part to the international political situation:

> With this number I terminate my editorship of *The Criterion*. I have been considering this decision for about two years: but I did not wish to come to a decision precipitately, because I knew that my retirement would bring *The Criterion* to an end. During the autumn, however, the prospect of war had involved me in hurried plans for suspending publication; and in the subsequent détente I became convinced that my enthusiasm for continuing the editorial work did not exist.

> Sixteen years is a long time for one man to remain editor of a review; for this review, I have sometimes wondered whether it has not been

---

too long. A feeling of staleness has crept over me, and a suspicion that I ought to retire before I was aware that this feeling had communicated itself to the readers. (XVIII, p.269)

Eliot’s emotions here were complex - personal and private, but at the same time essentially responses to public events. It was not that the external privations of war - paper shortages and rationing for instance - necessitated that the magazine should end: Scrutiny kept going throughout the war, and the first number of Cyril Connolly’s Horizon was not published until the war was four months old, in January 1940. Rather, political events (particularly the German annexation of Czechoslovakia⁶) engendered despondency in Eliot and a feeling that he simply did not wish to carry on. This, and his boredom with the rigours and routines of editorship,⁷ were responsible for The Criterion’s closure: "In the present state of public affairs - which has induced in myself a depression of spirits so different from any other experience of fifty years as to be a new emotion - I no longer feel the enthusiasm necessary to make a literary review what it should be" (XVIII, p.274).

The Criterion’s end was, then, a rather low-key affair, brought about by the imminence of war, and attended by depression and self-doubt on the part of its editor, with none of the forward-looking defiance of, for instance, The Calendar’s "Valediction". It happened without prior warning in the magazine, and thus The

---


⁷ In his commentary in the number of January 1932, Eliot had written that he preferred "a condition of affairs in which I have a daily routine of work or business the greater part of which for the greater part of the time I find boring .... a certain amount of routine, of dullness and of necessity seems inescapable from work; and for myself, I am too sceptical of my own abilities to be able to make a whole-time job of writing poetry, even if I had the means" (XI, p.274).
"Last Words" represented Eliot’s most sustained reflection on *The Criterion*, and on editing it. It involved an examination of the expansion of his interests over the period: "For myself, a right political philosophy came more and more to imply a right theology - and right economics to depend upon right ethics: leading to emphases which somewhat stretched the original framework of a literary review" (XVIII, p.272). By the time of its ending, the magazine’s interests could no longer be coherently encompassed within a literary review. Its range of reference had extended too far beyond its editor’s competence, and its contents had become too heterogeneous. The magazine’s writers had never believed that the idea of literature related solely to creative or imaginative work; in describing its controversies as literary, this thesis has assumed that literary controversy can be generated by any one of the many interests to which literary reviews attend. Such a review must always be, to a great extent, a collaborative exercise. The imminence of war suggested to Eliot that a such a group venture would be of peripheral importance, and he focused his intellectual effort on the last three *Quartets*.

*Four Quartets* was the most significant achievement of Eliot’s post-*Criterion* career. The first quartet, *Burnt Norton*, was published in *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (1936), with no reference in *The Criterion*. In October 1938, considering the viability of writing for a living, Eliot confessed: "For most of my life, when I needed money I did not write poetry: I wrote - or talked - about it" (XVIII, p.62). This appeared in his commentary in the penultimate number of *The Criterion*, but it has a ring of greater finality than that date suggests, as though it

---

8 T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men".
were written some twenty five years later. Eliot writes as if his poetic career were
over, even though the remaining quartets would be written and published within the
next five years. The second quartet, East Coker, was published as a supplement to
the New English Weekly of Easter 1940. In a famous, introspective passage, picked
out for special praise by his friend and adviser, John Hayward, who described it as
"poignantly self-revealing", Eliot looked back over his life since 1920:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years-
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres-
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate - but there is no competition -
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business. (V, 172-189)

It is striking to encounter this passage, and to see the twenty years preceding the
writing of the poem, almost the whole of the inter-war years, incorporating The
Criterion years, described as having been "largely wasted". What Eliot says might
be thought to accord with the pessimistic and doubting tone of the final
commentaries. But can readers of The Criterion agree that production of the

---

9 As Helen Gardner shows in The Composition of Four Quartets (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), Eliot did not consider Burnt Norton to be part of a larger work at the time of its publication.

