Eliot as Satirist

POMEROY, ANDREW,DAVID

Abstract

T. S. Eliot is seldom considered a satirist, even though satirical elements have long been perceived in his early poetry, most notably by Hugh Kenner and W. B. Yeats. Building on the scholarship from the last two decades which explores Eliot's relationship with popular culture, as well as the recently published letters from Eliot's early life and the drafts of *The Waste Land*, this dissertation argues that Eliot's earliest impetus was towards satire, and that his early career was a development, and finally an abandonment, of this mode. The first section surveys Eliot's earliest satirical poetry from *Inventions of the March Hare* to the controversial 'King Bolo' verses, contending that Eliot's initial satirical project was to provoke the particularly American puritanical culture that he grew up in. The second chapter explores Eliot's development of this satirical impetus as it relates to *Poems 1920*, particularly as it manifests in Eliot's defences of Wyndham Lewis, Ben Jonson, and Francis Cornford's theory of ancient 'tragi-comedy'. The concluding chapter deals with *The Waste Land*, firstly with the earliest reviews that correctly perceive Eliot's satirical tone in the poem, and then with Ezra Pound's edits, contending that the pair's differing opinions on the nature and purpose of satire motivated this editorial process and Eliot's eventual abandonment of the form.

Eliot as Satirist

Andrew David Pomeroy
PhD English Literature
Department of English Studies, Durham University
2023

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Introduction:
Yeats on Eliot as Satirist

T. S. Eliot is seldom referred to as a satirist. His reputation precedes him as an austere 'church-warden',[1] as W. H. Auden called him, or an 'Anglo Catholic in religion, a classicist in literature and a royalist in politics',[2] as Eliot famously said of himself. Much has been written in recent decades to complicate this image of Eliot the reactionary.[3] Numerous studies in the early 2000s developed a new understanding of Eliot's relationship with popular culture.[4] More recently, Robert Crawford's 2015 biography *Young Eliot* presents a picture of Eliot full of youthful vitality but burdened by physical and mental stress. Many of these new understandings of Eliot are made possible by the recent publication of Eliot's collected *Letters*,[5] which revealed that behind his austere public persona, Eliot was sending rambunctious, highly sexualised and unapologetically prejudiced 'King Bolo' ('Bolo') poems to his literary friends. Nonetheless, despite this new material, the notion that the young Eliot

---

1 W. H. Auden, quoted in Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue eds., *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Volume II: Practical Cats and Further Verses* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 39. Hereafter referred to as *Poems II*.

2 T. S. Eliot. 'Preface to For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order' (1928), in Frances Dickey, and Jennifer Formichelli, and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 3: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 513. Hereafter referred to as *Prose III*.

3 Such a reputation was at its strongest in the 1990s, with the growing number of studies on Eliot's anti-Semitism, which I discuss later in this introduction. See, for instance: Walter A. Strauss. 'The Merchant of Venom? T. S. Eliot and Anti-Semitism', in *South Central Review*, 14.3/4 (1997) 39 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3190206> [Accessed 23-07-2018]: 'Sometimes it is hard to believe that Eliot wrote in the twentieth century, indeed became one of the principal voices of the years 1920-45. He is the very model of a reactionary in the exact sense of the word: someone who refuses to recogni[s]e the reality of the present, who rejects any understanding of how the present grew out of the past (despite his professed admiration for Heracleitus), along with an idealization of a past that has long been dead.'

4 See for instance: David E Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Barry J Faulk, 'Modernism and the Popular: Eliot's Music Halls', in *Modernism/modernity*, 8.4 (2001) 603-21 [Online] <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2001.0082> [Accessed 13-11-2018]; Loretta Johnson, 'T. S. Eliot's Bawdy Verse: Lulu, Bolo and More Ties', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27.1/2 (2003) 14-25 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831831> [Accessed 27-11-2018]. To quote Johnson: 'Scholars as various as David Chinitz, Juan A. Suárez, Sebastian Knowles, David Trotter, Loretta Johnson, Barry Johnson, Barry Faulk, and Melita Schuam have contributed significant advances to our knowledge of Eliot's engagement with a variety of popular cultural form and traditions[.]'

5 For my purposes, I quote chiefly from: T. S. Eliot. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume I: 1898-1922*, Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton ed., Revised edition (London: Faber & Faber, 2009). Hereafter referred to as *Letters I*.

was a satirist is only found in scattered remarks.[6] Eliot's early poetry is usually recognised and appreciated for its 'ironic' flavour that participates in the 'satirical spirit [that] pervades the period's literature';[7] however, very few studies attempt any sort of comprehensive view of Eliot's satirical influences,[8] or seek to explore satire as a key driver of Eliot's early poetic developments preceding *The Waste Land*, as this thesis will do.

One of the most recent scholars to explore the influence of satire on Eliot's poetry is G. Douglas Atkins, who wrote in 2013,

> The early poems are, most of them, satirical. […] Although their satirical qualities have long been recognized, the poems of roughly the same period have received scant treatment as satires.[9]

It is rarely remarked that *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) (*Prufrock*) is a book of satires, for instance, despite the fact that it contains numerous poems that mock the 'Ellicott[s]',[10] thinly-veiled caricatures of figures from his own life, written only a few months after Eliot's hasty and not entirely convivial departure from his family in the United States. When the *Prufrock* is discussed as satire, these familial poems are usually underplayed in their importance, as with Lyndall Gordon's assessment that 'the witty, satiric poems Eliot wrote between 1917 and 1919 seem like a digression from his poetic career.'[11] Eliot's own critical terminology does little to enlighten us on his methods. 'Impersonality',[12]

---

6 From chiefly W. B. Yeats, Hugh Kenner, Carlos Baker, and Northrop Frye, all of which I discuss below.

7 David Bradshaw. 'Modern life: fiction and satire', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 218.
I am only aware of one book: Kevin Rulo, *Satiric Modernism* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2021). This appears to be an expansion of Rulo's PhD thesis: Kevin Rulo. *Modernism, Satire, and the Men of 1914: Eliot, Joyce, Lewis, and Pound*, 2012, The Catholic University of America, PhD thesis. Both of these works look at satiric modernism in broader terms, rather than focussing on Eliot in particular.

9 G. Douglas Atkins. *T. S. Eliot and the Failure to Connect* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 4.

10 Eliot. 'Cousin Nancy', in Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue eds., *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Volume I: Collected & Uncollected Poems*, Kindle edition (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 24, line. 1. Hereafter referred to as *Poems I*.

11 Lyndall Gordon, quoted in *Satiric Modernism*, p. 8.

12 Eliot. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), p. 112. Hereafter referred to as *Prose II*.

for instance, was championed by Eliot, but is not obviously apparent in his early poetry, which is frequently influenced by specific events from his own life, personal relationships, and political concerns. In fact, Eliot's early poetry often goes as far as to manifest these 'personal' prejudices into caricatures like Sweeney,[13] Burbank,[14] Fresca,[15] and in *The Waste Land* drafts, 'old Tom' himself.[16]

It is highly significant, then, that a figure such as W. B. Yeats, in his comments on Eliot in his 1936 preface to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935*, said, 'I think of him as a satirist rather than a poet'.[17] This remark comes at the end of the section. Yeats, who here was writing for a general audience, spends the earlier part of the section presenting the typical vision of Eliot as an austere 'high modernist':

> Eliot has produced his great effect upon his generation because he has described men and women that get out of bed or into it from mere habit; in describing this life that has lost heart his own art seems grey, cold, dry.[18]

One can see similar remarks in Stephen Spender, Hugh Kenner, and Northrop Frye.[19] The poet of *The Waste Land* and 'The Hollow Men' was a poet of modern malaise, it is almost trite to say. Eliot's austerity is usually described as a stemming from his 'disillusionment' with the modern world, a word Eliot famously rejected being used to describe *The Waste*

---

13 See: Eliot. 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', in *Poems I*, pp. 49-50; Eliot, 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', in *Poems I*, pp. 51-2; Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama*, in *Poems I*, pp. 115-27.

14 *Ibid.*, 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar', in *Poems I*, pp. 34-5.

15 *Ibid*., *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), pp. 27, 41, etc. Hereafter referred to as *The Waste Land Facsimile*.

16 *Ibid*., p. 5, line. 2

17 W. B. Yeats. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xxii.

18 Yeats, p. xxi.

19 See, for instance: Stephen Spender, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Fontana, 1976); Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot*, Reprinted edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Northrop Frye, *T. S. Eliot*, Revised edition (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1968).

Land.[20] However, Yeats is astute in his recognition that Eliot's 'high modern' coldness came from the standpoint of 'a satirist'.

The notion that Eliot's early poetry was not just 'disillusionment' with the world, but was an attempt in part to satirise it, is rarely found outside of Yeats. One such instance is Northrop Frye in *T. S. Eliot* (1963), who remarks that 'Eliot's earlier poetry is mainly satiric, and presents a world that may be summed up as a world without laughter, love or children.'[21] To Frye, satire was no small influence on the young Eliot, but a 'main' part of his early output. Frye identifies that despite being satirical, this should not be equated with 'laughter', which is absent from Eliot's vision of stultifying modern life. Another early example of a critical work that describes Eliot as a satirist is Hugh Kenner's *Invisible Poet* (1959).[22] Kenner's book has a whole subsection on Eliot's satire,[23] and Kenner perceives satire (although he does not use the term) in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock':

> 'Prufrock' exploits the nineteenth century's specialized plangencies at every turn. 'I grow old … I grow old … / I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.' Everyone remembers these lines. They manage to be ridiculous without being funny (the speaker is not making a joke) or cruel (a joke is not being made about the speaker).[24]

Here Kenner is right that Eliot's target is specifically the cultural hang-ups of the 'nineteenth century' that would loom over Eliot's privileged childhood. Prufrock is a 'ridiculous' caricature of these influences, without being a comedy character or cruel straw-man. This definition is essentially how the term 'satire' will be used in this thesis: satire means specific targets, influenced by real socio-political concerns, which are mocked without laughter, typically with moral undertones.

---

20 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 576: 'when I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed 'the disillusion of a generation', which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention.'

21 Frye, *T. S. Eliot*, p. 48.

22 In this thesis I often cite a reprinted edition of *Invisible Poet* from 1979, but 1959 is the publication date of the first edition, which I use here to demonstrate the earliness of Kenner's insights.

23 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, pp. 73-93.

24 *Ibid*., p. 5.

In later scholarship there are (again, infrequent) assessments that agree with Kenner and Frye, such as Carlos Baker's 1984 study, 'Apostate from Romantic Rule'.[25] Acknowledging Eliot's reputation as an austere modernist, Baker begins with the remark that,

> The atmosphere of high seriousness and romantic gloom that pervades the bulk of T. S. Eliot's verse tends to obscure the fact that he began his long and distinguished career as a social satirist.[26]

Later in the article, Baker goes into more specific detail as to Eliot's satirical beginnings:

> The period of Eliot's social satire began in boyhood, continued through his undergraduate and graduate years at Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Merton College, Oxford, outlasted the Great War, and more or less ended with the satirical sections of *The Waste Land* in 1922.[27]

This outline is supported, now, by the recent *Letters* and other primary sources unavailable to Baker. Eliot shows an early satirical impetus in his 'boyhood' mock-magazine *Fireside*, in which he parodies a Rudyard Kipling story and berates the boredom of 'civilisation'. He would develop this cynicism towards civility in his 'years at Harvard', both in crude form in the Bolo verses, and in more refined form in *Inventions of the March Hare* (*March Hare*). Shortly after, the satires of the Ellicotts that appear in *Prufrock* were written in Oxford under the influence of Eliot's new friend Wyndham Lewis, and this satire would be a main stylistic influence on his poetry at least up until *The Waste Land*, where it ultimately came into conflict with Ezra Pound's editorial pen.

Eliot's early poetry is rarely 'impersonal', but in fact full of caricatures and personas, often transparent disguises for his personal and political gripes. Baker describes Eliot's affinity for caricature this way:

> Eliot's satirical targets are more often people than social institutions. While men like Prufrock and Bleistein, Mr. Eugenides, and Apeneck Sweeney may be pinned wriggling on the wall of his distaste, his strongest impulse appears

---

25 See: Carlos Baker, 'T. S. Eliot: Apostate from Romantic Rule', in *The Echoing Green: Romantic, Modernism, and the Phenomena of Transference in Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 237-76.

26 *Ibid*., p. 237.

27 *Ibid*., 237-8.

> to be misogynistic, as in the couplets that were deleted from *The Waste Land* at Pound's instigation.[28]

Baker's assessment here is that misogyny is a main drive of Eliot's satires, from the 'new women' found in *Prufrock*, to Fresca, the promiscuous and cruel caricature Pound cuts from *The Waste Land*. Baker's insights are supported by the *Letters* and recent biographies: essentially, Eliot's main motivation for this prejudice was his shyness and difficulty with women, which he projected onto his Unitarian upbringing more generally. Eliot's sexual anxiety is most clearly displayed in a 1914 letter to his friend Conrad Aiken where he berates the 'virginity'[29] of the culture he would eventually move to Europe to escape.

'The more we know of Eliot, the better',[30] Ezra Pound declared in his introduction to the facsimile of *The Waste Land* drafts. An attitude quite in contrast with the 'impersonal'[31] critical perspective of Eliot, it is nonetheless a major drive of recent scholarship. From the *Letters*, to Ricks and McCue's two-volume *Poems of T. S. Eliot* (2015), to recent biographies like Crawford's *Young Eliot* (2015) and *Eliot After The Waste Land* (2022), there is more written on Eliot's personal life than ever. However, these studies often must confront the views and attitudes of Eliot that, to modern readers, are uncomfortable. The most widely-cited examples scholarship on Eliot's attitudes are Anthony Julius's study of Eliot's antisemitism, *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* (1995),[32] and Christopher Ricks's broader exploration *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (1988).[33] Both these books were arguing against a critical grain that used Eliot's own pronouncements against biographical criticism and 'personality' to deflect against the man himself.[34] A study of Eliot's satires has a similar

---

28 Baker, p. 240.
29 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.
30 Ezra Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. vii.
31 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 112.
32 Anthony Julius. *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
33 Christopher Ricks. *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988).
34 See especially Julius's introduction for an in-depth consideration of this notion.

problem, in that these poems are typically mixed together with politically reactionary attitudes, from the ridiculous racist depictions in the Bolo verses, the anti-feminist slant in *Prufrock*, the angry antisemitism in *Poems 1920*, and the misogynist depiction of Fresca in *The Waste Land*, much of which Pound and even Wyndham Lewis pushed back against.[35]

Many of Eliot's attitudes do have intellectual and biographical roots, particularly the poems written around Eliot's move to England, which follow the Vorticists in their attempts to 'blast' open the ostensibly stultifying 'snobbery'[36] of Victorian London on the one hand and genteel Boston on the other. Eric Sigg describes Eliot's budding attitudes that made him flee the United States:

> As he acquainted himself with realities that genteel Boston society chose to keep at a distance, Eliot felt uneasy with what he saw as a morally complacent and only superficially cultured society.[37]

Sigg is right here to find the intellectual currents beneath Eliot's decisions, and indeed these criticisms of 'moral complacen[cy]' can be found in, for instance, the *March Hare* poems. However, although these poems have these legitimate intellectual roots, when it comes to reading the poems themselves, modern readers are presented not with considered, intellectual criticisms of 'morally complacent' Bostonian ladies, but instead are forced to confront a particular style of poetry that is often bitter, ridiculous in its angriness, relishing its own bigotry, intending to provoke the reader emotionally rather than intellectually.

To call this style satirical is to recognise that, on the one hand, Eliot was not just being 'cold, dry', as Yeats said of Eliot's 'high modernist' work, and neither is it, on the other hand,

---

35 Pound's cutting of the Fresca passage from *The Waste Land* is the most obvious example. See also: Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (2nd February 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 93, in which he (probably jokingly) claims that Lewis' 'puritanical principles' prevented him from publishing the Bolo verses.

36 Wyndham Lewis. 'MANIFESTO', in Wyndham Lewis ed., *Blast*, no. 1 (London: John Lane, 1914), p. 15.

37 Eric Sigg. 'New England', in Jason Harding ed., *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 18.

to dismiss these poems as being merely jokes, downplaying the offence that they cause. 'Satire [was] particularly important and functional in Eliot', Atkins says, because it is

> traditionally understood as holding a mirror up to one's own nature and so, often, serving as 'cure', it participates in his widespread and frequent efforts directed at his characters – and the reader's – self-examination and -criticism.[38]

Eliot himself almost paraphrases Atkins in his review of Wyndham Lewis's satirical novel *Tarr*, where he says that satire is a way of 'protecting beauty against ugliness'.[39] Indeed, this phrase portrays Eliot's distinctly conservative attitude in its characterisation of modern women, blacks, and Jews, as being somehow degenerate, or antithetical to beauty and order. In attacking these groups, Eliot sees himself as a kind of 'protect[or]'. As Kevin Rulo says in *Satiric Modernism* (2021):

> [S]atire is useful most of all as a kind of cultural positioning […] Amid the perceived situation of modernity as decadence there is a felt need to offer a constructive response[.][40]

One can acknowledge, as Rulo does, that Eliot was reacting against his 'perceived' notions of 'ugliness', without sympathising with him. If we are to really 'know more of Eliot', it is not possible to avoid Eliot's prejudices. Bigoted though they may be, poems like the Bolos or the misogynist fragments from *The Waste Land* were not just a 'digression',[41] as Gordon suggests, but were in fact early expressions of Eliot's political temperaments and prejudicial attitudes.

Modernity for the young Eliot – as well as Lewis and Pound, his two major collaborators – was, in Rulo's words,

> sterility […] affecting every level of society (aristocratic, bourgeois, proletariat) and every sector (industrial, rural, professional, artistic).[42]

---

38 Atkins, p. viii.

39 Eliot. '*Tarr*: A second review of *Tarr* by P. Wyndham Lewis', in Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard ed., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Volume 1: Apprentice Years, 1905-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 746. Hereafter referred to as *Prose I.*

40 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 4.

41 Lyndall Gordon, quoted in *Satiric Modernism*, p. 8.

42 *Ibid*., pp. 24-5.

In Eliot's own terms, modernity is 'civilisation',[43] a culture that disguises its spiritual crisis and fundamental 'boredom'[44] behind boasts of its own advancement. So important for Eliot and Lewis was a counter-signalling of this rhetoric, proudly declaring themselves to be 'cavem[e]n'[45] or 'primitives'.[46] Even when this language veered into racist caricatures, they did not seem to care who it provoked or whether they were entitled to do so. In fact, they seemed to see themselves (as with Eliot's statement above) as being justified in their crusade against the ugliness of the liberal world,[47] which they equate with untampered technological progress and even war. Reviewing Lewis's novel *Tarr*, an irreverent satire of 'flabby' liberalism,[48] Eliot writes:

> The artist, I believe, is more *primitive*, as well as more civilized, than his contemporaries, his experience is deeper than civilization, and he only uses the phenomena in expressing it. Primitive instincts and the acquired habits of ages are confounded in the ordinary man. In the work of Mr. Lewis we recognize the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man.[49]

'Energy' is the crucial word here, for Eliot's vision of modern life is one that has, as Yeats put it, 'life that has lost heart'.[50] Eliot would get many of these ideas from Baudelaire, whose notion of *ennui* appears in *March Hare*;[51] but it was also motivated by Eliot's own feeling of entrapment in a female-dominated family, and a seemingly increasingly feminised society at

---

43 Eliot. 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, pp. 6-7. '[T]he French got hold of it [the island] and built a post there. They educated the natives to wear clothes on Sunday and go to church, so that now they are quite civilized and uninteresting.'

44 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420.

45 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.

46 *Ibid*.

47 This is true also of Eliot's relationship with Pound, where the pair adopted minstrel-style personas in their private correspondence. See: Michael North. 'The Dialect in/of Modernism: Eliot and Pound's Racial Masquerade', in *American Literary History*, 4.1 (1992) 56-76. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/489936> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

48 Lewis. *Tarr: the 1918 Version* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p. 34.

49 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.

50 Yeats, p. xxi.

51 See for instance: Eliot, 'Interlude in London', in Christopher Ricks ed., *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917 by T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), p. 16; 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (Prufrock among the Women), in *March Hare*, pp. 39-41, 45-6; 'Interlude: in a Bar', in *March Hare*, p. 51; 'The smoke that gathers blue and sinks', in *March Hare*, p. 70.

large.[52] His numerous medical issues would manifest mentally as intense shyness and a mindset of insurmountable 'virginity'.[53] Eliot hated these aspects of himself, and he hated the culture that cultivated them within him. He spent much of his Harvard days trying to rid himself of his shyness, of which the ridiculous Bolo poems are the apex.

Of course, Eliot was not naturally a 'cave-man',[54] and he was fully aware of this fact. Conrad Aiken, a friend of Eliot's at Harvard, would say in retrospect that Eliot

> was early explicit, too, about the necessity, if one was shy, of discipling oneself, lest one miss certain varieties of experience which one did not naturally 'take' to.[55]

Much of Eliot's efforts at Harvard, from the Bolo verses to the 'taking of boxing-lessons',[56] appear to be an attempt to masculinise himself. This was even more of a preoccupation for him than his studies, in which he was fairly unsuccessful and was even threatened with expulsion lest he apply himself better. 'He was working, but not very hard',[57] as Crawford writes. Indeed, Crawford comes to a similar conclusion regarding Eliot's attempts to quell his feelings of masculine inadequacy:

> Educated almost exclusively among boys, and now at what was in many ways a single-sex university […] Tom seems to have been assimilated into a predominantly masculine milieu where clubbableness might mask underlying insecurities.[58]

The Bolo verses are the obvious example of Eliot's attempts to mask his sexual insecurities with 'over-compensatory imaginative bravado',[59] but this 'bravado' transfers into his later involvement with the Vorticists and anti-feminist satire more broadly.

---

52 See: Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 25: 'Similarly, for many male writers the female writer or the female social interlocutor is invoked as the ultimate aesthetic ersatz, the artistic or intellectual fraud[.]'

53 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.

54 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.

55 Conrad Aiken. 'King Bolo and Others', in *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium Compiled by Richard March and Tambimuttu* (London: PL Editions Poetry, 1948), p. 20.

56 *Ibid*.

57 Robert Crawford. *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to The Waste Land* (London: Vintage, 2016), p. 79.

58 *Ibid*., p. 82.

59 *Ibid*., p. 152.

Blast was, for Eliot, an exciting, current, brilliantly polemical articulation of all that he had felt growing up in his Boston Brahmin household. Satire, for Lewis, was not just mere laughter at ugliness, but a way of constructing and theorising the modern world itself.[60] There is no better exemplification of Lewis's ideals than the proactive manifestos of *Blast*, whose attempts to 'blast' and 'curse' many disparate aspects of modernity resist easy ideological categorisation. As Morrow says, the magazine was a phenomenon, a

> brilliant combination of fierce critical seriousness and a satirical wit the likes of which hadn't disturbed the flow of British literature since Jonathan Swift published *Tale of a Tub*.[61]

Although the magazine was English and targeted English institutions, the attitudes it polemically set itself up against – from 'Rousseauisms (wild Nature cranks)'[62] to 'snobbishness (disease of femininity)'[63] – overlapped with Eliot's perceptions of liberal-minded Unitarian culture. *Blast*'s most characteristic form was the long lists of figures 'blasted' and 'blessed', defending its own idiosyncratic and hard-to-define, but certainly anti-establishment ideals in a deliberately provocative, highly personal manner.

Eliot would write his own 'blast and 'bless' lists before he even arrived in England, sending them to Aiken primarily, in which he blasted the 'civilised' proponents of Anglosphere imperialism, such as 'Ed. Grey', and blessed 'primitive' Haitian rebels, such as 'Gen. Bobo'.[64] This anti-imperialism is not an attitude typically associated with Eliot, but might be considered as an extension of his cynicism towards 'civilisation'. It stemmed from his familial background, with its unquestioned championing of American emancipatory movements.

Ronald Schuchard describes in *Eliot's Dark Angel* that

---

60 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 15.
61 Bradford Morrow, 'Blueprint to the Vortex', in Lewis, Wyndham ed., *BLAST*, 1 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1914), p. VI.
62 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 13.
63 *Ibid*., p. 15.
64 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (5th August 1915), in *Letters I*, pp. 121-2.

> Eliot has never enjoyed a public reputation as a comic poet or as an obscene poet, but his new friends in London in 1915 were well acquainted with the lusty characters who peopled his bawdy ballads and limericks.[65]

Eliot's London friends, particularly Lewis, would indeed be the new recipients of the Bolo 'bawdy ballads' Eliot had initially written at Harvard. However, although these poems were a starting point in the friendship of these men, Pound and Lewis would never advise Eliot to publish them, and they would remain private jokes for all of Eliot's life. Instead, Eliot the satirist would refine the *March Hare* poems that had made Pound declare, upon arriving in England, that he had 'modernised himself'.[66] *March Hare* is mostly made up not of Bolovian bawdiness, but of highly refined, self-conscious, ironic poems that targeted feminised, bourgeois 'ladies',[67] particularly the Henry James-inspired 'Portrait of a Lady'. Eliot's satirical impetus started with the boisterous Bolos, but did not remain limited to that form. The 'Oxford Poems', as Hugh Kenner called them,[68] appeared in Eliot's first volume, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, and would be Eliot's first published attempt to deliberately distance himself from the 'Ellicott[s]'.[69] Eliot's masculine anxiety is at its most refined and considered in the Oxford poems. This new satire was a way to cast out the parts of himself that he hated and to reinvent himself in a foreign land.

It is only after Eliot read *Blast* and moved to England, where he met Lewis, that his satire moved away from the 'bawdy ballads' in *March Hare* and the ironic 'observations' of *Prufrock* towards an 'objective'[70] satire of modern malaise at large. It is also in this period

---

65 Ronald Schuchard. *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 87.

66 Ezra Pound, quoted in Matthew Hollis. *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber & Faber, 2022), p. 79.

67 This, and similar terms, Eliot uses often in *March Hare*. See, for instance: Eliot, 'Afternoon', in *March Hare*, p. 53, lines. 1-2: 'The ladies […] in the hall of the British Museum'; Eliot, 'Prufrock', in *March Hare*, p. 39, line. 13: '[T]he women come and go'.

68 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 79.

69 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 24, line. 1.

70 'Wherever there is objective truth, there is satire.' Wyndham Lewis, quoted in Hugh Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis: The Satirist as Barbarian', in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 14 (1984), 272. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3508314> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

where Eliot's satire becomes further tangled up with overtly reactionary political implications, including antisemitism and misogyny. Eliot's 'Dark Angel', Schuchard's term for Eliot's private anxieties, 'would accompany him from Boston to London, where […] the playful young ironist would soon be driven to a more savage form of the comic mode'.[71] The 'savage form' is what Eliot calls Lewis's 'energy of the cave-man',[72] an irreverent and highly volatile 'blasting' of modern sterility. It is Lewis with whom Eliot's key discourses on satire are shared. Eliot follows Lewis in his chastisement of mere 'humour'.[73] Humour, for Lewis, was pathetic, a way of brushing off the parts of modernity that needed 'blasting'. Humour was a 'stiff upper lip', all-too-often cultivated by the Victorian Englishman but which should not be entertained in the modernist age of spiritual crisis, where the brutal, socio-critical aspect of satire was needed.[74] This was a highly masculinist ideology, for, as Henkle describes, 'Women in this and other works of Lewis' are reduced mercilessly to bourgeois commodities, to symbols of the softness and inertia of the culture.'[75] Indeed, even the phrase 'Men of 1914' – Lewis's own phrase for himself, Eliot, and Pound – displays this masculinist undercurrent. For Lewis, to merely mock the bizarreness of the modern was not enough, for there was no escape from this 'vortex'. Neither, for Lewis, was satire something that was moral: it could not be, because to him, the vortex had consumed and destroyed moral hegemonies, and defeated the Emersonian faith in rational cultivation that so disgruntled Eliot.[76] One could no longer rely on Christian moral norms or rational ethics to condemn 'decadence', for these norms no longer had any real power – and engaging with them moved

---

71 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 86.

72 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.

73 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 17. See also: *Blasting and Bombadiering*, Revised edn. (London: John Calder, 1982), p. 37: "For what does the 'sense of humour' mean but an ability to belittle everything – to make light of everything?"

74 *Ibid*: 'BLAST HUMOUR / Quack ENGLISH drug for stupidity and sleepiness.'

75 Roger B. Henkle. 'The 'Advertised' Self: Wyndham Lewis' Satire' in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 13.1 (1979) 102. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344954> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

76 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 24, line. 12: 'Matthew [Arnold] and [Ralph] Waldo [Emerson], guardians of the faith'. See Ricks & McCue's note 12, in *Poems II*, p. 433.

one dangerously close to vulgar traditionalism, besides. Eliot, who joined the Anglo-Catholic church in 1927, would come to disagree profoundly with this view; but in his early career, *Poems 1920* especially, Eliot would look to Lewis as a key innovator, a charismatic 'Tarzan of the apes',[77] an energetic 'cave-man' of the sort that the young Eliot could never quite mould himself into.

Although Eliot might have showed his modernist sensibilities with his cynical anti-liberalism in *March Hare*, it is not until *Poems 1920* where he would attempt to actually theorise a truly modernist satirical aesthetic. The familiar Poundian mantra of 'Make It New'[78] applies just as much to Eliot's satire as it does to his other poetry. Lewis was the primary theorist of this satire, but Eliot made his own contributions as well, rhetorically written as to champion his own form and style. Familiar Eliotian terms like 'impersonality',[79] when seen in the context of Lewis's influence, become theories on the nature of satire; so too does the broader 'classicist'[80] project of these 'Men of 1914'. As Rulo says,

> The stuff of which classicism is made consists of the desire to do something new, something 'fresh,' as Hulme once put, and that something is conceived of as being 'hard' and 'dry,' appealing to order and to what Lewis calls the 'external approach' (Eliot calls it 'Outside Authority' as opposed to the 'Inner Voice' of Romanticism). […] The broader project of a poetics of 'impersonality' also fits loosely into this category.[81]

Eliot's notions of 'impersonality'[82] or being 'Outside Authority' – often considered to be a reaction against 'the "Inner Voice" of Romanticism' – is closely aligned to Lewis's notion of 'objective'[83] satire. Considering the friendship he shared with Lewis when writing these essays on impersonality, this alignment is not a coincidence. Even in Eliot's reviews of

---

77 Eliot, 'Contemporanea: A review, in part, of *Tarr*, by P. Wyndham Lewis, and The People's Palace, by Sacheverell Sitwell', in *Prose I*, p. 720.
78 See Pound's 1934 collection of essays of the same name.
79 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 112.
80 *Ibid*, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.
81 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 19.
82 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 112.
83 Lewis, quoted in Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.

Lewis's work, he uses his own critical language to defend Lewis's satire, as if acknowledging that Lewis's project is also his.

After WWI – that 'War to make the world safe for democracy',[84] as Lewis mockingly called it – Eliot would put his developing satirical theories into practice in *Poems 1920*. 'I do not want to be considered a mere Wit or satirist',[85] he anxiously wrote to his brother, referring to the reputation he had cultivated with the Oxford poems and the few *Poems 1920* quatrains that had already been published. Eliot's notion of a 'satirist', as this line implies, had developed significantly by this time. He no longer sought to probe cultural hang-ups in a Jamesian manner, but instead wanted to make his satire more 'objective' and 'impersonal'. Many of the poems in *1920* are written in quatrains, influenced primarily by Gautier and instilled into Eliot by Pound's growing distaste of the 'dilution of *vers libre*';[86] quatrains would appear again in *The Waste Land* drafts, following much the same vein. These quatrains are almost surrealist in style, full of absurd images and ridiculous vocabulary intended to baffle the reader.[87] They are satires focussed on parodying rhetorical flair, rather than parodies of particular individuals or demographics. As Eliot argued in 'Metaphysical Poets', the complexity of modern life demanded complexity in modern poetry;[88] his satire was no different.

Furthermore, the growing 'fairy desert'[89] of tabloid newspapers, public speeches, and war propaganda was ripe for parody, especially for a satirist already interested in cultural hegemonies. Vincent Sherry alludes to this journalistic atmosphere in *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003), in which he argues that 'high modernist' literary style was a

---

84 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 207. Lewis is ironically mouthing the phrase used by Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Lewis says this ironic phrase gave the war a 'satiric identity'.

85 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.

86 Pound, quoted in Hollis, p. 12.

87 Again this style probably influences *The Waste Land*, which utilises complex allusions to much the same effect – although this is not to do with the quatrain form, per se.

88 Eliot, 'Metaphysical Poets', in *Prose II*, p. 381.

89 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.', in *Blast*, p. 33.

parodic response to the increasing vulgarisation of public speech, 'a register to echo and inflect the prodigal logical Liberal war policy.'[90] Eliot arrived in London at, according to Sherry,

> the exact point at which a venerable intellectual legacy, social liberalism with its rich bibliography of concerned humanitarianism, touches awake that equally rich if more cryptic tradition: parodic liberalism, featuring in its most familiar instance the burlesqued voice of the concerned humanitarian in Swift's 'A Modest Proposal'.[91]

Swift would of course be 'blessed' in *Blast*[92] – identified by Lewis as a kindred satirical spirit.

Eliot's quatrains in *Poems 1920* are satires of rhetoric itself, their form appearing tight and logical but always ending in 'the burlesqued voice of the concerned humanitarian'. As Sherry puts it:

> Eliot's quatrain art concocts a rhetorical fiction of particularly sagacious high jinks, sententious absurdity. His tautly formed stanzas employ normative syntax and mechanical metre to create a feeling of reasoned meditation that dissolves constantly, however, into imponderable propositions, unpronounceable words.[93]

Probably the best example of this is 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service'. This poem is a familial satire, but quite different in style from the Oxford poems. In 'Sunday Morning Service', Eliot baffles his reader with highly specialised terms, parodying the speaker's intellectual arrogance; but here Eliot also parodies the limitations of the quatrain form itself, beginning with the appearance of unfolding logic but ending in 'imponderable' ambiguity. No doubt this technique is at least partly influenced by the increasing prevalence of 'public reason', which Eliot and the Vorticists had been cynical about for years, but especially so

---

90 Vincent Sherry. *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 11.

91 *Ibid*., p. 41.

92 Lewis, '3', in *BLAST*, p. 26.

93 Sherry, 'Literature and World War I', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 166.

during the outbreak of war. The *Poems 1920* satires are socially-minded, in the sense that they seek to parody 'concerned humanitarian[s]' in this way.

Eliot's key theoretical essay on satire is 'Ben Jonson' (1919). Ostensibly a defence of Jonson, it serves the dual purpose of defending Eliot and his satirical style in *Poems 1920*. Eliot sees in Jonson a forgotten voice waiting to be revived. Jonson's technique is what Eliot calls 'poetry of the surface',[94] a deliberate lack of depth in character that does not show a lack of talent for subtlety, but rather a keen eye for the abstract. As Eliot said in 'The Oxford Jonson' (1928), the flatness and lack of 'personal feeling' that puts modern readers off Jonson is precisely what makes Jonson's satire 'immensely impressive':

> What is repellent to many readers in the plays of Jonson, or what at least leaves them indifferent, is perhaps this fact that the satire fails of the first intensity, by not seeming to come out of deep personal feeling. By the consistency of the point of view, the varied repetition of the same tone, by artistic constructive skill, Jonson does create the illusion of a world, and works a miracle of great satire without great emotion behind it.[95]

Rulo paraphrases Eliot's thesis this way:

> The chief means for Eliot of this amplification is caricature, another prominent tactic of modernist satire, one that can also be useful for representing colder modernisms' denials of subjectivity and interiority, although caricature need not always be anti-humanist in actual import. Caricature is a central means, largely overlooked at present, by which modernism innovates abstractionist representational strategies. It should be regarded in this vein alongside other strategies like cubist and Vorticist figuration, to which it is closely related.[96]

Eliot wrote 'Ben Jonson' after he expressed his desire to Woolf to move away from the 'interior' style of Henry James and towards the 'externals' of Jonson.[97] This change is influenced by the Vorticist manifestos, whose call to an 'English humour'[98] underlines not just Eliot's interest in Jonson but also his defence of *Tarr*'s 'British humour'.[99]

---

94 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 150.
95 *Ibid*, 'The Oxford Jonson', *Prose III*, p. 452.
96 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 20.
97 Virginia Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
98 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26
99 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

As Schuchard says, '[T]he early thrust of Eliot's literary modernism was in the revival of this comic mode,'[100] which elsewhere Schuchard calls, echoing Lewis, 'ferocious English humour'.[101] There is a social concern that underpins this aesthetic, a sense that modern culture had lost something that it was the artist's duty to rediscover. One should not mistake Eliot's ambition to revitalise satire as mere playfulness or boyish irreverence; Lewis had convinced Eliot that 'humour' was the enemy of satire, and Eliot would be at pains to defend *Poems 1920* as 'intensely serious' despite their satirical content.[102] As Helmling says, Eliot would constantly defend Jonson and others against the charge of unseriousness:

> When Eliot explains that 'with the enfeebled humour of our times the word [farce] is a misnomer', he is covertly announcing an ambition to bring this Marlovian intensity back to contemporary poetry. He characterizes 'farce' as a 'terribly serious, even savage comic humour', which 'attains its effects by something not unlike caricature'.[103]

Just as *Blast* defended Swift and various vaudeville comedians, Eliot too was keen to find shreds of importance in forms sometimes previously disparaged as 'low'.

Jonson was applicable to the modern age, Eliot said, because unlike more conventional satire, Jonson met Eliot's (or rather, Lewis's) definition of a 'non-moral'[104] satirist. Jonson's satire was only 'incidentally a criticism of the actual world'.[105] To be 'incidentally a critic' was the crucial trait that modern satire needed to uphold. Jonsonian caricature was the means for Eliot to advance beyond the *March Hare* satires towards this modern satire. Caricature, in its abstraction and flatness, does not just represent, but also constructs the world, and this is what Eliot meant when he said Jonson was an 'incidental' satirist. Jonson does not mock his characters, as a moralist might, but instead focusses on

---

100 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 90.
101 *Ibid*.
102 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
103 Steven Helmling. 'The Grin of Tiresias: Humor in *The Waste Land*', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36.2 (1990) 140 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441818> [Accessed 21-11-2018].
104 See Robert Lehman. 'Eliot's Last Laugh: The Dissolution of Satire in *The Waste Land*', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32.2 (2009) 69 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25511804> [Accessed 14-11-2017].
105 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.

detached (perhaps 'objective') representation, which only becomes satire as the reader projects their insecurities and cultural hang-ups onto it. According to Lewis, the most powerful satire does not hyperbolise or turn its characters into buffoons – which turns it into pure comedy, moving it away from useful criticism of the real world.[106] Depth of character detracts from satire, therefore, because too-specific characters will be recognised as an 'other' by the audience, who should instead be shocked into confronting their own prejudices. This 'otherising' exists in *March Hare* and *Prufrock*, where the reader laughs at philistines and 'ladies',[107] but does not exist in *Poems 1920*, where the reader is forced to confront their own preconceptions.

Forcing the reader to confront their own alienation is Eliot's primary aim of *Poems 1920*. Only simple shapes can mirror the reader's own prejudices and anxieties back at them. Hugh Kenner displays a similar thesis in *Invisible Poet*, saying that 'what is observed defines the angle of view of an observer. [… They are] poetic mechanisms whose parts circulate about one another, while the poet rests invisible'.[108] The abstractions of *Poems 1920*, and later *The Waste Land*, leave the modern reader baffled, feeling astray, alienated, while Eliot himself 'rests invisible' – and this very much forms part of Eliot's social criticism, his attempts to chastise modern 'Hollow Men'.[109] Eliot's technique is 'calculated to annoy'[110] modern readers, as a contemporary reviewer said of *The Waste Land*.

Another of Eliot's key satirical influences is popular culture. 'At Harvard', says David Chinitz – whose 2003 book *T. S. Eliot and the Popular Divide* (and related journal articles) is one of the seminal studies on the topic of Eliot and popular culture –

---

106 Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.
107 Eliot, 'Afternoon', in *March Hare*, p. 53, line. 1.
108 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 80.
109 See Eliot's 1925 poem of the same name.
110 Harold Monro. 'Notes for a Study of The Waste Land: an Imaginary Dialogue with T. S. Eliot', from *Chapbook* no. 34 (Feb 1923), in *T. S. Eliot: Critical Assessments: Volume II: Early Poems and The Waste Land*, ed. by Graham Clarke (London: Christopher Helm, 1990), p. 88.

> Eliot had regularly attended vaudeville performances with Conrad Aiken; in London he continued to patronize the halls with Wyndham Lewis. Eliot, who had a capacious memory for music-hall material, enjoyed singing popular numbers and re-enacting comic routines for friends.[111]

Chinitz's book is influential for its attempt to complicate the picture of Eliot as buttoned-up reactionary. However, Eliot's interest in popular culture had ulterior motivations, principally the influence of Vorticism. Indeed, it was Lewis with whom Eliot 'patronised' the London music halls. Vorticism's blessing of the popular did not stem from a progressive standpoint – 'Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to',[112] *Blast* says. Hence the acknowledgement of Eliot's popular influences complicates the picture of him as a staunch conservative, but should not diminish it altogether. Music hall was a means of spreading poetry to the uncultivated masses, as Eliot said in one essay.[113] He still considered himself a protector of beauty, and music hall artists like Marie Lloyd were an expression of fragile culture – the 'English nation', in Lloyd's case.[114]

As Chinitz goes on to say,

> The music hall is a rare venue in which Eliot's modernist alienation is momentarily assuaged by a sense of genuine community. The vital element in the music-hall format, for Eliot, is audience participation – a stark contrast to the passivity of the middle class when confronted with 'Art'.[115]

The 'passivity of the middle class' is the key idea here. When Eliot includes popular music alongside references to Dante in *The Waste Land*, for instance, or bemoans the fall of civilisation with a children's rhyme in 'The Hollow Men', these are examples not of Eliot's

---

111 David Chinitz. 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', in *PMLA*, 110.2 (1995) 239 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462913> [Accessed 27-11-2017].

112 Lewis. 'Long Live the Vortex!', *BLAST*, 1, p. 7.

113 Eliot, 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', in *Prose II*, p. 283: 'The Elizabethan drama was aimed at a public which wanted *entertainment* of a crude sort, but would *stand* a good deal of poetry; our problem should be to take a form of entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art. Perhaps the music-hall comedian is the best material.'

114 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 418.

115 Chinitz, 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', 239.

genuine expertise in lower-class art forms,[116] but of his attempt to undercut and shock the middle-class, who Eliot sees as philistines, 'a product of the bourgeois craving for "culture" as a token of respectability'.[117] Especially in *The Waste Land*, the popular allusions are a demonstration of the cultural malaise that Eliot felt was infecting all classes. He was trying to undercut 'snobbery',[118] as *Blast* put it. Like much of Eliot's satire, this hatred of pretentiousness stems from his hatred of these aspects of himself and his own upbringing, and so is deliberately tinged with irony. It should not be taken straightforwardly as proof he did not have a conservative temperament.