10 Letter to Frank Morley, February 1940, quoted in Gardner, p.17.
magazine was largely a waste of the inter-war years? The word "largely" indicates some discrimination on Eliot’s part, some sense that there were worthwhile achievements in the period, as one would expect in twenty years’ work that included *The Waste Land*, "Ash Wednesday*, *The Sacred Wood*, *Murder in the Cathedral*, as well as the first quartet, to cite just a small part of Eliot’s output. But does this discrimination include *The Criterion*?

The twenty years that preceded the writing of *East Coker* are the core years of Eliot’s achievement, and during this time Eliot made the transition from relative obscurity to become the most authoritative figure in London literary culture; eight years later, he won the Nobel Prize.¹¹ His editorship of *The Criterion* contributed to the accomplishment of this transition. In an article published in the *Partisan Review* in 1949, Delmore Schwartz wrote that "since 1922, at least, Eliot has occupied a position in the English-speaking world analogous to that occupied by Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold." He described this position as a "literary dictatorship", and although he signalled his awareness of the overtones of that metaphor at that point in history, and questioned Eliot’s compulsion to make judgements of value, his article was by no means hostile to Eliot’s criticism. Schwartz divided Eliot’s literary dictatorship into two periods, and dated 1922 "as the approximate beginning of the first period, for in that year Eliot began to edit *The Criterion*, and *The Waste Land*’ was published in the first number."¹² For Schwartz, Eliot’s editorship of *The Criterion* played an

¹¹ Ackroyd, p.289.

important role in his accession to cultural authority. Ronald Bush has written of Eliot's transition as his "conquest of London", achieved through literary journalism, and he dates its beginning as early as 1919. Thus, these inter-war years were, for observers of Eliot's life, years of achievement in journalism and editing, as well as in poetry. Eliot does not clarify his discrimination in *East Coker*, nor pick out any particular aspect of his work from the "largely wasted" years, and we would not expect him to - that would upset the balance and tone of the passage. Thus the poem implies that in spite of accomplishments acknowledged by others, *The Criterion* was part of a larger failure. The outbreak of the Second World War demonstrated that the European cultural cohesion to which Eliot believed the little magazines had made a contribution was a rather distant ideal, rather than something more attainable.

The last of Eliot's retrospectives on *The Criterion* which I wish to consider is the second of the three talks which Eliot broadcast to Germany in March 1946, which were published as an appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* with the title "The Unity of European Culture". In these talks Eliot reflected on the possibility of European cultural reintegration, and in the second talk, he discussed the contribution which a renewed community of magazines might make. He looked back at the efforts that *The Criterion* had made to be a review of European ideas and writing, and he concluded: "I am still of the opinion, twenty-three years after I began, and seven years after I ended, that the existence of such a network of

---


independent reviews, at least one in every capital of Europe, is necessary for the transmission of ideas - and to make possible the circulation of ideas while they are still fresh."\textsuperscript{15}

Eliot stated frankly that in talking about what his aims for \textit{The Criterion} had been, his point was that they failed, chiefly because of the breakdown in relations between European nations in the years leading up to the Second World War. He surveyed the writers of some of those nations, in order to explain the particular problems associated with each of them. Eliot formed the opinion that:

the newer German writers had less and less to say to Europe; that they were more and more saying what could be understood, if understood at all, only in Germany. What happened in Spain is more confused; the tumult of the civil war was hardly favourable to thought and creative writing; and that war divided and scattered, even when it did not destroy, many of her ablest writers. In France there was still free intellectual activity, but more and more harassed and limited by political anxieties and forebodings, and by the internal divisions which political prepossessions set up. (pp.116-7)

In a very forthright statement, Eliot blamed this fragmentation on the increasing pressures of politics, and went so far as to say that a "universal concern with politics ... tends to destroy the cultural unity of Europe" (p.117). One might argue, however, that political thinkers in the countries of Europe should have been more concerned with political events in neighbouring nations, rather than less, and that avoiding political engagement was an inadequate position to adopt. One might argue further that something which is "universal" tends to promote, rather than to destroy "unity". But Eliot believed that for a time his own magazine had been able to transcend political problems, and he wrote that \textit{The Criterion} had:

a definite character and cohesion, although its contributors were men holding the most diverse political, social and religious views. I think also