Returning to Yeats, much of what he criticises in Eliot are these satirical tendencies in Eliot's youth, the attempts at objectivity and incisive blasting of liberal complacency that Yeats merely calls 'dry'. It is significant that Yeats calls Eliot 'an Alexander Pope', considering, probably unbeknownst to Yeats, that Eliot would imitate Pope in some of the removed sections of *The Waste Land*. However, to Yeats, to be a satirist like Pope was to be merely flat and dry, 'working without apparent imagination, producing his effects by a rejection of all rhythms and metaphors used by the more popular romantics'.[119] Yeats was not really admonishing Eliot for this – the 'rejection' of conventional forms is surely one of Eliot's most important contributions – although there is a slight insult behind the notion that Eliot's artistic decisions were a rejection of 'more popular' styles. Eliot, despite his 'rejection' of 'romantic' taste,[120] nonetheless desired some semblance of 'popular[ity]', as his defences of Marie Lloyd and anxiety over his critical reception indicate. His avant-garde stage play, *Sweeney Agonistes*, attempted to be 'popular' at least insofar as it incorporated

---

116 Tyrus Miller. 'The avant-garde, bohemia and mainstream culture', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 104-5.

117 Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 58.

118 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *BLAST*, p. 15.

119 Yeats, p. xxi.

120 We can perhaps read 'romantic' here as 'bourgeois', i.e. reminiscent of the statues of American Romantics like Emerson that haunt the upper-middle class abodes of the *March Hare* ladies.

jazz rhythms, popular songs, and humour alongside its 'higher' allusions to Aristophanes and Christian mysticism. *Blast* overtly defended its own notion of popular art which must be rescued from the stale 'romantic' hegemony in which it was trapped; and this notion appeared in Eliot's own writing, in his defences of 'popular' but neglected writers like Jonson.

Yet, as Eliot's satirical projects like *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Waste Land* failed to 'blast open' bourgeois culture 'like a bomb',[121] he moved away from satire, certainly as his religious inclinations progressed. Perhaps he came to a similar conclusion Lewis did in his 1937 memoir *Blasting and Bombadiering*:

> What I think history will say about the 'Men of 1914' is that they represent an attempt to get away from romantic art into classic art […] The attempt at objectivity has failed. The subjectivity of the majority is back again, as a result of that great defeat, the Great War, and all that has ensued upon it.[122]

Lewis practically agrees with Yeats that 'romantic art' won out against the 'objectivity' attempted by the London 'Men of 1914', albeit Lewis had a negative view of these events. Eliot, who grew more detached from Lewis with age, and would not write satire again after *The Waste Land*, probably came to similar realisations. Eliot's early satire was his way of showing his detachment from the 'fairy desert'[123] of the modern world, but by the 1920s he grew increasingly frustrated by satire's inability to contain his aspirations, especially after Pound had chastised his satire heavily in *The Waste Land* drafts. 'Satire can be the defence of the sensitive',[124] Eliot reflected much later in 1951.

As Yeats says, it is not until Eliot expended his early satirical anger and found religious peace that he found his true voice. Yeats is dismissive of the pre-conversion Eliot:

---

121 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.', in *Blast*, p. 31. I discuss the notion of *The Waste Land* as a satirical failure in Chapter 3.

122 *Ibid.*, *Blasting*, p. 250.

123 *Ibid*., 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 33.

124 Eliot, 'Wyndham Lewis', in *The Hudson Review*, 10.2 (1957) 169 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3848852> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

> Nor can I put the Eliot of these poems [referring to 'Prufrock' and *Poems 1920*] among those that descend from Shakespeare and the translators of the Bible. I think of him as satirist rather than poet.[125]

This last line especially is rather damning. It was part of Eliot's project – as it was Lewis's – to prove that satirists were not something other than poets, as Yeats implies here. Eliot's essays on Ben Jonson are passionately written in defence of this notion.[126] Satire, for the 'Men of 1914', had to be more than cruel mockery. Yet, as Eliot grew older, he came essentially to agree with Yeats. Eliot's reflection on his friendship with Lewis in 1951 could be read as a condemnation of his past self as much as an appraisal of Lewis:

> Many people may have thought of Lewis as 'tough' and aggressive, with a tendency to persecution mania. He was rather, it now seems to me, a highly strung, nervous man, who was conscious of his own abilities, and sensitive to slight or neglect.[127]

A 'highly strung, nervous man' – perhaps true of Lewis, but surely also true of the young Eliot. 'Temperament and circumstances combined to make him [Lewis] a great satirist', Eliot went on to say; 'satire can be the defence of the sensitive.'[128] This is a highly significant phrase since, decades earlier, Eliot would defend satire, and Lewis himself, using the same term:

> Wit is public, it is in the object; humour (I am speaking only of *real* humour) is the instinctive attempt of a sensitive mind to protect beauty against ugliness; and to protect itself against stupidity.[129]

The early Eliot speaks of 'sensitiv[ity]' as a virtue, the quality of an artist with their finger on the pulse of a culture that must be vehemently blasted. For the post-conversion Eliot, however, 'sensitiv[ity]' takes on its other meaning – that of a juvenile, reactive anxiety, an angry lashing out against falsely perceived 'persecution'. Perhaps Yeats is right, then, that

---

125 Yeats, p. xxii.
126 See: Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', 'The Oxford Jonson', et al.
127 Eliot, 'Wyndham Lewis', p. 169.
128 *Ibid*.
129 *Ibid.*, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

Eliot had to move away from his early-career Popean dryness – and perhaps Eliot acknowledged that himself.

Stephen Spender arrived at a similar conclusion as Yeats regarding Eliot's departure from satire. Spender's reflection on Eliot is interesting for, on the surface, it seems too protective of Eliot, unwilling to admit to the anger and bitterness that motivated much of Eliot's satire: 'Eliot was perhaps too restrained to be a satirist, too considerate of persons to make enemies.'[130] On the one hand, it seems this cannot be true, considering the sheer volatility of Eliot's satires: how can one read Fresca and say that Eliot was too shy to provoke, too keen to avoid offence? But on the other hand, we must remember that much of the young Eliot's satirical bravado was an attempt to masculinise himself, an angry rejection of personal circumstances – a 'continuous rejection of personality'.[131] This anger surely could not go on forever, and indeed did not. Eliot was embarrassed about the 'rhythmical grumbling'[132] of *The Waste Land* just as he was relieved to discover that the Bolo manuscripts were lost. Eliot would write comedic plays later in his life, and shorter poems for children, but would never write anything as remotely volatile as *Poems 1920.* The Eliot in 1951 who remarked on the 'sensitiv[ity]'[133] of Lewis was a man who had changed his personality once again – a man who, as Yeats says, only found his voice after the angry satirist within him had been tempered by age and experience.

Eliot as Satirist

In the section that follows, 'Blasting the Philistine Aristocracy' – a title that is a combination of *Blast*'s catchphrase and a phrase from one of Eliot's letters to Eleanor Hinkley[134] –

130 Spender, p. 51.
131 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 108.
132 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems I*, p. 577.
133 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', 169.
134 *Ibid*., Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.

focusses on Eliot's early life and poetry up to the publication of *Prufrock* in 1917. Although rarely considered a book of satires, the *Prufrock* volume is the culmination of Eliot's early satirical impetus. The volume is made up of highly refined poems, such as the title poem and 'Portrait of a Lady', through which Eliot's vision of anxious masculinity displays itself. These poems were written at Harvard as a sort of counterpart to the absurd, boisterous displays of vulgar bravado, the 'King Bolo' verses. Eliot was struggling with his shyness around women, and there is no better depiction of this than in the contrast between the *March Hare* poems that would be published in *Prufrock* and the 'bawdy verses'[135] that would not. The three Oxford poems that appear in the volume were written much later, after Eliot had fled America, and are more recognisably satire. They bear influence from Lewis's call to bravely tear open complacent, liberal society. 'Matthew and Waldo, Guardians of the Faith', and the sections that follow it, explore the biographical and intellectual roots of Eliot's disdain towards Puritanical 'ladies',[136] especially as it appears in his recently published letters and in *March Hare*. 'Quite civilised and uninteresting' considers how Eliot's disgust towards 'philistine aristocracy' broadened out into a reactionary temperament more generally, linking to his writings on modern culture and anthropology, including 'Marie Lloyd and the Fate of the Melanesians', his most overt chastisement of 'civilised boredom'. At the outbreak of war, Eliot was forced to move to London, where his increasing involvement with Vorticism was a further development of his anti-liberal intuitions, and influenced his writing of the Oxford poems. Lastly follows a close reading of *The Columbiad* – Ricks and McCue's term for their composite of the Bolo verses. In these last sections, I explore the composition controversy of the Bolos, the controversies over their offensive content, and the ways in which the individual

135 Chinitz. 'T. S. Eliot's Blue Verses and Their Sources in the Folk Tradition', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 23.2 (1999-2000) 329-333 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831929> [Accessed 04-11-2018].

136 Eliot, 'Afternoon', in *March Hare*, p. 53, line. 1.

verses were shared under different guises to their recipients, from laddish jokes at Harvard to parodies of academicism in Eliot's later life.

The next chapter, 'Modern Humour and Ancient Comedy', explores the development of Eliot's intellectual considerations of satire, especially as these ideas pertain to *Poems 1920*. The Oxford poems were a culmination of Eliot's early satirical impetus to probe American culture 'in the manner of Henry James', but towards the end of the decade, he wanted to move away from this style and closer towards the 'externals'[137] of Jonson. A far cry from the juvenilia of the Bolos, Eliot now wished his satire to be 'intensely serious'.[138] Many of Eliot's essays and articles from this period defended his own poetry, and especially the satires of Wyndham Lewis, by emphasising their objectivity and so-called primitiveness – in contrast to the dishonest 'jangling'[139] sentimentalism of modern culture. Eliot develops his early reactionary intuitions into a more coherent – and violent – political language in this era. The first sections consider numerous essays of Eliot's on satire, Lewis, and Jonson, developing an understanding of Eliot's changing literary and political views. Then follows a close-reading of *Poems 1920* as Eliot's most overtly political, Vorticist-inspired satire. The final sections consider *Sweeney Agonistes*, an incomplete Aristophanic drama written several years after *The Waste Land*, but which serves as a fruitful comparison to *Poems 1920* in that its vision of terrified modern womanhood is tempered by Eliot's growing religious sentiments. *Sweeney Agonistes* is also interesting for its links to the Bolo verses, which Eliot mockingly transfigures into 'phallic songs'[140] inspired by the anthropological theories that came to influence the structure of *The Waste Land*.

---

137 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
138 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
139 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 33.
140 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.

The final chapter, 'Parodying Pope', focusses entirely on *The Waste Land*, which Robert Lehman calls 'Eliot's last laugh'[141] – Eliot's final foray into satire. The poem in its draft form was far more satirical in content than the published version; much of the satire was suggested to be cut by Pound. The satirical undertones that remained in the published poem were picked up on by some of its earliest readers, who are considered in depth in the first section. In the sections that follow it, the language of these first critics is utilised in a long close-reading of the draft poem. The draft *Waste Land* was a final culmination of Eliot's anxious masculinity – a despairing and often angry critique at what he saw as a culture overtaken by spiritual hollowness and sexual humiliation. Much of this was, as Eliot said himself, a 'personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life',[142] especially as it pertained to his failed marriage to Vivien. Indeed, the pair's strained relationship appears during the poem's editing process. Nowhere are Eliot's resentments best illustrated than in the most overtly satirical section of the poem, cut completely by Pound: around 100 lines written in Popean couplets, angrily mocking a sexually licentious woman, Fresca, Eliot's most vicious caricature of the 'ladies'[143] that had for years caused him 'nervous sexual attacks'.[144] Pound, sensing that Eliot displayed too much personality in this satire, and perhaps seeking to protect his friend's public reputation, advised him to cut every line, to which Eliot eventually acquiesced; this is the subject of the final sections. The entire affair over the editing process lead Eliot towards questioning the power of satire. Eliot, with some exceptions, would not write satire after *The Waste Land*, and would in fact express regret that his early satirical forays were the mark of his too 'sensitive'[145] mind.

---

141 See the subtitle of Lehman's essay.
142 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 577.
143 *Ibid.*, 'Afternoon', quoted in *March Hare*, p. 53, line. 1.
144 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.
145 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', 169.

Chapter 1:
Blasting the Philistine Aristocracy

Although rarely considered a book of satires, Eliot's debut collection *Prufrock and Other Observations* (*Prufrock*) contains some of his most overtly satirical poetry. 'Aunt Helen', 'Cousin Nancy', and 'The Boston Evening Transcript' – the three 'Oxford Poems' – are the culmination of the early satires of Bostonian bourgeois culture found in *Inventions of the March Hare* (*March Hare*). Often described as an introverted child, Eliot nonetheless had an admiration for vaudeville, rude and bawdy verses, a genre that blew apart the polite norms of the puritanical New England society which he blamed for his shyness. Eliot's satirical impetus was at its most refined and detached in *Prufrock*, but the same cannot be said for the King Bolo verses, whose rambunctious tales of bawdiness and buggery were surely designed to shock Bostonian polite society. These verses would become an in-joke among Eliot's friends, a means for them to release the tension they felt as outsiders in liberal Protestant culture; they also served as a means to parody the publishers and literary tastemakers who rejected their more refined avant-garde experiments. Indeed, much of Eliot's satire, including those poems that would make it into *Prufrock*, were written in England after Eliot's friendship with Wyndham Lewis had begun to blossom,[146] and much of the Vorticists's 'blasting' of modern complacency would appeal to the young Eliot, eager to rid himself of his Unitarian propriety.

Although Eliot's reputation has been shaped by the remark made in *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928) that he was 'an Anglo-Catholic in religion, a classicist in literature and a royalist in politics',[147] he had not yet fully formed these beliefs in 1911-14, and in fact

---

146 Jeffrey Meyers. 'Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot: A Friendship', in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 56.3 (1980) 455 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26436044> [Accessed 08-07-2019]: 'Wyndham Lewis first met T. S. Eliot […] in Ezra Pound's little triangular sitting room at 6 Holland Park Chambers in Kensington, early in 1915.'

147 Eliot, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.

described himself as a 'relativist'.[148] The young Eliot, following the example of Henry James, and disgruntled with the culture he grew up in, probed the cultural neuroses of New England – but rarely in these poems did he offer a particular vision to take its place. On the one hand, these poems from *March Hare*, many of which are overtly satirical, are profound – 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' being the most famous example. Many of these poems also complicate the picture of Eliot as reactionary: the Bolos, for instance, suggest a cynicism and detachment towards American imperialism. On the other hand, Eliot's satire often seems to be a vessel for his sexual frustrations, or, in the case of the Bolo poems, racist and antisemitic tendencies. This period in Eliot's development is an important bridge between his early Jamesian style and his later satirical technique seen in *Poems 1920*, and is also the germ of his distaste towards liberal Protestantism.

'Matthew and Waldo, Guardians of the Faith'

Eliot was born into a privileged Unitarian family in 1888 in St. Louis. His grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, settled there in order to establish a Unitarian church. Greenleaf died before Eliot's birth, but the ideals of the man Ralph Waldo Emerson called the 'Saint of the West'[149] were ever-present during Eliot's early life. Eliot's mother published a biography of Greenleaf in 1904, dedicating it to her 'children, Lest They Forget'[150] – the austerity of this phrase giving an insight into the sincere and stifling reverence the Eliot family held towards Greenleaf. A Unitarian minister and Professor of Metaphysics, school and prison reformer, abolitionist and advisor to President Lincoln during the Civil War, the life and character of Greenleaf was motivated by a strong sense of pragmatism and need to act. T. S. Eliot would turn away from Unitarianism, and liberal Protestantism more generally, in favour of Anglo-

148 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (21st August 1916), in *Letters I*, p. 160.
149 Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 4.
150 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 3.

Catholicism, to some extent a counter-reaction to a childhood living under Greenleaf's shadow.

Eliot 'was conscious of being their seventh, youngest, and most promising child',[151] and these already high expectations were made heavier by the medical issues he suffered as a boy. An active young man, he was harshly affected by a congenital double inguinal hernia, which limited his participation in the activities he loved, and isolated him from his peers. His mother would write to the headmaster of the Smith Academy that

> He has had a case of congenital rupture […] Tom has never fully realized until now, when he is almost the only fellow debarred from football, his physical limitations. We hope in a few years he will be entirely normal, but his rapid growth has rendered him less rugged, perhaps, although perfectly healthy.[152]

'Less rugged', indeed. Eliot would in fact develop into a self-confessed shy boy, and this shyness would become a source of intense anxiety that would transfer into his adulthood. This shyness would affect his sexual relationships and self-esteem. Even a decade later, he would suffer from what he termed 'nervous sexual attacks'.[153] This difficult upbringing is the most likely source for the foremost targets of his satirical resentment: women.

After his undergraduate studies at Harvard, Eliot moved to Paris in 1910, where he would spend the year studying philosophy at the Sorbonne, 'to see the Paris of Baudelaire and the Symbolists with his own eyes.'[154] This was much to the dismay of his mother, who wrote to him that

> I cannot bear to think of your being alone in Paris, the very words give me a chill. I do not admire the French nation, and have less confidence in individuals of that race than in English.[155]

---

151 William Pratt. 'Eliot at Oxford: From Philosopher to Poet and Critic', in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 78.2 (1995) 321 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41178706> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

152 Charlotte C. Eliot, Letter to Mr. Cobb (September 1904), in *Letters I*, p. 9.

153 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.

154 John Morgenstern. 'The 'Centre of Intensity': T. S. Eliot's Reassessment of Baudelaire in 1910-1911', in *Religion & Literature*, 44.1 (2012) 160 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347066> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

155 Charlotte Eliot, Letter to T. S. Eliot (3rd April 1910), in *Letters I*, p. 12.

Eliot's decision to leave America and abandon his promising academic career was not met with support from either of his parents, and he would grow distant from them later in life.[156] Nonetheless, his time in France would prove to have an enormous effect on him and his art. It was here where he would attend lectures by Henri Bergson, read the royalist and anti-Romantic Charles Maurras, who would influence Eliot's political outlook far into the future,[157] and develop his already growing interests in French poetry that had begun with his discovery of Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* a few years earlier. He would move back to Harvard in 1911, and again to Marburg, Germany in 1914, before war broke out and forced him to relocate to Oxford.

Throughout his adolescence, he would struggle with women and his shyness. Conrad Aiken, a close friend, described years later the lengths Eliot would go to rid himself of his introversion:

> He was early explicit, too, about the necessity, if one was shy, of disciplining oneself, lest one miss certain varieties of experience which one did not naturally 'take' to. The dances, and the parties, were a part of this discipline, as later on […] was his taking of boxing-lessons.[158]

Eliot corresponded with Aiken frequently during these years, often in far more intimate and personal terms than his other letters – certainly more-so than those to his mother. Aiken was perhaps the only person to whom Eliot felt he could express the intimate details of his sexual anxiety. It is worth quoting the following paragraph in its entirety in order to get a sense for how powerfully Eliot's upbringing and medical issues had affected him:

> How much more self-conscious one is in a big city! Have you noticed it? Just at present this is an inconvenience, for I have been going through one of those nervous sexual attacks which I suffer from when alone in a city. Why I had almost none last fall I don't know – this is the worst since Paris. I never have

156 Matthew Hollis. *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber & Faber, 2022), p. 14: '[Henry] Hal [Eliot Snr., Eliot's father] had not approved of the union [between Eliot and Viv], nor of his son's decision to abandon an academic career for literature, nor, for that matter, the decision to leave America to settle in the old country.'

157 James Torrens. 'Charles Maurras and Eliot's New Life', in *PMLA*, 89.2 (1974) 312-13 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/461454> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

158 Aiken, p. 20.

> them in the country. […] I am very dependent upon women (I mean female society); and feel the deprivation at Oxford – one reason why I should not care to remain longer – but there, with the exercise and routine, the deprivation takes the form of numbness only; while in the city it is more lively and acute. One walks about the street with one's desires, and one's refinement rises up like a wall whenever opportunity approaches. I should be better off, I sometimes think, if I had disposed of my virginity and shyness several years ago: and indeed I still think sometimes that it would be well to do so before marriage.[159]

Dependency on 'female society', 'deprivation' that manifests as 'numbness', the stifling atmosphere of the city in general ('I never have [nervous sexual attacks] in the country') – these are all familiar themes of Eliot's poetry from this period, from the famous 'Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' to his lesser-known poems from *March Hare*.

There can be no doubt what Eliot blamed for this neurosis: in a letter to Ezra Pound, he scolded the 'Evil Influence of Virginity on American Civilisation.'[160] Although he felt he 'should' have 'disposed' of these anxieties 'years ago', they haunted him for years. His anxiety verged on desperation: to merely 'dispose' of one's virginity like garbage, especially 'before marriage', would be a quite serious refusal of his family's Unitarian austerity. He clearly felt no obligation towards the 'female society' that raised him. He blamed his sexual resentments on prudish, pragmatic, Protestant culture – the 'refinement' of manners that he could not escape, and which drained his life of 'opportunities'.

Even as a young man, Eliot felt, like his famous character Prufrock, to be an old man stifled by an emasculating culture of forced geniality. He would write to his brother about his anxieties, already worried about compromising his desires even at a young age:

> The great need is to know one's own mind, and I don't know that: whether I want to get married, and have a family, and live in America all my life, and compromise and conceal my opinions and forfeit my independence for the sake of my children's future; or save my money and retire at fifty to a table on the boulevard, regarding the world placidly through the fumes of an aperitif at 5 p.m. – How thin either life seems![161]

---

159 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.
160 *Ibid*., Letter to Ezra Pound (15th April 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 104.
161 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (25th February 1915), in *Letters I*, pp. 95-6.

What 'opinions' was Eliot repressing? There is a fair amount of evidence, both in his poetry and his prose, of Eliot's conservative worldview already beginning to form. As Schuchard says in *Eliot's Dark Angel*,

> Though Eliot's formal conversion to Anglo-Catholicism was eleven years away, his sensibility was religious and Catholic and his primary critical concerns were moral in 1916.[162]

Conservative is perhaps too broad a term: it was, more accurately, a distaste, more emotional than intellectual – a kind of moral intuition – towards the Prufrockian culture of his Missouri hometown.

Eliot was cynical towards the idea of 'refinement' and 'civilisation', so important to his Unitarian family, who would have been disgusted by the idea that their prized son would have on 'one or two' occasions sung a 'ballad like "The Reconstruction Rebel"'[163] for Aiken and his other Harvard friends. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue reprint the chorus of this song in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Volume II* (*Poems II*):

> I'm a Reconstruction Rebel and I don't give a damn
> I hate the Reconstruction and I hate Uncle Sam.[164]

Such a song would have appalled Eliot's mother and, of course, his abolitionist grandfather Greenleaf – which is probably why Eliot sung it. On another occasion, he recalled, 'When I was a small boy, I was reproved by my family for using the vulgar phrase "O. K."'[165] It was only a few years later when he would regularly sing and write far more 'vulgar phrases' in the 'King Bolo' verses. What would later become an intellectual opposition towards liberal

---

162 Ronald Schuchard. 'Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Toward a Revaluation of Eliot's Critical and Spiritual Development', in *PMLA*, 88.5 (1973), 1091. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/461641> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

163 Herbert Read, quoted in Alan Tate ed. *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work* (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 15.

164 Unknown author. 'The Reconstruction Rebel', quoted in *Poems II*, p. 960.

165 Eliot, quoted in Crawford, *Young Eliot*, p. 18.

Christianity in fact started out as a crude, laddish, vulgar rebellion, primarily against his parents but also against feminisation in general.

His attempts to train himself into extroversion seem to have been a part of his rebellion, also. If his prudish, polite upbringing disrupted by medical issues had moulded him into a shy and anxious boy, he was determined get out of that mindset. If the racist, absurd Bolo verses are any indication, then he often went too far. He would flip between 'church-warden' and 'twelve year-old boy', to use Auden's phrases,[166] virtually his entire life, seemingly never comfortable adopting either persona entirely. In his early Harvard years, he would attempt to counter his upper-class background by broadening his taste for 'lower' art forms like music-hall and popular songs:

> At Harvard Eliot had regularly attended vaudeville performances with Conrad Aiken; in London he continued to patronize the halls with Wyndham Lewis. Eliot, who had a capacious memory for music-hall material, enjoyed singing popular numbers and re-enacting comic routines for friends.[167]

His taste for popular art was to some extent a persona. He would, for instance, praise the popular music-hall singer Marie Lloyd for being the voice of a changing working-class English culture[168] – but frankly, how could have written this in good faith, when he had little knowledge of Lloyd, working-class, or indeed English popular culture? His reasons for engaging with music-hall were political – or started out as intuitive, and were adapted to politics. The intuitive aspect tends to be emphasised in contemporary scholarship, as if Eliot's poetry from this period – much of which is plainly racist, sceptical of feminism and liberalism in general – was just part of a boisterous façade to annoy his parents, rather than also indicating certain political (and later, religious) ideologies he genuinely believed in. Robert Crawford, for instance, describes Eliot's early poetry in this manner:

---

166 Auden, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 39.

167 Chinitz, 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', in *PMLA*, 110.2 (1995) 239 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462913> [Accessed 27-11-2017].

168 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 418.

> Such confrontations of the genteel and the slummy could be seen in Boston and in Eliot's early poetry. Here is gloom and terror in some of his early unpublished poetry. There is a preoccupation with debris and a shattered world, but there is also a humour that sets details of vulgar life against a romantic, genteel world of blue-delft China. […] Often they made fun of 'higher' learning, or could be adapted to do so.[169]

It is true that there is 'humour' in the early Eliot – but Crawford's description is missing a key element. Eliot's depictions of 'the genteel and the slummy' were depictions of white, Protestant, upper-class life against black, pagan, working-class life; and the 'romantic, genteel world' he depicts was not gender-neutral, but particularly feminised. One should not try to whitewash these intuitions as a broad distaste of the bourgeoisie, when they were specific and rooted in Eliot's biography.

What particular parts of Unitarian culture annoyed Eliot? Although socially liberal and reformist, Unitarian culture – at least in the Eliot household – was marked by a pragmatic, reserved approach to daily life. Self-reliance and self-improvement were central to the Unitarian ethic. Mankind was not doomed to a sinful existence after the Fall, but was in fact capable of reaching Christ-like perfection through self-cultivation and discipline.[170] Contrary to the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination, Unitarians instead emphasised that it was the individual, not God, who claimed responsibility for their own salvation.[171] As a consequence, Unitarians focussed on practical ethics rather than doctrine or theology. Emphasis was put on correct thoughts and correct action, which allowed the individual to refine themselves and eventually realise their essentially good moral nature. Greenleaf himself would write in *Discourses on the Doctrines of Christianity* that

> The essential idea of humanity is not derived from weakness and sin […] Our spiritual nature is probably the same, in its elements, with that of the most exalted archangel.[172]

---

169 Crawford. *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 53.
170 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 7.
171 *Ibid*.
172 William Greenleaf Eliot, quoted in *ibid*., p. 1.

Eric Sigg would describe these ideas in more detail in his essay on 'New England':

> It was fundamental to Unitarianism that human nature was essentially good and could be perfected through conscious, diligent cultivation; indeed, Unitarians decreed moral self-improvement to be the paramount duty. Unitarians held Christ to be the paradigm, a human being who, by perfecting his moral nature, had become divine. They believed that with lifelong effort, ordinary humans could achieve this perfection. Eliot rejected these doctrines, and later opposed them with the orthodox Christian dogmas of Original Sin and the Incarnation.[173]

There is no doubt that Unitarianism was a radical movement. Belief that Christ was a 'human being' who had 'become' divine, for instance, is a departure even from mainstream Protestant theology. However, Unitarianism was also in some sense an establishment movement, being deeply ingrained in the culture of early America – certainly of New England. It is for this reason that Sigg associates it with the 'gentility' that Eliot 'react[ed] against […] throughout his early poetry.'[174]

Much later in his life, Eliot would come to understand the failure of Unitarianism to be the abandonment of Original Sin. This abandonment was a failure indicative of the broader failures of, as Sigg puts it,

> Romanticism, democracy, and Protestantism – each linked to 'humanitarianism', to the United States, and to 'that deceitful goddess of Reason' born in the Enlightenment.[175]

These specifically ideological gripes are often ignored in discussions of Eliot's early poetry. This can be seen, for instance, in the example Sigg cites, the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of 'Prufrockian', in which 'the precisely drawn class contours of Bostonian Unitarianism have been flattened into the broad "middle-class"', when in reality, 'Prufrock's exquisite hesitations and moral punctiliousness are products of the rarefied atmosphere of

---

173 Sigg, 'New England', in Harding, Jason ed. *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 19.

174 *Ibid*., *The American T. S. Eliot*, pp. 4-5.

175 *Ibid*., p. 9.

upper-crust New England, with its ethos of pragmatism and reserve.'[176] There is a tendency in some current scholarship to 'flatten' Eliot's early poetry into something less politically volatile. However, it is their specificity and personality which make Eliot's early Prufrockian poems more akin to satire than broad social commentary.

This satirical spirit can plainly be seen in some of Eliot's poems targeting fake familial figures. 'Miss Nancy Ellicott',[177] judging by her surname and title of 'Cousin', is supposed to be an imaginary relative of Eliot's. Her family is even located in the 'barren New England hills',[178] the initial settling place of the real Eliot family. Nancy fancies herself a 'New Woman', 'smoking' and 'danc[ing] all the modern dances'.[179] Amusingly, the 'aunts' of the Ellicott household – whose on-display busts of 'Matthew [Arnold] and [Ralph] Waldo [Emerson]'[180] again link them with Eliot's own family – 'were not quite sure how they felt about' Nancy's behaviour. The aunts are unable to disguise their prudery, despite their mealy-mouthed acclaim for all that is 'modern'.[181] 'Upon the glazen shelves kept watch' the busts of Arnold and Emerson, the 'guardians of the faith'[182] that the aunts uphold, despite their naturally conservative attitudes. This is a hollow and conformist culture, in Eliot's view. For all the rhetoric of self-reliance and human potential, this 'faith' in the 'modern' was really an 'unalterable law',[183] a dogma by people purporting to be free from dogma.

Northrop Frye comes to a similar reading:

> 'Cousin Nancy' smokes and dances and impresses her aunts as modern, and fulfils 'Waldo' Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance and 'Matthew' Arnold's individualised culture, but what she does is still only fashionable conformity.

176 Jayme Stayer. 'I Grow Old: T. S. Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Inventions of the March Hare 100 Years On', in *Literature Compass*, 9.4 (2012) 320.
177 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 1.
178 *Ibid*., line. 4.
179 *Ibid*., lines. 7-8.
180 *Ibid.*, line. 12.
181 *Ibid.*, lines. 9-10.
182 *Ibid*., lines 11-12.
183 *Ibid*., line. 14.

> The last line of this poem is quoted from Meredith's sonnet on the hopeless rebellion of Lucifer, and aligns Nancy with the same futility.[184]

The irony of the poem, and the issue that Eliot explores, is that Nancy's attempts at undercutting this conformist, stale culture is paradoxically in keeping with the established doctrines of that culture. Her rebellion is futile. According to Frye, Eliot even suggests that her rebellion is satanic. To Eliot, seemingly empathetic men like Emerson and Arnold – and the ideology they represented, genteel liberal Christianity (even though both were lapsed Christians) – were in fact 'also potentially malevolent influences.'[185]

Prejudice, irony, and Jean Verdenal

If Eliot implied his distaste towards New England liberal Protestantism in a sly, satirical manner in his published poems, he would make no attempt to hide his disdain in his private correspondence, where his true prejudices are displayed. Many of his early letters have only been published in the last decade, including the letters between himself and his French friend Jean Verdenal, who he met in his trip to Paris in 1910-11. Verdenal was witty, intellectual, idealistic, and sensitive – if also somewhat snobbish. His ironic tirades against 'science (!)'[186] and 'positivism (materialism poorly disguised)'[187] resonated with Eliot's own temperament. Verdenal wrote polemically about what he saw as the wrong trajectories of modern society:

> There is reason to think that the Parisian working class is undergoing the same evolution as the aristocracy in the eighteenth century. Today, you constantly come across examples of the 'educated, intelligent worker'; he no longer believes in the old stories dating from the past; many of them believe in science (!) but, what is more important, many have repressed their good inner impulses through a desire to think rationally.[188]

---

184 Frye, p. 14.
185 Pratt, 326.
186 Jean Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (25th July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 25.
187 *Ibid*.
188 *Ibid*.

The 'repress[ion]' of 'good inner impulses' by rationalism is a common theme in Verdenal's letters – anticipating *Blast*'s similar condemnations of technocratic liberalism and its stifling of 'the individual'.[189] It is a mode of social criticism that makes little attempt at subtlety or rigour, preferring, instead, rhetoric and humour.

Elsewhere, Verdenal's targets are not philosophies, but people – his political and philosophical enemies embodied by stereotypes. Here is a prejudicial and unsophisticated discourse, unlocked by the fact that he was communicating privately with his friend. It is the language of private jokes and knowing winks. See, for instance, this passage from a 1911 letter to Eliot:

> My dear friend, I have received your letter just as I am on the point of leaving Paris to go down for a fortnight to the Pyrenees. Everyone has already gone, apart from Fellows; and the house is filled with ephemeral visitors, almost all corresponding to the label 'elderly American spinster'. No more need be said.[190]

This letter is exemplary of the ease in which these men could disparage the social mores that disgusted them – disguised, of course, as ironic wit. However, Verdenal has a clear disdain towards these 'ephemeral visitors' – 'women [who] come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'.[191] And indeed they were always women. Eliot would share this disdain. It is not clear to what extent Verdenal influenced Eliot's opinions, or, conversely, whether the pair became friends because of their shared attitudes.

Verdenal's list of misguided modern 'causes' reads like a passage from a *Blast* manifesto. Among the traits he blasts are

> snobbishness, self-interest, sincere repentance, flawed intelligence, literal Catholic belief in the dogma, social attitudes (national, provincial, traditional, sectarian), harking back to the past, literary artifice, pragmatism, etc.[192]

---

189 Lewis. 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *BLAST*, p. 7.
190 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 24.
191 Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 32, lines. 13-4.
192 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (25th July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 25.

It is hard to say if there is any precise ideology motivating this list; it is rather a vague condemnation of right-wing sensibilities. Indeed, it is rather ironic that many of these qualities could easily be applied to Eliot himself. The young Eliot had his own lists of private resentments, sharing Verdenal's distaste for the

> typical American middle-class confusion of thought – anxious to be broadminded (that is, to be vague), to have wide interests (that is to say, diffuse ones), to be tolerant (of the wrong things) etc.[193]

Again, it is quite ironic for Eliot, who spent much of his early career deflecting the constant charge that he was merely a 'clever' poet,[194] to criticise 'vague[ness]' and 'wide interests', but this is the kind of polemical and hypocritical discourse that is common in Eliot's private letters.

In a letter to his cousin Eleanor Hinkley, Eliot's distaste for philistines is mixed with his now-familiar antisemitic leanings:

> Both at the Moral Science Club, where I read a paper, and at the Heretics (the leading literary society) the men impressed me by their resemblance to Harvard graduate school types; serious, industrious, narrow and plebeian. The more *brilliant* ones (one or two) more like the clever Jew undergraduate mind at Harvard; wide but disorderly reading, intense but confused thinking, and utter absence of background and balance and proportion. I should expect it to be accompanied by a philistine aristocracy.[195]

'Philistine aristocracy' is a rather pertinent phrase; it captures the attitude of the women he satirised in *March Hare*, such as the ladies in the 'British Museum'.[196] It is a phrase that also links Eliot to the Vorticists, who made similar condemnations of middle and upper-class philistines. The Vorticists similarly feminised their targets, blasting 'snobbery (disease of femininity)'.[197] Eliot was not being wholly serious in this letter to Hinkley, however – he is

193 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (3rd January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 86.
194 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, pp. 75-6.
195 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.
196 *Ibid*., 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, line. 2.
197 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 15.

humouring his friend – but his irony is disguising his real resentments and simmering prejudices.

Another one of Verdenal's attitudes he shared with Eliot is his scepticism towards philosophy. Eliot came to this kind of scepticism himself, as he abandoned his Doctoral studies. Possibly following from Verdenal's distaste towards the modern academy and the 'materialism' and 'positivism' that characterised it, Eliot moved away from his promising career in academic philosophy to pursue poetry under the guidance of Ezra Pound in London. In a letter to his Doctoral supervisor, Eliot wrote:

> What it seems to me to lend itself to most naturally, is a relative materialism – or at least this is the way in which my sympathies incline.[198]

Unable, like Verdenal, to appreciate positivist philosophy, he nonetheless could not get behind a fully 'relative' philosophy either, expressing contempt, in the same letter, towards philosophy that over-theorised 'common sense':

> In a sense, of course, all philosophising is a perversion of reality: for, in a sense, no philosophic theory makes any difference to practice. It has no working by which we can test it. It is an attempt to organise the confused and contradictory world of common sense, and an attempt which invariable meets with partial failure – and with partial success. It invariably involves cramming both feet into one shoe: almost every philosophy seems to begin as a revolt of common sense against some other theory, and ends – as it becomes itself more developed and approaches completeness – by itself becoming equally preposterous – to everyone but its author.[199]

Here is the germ of Eliot's satirical attitude: a desire to find simplicity and to dismiss those he saw as over-complicating or over-theorising the world. On the one hand, this is an anti-intellectual attitude from Eliot, rejecting all branches of inquiry as 'equally preposterous' – although his implied valuation of knowledge 'we can test' hints at his pragmatic leanings. On the other hand, there is a genuine intellectual curiosity behind this statement, a searching for the un-'pervert[ed]' truth of 'reality' that was not satiated by academic intellectualism.

---

198 Eliot, Letter to Norbert Wiener (6th January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 87.

199 *Ibid*.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Eliot would turn towards poetry and art, whose revolutions of 'common sense' culminate in something that can be seen and felt. He would say of Vorticism, to Pound, that

> I was fearful lest you should hitch it up to Bergson or James or some philosopher, and was relieved to find out that Vorticism was not a philosophy.[200]

Vorticism's appeal for Eliot lay in its 'common sense' revolt against the stultified art world of Victorian England. As Brooker says, 'its lists of those "Blasted" and "Blessed" were violently discriminating, anti-establishment, arbitrary and comic.'[201] Bradford Moorow describes *Blast* in a similar fashion:

> *Blast* functioned as a multi-faceted instrument of change, an intellectual demarcation point between the extreme dying gasps of Victorian England and an explosive, if short-lived battlecry for a new British artistic renaissance.[202]

Blast's 'battlecry' and apathy towards precise 'philosophy' would incite Eliot's passion to place himself parallel to this movement and their 'violent polemic[s] against certain aspects of the contemporary, liberal world'.[203]

This rejection of over-intellectualisation motivated Eliot's disdain for liberal Protestantism. In 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', Eliot suggests the religious attitude is left incomplete if muddled by academic phrases and terminology. Eric Sigg says that,

> Though it had numerous sources, Eliot's rejection of liberal education and theology appeared first at Harvard. As an undergraduate, he gravitated towards

---

200 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (2nd February 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 94.

201 Peter Brooker. 'The Modernist moment in the metropolis', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 124.

202 Bradford Moorow. 'Blueprint to the Vortex', in Lewis, Wyndham ed., *Blast*, 1 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1914), p. v.

203 Richard W. Sheppard. 'Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*: An (Anti-) Vorticist Novel?' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88.4 (1989) 512-3. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27710234> [Accessed 25-07-2019]. *Blast*'s anti-liberalism was not precise, but idiosyncratic. See, for instance, William C. Wees' comments on 'birth control', Blasted by Lewis: 'Perhaps in a political context, birth control seemed too closely tied to 'meddling', scientific liberalism.' William C. Wees. 'Appendix Business: The Blasted and the Blessed' in *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 218.

> teachers like Santayana, Barrett Wendell, and Irving Babbitt, who opposed President Eliot.[204]

Eliot, raised in the shadow of his grandfather Greenleaf, felt he could not escape his family, who held powerful places in the Harvard hierarchy. 'Oppos[ing] President Eliot' motivated his embrace of philosophical dissenters, but it also motivated his satire.

Another Oxford poem found in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 'Mr. Apollinax', often understood as a mockery of Bertrand Russell,[205] probably has more specific roots in this opposition to the Harvard hierarchy. 'Professor Channing-Cheetah' is a friend of the 'charming' Mr. Apollinax, who entertains his company 'In the palace of Mrs. Phlaccus'.[206] This bizarre name is probably a corruption of a real person. Donald J. Childs notes that 'Harvard actually professed a Professor [Edward] Channing', who was disliked by students – and probably even more-so by Eliot – for his 'New England prudery and lack of humor.'[207] There is a strong case that Prof. Channing-Cheetah was a parody of the New England establishment. Childs continues:

> But the professor aside, Channing itself was a distinguished name in Boston. The patriarch of the Channing clan, William Ellery Channing (1790-1842), was one of the founders of Unitarianism, particularly the Unitarian movement in New England. His continuing influence upon New England thought was such that his philosophy, insisting upon a union between mystical and rational religious interests, was discussed by Eliot and the rest of the class in Josiah Royce's seminar of 1913.[208]

Did William Ellery Channing have the sort of 'preposterous' philosophy that so annoyed Eliot? Or perhaps Eliot's resentment was of a more literary nature. Eliot himself 'once identified Professor Channing-Cheetah as Professor [William Henry] Schofield',[209] a scholar

---

204 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 16.

205 See, for instance, Spender, *T. S. Eliot*, p. 50: ''Mr. Apollinax', the poem which he wrote about Russell's visit to Harvard, is taken by most critics to be a genial enough piece of mist satire.'

206 Eliot, 'Mr. Apollinax', in *Poems I*, p. 58, line. 6.

207 Donald J. Childs. ''Mr. Apollinax', Professor Channing-Cheetah, and T. S. Eliot', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 13.1 (1986) 174 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831440> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

208 *Ibid*.

209 *Ibid*., 175-6.

of Comparative Literature at Harvard who wrote on Chaucer, Old Norse, and co-authored a book on *Romance, Vision & Satire* with Jessie Weston. Whether this statement by Eliot actually occurred or not (Childs was only told 'in a conversation with Charles Monteith'),[210] or indeed whether he was telling the truth, is hard to say – and certainly I see little reason to 'yield ultimately to Eliot's authority', as Childs concludes.[211] However, the Unitarian links make sense considering Eliot's other Oxford poems. Whoever 'Professor Channing Cheetah' may have referred to specifically, there is a clear resentment towards philosophers, academics, and intellectuals who share new-fangled or liberally-minded opinions. These opinions ostensibly trickle-down into middle-class socialite circles, hence Eliot's disdain for the women who talk of Michelangelo, for instance.