\textsuperscript{15} NTDC, p.116.
that it had a definite congeniality with the foreign periodicals with which it associated itself. The question of a writer's political, social or religious views simply did not enter into our calculations, or into those of our foreign colleagues. What the common basis was, both at home and abroad, is not easy to define. In those days it was unnecessary to formulate it; at the present time it becomes impossible to formulate. I should say that it was a common concern for the highest standards both of thought and of expression, that it was a common curiosity and openness of mind to new ideas. The ideas with which you did not agree, the opinions which you could not accept, were as important to you as those which you found immediately acceptable. You examined them without hostility, and with the assurance that you could learn from them. In other words, we could take for granted an interest, a delight, in ideas for their own sake, in the free play of intellect. (pp.117-8)

This is a very idealised image of the pluralism and tolerance of The Criterion group. Eliot acknowledged that The Criterion "had clearly failed of its purpose several years before events brought it to an end" (p.117), one reason being that "in the later years it tended to reflect a particular point of view, rather than to illustrate a variety of views on that plane. But I do not think that this was altogether the fault of the editor: I think that it came about partly from the pressure of circumstances ...." (p.118). Thus, however much a literary magazine might seek to eschew direct discussion of politics, it was compelled to become engaged in political controversy in spite of itself. In such a historical situation, it was impossible to maintain disinterestedness about the practicalities of political events, and as a consequence, Eliot felt unable to continue with the magazine.

In his last commentaries, and at the beginning of the final section of East Coker, Eliot articulated a certain amount of disillusionment with his literary efforts between the wars, including the experience of editing a literary review. His ideas about what a magazine might achieve, in collaboration with other similar publications elsewhere in Europe, were confounded. In the appendix to the Notes,
Eliot meant what he said in expressing doubts about what *The Criterion* had achieved, but his belief in the potential contribution that literary journalism could make to culture had not disappeared. He never became involved in a similar venture again, but as his letters of 1949 and 1950 to the editors of the new periodicals *Nine* and *The Catacomb* indicate, he came to believe again that literary periodicals actively made a crucial contribution to literary culture. The end of the war called for Eliot to adopt a different tone, and rather than owning up to, and accounting for, his failures, he was interested in how the lessons learnt from experience might make a difference in the future. One of the most important of these lessons was that without the space provided by magazines such as *The Criterion* for debate and controversy, intellectual progress and the circulation of ideas would have been impeded. *The Criterion* did not publish exciting new work in prose and poetry to the same extent as did the much shorter lived *Egoist*, nor did it promulgate a systematic set of critical ideas as did *Scrutiny*, nor did it combine creative work and criticism as energetically as *The Calendar of Modern Letters*; but it provided Eliot with a space in which ideas could be developed and tested, and in which he and his contributors could respond to important literary, social, and political events. In 1934, Eliot wrote that "in times like ours we need ideas, not only our own, but antagonistic ideas against which our own may keep themselves sharp" (XIII, p.273), and the existence of *The Criterion* enabled this oppositional exchange of ideas to take place. Study of *The Criterion*’s engagement in literary controversy enables those who are interested in Eliot’s work to explore a particular context for his concerns in the period 1922-1939, and to see how editing a literary review affected his perception and expression of them.
Works Cited

1. Contributions by T. S. Eliot to *The Criterion*

1.1 Commentaries

"Censorship and Blasphemy." April 1930 (IX, pp.382-4).

"Censorship by What Authority?" September 1928 (VIII, pp.3-4).

"Censorship and the Films." April 1930 (IX, p.384)


"The Cinema Quota." October 1927 (VI, p.290).

"The Conversations at Pontigny." November 1927 (VI, pp.385-7).

"The European Idea." August 1927 (VI, pp.97-9).

"Fate of the Labour Party." July 1930 (IX, pp.589-90).


"Francis Herbert Bradley." October 1924 (III, pp.1-2).

"Further Reflections." October 1929 (IX, p.5).

"The Future of the Roman Empire." April 1926 (IV, p.221-2).

"How They Buried Thomas Hardy." March 1928 (VII, p.193).

"Hulme and Classicism." April 1924 (II, pp.231-2).

"Jacques Rivière." April 1925 (III, p.344).


"King Lear." April 1924 (II, p.235).