Inventions of the March Hare *and Henry James*

Alongside his studies in philosophy, Eliot wrote, at Harvard, many poems that were collected posthumously in the volume *Inventions of the March Hare* (*March Hare*). These poems, most of which Eliot deemed unfit for publication, were written in a notebook and sold to John Quinn in 1922. Eliot told Quinn that he started writing the notebook 'in 1909', which is the year he began his undergraduate course at Harvard, and contained 'all my work of that time as I wrote it'.[212] The volume serves, therefore, as an important insight into Eliot's early poetic influences and interests. *March Hare* displays the themes discussed in the previous sections: Eliot's disgust towards a culture centred around liberal Protestantism, the futile rebellion of this type of 'modernity', his association of women with this culture, and his use of irony to temper this disgust. Although Eliot would be explicit in his letters to Verdenal, he seemed to have a fear of social chastisement that motivated his desire to 'conceal [his] opinions', as he

---

210 Childs, 175-6.
211 *Ibid*.
212 Eliot, quoted in *March Hare*, p. xi.

said in a letter to Conrad Aiken.[213] When he sold the *March Hare* notebook to Quinn, for instance, he tore out the Bolo verses. Much later in his life, he was 'relieved to think that the notebook had been lost',[214] perhaps out of embarrassment for his poetic juvenilia, or perhaps because he considered many of the poems to be inside jokes that would be misinterpreted by a wider readership and damage his own reputation.

If Eliot was worried that his reputation would be negatively affected by the publication of *March Hare* and the Bolo verses, this was not a wholly unfounded concern. The Bolo verses have received widespread condemnation from critics for their racist and homophobic content.[215] However, there have equally been defences of the Bolos as being mere 'juvenile graffiti' or 'sexual caricature',[216] a bit of fun between friends, or even, as Gabrielle McIntire puts it, 'a version of Eliot's sexual discovery, charting the evolution of his queer poetics through an allegory of New World exploration'.[217] I differ from these readings in that I see Eliot's engagement with the ironic mode in *March Hare* as logically leading to a reading of the Bolo poems as satire.

To read the *March Hare* poems as satire is neither a defence nor a condemnation of Eliot. Satire does not mean mere fun; it is not the same thing as comedy or silliness. Satire is a kind of moralism.[218] To satirise the 'futile rebellion' of Cousin Nancy, say, is to imply

---

213 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (25th February 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 96.

214 Stayer, 'I Grow Old', 318.

215 See, for instance, Lois Cuddy, quoted in Loretta Johnson, ''Feeling the Elephant: T. S. Eliot's Bolovian Epic', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 37.4 (2014) 110 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.37.4.109> [Accessed 12-02-2018]: 'Eliot's pornographic verses in an "epic" about "King Bolo and His Great Black Kween" indicate the extent and depth of his racial/sexual stereotypes and eugenic prejudices'; Anthony Julius, quoted in Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 112: 'They are not worth reading […] They tap, in the most puerile way imaginable, racist fantasies of the sexual superiority of blacks'.

216 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 87.

217 Gabrielle McIntire. 'An unexpected beginning: sex, race, and history in T. S. Eliot's Columbo and Bolo poems', in *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 25.

218 Wyndham Lewis, an important influence on Eliot's satire, did not see satire as moral at all. However, Eliot had not met Lewis yet, and shows no signs of having this opinion himself. Thus I resort here to a more conventional notion of satire as a kind of moralistic comedy, expressed by, for instance, James F. English. Indeed, the transformation of Eliot's satire from moral to non-moral is the essential argument of Chapter 2.

support for the opposite value. Of course, one might ask what the opposite of 'futile rebellion' is. Presumably 'conformity' – but this is where Eliot's ironic mode becomes a barrier, because his criticism of Nancy's rebellion is ironically a criticism of her conformity. This all adds to the interest of *March Hare*. The poems resist too-easy readings condemning Eliot for mindless bigotry but, equally, mindless fun. Some of Eliot's satires against bourgeois Unitarians, academic philosophers, and alienated modern men are in many respects self-criticisms. To talk about the early Eliot as holding well-formed opinions is a mistake. Eliot, in his youth, had few political beliefs, but rather political intuitions, and his way of communicating them was through ironic polemics and provocations, perhaps a means of avoiding arriving at any particular ideology. He even said to Hinkley in 1915 that he annoyed some of his interlocutors at Oxford, who have 'come to regard me as an unscrupulous sophist – as I always took either the ultra conservative or the ultra radical view'.[219] He was not yet the social critic he would become in his maturity, but was a polemicist, a joker, a trouble-maker – a satirist.

Northrop Frye says that 'Eliot's earlier poetry is mainly satiric, and presents a world that may be summed up as a world without laughter, love or children.'[220] 'Without children' is a pertinent observation. Eliot struggled to hold together his marriage, and would never have children despite the clear affection he had for his godchildren, for whom he wrote the bulk of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*.[221] A moving 1915 letter to Aiken mentions 'my children's future', despite his same exclamation of 'How thin either life seems!'[222] There is always a hint of self-irony in Eliot's satires. His depiction of New England is that of lonely

219 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (3rd January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 86.
220 Frye, p. 48.
221 See: Ricks & McCue, *Poems II*, p. 42 for the dates and recipients of all the *Practical Cats* poems, most of which were originally sent as letters.
222 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (25th February 1915), in *Letters I*, pp. 95-6.

spinsters, spiritually confused intellectuals, and modern people who cannot grasp joy and purpose in their life despite their intellect – but is this not also an image of Eliot?

Some of Eliot's earliest poetry are the bawdy 'King Bolo' verses, written alongside the Prufrockian satires of New England gentility in *March Hare*. The Bolos even continue into the 1920s, written alongside *Poems 1920* and the first drafts of *The Waste Land*. Eliot's satirical impetus starts even earlier, however. Carlos Baker identifies a poem from 1910, 'Spleen', 'one of his contributions to the *Harvard Advocate*'.[223] 'The poem', Baker says,

> alerts us to his somewhat supercilious view of the urban bourgeoisie in the years immediately preceding the Great War, and even anticipates the caricature of J. Alfred Prufrock.[224]

'Supercilious', with connotations of 'superiority, indifference, or disdain',[225] is an apt description of Eliot's satirical persona. It is worth printing 'Spleen' in full here, since it is not well known:

> Sunday: this satisfied procession
> Of definite Sunday faces;
> Bonnets, silk hats, and conscious graces
> In repetition that displaces
> Your mental self-possession
> By this unwarranted digression.
>
> Evening, lights, and tea!
> Children and cats in the alley;
> Dejection unable to rally
> Against this dull conspiracy.
>
> And life, a little bald and gray,
> Languid, fastidious, and bland,
> Punctilious of tie and suit
> (Somewhat impatient of delay)
> On the doorstep of the Absolute.[226]

---

223 Baker, 238.
224 *Ibid*.
225 'Supercilious, adj. and n.', in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, September 2022) [Online] <www.oed.com/view/Entry/194242> [Accessed 04-11-2022].
226 Eliot, 'Spleen', in *Poems I*, p. 239.

This poem foreshadows many of the themes found in *March Hare* and the Bolos. There is a disdain towards Christian seriousness: 'Sunday' worshippers form a procession 'conscious' of their piety, a type of social posturing that Eliot's regards as 'satisfied' with itself. This is Eliot's contempt, but he tricks the reader into sharing it, suggesting that it is 'your self-possession' that is being insulted by the procession. This sly technique Eliot uses often, getting his reader to sympathise with a caricature of himself; it is a technique used in 'Prufrock',[227] for instance. It is Eliot's way of projecting his own anxieties into broader social criticism, as if it is not him, but his reader who is alienated from Boston Brahminism. Eliot makes his idiosyncratic grievances appear universal or obvious.

Other themes appear in 'Spleen' that reappear in Eliot's other satires. It is against women who the reader is supposed to feel this alienation: the focus on 'Bonnets' makes it clear that the procession is made up mostly of ladies. There is no youth in this poem, despite Eliot's tender age: life, even then, was 'a little bald and gray' – anticipating Prufrock's 'I grow old' lines.[228] Life is a buttoned-up 'tie and suit', a fashion Eliot himself would uphold. What is the opposite value, the moralism beneath the irony, here? There is a vague gesture towards 'the Absolute' in the final line, a Bradleian phrase which Eliot would use in his other *March Hare* poems.[229] This phrase is suggestive of 'true religion' – or, at least, not the stultifying Unitarianism of New England, untrue because of its rejection of established doctrines and tradition. These themes will all appear in *March Hare* and the Bolos: attacks on liberal Protestant Christianity, the feminine and prudish culture Eliot associates with it, sometimes signalling towards some 'genuine' religious impulse (what would perhaps become

---

227 See, for instance: Eliot, 'Prufrock', *Poems I*, p. 34, lines. 55-61.

228 *Ibid*., p. 37, lines. 120-1.

229 See: *Ibid*., 'Conversation Galante', in *Poems I*, p. 61, line. 14; 'Spleen', p. 315, line. 16; 'Suite Clownesque: III', p. 334, line. 21; 'Afternoon, p. 365, line. 9.

Eliot's high-profile conversion to 'Anglo-Catholic in religion'),[230] always filtered through self-projection and irony.

Eliot's satirical technique is typically that of dehumanisation. The objects of his derision are flat, faceless, and bland, identified only by disembodied clothing ('Bonnets, silk hats') or by moods and expressions ('definite Sunday faces', 'Languid, fastidious, and bland'). In one *March Hare* poem, 'Convictions (Curtain Raiser)', these figures are literal marionettes, talking puppets. These marionettes are identifiably New Englanders, voicing the Emersonian-Arnoldian doctrines of reason in all things, self-reliance, and political optimism. These values provoke the disdain of Eliot the 'sophist', whose prime grievance was against sincerity itself:

> And over there my Paladins
> Are talking of effect and cause,
> With 'learn to live by nature's laws!'
> And 'strive for social happiness
> And contact with your fellow-men
> In Reason: nothing to excess!'
> As one leaves off the next begins.[231]

There is no actual joke or punchline here, it is just someone sincerely voicing these opinions. The satire comes from the first two lines, spoken by the poet, the observer with a birds-eye view of things, who invites us into sympathy with his prejudices through rhetorical trickery. His sarcastic description of the speakers as 'Paladins' drapes a layer of irony over what otherwise would be genuine conversation. The rhetorical framing is completed by the final line, equally sarcastic, 'As one leaves off the next begins', implying a sort of sheep-like behaviour, as if the conversation were mere social routine rather than sincere 'talking'. The Paladins do not actually possess 'Convictions', hence the irony of the title. It is a similar sarcasm held over 'women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'.[232] To Eliot the satirist,

---

230 Eliot, 'For Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.
231 *Ibid*., 'Convictions (Curtain Raiser), in *Poems I*, p. 313, lines 14-20.
232 *Ibid*., 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, pp. 32, 35, lines. 13-4, 35-6.

this type of talk is hollow and pretentious, a symbol of a 'female society' obsessed with the appearance of intellect rather than the genuine possession of it. This conformism disguises, for Eliot, a kind of secret totalitarianism:

> They see the outlines of their stage
> Conceived upon a scale immense.[233]

That is to say, although these Paladins may talk of 'social happiness', their ideology is universalist, a sort of intellectual imperialism. This is a criticism that will appear in Eliot's satires of war-mongers, which motivated the Bolos. The 'Paladins', furthermore, are poseurs, since their talk of 'contact with your fellow-men' does not manifest in actual community, and least of all romantic love, as with the 'lady with a fan' (the 'elderly American spinster')[234] in the penultimate stanza, who cannot 'find a man […] who appreciates my soul'.[235] There is the 'Evil influence of Virginity' hanging over this civilisation.

Spinsters and prudes appear in other *March Hare* poems. 'In the Department Store' portrays women who repress a deep unhappiness with their lives through aesthetic, fashionable refinement and manners. One of the ladies, for instance,

> Smiles at the world through a set of false teeth.
> She is business-like and keeps a pencil in her hair.[236]

Behind her 'business-like', albeit 'false' exterior, there are dreams, or perhaps memories, of long-forgotten romances:

> But behind her sharpened eyes take flight
> The summer evenings in the park
> And heated nights in second story dance halls.[237]

The conflict in this 'lady' is a familiar one. Is she meant for 'business-like' life devoted to her puritanical culture, which Eliot senses is 'smil[ing …] through false teeth', a naïve desire to

---

233 Eliot, 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, lines 3-4.
234 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 24.
235 Eliot, 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 1313, lines 21, 24.
236 *Ibid*,, 'In the Department Store', in *Poems I*, p. 367, lines 2-3.
237 *Ibid*., lines 4-6.

please others or publicly appear virtuous? Or is she meant to follow her secret, all-too-human passions for love and romance? 'How thin either life seems!'[238] Indeed, it is not just the lady who has this repressed passion. For all the sneers at women in *March Hare*, the male counterparts in the poems are just as sexually anxious and prudish. The man 'In the Department Store' has a pessimistic stance towards human nature and, by extent, his own confidence:

> Man's life is powerless and brief and dark
> It is not possible for me to make her happy.[239]

Eliot's cynicism towards the 'refinement' that quells 'opportunities'[240] is what motivates his scorn for the 'false teeth[ed]' spinsters of New England. Here it comes to a pessimistic conclusion: if man is really so 'powerless', how could he find love, or bring joy to another? If Unitarian stoicism leads to a detachment from romantic fulfilment, then Eliot's anti-humanist stance leads to similar conclusions.

An under-discussed influence on the early *March Hare* poems is fellow American writer Henry James. The Jamesian influence is suggested by 'Portrait of a Lady', for instance, whose title comes from James's novel. While not often considered a satirist per se, James is certainly a writer who probed the hypocrisies and uncertainties of American polite society in a manner that resembles Eliot's ironic mode. In the 1886 novel *The Bostonians*, the young and naïve Verena Tarrant, a talented orator, is forced to make a decision whether she ultimately wants to tour the country lecturing on women's suffrage issues with the prudish, if not devoted, Olive Chancellor, or whether she would rather run away with the charming bigot Basil Ransom. The tension between Olive and Basil is the primary conflict in the novel, and at points it resembles a comedic tension. Olive's a resentment towards Basil stems from her

---

238 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (25th February 1915), in *Letters I*, pp. 95-6.
239 *Ibid*., 'In the Department Store', in *Poems I*, p. 367, lines 7-8.
240 *Ibid.*, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.

quasi-religious passion for emancipatory movements, which Basil dismisses with irreverence and charm. At one point, Olive asks him sincerely, 'Don't you care for human progress?' only to be met with sarcasm from Basil, who takes no notice of the ideological underpinnings of her statement: 'I don't know […] I never saw any. Are you going to show me some?'

Olive then invites Basil, reluctantly, to attend a talk by 'one of our celebrities', Miss Birdseye, who Olive provocatively informs him, knowing of his past ties to the Confederacy, 'was one of the earliest, one of the most passionate, of the old Abolitionists'. Here, the Jamesian narrator intervenes, probing into the mindset of Olive and her disguised motives: 'She had thought, indeed, she ought to tell him that [Birdseye was coming], and it threw her into a little tremor of excitement to do so.'[241] There is a visible 'excitement' in Olive to pin Basil down, to annoy him – to defeat him, ideologically. Basil has this craving also, calling, later in the novel, the emancipation movement a 'modern pestilence [to be] eradicated'.[242] Beneath the mock-cordiality of the discussion, the conforming to the conventions of respectability and liberal tolerance of different perspectives, there is a repressed tyrant, a desire to universalise their own ideologies.

Basil is much more competent in suppressing these despotic desires, using his wit to his advantage:

> [I]f she [Olive] had been afraid he would show irritation at this news [that Birdseye would be there], she was disappointed at the geniality with which he exclaimed: 'Why, poor old lady – she must be quite mature!'[243]

James's technique is subtle, mixing together the range of his characters' emotions in a way that uncovers their dishonesty. If Olive was 'afraid', for instance, why would she be 'disappointed', and not relieved, that Basil didn't get angry? The characters share a similarity

---

241 Henry James. *The Bostonians*, Oxford World's Classics edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 17.
242 *Ibid.*, p. 324.
243 *Ibid*., p. 17.

with Eliot's New England ladies, but there are also similarities of style and tone: the subtle shifts of perspective, the probing of the ironies and hypocrisies of this culture, and the disguising of the author's own perspective through use of free-indirect narration.

Olive is too caught up in the necessity of her cause, too much a 'Paladin', that her opinions cross over into rhetoric and hyperbole:

> The unhappiness of women! Ages of oppression had rolled over them; uncounted millions had lived only to be tortured, to be crucified.[244]

Olive's placing of women into the place of a 'tortured', 'crucified' Christ is no accident; indeed, women's emancipation becomes a kind of religious duty to her. 'Priests', she says to Verena, 'when they were real priests – never married, and what you and I dream of doing demands of us a kind of priesthood!'[245] She says this to Verena to try and dissuade her from marrying a man, her reason being that 'our cause' requires full commitment that a husband will only distract from. Ironically, since Verena eventually marries Basil and abandons the suffragette cause, Olive actually turns out to be quite the prophet – but before the reader becomes aware of those events, Olive's statement sounds fanatical, perhaps even a cover for sexual jealously.

There does seem to be a sexual tension between Olive and Verena (at least in Olive's mind), and even between Olive and Basil. The 'excitement' passage might be read as flirtatious banter, for instance. However, whatever sexual tension exists is repressed, for Olive is in love only with her cause. James's vision of Boston is remarkably Eliotian; it is a world simultaneously feminised and entirely de-sexualised, politically liberal but socially prudish, devoutly Christian but deeply hypocritical and dishonest. Verena ultimately rejects this world of abolitionists and spinsters, succumbing to her desires for the handsome misogynist Basil. Whether this is for good or ill is not clear, as best shown by the ambiguous

---

244 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 33.
245 *Ibid*., p. 130.

closing lines of the novel.[246] Indeed, it is this unwillingness to commit to either side whilst still managing to put across a clear vision is probably what so fascinated Eliot with James.

It must be said, however, that Eliot rarely shows this kind of Jamesian negative capability in the *March Hare* poems. Eliot's is the same world of abolitionists and spinsters, but, much like in his own life, the world outside – of Paris, London, or Europe – is the greener patch of grass. His own attempts to rid himself of his New England prudery would ironically turn out to be futile; he was always described by friends as shy, even in maturity, and despite all his 'twelve year-old boy' antics.[247] He would learn, too, with his marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood, that life with bohemians, dancers, actresses, and artists can be just as hellish as a life 'measured out with coffee spoons'.[248] Indeed it is probably because of these slow revelations that he would abandon satire in his late career; but in his *March Hare* days, having not yet encountered this realisation, he romanticised whatever signified for him the opposite of Olive Chancellor.

In 'Paysage Triste', the girl in the poem, a stranger 'mounted in the omnibus',[249] has the same 'reddish hair'[250] that Basil finds so striking about Verena Tarrant – the total opposite of the prudish black bun worn by Olive. The poet proceeds to fantasise about asking her to join them 'in the box with us', despite her lack of refinement and manners, demonstrative of her lower-class: 'She would not have known how to sit, or what to wear.'[251] But it is in fact this lack of gentility in the girl that the poet finds attractive. She is in total contrast to the woman who is in the box with the poet, who

> leaned as you did, your elbow on my knees
> To prod impetuously with your fan
> The smiling stripling with the pink soaped face

246 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 435.
247 Auden, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 39.
248 Eliot, 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 34, line. 51.
249 *Ibid*., 'Paysage Triste', in *March Hare*, p. 52, line 1.
250 *Ibid*., line 6.
251 *Ibid*., lines 8-9.

Who had your opera-glasses in his care.[252]

The sheer presence of these upper-class ladies seems to annoy the narrator. Their most basic actions are coloured as 'impetuous', thoughtless – arrogant, even. The upper-class woman in this poem (again it is an object, 'opera-glasses', that signifies her class) has a total lack of self-awareness; she is rude and has a self-important regard for class distinctions. Hers is an attitude contrasted with the naïve, unpretentious red-haired girl – the sort of unpretentiousness that attracts Basil to Verena. It is quite striking how these two women resemble Olive and Verena in both looks and character.

'Paysage Triste' does not end with a resolution. The poet does not approach the red-haired woman, he merely fantasises about doing so. This sort of sexual indecisiveness is the subject of another poem, 'Entretien dans un parc', which is one of the few *March Hare* poems that shows the beginnings of Eliot's Prufrockian introspection. Walking with a woman, evidently a love interest, the poet is struck by shyness, 'uncertainties' projected from the 'April trees', a 'struggling intention that becomes intense'.[253] He can speak only in innuendoes: 'love' or 'marriage' or 'proposal' are never mentioned in the poem, only 'the resolution that our lives demand', as if there were something threatening, terrifying, or oppressive about the expectation to find love. There is something comedic about his lack of tact:

With a sudden vision of incompetence
I seize her hand
In silence and we walk on as before.[254]

The enjambment after 'hand' captures the sudden hesitations and awkward pauses found in these situations with a kind of comic timing. However, any comedy is undercut by a Prufrockian self-loathing, as in

252 Eliot, 'Paysage Triste', in *March Hare*, p. 52, lines 16-9.
253 *Ibid.*, 'Entretien dans un parc', in *Poems I*, p. 343, line. 6.
254 *Ibid*., lines 8-10.

> Round and round, as in a bubbling pot
> That will not cool
> Simmering upon the fire, piping hot
> Upon the fire of ridicule.[255]

These lines from 'Entretien' recall the famous passage from 'Prufrock',

> I should have been a pair of ragged claws
> Scuttling across the floors of silent seas…[256]

For all Eliot's mockery of spinsters in the Verdenal letters,[257] or the marionettes in *March Hare*,[258] it all disguises an ironic self-criticism. Eliot was just as unhappy as the 'lady' without a 'man' in 'Convictions',[259] and he could not rid himself of his Unitarian sensibility.

Perhaps it is these sexual anxieties that underpin Eliot's conservative attitude. In James's novel, Basil's conservatism is tangled with his sexual desire for Verena and his frustration that she is wasting herself with Olive (Olive's sexual anxieties are just as wound up with her politics, of course). James's novel is powerful because of his probing of American cultural consciousness in this manner. As Emily Coit puts it:

> James writes his political novels at a moment when the tensions intrinsic to liberalism threaten to fracture its ideals, and public debates on both sides of the Atlantic pose questions about the receptivity to cultivation – and thereby the suitability for suffrage and citizenship – of populations seeking the franchise, including women, working-class men, imperial subjects, and the freedmen of the American South.[260]

This is to say, the political liberties that Olive and Verena fight for was once opposed by figures like Basil because of a scepticism towards the ability for women to be 'cultivat[ed]' – for them to learn and uphold the responsibilities ostensibly necessary for the preservation of

---

255 Eliot, 'Entretien dans un parc', in *Poems I*, p. 343, lines 22-25.
256 *Ibid*., 'Prufrock', p. 35, lines. 73-4.
257 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 24.
258 See: Eliot, 'Humouresque', in *Poems I*, p. 311, lines. 1, 21; 'Convictions (Curtain Raiser)', pp. 313-4, lines. 1, 28; 'Goldfish (Essence of Summer Magazines: I', p. 327, line. 16; 'Goldfish (Essence of Summer Magazines): IV', p. 329, line. 15.
259 *Ibid*., 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, lines. 21-6.
260 Emily Coit. 'Henry James's Dramas of Cultivation: Liberalism and Democracy in *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*', in *The Henry James Review*, 36.2 (2015) 180 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/582078> [Accessed 21-03-2019].

the democratic state. As Coit goes on to say, the debate between Basil and Olive is reminiscent of the debate between J. S. Mill and Thomas Carlyle over the 'Negro question'.[261] Olive, echoing Mill,

> believes in Verena's natural capacity to develop and wishes to educate her so that she may rise to participate in 'civilisation'. Basil [echoing Carlyle] believes Verena's capacities are naturally limited and so seeks to govern her.[262]

On the one hand, paternalism stems from affection, a sense of care or duty; but on the other hand, it is repressive, perhaps even dehumanising in its refusal to respect the individual's agency. In this sense, debates between Millian liberalism and Carlylean reaction arise out of, or are perhaps a refinement of, these human passions.

Basil's concerns go much deeper than a purely intellectual opposition to educationalism, that is to say. He has a similar dishonesty to Olive, in that he subsumes his anxieties into ideological reasoning, only for them to swell up at certain points. He is motivated, for instance, by a fear that with political freedoms for women will come a dramatic shift in cultural confidence. Suffrage, for him, is not just political radicalism, but a kind of nihilism – one whose true motivation is the advocation of effeminacy and weakness. In his own words, he claims that

> The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitudes and coddled sensibilities, which, if we don't soon look out, will usher in the reign of mediocrity, of the feeblest and flattest and the most pretentious that has ever been.[263]

What Basil fears is not just a rise in the political power of women, but also their social power – a destruction of masculine greatness by a motherly, inclusive sensibility. The 'womanized' generation is, to Basil, not just egalitarian or liberal, but more importantly, hollow,

---

261 Coit, 185.
262 *Ibid*.
263 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 322.

conformist, and pretentious. Is this not Eliot's complaint in *March Hare*? Eliot's portrayal of New England coincides with this description: ruled by women, especially the 'nervous' and 'hysterical' sort (Eliot even writes a poem called 'Hysteria'), whose beliefs are really 'cant' and 'hollow phrases', masking their 'false delicac[ies]' and 'coddled sensibilities'.

Regarding the 'reign of mediocrity' that this feminine age ostensibly 'usher[s] in', this is a criticism similarly found in *March Hare* and the later Oxford poems. The ladies in *March Hare* are part of the 'philistine aristocracy';[264] their respect for art does not move beyond a desire to be seen as having respect for it. In 'Afternoon', for instance, the 'ladies who are interested in Assyrian art / Gather in the hall of the British museum',[265] far removed from the culture that that art was produced in. Art, disembodied from its cultural base, becomes a mere object or commodity to be briefly looked at, chatted about, and moved on.[266] As David Chinitz says, 'Eliot views the sacrilisation of art' – the holding up of art in place of religion in an Arnoldian fashion – as a 'reflection of middle-class ascendency, a product of the bourgeois craving for "culture" as a token of respectability'.[267] The museum is a social event for the ladies, who pretty themselves up with 'faint perfume' and dried 'rubber overshoes'. This scene is 'sombre', for Eliot.[268]

It is intentional that the event takes place on a 'Sunday',[269] just as it does in 'Spleen'; Christian traditions are passively forgotten, replaced by 'false delicacy'. Indeed, a familiar phrase reappears from that poem: the ladies move 'towards the unconscious, the ineffable, the absolute' without realising.[270] The women, in Eliot's 'supercilious' mind, are not capable of understanding the 'absolute', this true knowledge. His criticism recalls Verdenal's letters on

264 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.
265 *Ibid*., 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, lines. 1-2.
266 *Ibid*., lines. 6-9.
267 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 58.
268 Eliot, 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, lines. 3-4, 6.
269 *Ibid*., line. 6.
270 *Ibid*., line. 9.

the mal-education of the aspirational working- and middle-classes,[271] but this is an attitude Eliot shares with Pound. As Ann Ardis says,

> both Eliot and Pound […] articulate the cultural value of 'serious' art – and to distinguish it, with absolute confidence, from the reading matter enjoyed by what Pound terms 'the half-educated simpering general', that is, the newly (and, as far as he's concerned, inadequately) literate populace in Britain created after the 1870 Education Act and the establishment of board schools, workingmen's institutes and women's colleges.[272]

They were concerned with, to use Eliot's own phrase, 'The Degradation of Women in American Society'.[273] Predicting the socially conservative attitudes he would articulate later in his life, Eliot here associates this feminine philistinism with political liberalism. The ladies are keen to display the 'purple feathers' on their hats,[274] symbols of the women's suffrage movement. Just as in 'Convictions', Eliot senses beneath these adherents of suffragism a sort of narcissism or self-conscious display of piety. The women have the kind of annoying sanctimoniousness that believers in the progression of society ostensibly hold. Eliot, who rejected this kind of Whig self-confidence, regarded these figures with contempt, deserving of satire.

Another of Eliot's complaints with this society is that it was, frankly, boring. The 'women' in 'Prufrock' who 'come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'[275] are, it is implied, not exciting or engaging; they speak in 'cant' and 'hollow phrases' on lofty topics they do not care to understand. There is a dullness associated with philistines. This is seen plainly in 'Portrait of a Lady', whose published version is quite different to the one found in *March Hare*. The sarcastic narrator that appears in many of the *March Hare* poems reappears in the

---

271 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (25th July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 25.

272 Ann L. Ardis. 'The gender of modernity', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 64.

273 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (15th April 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 104.

274 *Ibid*., 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, line. 5.

275 *Ibid.*, 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, pp. 32, 35, lines. 13-4, 35-6.

first draft of the poem as a detached, silent observer, who can only force an unenthusiastic 'smile' as the titular lady he sits with talks at him sincerely about 'my friends',

> And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
> In a life composed so much, so much of ways and ends
> […]
> – To find a friend that has those qualities
> […] And h]ow much it means that I say this to you.[276]

The silent protagonist, rather comically, ignores this sincere confession, and lets his mind drift into pleasant trivialities:

> Among the windings of the violins
> And the ariettas
> Of our cornets
> Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
> Hammering a prelude of its own
> Capricious monotone.[277]

This is a poem about boredom as much as it is about social ineptitude or shyness. Multiple times, the serious conversation of the lady is broken up or undercut by the 'droll tom-tom' in the poet's brain. The narrator is a man who merely wants to sit '[r]eading the comics and the sporting page'[278] alone in a park – an amusing image of masculine apathy.

Music is suggestive of boredom, as when the lady's 'Voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune / Of a cracked violin on an August afternoon',[279] or when the poet loses his 'self possess[ion]'[280] when a

> street piano, mechanical and tired
> Reiterates some worn-out common song
> With the smell of hyacinths across the garden –
> Recalling things that other people have desired.[281]

276 Eliot, 'Portrait', in *Poems I*, p. 39, lines 19-28.
277 *Ibid*., pp. 41-2, lines 30-35.
278 *Ibid*., p. 41, line. 32.
279 *Ibid*., lines. 16-7.
280 *Ibid*., pp. 42, 43, lines. 11, 18.
281 *Ibid*, p. 42, lines. 39-42.

His boredom in conversation with the lady, his begrudging acknowledgement of 'what other people have desired' (like 'Entretien', he is unable to say 'love'), is undercut by self-doubt. Like Verena Tarrant, he is not so sure he should be dismissive of worldly desires. He poignantly asks in the final line of Part II, 'Are these ideas right or wrong?'[282] The music of 'common song' becomes a symbol of this modern boredom. Music reappears in the New England social scene from 'The smoke that gathers blue and sinks'. A 'Torpid after dinner drinks',[283] described as 'Existence just about to die'[284] by Eliot, suddenly bursts into jazz rhythms:

> What, you want action?
> Some attraction?
> Now begins
> The piano and the flute and the violins.[285]

The party degenerates into clichéd lines of popular songs, as in 'Throw your arms around me – Aint you glad you found me',[286] and a 'a negro (teeth and smile)' who 'has a dance that's quite worth while'.[287]

In another *March Hare* poem, 'Suite Clownesque', the sudden musical bursts are used by Eliot to mock the self-consciousness of the 'comedian',[288] another of his marionettes. The comedian has a 'broad, dogmatic vest, and nose / Nose that interrogates the stars'[289] – the sort of arrogance and pseudo-intellect that the Paladins in 'Convictions' display. There is nothing more loathsome to Eliot the satirist than delusions of social respectability. Later the comedian is sarcastically described as the

> Euphorion of the modern time
> Improved and up to date – sublime

---

282 Eliot, 'Portrait', in *Poems I*, p. 42, line. 43.
283 *Ibid*., 'The smoke that gathers', p. 348, lines. 1, 3.
284 *Ibid*., line. 7.
285 *Ibid*., lines. 11-14.
286 *Ibid*., line. 18.
287 *Ibid*., line. 21.
288 *Ibid*., 'Suite Clownesque: I', in *Poems I*, p. 332, line. 5.
289 *Ibid*., lines. 6-7.

Quite at home in the universe.[290]

'Suite Clownesque' is the most overtly satirical of the *March Hare* poems. The target is the familiar New England taste-makers. The comedian's anxiety, repressed beneath his stylish 'flannel suit',[291] is presented almost comically:

I guess there's nothing the matter with us!
– But say, just be serious,
Do you think I'm alright?[292]

This is indeed a sort of Cousin Nancy-like desire to 'dance all the modern dances'[293] and appear fashionable – but here we get an insight into the mind of this character, and he is really a man desperately concealing his own fear of loneliness. This is the fear implicit in all the modern ladies of *March Hare,* from the ladies in the British Museum, the pious procession in 'Spleen', and the Paladins in 'Convictions'. Eliot's New England is characterised by this repressed loneliness, and he blames his upbringing for his own similar feelings.

'Quite civilised and uninteresting'

The contrast of savage and civilised is a recurring theme in Eliot's early poetry. It is a narrative that offered a pertinent criticism of the upper-crust New England civility that so annoyed him. In *March Hare* can be seen the beginnings of Eliot's vision of a world that, despite its ostensible modernity, could not successfully repress the 'primitive' beneath the surface. 'We hibernate', as Eliot says in 'Interlude in London' – a word chosen for its animalistic connotations – 'among the bricks […] with marmalade and tea at six'.[294] The animal nature of man and the artificiality of the city is here contrasted for ironic effect. The

290 Eliot, 'Suite Clownesque: III', in *Poems I,* p. 334, lines. 10-2.
291 *Ibid*., line. 23.
292 *Ibid*., pp. 334-5, lines. 24-6.
293 *Ibid*., 'Cousin Nancy', p. 57, line. 8.
294 *Ibid*., 'Interlude in London', p. 352, lines 1-3.

modern industrialised city, that great symbol of technological progress, in fact serves only to alienate us, leave us 'indifferent to what the wind does / Indifferent to sudden rains'.[295] 'Indifferen[ce]' is the key term here, for that is the mood – so particular to modern life – that Eliot wanted to criticise. In 'Easter: Sensations of April', the 'geraniums', whose 'perfume' is masked by 'the smell of heat / From the asphalt street',[296] are 'withered and dry', forgotten, 'long laid by / In the sweepings of the memory'.[297] Modern life, made comfortable and disconnected from the natural world, leaves us arrogant, forgetful of our past, and – more pertinently – 'indifferent', lifeless, bored.

Eliot's most articulate criticism of this modern apathy comes over a decade later in a short and somewhat overlooked essay, 'Marie Lloyd', titled after the music-hall comedienne and written shortly after her death in 1923. There are two versions of this essay, but here I am interested in the second version, published in *The Criterion*, which contains an altered concluding paragraph regarding 'the fate of the Melanesians'. Eliot, who claims to have been profoundly affected by Lloyd's death,[298] praised her for her ability to 'express that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest', which later in the essay he takes to mean the culture of 'what is called the lower class'.[299] Lloyd's performance, known for her saucy jokes and her sharp use of innuendo,[300] was uniquely poised to unite otherwise business-like, apathetic city-dwellers in laughter. Her ability to express this 'lower class' culture gave her 'moral superiority' over other artists and music-hall performers, because there was allegedly 'no such expressive figure for any other class'.[301] The middle-class particularly, 'under democracy, are morally dependent on the aristocracy'. This

295 Eliot, 'Interlude in London', in *Poems I*, p. 352, lines 4-5.
296 *Ibid*., 'Easter: Sensations of April: I', p. 319, lines 8-9.
297 *Ibid*, lines 11-12.
298 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 418.
299 *Ibid*.
300 Steven Gerrard. 'The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to British Culture and 'The Trivial', in *Culture Unbound*, 5 (2013) 497.
301 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 419.

dependency was not something Eliot saw as a negative in itself, but this 'aristocracy' – who were rapidly disappearing as a consequence of liberalisation and democratisation – were similarly 'dependent' on the 'morally corrupt' middle class,[302] and hence the unity of classes in the nation can no longer be described as a net positive.

As other scholars have pointed out,[303] Eliot's essay must be read with consideration shown to the popularity of music-halls as an intellectual discussion topic. Eliot's polemic engagement with the conservative, nationalist side of the debate sought to reconfigure music-halls as an expression of 'national character' – often an exaggeration of the truth. Eliot cannot 'really be said to be an expert in popular culture'.[304] However, 'Marie Lloyd' remains Eliot's foremost articulation of the boredom associated with modern technological and political 'progress'. Art, Eliot contends, requires a communal or ritualistic element to leave an audience 'not so much hilarious as happy'.[305] With the 'encroachment of cheap and rapid-breeding cinema', the connection between performer and audience is severed, and 'the lower-classes will tend to drop into the same state of protoplasm as the bourgeoisie'.[306] The death of music-hall and the rise of cinema would result in a passive, consumeristic audience, 'lulled by continuous senseless music', and would come to embody 'that same listless apathy with which the middle and upper classes regard entertainment of the nature of art'.[307] Tyrus Miller summarises Eliot's logic in this way:

> The cinema, the revue and the technological life-form represented by the motorcar, radio and gramophone will, Eliot suggests, not only lower the level

---

302 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 419.

303 See, for instance: Faulk, 606, 607; Roger Luckhurst, 'The Music Hall & Popular Culture (Review of Barry J. Faulk. *Music Hall and Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture*)', in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 49.2 (2006) 195 [Online] <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/366371/summary> [Accessed 29-11-2018]; Joana Mackin, 'Raising Life to a Kind of Art: Eliot and Music Hall', in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 51-2.

304 Tyrus Miller. 'The avant-garde, bohemia and mainstream culture', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 105.

305 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, pp. 418-19.

306 *Ibid*., 419-20.

307 *Ibid*., p. 420.

> of culture. More consequentially, it will abolish the final residues of distinct class cultures and moralities, a distinction that only persisted in the spontaneous aspirations of the working class to consciously be working-class and not some less well-heeled version of a middle-class, consumer culture.[308]

In short, the lower-class man will also be dragged into this philistine malaise: 'he will have lost some of his interest in life'.[309] This boredom, to Eliot, was a great cause of concern – a sign of decadence. Citing the anthropologist W. H. R. Rivers, he noted how the 'natives' of Melanesia, under the influence of 'the "Civilisation" forced upon them', led to their loss of 'interest in life' and their subsequent extinction.[310] After 'applied science has done everything possible with the materials of this earth to make life as interesting as possible', Eliot sarcastically remarks, 'it will not be surprising if the population of the entire civilised world rapidly follows the fate of the Melanesians'.[311] Here Eliot's respect for the 'primitive' and the lower-classes becomes clear: they are the last vestiges of vitality, a bulwark against the forces of reason and progress that have made the 'civilised' world hollow, arrogant, and boring.

Eliot's admiration of music hall has been much remarked upon in contemporary scholarship. David Chinitz says, for instance,

> The music hall is a rare venue in which Eliot's modernist alienation is momentarily assuaged by a sense of genuine community. The vital element in the music-hall format, for Eliot, is audience participation – a stark contrast to the passivity of the middle class when confronted with 'Art'.[312]

This is mostly Eliot's own words, and indeed Chinitz is right to identify that Eliot's critique harbours a kind of 'vital element', both in the sense of 'necessary' but also echoing the vitalism of the Vorticists and Lewis, who Eliot would have known as he was writing the

---

308 Miller, p. 105.
309 *Ibid*.
310 *Ibid*.
311 *Ibid*.
312 Chinitz, 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', 239.

essay in 1923.[313] Barry Faulk is more sceptical of Eliot's rhetoric, seeing in Eliot's eulogy 'that favored modernist trope of crisis, the end of art':

> Mass culture means credulous, lazy, and corrupted spectators; the end of proletarian culture by necessity imperils the nation, since the working-class represent, in Eliot's words, 'that part of the nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest'.[314]

Indeed, there is surely a deliberate exaggeration in Eliot's phrasing. The first edition of the essay had no such grand prophetic claims; it was only in the second edition that the paragraphs on the 'Melanesians' were added. A piece of literary journalism primarily, the first edition lacks the kind of bold critical stance that readers had come to expect from Eliot since *The Sacred Wood*. This is not to say that Eliot was being dishonest; rather, it goes to show how enamoured Eliot was by the potential for popular culture to criticise modernity. Eliot may not have had an expertise in popular culture, and certainly was not a member of the lower-class himself, but he still felt the need, even if done so performatively, to raise it up and integrate it into his own literary aims and social philosophy.

Eliot's relationship with the ordinary theatre-goer was a mixture of admiration, as he implies in the 'Marie Lloyd' essay, but also allowed for gentle mockery and detachment. This is basically Eliot's relationship with 'popular culture': never fully engaged, but never fully disparaging, either. Eliot does not really see music-hall as 'low' art, or see poetry as 'high' art that should remain detached and isolated. As McNeilly puts it, Eliot thought that 'the music-hall d[id] not need to be 'lifted' to the level of literature; instead, poetry needs to return to its mass roots.'[315] Eliot's dual relationship with the popular theatre-goer is best seen in his letters to his cousin Eleanor Hinkley, in which Eliot shares an in-joke (recurring over multiple

---

313 Upper-crust New England is of course not quite the same as English Victorian culture, although there are common 'blasted' elements: the 'philistine aristocracy', the feigned liberalism and 'progress', the affinity with Protestant theology, etc. – and, most importantly, a similar detached engagement with art.

314 Faulk, 606.

315 Kevin McNeilly. 'Culture, Race, Rhythm: *Sweeney Agonistes* and the Live Jazz Break', in in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000) p. 32.

letters sent over multiple months) of a melodramatic play he was supposedly writing – sections of which he pretends to re-print exclusively for Hinkley. In these fragments exists a parody of mock-Victorian literary cultivation that borders on vaudeville performance:

> F: Miss Elizabeth, the devotion and ardour of my flame in the past is sufficient earnest and token guarantee of my constancy in the future, and any further hesitation upon your part would argue not that natural coyness and timidity which in the female appears so seemly, but rather a coldness of complexion and a defect of appreciation of my merits. Conscious as I am, and as I ought to be, of the honour I bestow, and of the exalted and difficult post which I propose that you should occupy, I yet am fully minded to make you my wife.[316]

The ridiculous abundance of civility and decorum, the self-conscious 'civilisation' of this speech, is indicative of Eliot's satirical wit, aimed as it was towards a bourgeois culture desperate to affirm its own refinement. This anxiety about the 'corruption of the aristocracy' trickles down into the audience, whose reactions Eliot parodically includes in his stage directions:

> F: (*on one knee*) My Elizabeth!
> (*Sensation among the old ladies in the front row*)
> *He rises, his boots creaking as he does so*. 'There, that's settled'. *Looks at his watch.* 'Now I must be off to address a meeting of the Church Lads Brigade in Arlington'. *Starts to put on his rubbers*. 'Oh, I forgot'. *Advances f.c.*. 'Permit me'. *Kisses her decorously in exact centre of left cheek.*
> CURTAIN[317]

It is as if the audience themselves were in a sense part of the same self-consciously civilised performance. Indeed, this is his criticism in 'Marie Lloyd', that the passive middle-class audience member is always signalling their affinity with the 'civilised'. Of course, this anxiety is particular to 'old ladies in the front row', like the old ladies in 'Cousin Nancy' eager to prove their affirmation of Nancy's 'modern dances'.[318] A fiction of Eliot's mind, in

316 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (27th January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 90.
317 *Ibid*., p. 91.
318 *Ibid*., 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 8.

one sense – although these letters help us to understand Eliot's disdain for the 'philistine aristocracy',[319] the common target of his early satires.