"Last Thoughts." April 1929 (VIII, p.381).

"Last Words." January 1939 (XVIII, pp.269-75).

"Lord Brentford’s Apology." October 1929 (IX, pp.1-3).
"Mr. Mead and the Bishop of Natal." October 1929 (IX, pp.4-5).


"Neo-Classicism." June 1927 (V, pp.284-5).

"Neo-Classicism Again." September 1927 (VI, pp.193-4).


"A Note on Our Reviews." January 1930 (IX, p.184).


"Of British Freedom." September 1928 (VIII, pp.1-3).

"Of Your Charity." October 1929 (IX, pp.5-6).

"The Place of Robert Bridges." July 1930 (IX, pp.587-8).


Untitled. April 1933 (XII, p.468-73).

Untitled. July 1933 (XII, pp.642-7).

Untitled. October 1933 (XIII, pp.115-20).

Untitled. April 1934 (XIII, pp.451-4).


Untitled. October 1936 (XVI, pp.63-9).


Untitled. April 1937 (XVI, pp.469-74).


Untitled. October 1937 (XVII, pp.81-6).


"What Books should be Reviewed?" May 1927 (V, pp.188-9).


1.2 Other


"Dramatis Personae." April 1923 (I, pp.303-6).

"Four Elizabethan Dramatists." February 1924 (II, pp.115-23).


"In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd." January 1923 (I, pp.192-5).


"Preface" to The Criterion: 1922-1939, repr., 18 vols. London: Faber & Faber,


2. Contributions by other writers to The Criterion


Boase, Alan M. Correspondence. April 1929 (VIII, pp.501-3).


Higgins, Bertram. Correspondence. September 1927 (VI, pp.258-9).


Lawrence, D. H. "Flowery Tuscany I." October 1927 (VI, pp.305-10).
  ---. "Flowery Tuscany II." November 1927 (VI, pp.403-8).
  ---. "Flowery Tuscany III." December 1927 (VI, pp.516-22).
  ---. "Mornings in Mexico." June 1926 (IV, pp.467-75).
  ---. "Mother and Daughter." April 1929 (VIII, pp.394-419).


Read, Herbert "Humanism and the Absolute." December 1928 (VIII, pp.270-6).


3. Other works by T. S. Eliot


"American Literature and the American Language." TCC, pp.43-60.


"Catholicism and International Order." EAM, pp.113-35.


"Contemporary Literature: Is Modern Realism Frankness or Filth?" The Forum LXXXI, Feb 1929, pp.xlvi-xlvii


"D. H. Lawrence." Letter to The Nation and Athenœum XLVII, 5 April 1930, p.11.


"Imperfect Critics." SW (1920), pp.15-41.


"The Literature of Politics." *TCC*, pp.136-44.


*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. 1948; London: Faber & Faber, 1967.


"Religion and Literature." *EAM*, pp.93-112


*Thoughts After Lambeth*. London: Faber & Faber, Criterion Miscellany no.30, 1931.


"To Criticize the Critic." *TCC*, pp.11-26.


4. Other contributions to magazines of the teens, twenties, and thirties


Brentford, Viscount. "'Censorship of Books'." Nineteenth Century and After CVI, August 1929, pp.207-11.


5. Secondary


*Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War.* London: Left Review, 1937.


Brentford, Viscount. Do We Need a Censor? London: Faber & Faber, Criterion Miscellany no. 6, 1929.


Foster, Kevin. "'Between the bullet and the lie': Intellectuals and the War." In Kenwood, ed., pp.19-25.


---. "*Left Review, New Writing* and the broad alliance against Fascism." In Timms and Collier, eds., pp.113-36.


Holquist, Michael. "Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship." *PMLA* 109,


Kenwood, Alun. "Art, Propaganda, Commitment: Hispanic Literature and the War."
In Kenwood, ed., pp.27-38.


Klaus, H. Gustav. "'The sore frailty of this lasting cause': Some Celtic Versions of Spanish Civil War Poetry." Irish University Review 21, 1991, pp.268-84.


Praz, Mario. "T. S. Eliot as a Critic." In Tate, ed., pp.262-77.


Schwartz, Delmore. "The Literary Dictatorship of T. S. Eliot." In Selected Essays


---. "Remembering Eliot." In Tate, ed., pp.38-64.