The Columbus ballad and American imperialism

If the *March Hare* poems were to be a Jamesian probing of the hypocrisies of his Unitarian upbringing, then Eliot would take a very different approach in his 'King Bolo' verses. Written at the same time as many of the *March Hare* poems, the Bolos take his own 'futile rebellion' into a much cruder, laddish direction. If his mother was appalled at his use of the 'vulgar phrase "O. K."',[320] then she would have been extraordinarily shocked to find out that her son was composing bawdy limericks about 'bugger[ing] in the rectum',[321] 'knotty penis[es]',[322] and so on – and this was likely why Eliot enjoyed writing them.

The foremost artistic influence for these shocking stanzas was most likely a popular ballad, 'Christopher Columbo'. Eliot may have heard this ballad at Harvard, considering the ostensible popularity of the ballad amongst university fraternities.[323] These parts of Harvard allowed Eliot to experience a highly masculine, irreverent culture – a total contrast to his youth living with five sisters.[324] David Chinitz agrees that the ballad is a likely source for the Bolos, saying that

> It is not in 'Fragments' but in his 'Columbo and Bolo' verses that Eliot genuinely writes his own 'dud' variations on a folk theme, borrowing bits and pieces of the original, discarding some components while elaborating on others. The coprophilia [meaning 'interest in faeces'], anal-eroticism, and sexual violence of Eliot's verses surprised many readers of *Inventions of the*

319 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.
320 *Ibid*., quoted in Crawford, *Young Eliot*, p. 18.
321 *Ibid*., *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 278, stz. 25, line. 8.
322 *Ibid*., p. 272, stz. 6, line. 8.
323 Ed Cray ed. *The Erotic Muse: American Bawdy Songs*, Second edn. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. xxv. The Columbus ballad is printed in the 'Undergraduates Coarse' chapter, the section of the book dedicated to fraternity songs.
324 One sister died in infancy, so perhaps it is more accurate to say he grew up with four sisters.

> *March Hare*, but all of these elements derive from the folk ballad of 'Christopher Columbo', already loaded with them.[325]

Indeed, it is quite easy to see Eliot's 'variations' if one only reads the original ballad and compares it to Eliot's poems. The infamous antisemitic stanza, for instance,

> Columbo he lived over in Spain
> Where doctors are not many
> The only doctor in his town
> Was a bastard jew named Benny.[326]

was not Eliot's original composition, but was copied straight from at least one version of the traditional ballad.[327] Many of Eliot's verses resemble the ballad even in terms of rhyme and phrasing. For instance, Eliot's quatrain,

> Now when they were three weeks at sea
> Columbo he grew rooty
> He shook his cock with both his hands
> And swore it was a beauty.[328]

is remarkably similar to a stanza in one of the versions of the Columbus ballad collected in *The Erotic Muse*, which reads:

> Columbo paced upon the deck.
> He knew it was his duty.
> He laid his whang into his hand
> And said, 'Ain't that a beauty'.[329]

It is quite clear from this evidence, then, that Eliot was, as Chinitz puts it, participating in a bawdy ballad tradition. Although Chinitz himself does not conclude so, it is not a stretch to suppose that Eliot's otherwise bizarre dive into fraternity obscenity was a way for him to resist the 'reliance' upon 'female society'[330] that haunted him in his youth.

---

325 Chinitz, 'T. S. Eliot's Blue Verses and Their Sources in the Folk Tradition', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 23.2 (1999-2000) 332 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831929> [Accessed 04-11-2018].

326 Unknown author, 'Christopher Columbus', in *Erotic Muse*, p. 312.

327 There are multiple versions of the ballad printed in *The Erotic Muse*. The stanza quoted here is from what Cray terms the '[B]' version. See: '[B]', in Cray ed. *The Erotic Muse*, p. 311.

328 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 274, stz. 11, lines. 1-4.

329 Unknown author, 'Christopher Columbus', in *Erotic Muse*, p. 312.

330 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.

Another possible source for the Bolo verses were Navy songs and sailors' shanties. Quite how Eliot would have come into contact with these forms is not clear. The term 'Bolo', Loretta Johnson says, comes from these songs. She cites 'The Philippine Hombre' as an example:

> His padre was buen Filipino,
> Who never mixed tubig with vino,
> Said, 'No insurrecto, no got gun nor bolo…'[331]

The word 'bolo', in this instance, refers to a kind of knife carried by Filipino soldiers in order to cut down the thick forests of the region.[332] Johnson says 'the term would have been known in the United States especially after its annexation of the Philippines in 1898.'[333] 'The Philippine Hombre' was allegedly composed by U. S. Marine corps during this conflict.[334] [335]

Eliot did have some interest in the Philippines conflict – and his interest goes very far back. His childhood mock-magazine, *Fireside*, written in 1898 when Eliot was about 10 years-old, has an editorial from a 'special correspondent' who drew the Philippines flag.[336] In another *Fireside* editorial, he 'comments on Emilio Aguinaldo (the Filipino independence leader)'.[337] Six years later, in 1904, Eliot would again encounter the Philippines at the St. Louis World Fair.[338] Narita says that 'the young Eliot visited this Philippine Exposition, held jointly with the Fair, and witnessed how native Filipinos led their own lives.'[339] Interestingly, while at this Exposition, he would interact with the 'Ingorot' people, a tribe known for their 'curious customs', who 'walked to the Exposition site with no clothes other than their

---

331 Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 120.
332 *Ibid*., 'T. S. Eliot's Bawdy Verse', 21.
333 *Ibid*.
334 *Ibid.*
335 *Ibid*., 'Feeling the Elephant', 120.
336 Eliot, quoted in Tatsushi Narita. 'The Young T. S. Eliot and Alien Cultures: His Philippine Interactions', in *The Review of English Studies*, 45.180 (1994) 523 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/517810> [Accessed 25-07-2019].
337 Narita, 523.
338 Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 116.
339 Narita, 523.

traditional loin-cloths, which drew the attention of a local women's society.'[340] Narita doesn't take this implication, but perhaps this encounter motivates the *March Hare* disgust at the suffragettes with 'purple feathers' in their hats.[341] Perhaps Eliot's experiences of conflicts like the one at the Exposition were a germ of his contempt for upper-crust liberalism.

In 1905, only a year after his visit to the World Fair, Eliot wrote a short story, 'The Man Who Was King', based on Rudyard Kipling's tale of a similar name. Kipling, who wrote that it was 'The White Man's Burden' to rule over the Filipino people and their country,[342] set his story in Kafiristan, now part of modern-day Afghanistan. Two adventurers become kings after mustering an army and taking over native settlements; the Kafiri natives make them their leader because their white skin was ostensibly evidence that they were relations or even reincarnations of Alexander the Great. They are proclaimed as gods. They are found out, however, when one of the adventurers marries a Kafiri girl to solidify his power; she bites him out of fear when he tried to seduce her, demonstrating that he is mortal after all.[343]

Eliot's story is very similar in structure to Kipling's. Eliot begins the narrative of 'Cap'n Jimmy Magruder',[344] told second-hand by a narrator, reminiscent of Kipling's story but perhaps also influenced by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Eliot would clearly take influence from Conrad's story, alluding to it multiple times in his later poetry, most notably in the draft epigraph to *The Waste Land*. The importance of Conrad is put succinctly by Boehmer:

> It is the narrator Marlow's suspicion at the start of *Heart of Darkness* that Europe exposes its own primitive heart in the very act of 'civilising' other peoples, which leads him to utter his well-known assertion: London, too, 'has been one of the dark places of the earth'. The contemporary shock factor of this statement is most clearly perceived when we remember that the effort to bring 'backward peoples' into the light of progress (represented either by

340 Narita, 523.
341 Eliot, 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, line. 5.
342 Rudyard Kipling, 'The White Man's Burden', in *Rudyard Kipling: The Complete Verse*, pp. 261-2.
343 *Ibid*., *The Man Who Would Be King* (New York: Open Road Media, 2016).
344 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.

> commerce or by Christianity, or both), constituted a major justification for the imperial mission in the first place.[345]

We see a similar 'suspicion' towards ''civilising' other peoples' in Eliot's story. Cap'n Jimmy sinks his ship off the coast of 'Polynesia', and swims to an island which later he finds out is 'Matahiva, in the Paumota group.'[346] Once he arrives, the natives proclaim him as their god and leader, since, being 'of a whitish color, they straightaway concluded that the gods had dropped him down for the purpose of ruling over them'.[347] One might consider this a bigoted sentiment, reminiscent of Kipling, but this is not the tone of Eliot's story, which is ironically charged.[348] Eliot writes, for instance, of Cap'n Jimmy's disappointment, after landing on the island, that,

> [T]he French got hold of it and built a post there. They educated the natives to wear clothes on Sunday and go to church, so that now they are quite civilized and uninteresting.[349]

Here the themes from *March Hare* arise again: a vague anti-Christianity, especially the surface-level kind seen in 'Spleen'; a scepticism towards the aims of 'education[alism]',[350] like that of Basil Ransom and Thomas Carlyle; and a disdain for the flattening of art and culture into this educated but nonetheless 'uninteresting',[351] boring civilization.[352] The language of the 'Paladins'[353] of civilisation is here given an ironic charge: 'civilized' does not carry the loftiness that a serious imperialist like Kipling, but instead it becomes a synonym

---

345 Elleke Boehmer. 'Empire and Modern Writing', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 52.

346 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.

347 *Ibid*., pp. 6-7.

348 Johnson also says, in 'Feeling the Elephant', 116: 'Something of the virtue or lack of virtue in white colonials, kings, and queens emerges in the early Bolovian verses, albeit the kings fare better than the others.'

349 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.

350 Coit, 181.

351 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.

352 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420.

353 *Ibid*., 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, line. 14.

for a repressed natural state, ideologically dismissed by the white man for being 'primitive' or otherwise deserving of paternalistic control.

The language of liberalism, especially in the United States, was used to justify the invasion of the Philippines. War broke out between the newly-formed first Philippine Republic and the U. S. around 1898, after the Treaty of Treaty of Paris established the U.S. possession of the Philippines from the Spanish. Filipino nationalists did not want U.S. rule, but independence; the U.S. regarded their resistance as an insurrection. 'For the Americans', Susan Brewer suggests,

> the acquisition of a colony thousands of miles away required a break with their anti-imperialist traditions. To justify such a break, the administration of William McKinley proclaimed that its policies benefitted both Americans and Filipinos by advancing freedom, Christian benevolence, and prosperity.[354]

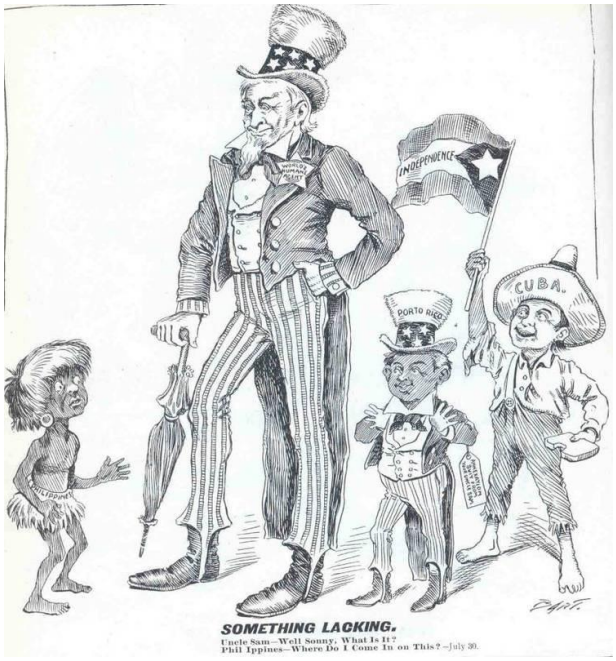
Indeed, we can see these sorts of justifications in the speeches of then-President William McKinley, quoted by Brewer:

> And, my fellow-citizens, wherever our flag floats, wherever we raise that standard of liberty, it is always for the sake of humanity and the advancement of civilization.[355]

Eliot's 'civilization' here appears, with all its unintentional ironic edge. America's true intentions for their declaration of war are here deliberately flattened under moralistic innuendo; 'wherever' they go and whatever their aims, they always, ostensibly, champion 'liberty', seeing themselves as the world's defenders of 'humanity'. So too is there a notion of 'advancement' or progress, here not defined, although one suspects that the primacy of 'liberty' here implies that republicanism, so important to the founding mythology of the United States (and the party McKinley led), is considered the most 'civiliz[ed]' of states – the traditions and customs of the Filipinos be damned.

---

354 Brewer, p. 14.
355 McKinley, quoted in Brewer, p. 26.



In 'The Man Who Was King', Eliot displays his early scepticism towards 'Christian benevolence' and social 'prosperity'.[356] This scepticism extended into his Harvard years. Eliot's drawings of 'Bolovians' are strikingly similar to the depictions of Filipinos (and other 'natives') in U. S. war propaganda. See, for instance, the image (above left), where Uncle Sam, wearing a badge declaring him the 'World's Humane Agent', paternalistically guards the child figures of Cuba and Puerta Rico as the latter (standing middle right) twiddles the bowtie of his 'annexion suit from Uncle Sam'.[357] The depiction of Puerta Rico is remarkably similar to Eliot's depiction of a Bolovian (above right image),[358] with his top-hat, bow-tie, and unmistakably 'Negro' appearance; Eliot would even call the Bolovians a 'race of comic Negros' in a letter.[359]

Bolovians, as Eliot would later develop in letters to Bonamy Dobrée, are the originators of many Western 'civilized' traditions, including 'Wuxianity', whose 'Modernist'

356 Brewer, p. 14.
357 Image from: Charles L. Bartholomew, 'Something Lacking', in *Cartoons of the Spanish-American War by Bart* (Minneapolis: Journal Printing Company, 1899), p. 101. [Online] <https://archive.org/details/cartoonsofspanis00bart/page/101/mode/2up> [Accessed 04-11-2022].
358 Image from: Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (19th July 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 47.
359 Eliot, Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (22nd June 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 257.

and 'Fundamentalist'[360] denominations clearly mock contemporary theological debates. The two sects worship the same idol from the front and from the back respectively, as they are too 'lazy' to make a second idol.[361] This cynical satire is broadly in line with Eliot's other anti-intellectual poetry from the period. Eliot mocked intellectuals in his Bolo letters, such as one, also sent to Dobrée, in which he remarked that 'certain authorities' – being German scholars with ridiculous names like 'Schnitzel' – believed that the Bolovians 'were the Tenth (lost) tribe of Israel', apparently because a 'Corrupt Stanza' should actually read,

> Now the Jewboys of Columbo's Fleet
> Were feasting at the Passover:
> King Bolo & His Big Black Queen
> Rolled in Tea-kettle-arse-over……[362]

Letters like these would motivate Dobrée to say, when asked about the Bolos after Eliot's death, that they were a kind of satire 'on the way anthropologists talk about the religion of others'.[363] They are satires, in other words, of 'civilised' rhetoric – of an ideology that separates people into the categories of either 'civilised' or 'savage'.

As Johnson says, this mock-scholarship 'reveals that the Bolovian behaviour and characteristics are the sources of many modern Western traditions'.[364] The origins of America are shown to be farcical, full of hypocrisy – and Columbus being no more 'civilized' than the 'primitives' he meets. In a stanza Eliot entitles 'AMERICA DISCOVER'D', Columbus finds the land only because he can 'Smell Bitches!':[365] Columbus' discovery of America, in other words, was not a 'civilising' mission, as President McKinley might have presented it, but instead was motivated by the masculine desire of sexual domination. This sort of cynicism at socio-political narratives exists in the traditional Columbus ballad, which also depicts

---

360 Eliot, Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (10th May 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 257.
361 *Ibid*.
362 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (29th September 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 262.
363 Bonamy Dobrée, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 247.
364 Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 111.
365 Eliot, 'AMERICA DISCOVER'D', in *Poems II*, p. 261, line. 4.

Columbus as a pervert – but Eliot, in creating the 'comic Negros'[366] of 'King Bolo & His Big Black Queen', extends the joke to be at the expense of the white imperialist in general, whose imported 'civilisation' contains its own 'heart of darkness'.

The Language of Modernism: Vorticism and WWI

Eliot would move to Marburg, Germany, in 1914 to study, before war broke out on the continent only a few months later and he would be forced to relocate to Oxford. Eliot appears to have enjoyed his time in Germany. His letters to Eleanor Hinkley on 'Marburgians' are full of humour, caricatures, and a kind of relief, perhaps, that he was not in America.[367] His experience of German war propaganda, followed soon by his experience of anti-German war propaganda in Oxford, played into his 'relativism'. As he says in one letter,

> The [German] people in general are persuaded of the rightness of the German cause; so was I, to a certain extent, till I found that the English papers were making the exact contradictions of the German.[368]

He would still make a commitment to the anti-German cause, mainly on ethnic grounds, being an American – but he never seemed wholly convinced. He says in another letter,

> the whole experience has been something which has left a very deep impression on me; having seen, I mean, how the people in the two countries have taken the affair, and the great moral earnestness on both sides. It has made it impossible for me to adopt a wholly partisan attitude, or even rejoice or despair wholeheartedly, though I should want to fight against Germans if at all.[369]

This final sentence is unconvincing. Eliot had friends in Germany and clearly felt little reason to fight against them. He even expressed sympathy for the German cause, at the same time as he expressed sympathy for the English one:

> [I]t is silly to hold up one's hand at German 'atrocities' and 'violations of neutrality'. The Germans are perfectly justified in violating Belgium – they are

366 Eliot, Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (22nd June 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 257.
367 See, for instance: *Ibid*., Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (26th July 1914), in *Letters I*, pp. 52-5.
368 *Ibid.*, Letter to Charlotte Eliot (23rd August 1914), p. 58.
369 *Ibid*., Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (8th September 1914), p. 62.

> fighting for their existence – but the English are more than justified in turning to defend a treaty. But the Germans are bad diplomats. It is not against German 'crimes', but against German 'civilisation' – all this system of officers and professors – that I protest. But very useful to the world if kept in its place.[370]

This is one of the most explicit examples of Eliot's 'relativis[m]'[371] as it appears in relation to WWI. He is dismissive of the moralistic language condemning the Germans – the quote-marks around 'atrocities' being the most egregious – but still maintains a moral tone when it suits his own stance. In Eliot's view, Germany was 'fighting for its existence' against the increasingly powerful nations surrounding it; this is to say, Eliot viewed Germany's invasion of Belgium was a defensive pre-emptive strike. The last two sentences are especially telling; apparently it was not German 'crimes' – defined, as they are, by the persecutor, and therefore relative – but German bureaucracy that Eliot 'protest[ed]', despite its 'useful[ness]' when made subservient to some other, unspecified moral. Perhaps his lack of sympathy for the moralising language of war had its roots in his earlier dismissals of McKinley's fight for 'civilization' and 'liberty'[372] – Eliot even uses the former word in this letter. What appears in these letters are the themes that will reappear all over his writings on the WWI: a cynicism towards the war's justifications, especially the language used to express them; a focus on 'the English papers' as proponents of these unconvincing justifications; and a shifting of the blame onto public officials and intellectual circles.

The language of newspapers, political speeches, and public debates – ever-present in wartime London, as the press sought to manufacture public approval for the war – has been extensively examined by Vincent Sherry in *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003). Sherry contends that the familiar Eliotian (and perhaps more broadly, 'modernist') ironic mode that developed in this period was a response to the increasingly self-parodying

370 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (7th September 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 60.
371 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (21st August 1916), p. 160.
372 McKinley, quoted in Brewer, p. 26.

justifications for the war by the Liberal press and politicians. With its emphasis on 'public reason',[373] liberalism privileges, Sherry says, the rhetorical style in which a policy is presented, rather than the evidence for or against it. In other words, the Liberal party could justify the war, normally in conflict with liberal values, only by presenting it as an ethical necessity agreed upon after rational debate.[374] 'The supreme effort in this campaign' of making the war appear rational, Sherry says, 'belonged to Sir Edward Grey':

> The foreign secretary was committed in public for most of July to neutrality. However, his private memos of understanding with the French had allowed that nation's fleet to be shifted to the Mediterranean, leaving the northern and western coasts of that country exposed. The secret agreements compelled an English defense of an unprotected France. Grey needed nonetheless to address matters of foreign policy through the still-regnant conventions of Gladstonian probity. He had to reason the move to France's side as a decision taken freely on ethical grounds. This is the predicament toward which the various and conflicting strains of intellectual and political Liberalism had pushed the situation by 3 August. On this day, he addressed Parliament, in a speech whose text would be printed in all of the major dailies of 4 August and reprinted through the course of the war as the founding document of its moral authority.[375]

This speech,[376] Eliot surely would have known through osmosis at least, even if he did not read directly. Grey channels the authoritative Gladstonian style, the defence of liberal morals that, like McKinley's 'liberty', is resonant in its ability to disguise the true cost of the policies. This language is almost self-parodic, as Sherry describes:

> Already double and shifting, the literary resonance of the speech catches the exact point at which a venerable intellectual legacy, social liberalism with its rich bibliography of concerned humanitarianism, touches awake that equally rich if more cryptic tradition: parodic liberalism, featuring in its most familiar instance the burlesqued voice of the concerned humanitarian in Swift's 'A Modest Proposal'.[377]

---

373 Sherry, *The Great War*, p. 9.
374 *Ibid*., p. 27.
375 *Ibid*., p. 37.
376 Full text: 'Statement by Sir Edward Grey' (3rd August 1914) [Online] <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1914/aug/03/statement-by-sir-edward-grey> [Accessed 09-08-2021].
377 Sherry, *The Great War*, p. 41.

This 'literary resonance', Sherry contends, was captured by the modernists, who saw in this style – adopted by the new literary mediums such as newspaper journalism – a potential for a revival of that 'more cryptic tradition: parodic liberalism'.

This sort of Swiftian 'parodic liberalism', so particularly 'English',[378] would be adopted by praised by the London Vorticists, a movement Eliot admired even before he arrived in England. Clearly aware of events happening in the country, and aware of the *Blast* manifesto and its particular style, Eliot made his own mock-Vorticist 'blasts' in a letter to Conrad Aiken, in which the English foreign secretary himself makes an appearance:

> What I want is MONEY!$!£!! We are hard up! War!
> BLAST
> THE KAISER ED. GREY
> THE AMERICAN AMBASSADORS (SÄMTLICH)
> THE DEMOCRATS[379]

Coming at the end of an otherwise drab letter informing Aiken of Eliot's financial circumstances,[380] here is a brief moment, somewhat typical in his letters before 1918, where Eliot erupts into his satirical persona. Referring to his own financial troubles, Eliot nonetheless, through his ironic mode, projects his own desires onto others, suggesting what he believes is the true motivation behind the Britain's declaration of war: 'What I want is MONEY!$£!!' Still not taking sides, he 'BLAST[ED]' 'THE KAISER' as well as 'ED. GREY'. His unique status as an ex-student in Marburg and outsider in England allowed him to maintain an ironic distance from either side's bogus justification for the war. In a sense, the 'BLAST' against 'THE AMERICAN AMBASSADORS'[381] is an ironic joke, seeing as Eliot was himself a kind of American ambassador. It would be with the Vorticists in London where

---

378 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.

379 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (5th August 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 121.

380 Eliot similarly follows a mundane letter to Aiken with a Bolo verse in Letter to Conrad Aiken (10th January 1916), in *Letters I*, pp. 137-8.

381 Perhaps also an allusion to the Henry James novel, *The Ambassadors.* Eliot praised this novel, as well as *The Europeans*, which he called 'a wonderful criticism of New England', in a Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (31st December 1917), in *Letters I*, p. 245.

his unique perspective as cultural insider-and-outsider could be put to service towards poetic and artistic aims.

Eliot sent similar parodic poems later on to Aiken, as the war turned from a future event, justified through innuendo, to a political reality. The fervour for the war, manufactured by narrative-crafters like 'ED. GREY', was parodied in poems like this one, in which Eliot pretends to submit a jingoistic ode to a newspaper competition:

> My war poem, for the $100 prize, entitled
> UP BOYS AND AT 'EM!
> Adapted to the tune of *C. Columbo lived in Spain* and within the compass of the average male or female voice.[382]

Eliot's 'war poem' does not mention either Columbo or Bolo, but is reminiscent of the Bolos in style, and indeed it is remarkable that he would repurpose the 'tune of C. Columbo' decades later during the similar propaganda campaigns for WWI. The poem he 'submits' satirises the British navy, the obvious joke being, as in the Bolos, that these civilised protectors of 'liberty' harbour the same animalistic lust as a 'primitive':

> Now while our heroes were at sea
> They pass'd a German warship.
> The captain pac'd the quarterdeck
> Parading in his corset.
> What ho! they cry'd, we'll sink your ship!
> And so they up and sink'd her.
> But the cabin boy was sav'd alive
> And bugger'd, in the sphincter.[383]

Written in September 1914, after tensions with Germany reached the point of war (Prime Minister Asquith's declaration of war came on August 4th, 1914), it is remarkable that Eliot's cynicism towards the language and justifications for war seen in 'The Man Who Was King' and the Bolo verses reappear here. Eliot, rather distastefully, utilises homophobic sentiments to mock his political enemies; his joke is that the imperialist's suppressed 'savage' impulses

---

382 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (30th September 1914), in *Poems II*, p. 251.
383 *Ibid*.

manifest as homosexual rape or otherwise cross-dressing 'perversion'. Perhaps recalling the Admiral Barry affair,[384] the British captain effeminately 'parades' the deck 'in his corset', as the crew has their way with a cabin boy. There is nothing cultivated about these 'liberating' war-mongers, this comparison suggests. The word 'heroes' of the opening line carries the same ironic weight as 'civilised' in the Kipling pastiche.[385]

Even among the other 'Men of 1914', Sherry's thesis appears to be vindicated. The perceived hypocrisy of the Liberals was remarked upon by Lewis in his memoir *Blasting and Bombadiering*. Lewis tells of the time when he first realised the state of affairs in a particularly enlightening conversation with Ford Madox Ford (then called Ford Madox Hueffer):

> [Lewis:] 'Liberal Governments can't go to war. That would not be liberal. That would be conservative.' […] 'I don't agree', Ford answered, in his faintest voice, with consummate indifference, 'because it has always been the Liberals who have gone to war. It is *because* it is a Liberal Government that it *will* declare war.'[386]

It appeared that Ford sensed, as Sherry describes, the coming rhetorical debates, ostensibly particular to Gladstonian liberalism, that would change the perception of the war to reconcile it with liberal principles. Lewis goes on to describe this rhetorical technique in another passage:

> Without Mr. Lloyd George's labelling, the War might have sunk out of sight, an almost *anonymous* horror. They gave it as it were a name, a satiric identity. It was 'the War to end War'. It was 'the War to make the world safe for democracy'. It was 'the War to make England a place fit for heroes to live in'. What a terrible felicity of expression to convey, with a merciless blatancy, all that things are *not*![387]

There was a sense, in other words, of a kind of inevitability that the war would be justified with liberal values ('end[ing] war', 'to make the world safe for democracy'), and that there

384 Eliot would refer to Admiral Barry in Letter to Ezra Pound (22nd October 1922), in *Poems II*, p. 254.
385 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.
386 Lewis, *Blasting*, pp. 58-9.
387 *Ibid*., p. 207.

would not be enough pushback from the press or the public to quell Grey's rhetorical campaign.

Lewis' cynicism extends towards the literary and cultural establishment, who he accuses of hypocrisy. The failure to pushback against liberal rhetoric was a failure, in some sense, of intellectuals and artists to fulfil their paternalistic duty:

> But the 'bloomsburies' all exempted themselves, in one way or another. Yet they had money and we hadn't; ultimately it was to keep them fat and prosperous – or thin and prosperous, which is even worse – that other people were to risk their skins. Then there were the tales of how a certain famous artist, of military age and military bearing, would sit in the Café Royal and addressing an admiring group back from the Front, would exclaim: '*We* are the civilization for which you are fighting!'[388]

These 'bloomsburies' represented, for Lewis, the hypocritical intellectual class of London, an artistic caste broadly left-wing and avant-garde, but who were in fact 'Apes of God',[389] wealthy poseurs channelling the aesthetic of bohemians and radicals. 'All but one of the members came from professional upper middle-class families', Rosenbaum says, and 'In religion, the Victorian patriarchies and matriarchies from which Bloomsbury came were in a very general sense […] puritan; in politics they were liberal.'[390] Establishment families with Puritanical roots, politically liberal, and blind to the true consequences of their ideological positions: there is clear overlap between Lewis's political resentments and Eliot's Bostonian resentments.

There was a shared concern amongst Lewis and Eliot, especially after the outbreak of war, that this culture, whether it be American or English, had to be 'blasted'. The 'bloomsburies' were of the new professional classes that provided ripe material for modern satire, as Henkle says:

---

388 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 185.

389 See the title of Lewis' 1930 novel, *Apes of God*.

390 S. P. Rosenbaum. 'Preface to a Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group', in *New Literary History*, 12.2 (1981), 326-7. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468674> [Accessed 04-06-2019].

> And now the arbiters of taste were middle class people like Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, and E. M. Forster, who bore all the mannerisms of the English aristocratic class that for centuries had been deemed to be effete and cynically self-absorbed […] For centuries, also, that aristocracy had been ripe material for polished satire; and here they were again, rejuvenated by new imposters, at their masquerade ball.[391]

It is clear, just as Sherry describes, where the irony-laden rhetoric of the London modernists, Vorticism more specifically, came from: it was a response to the potential in contemporary public language to satirise itself, to disguise its own intentions behind innuendo, and the complete failure of certain intellectual currents to pushback against this hypocrisy.

From these insights stems the Vorticist aesthetic of hardness, precision, 'objective[ity]',[392] the primacy of the individual against the mob, and the sympathy with the supposed uneducated. It was an ideology, broadly conceived, that was at least in part a response to the liberal primacy of public reason and sophisticated 'civilised' rhetoric. Vorticism was best exemplified by the manifestos in the first edition of *Blast*. 'SNOBBERY (disease of femininity)', is blasted as a condition of 'VEGETABLE HUMANITY', as are the 'ROUSSEUISMS' of the 'BOURGEOIS VICTORIAN' 'middle-class (also Aristocracy and Proletariat)'.[393] There is much to unpack here: recalling Eliot's letters to Aiken, the 'disease of femininity' is one of the primary culprits of modern decadence, manifesting as 'SNOBBERY' or 'BOURGEOIS VICTORIAN' tastes, interestingly identified as having an affinity with Rousseauian Romanticism. This 'disease' was ostensibly 'middle-class', not in the economic sense but in a cultural sense, shared with the upper- and lower-classes also – reminiscent of Eliot's thesis from 'Marie Lloyd'.

The self-aware over-confidence of Lewis's phrasing deliberately detracts from his imprecision and inaccuracies. *Blast* is very self-consciously not an academic piece, but a

391 Henkle, 105.
392 Lewis, quoted in Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.
393 *Ibid*., 'MANIFESTO.', in *Blast*, p. 13.

rhetorical piece, one which delights in humorous, if not 'violent polemic[s] against certain aspects of the contemporary, liberal world'.[394] As Sherry puts it,

> The opposition of art to prudent bourgeois values, which represent the dead center of political and cultural liberalism, designates a temper to which the sensibility of these modernists is routinely assigned.[395]

Perhaps this is too sympathetic towards Lewis's rhetoric (why must liberalism necessarily be dominated by 'prudent bourgeois values'?), but this is otherwise an apt summary of how the Vorticists described their own enemies. As Lewis said himself in *Blasting and Bombadiering*, explaining the motivation behind specific blasts:

> Take my next *Blast* – namely, 'Blast years 1837 to 1900'. The triumph of the commercial mind in England, Victorian 'liberalism', the establishment of such apparently indestructible institutions as the English comic paper *Punch*, the Royal Academy, and so on.[396]

Indeed, it is telling that he puts 'liberalism' in quotation marks. '[L]iberalism' was, in Lewis's formulation, no longer a radical movement, but one of the 'bloomsburies', the 'aristocratic class', vindicated by government-funded institutions like 'the Royal Academy' and the Royal College of Art (established in 1837, hence Lewis starts his dates there. The general election of 1837 also saw a Whig victory). These are perhaps unfair generalisations from Lewis, but is nonetheless what motivated his art.

The destruction of the relationship between the art world and the establishment was a key Vorticist aim. Vorticism was certainly anti-aristocratic, in this sense. As Lewis writes in one of the manifestos, 'Long Live the Vortex!':

> Blast will be popular, essentially. It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL. […] Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals.[397]

---

394 Richard W. Sheppard. 'Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*: An (Anti-) Vorticist Novel?' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88.4 (1989) 512-3 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27710234> [Accessed 25-07-2019].

395 Sherry, *The Great War*, p. 20.

396 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 38.

397 *Ibid*., 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast*, p. 7.

As the last line implies, just because Vorticism was 'popular', this is not to say it is socialist, seeing the romanticisation of the poor as primarily an aristocratic, Romantic conceit. As *Blast* again affirmed,

> We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals, wherever found. […] We are against glorification of 'the People,' as we are against snobbery. It is not necessary to be an outcast bohemian, to be unkempt or poor, any more than it is necessary to be rich or handsome, to be an artist. […] The 'Poor' are detestable animals! They are only picturesque and amusing for the sentimentalist or the romantic! The 'Rich' are bores without a single exception, *en tant que riches!* We want those simple and great people found everywhere.[398]

The aping of 'outcast bohemian[s]' is the most important statement here, in relation to Eliot, for this is a similar 'Observation' to the one he would make of New England in *Prufrock*. Indeed, a familiar word appears in *Blast*, reminiscent of 'Marie Lloyd':

> To make the rich of the community shed their education skin, to destroy politeness, standardization and academic, that is civilized, vision, is the task we have set ourselves.[399]

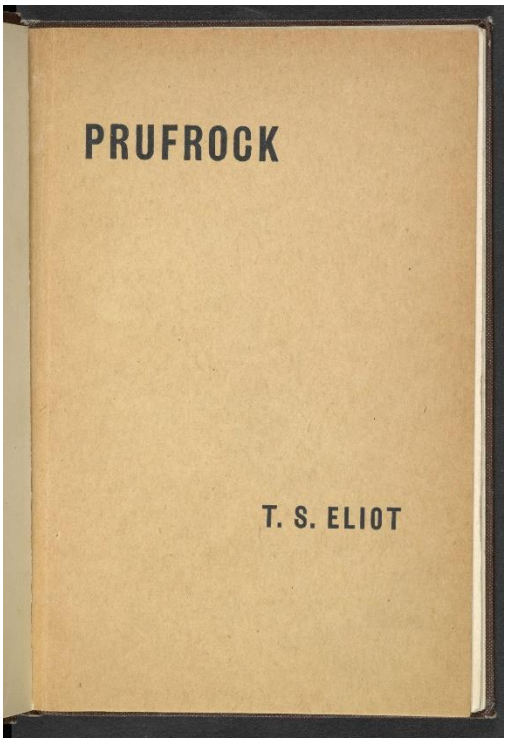
The 'civilized' world that Vorticism aims to destroy was the main appeal for Eliot, despite the fact that its targets were of a culture he did not know. Although the 'Victorian "liberal"' London art world and New England Puritans were separated by the Atlantic, culturally they shared a 'philistine aristocracy',[400] as well as a dedication to a strange mix of aristocratic aesthetics and liberal political ideology. Eliot's early juvenile intuitions about the sterility of his hometown culture were here given more precise edge and an historical grounding. Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that his most refined satires of New England were written in Oxford around the time that he met Lewis and Pound.

---

398 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast*, p. 8.
399 *Ibid*., p. 7.
400 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.

The 'Oxford Poems'

This section will consider three poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*: 'Cousin Nancy', 'The Boston Evening Transcript' and 'Aunt Helen'. These poems have been collectively referred to as the 'Oxford poems' by Kenner[401] because all three were composed in Oxford around 1917.[402] These poems are not wholesale departures from the *March Hare* poems in terms of style, but are rather a revival of the Bostonian satirical target, spurred on by Eliot's involvement with Lewis and his satires of the 'Apes of God'. 'The Oxford poems are experiments with a revised satiric mechanism', Kenner says;[403] they 'turn on an observer's opinions and valuations'.[404] This is to say, they are, unlike what Kenner calls the 'Harvard poems' (the *March Hare* poems), which are more moralistic in tone and style – more akin to traditional satire.



Prufrock is rarely referred to as a volume of satirical poetry, owing to the ostensibly 'minor' status of the three Oxford poems. Indeed, most of the poems from the volume contain little which can be claimed to be outright satire, and those poems from *March Hare* – notably 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait' – contain mostly elements of satire rather than a consistent satirical mode. Yet, there is an air of parody about the whole volume, a sardonic spirit that seeks to overthrow the old literary order. Indeed, isn't this what Pound meant when he described Eliot

401 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 79.
402 For a more detailed composition history, see: *Poems I*, p. 510; *Poems II*, pp. 331-2.
403 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 79.
404 *Ibid*., pp. 91-2.

as 'modernising himself'?[405] Even the original cover of the volume (above image),[406] with its beige, envelope-like surface and meagre, frankly expressed typewritten font, 'PRUFROCK. / T. S. ELIOT' – not even bothering to communicate its own title in full – has something irreverent or anti-social about it, as if it does not care to be read at all. Like Prufrock himself, it is high-strung, business-like, prudish – the archetype of a modern city-dweller. Prufrock is not a wholly a comic character, but still contains a veneer of parody. The subtitle, 'and other observations', has a similar air, the phrase perhaps reminding of Lewis's notion of 'objective[ity]',[407] purporting to be impartial, journalistic, formal. Of course, Eliot is being sarcastic in this regard: most of these poems are not mere observations at all, but highly provincial and ironically charged, clearly owing to the author's own life, indeed even placing himself into the text at points with feigned distance (the name 'Ellicott'). However, indeed, the mock seriousness, the pseudo objectivity, the harsh departure from polite decorum – surely this is owed to the Vorticists, with their similar sharp-edged blasting of propriety and 'politeness'.[408]

William Pratt, describes the Oxford poems in this manner; it is worth quoting him in full:

> The image of Boston which Eliot gives in 'The *Boston Evening Transcript*' and 'Aunt Helen' and 'Cousin Nancy' is of a provincial capital where the leading families rule, those Boston Brahmins or Blue Bloods of which Eliot's own family were prominent members […] All the portraits seem to be of relatives – from 'Cousin Harriet', to whom the speaker brings the *Boston Evening Transcript* as if it were a sort of divine tablet, to 'Aunt Helen', who 'lived in a small house near a fashionable square', to 'Cousin Nancy' (whose last name is 'Ellicott' – very nearly Eliot) who shocks her kinswomen by her 'wild' behaviour […] All the women seem strong-willed enough to exert authority over the men, and intellectually superior, too, because they keep on their shelves the books (and probably the busts) of Arnold and Emerson […]

405 Pound, quoted in Hollis, p. 79.
406 Image from: 'Prufrock, and other observations by T S Eliot', in *The British Library* [Online] <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/prufrock-and-other-observations-by-t-s-eliot> [Accessed 01-12-2022].
407 Lewis, quoted in Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.
408 *Ibid*., 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast,* p. 7.

> Taken together, Eliot's three Boston poems make a subtle critique of the narrowness of the New England capital and its female tyrants, and even of the authors they most admired, and since Eliot had himself escaped the family clutches by going to England, they may be seen in retrospect as a formal farewell to his family past and to the American provincial scene.[409]

Pratt calls on many important features of these poems: the concentration on women, especially spinsters or otherwise old women; their aristocratic philistinism; their worship of Arnold and Emerson, 'guardians of the faith'; the desire for these women to appear morally and intellectually superior, despite their provincialism; and the deliberate tactic Eliot employs in inciting, but never specifically, his own personality into the poems, suggesting sharp targeted satire yet remaining 'invisible'. These are all an extension of the interests and themes from *March Hare*: the problem of boredom in modern society, the fake liberality of the bourgeois ladies which disguises their philistinism, to the disconnect those people feel from human relationships because of their Olive Chancellor-esque devotion to social causes.

'The Boston Evening Transcript' ('Transcript') is the first Oxford poem that appears in the volume. The readers of the Transcript, like the familiar 'marionettes'[410] from *March Hare*, are described, rather bitterly, as almost unhuman, unthinking ragdolls that 'sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn'.[411] This image of a cornfield implies a great many 'readers', the unthinking 'masses' who vastly outnumber the enlightened individuals like the poet, who seems to be the only one in Boston resistant to the ideology. One might describe the poet as the Vorticist 'individual',[412] able to resist newspaper rhetoric. However, unlike *Blast*'s fiery calls to action, there is a defeatist tone in the final lines of 'Transcript'. The protagonist 'wearily' delivers the newspaper to his 'Cousin Harriet':

> I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning
> Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to La Rouchefoucauld,

---

409 Pratt, 326.

410 Eliot, 'Humouresque', in *Poems I*, p. 311, lines. 1, 21; 'Convictions', pp. 313-4, lines. 1, 28; 'Goldfish I', p. 327, line. 16; 'Goldfish IV', p. 329, line. 15.

411 *Ibid*., 'The Boston Evening Transcript', *Poems I*, p. 30, line 2.

412 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *BLAST*, p. 7.

> If the street were time and he at the end of the street,
> And I say, 'Cousin Harriet, here is the *Boston Evening Transcript*.'[413]

There is a similar defeatism in 'Aunt Helen', 'The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece' suggesting the continuation of the ideology Helen represents even as she herself dies; and in 'Cousin Nancy', the 'faith' of Matthew Arnold and Ralph Waldo Emerson is described as 'unalterable'.[414] There is a defeatism in these satires, a suspicion that the Bostonian culture Eliot so despises must inevitably win – that the 'individuals'[415] like himself were outnumbered and helpless in the face of 'the army of the unalterable law'.[416]

Beneath this 'weariness' and cynicism, however, there is a sort of comedy, a laughter at the poor fool trapped in a prudish hell he cannot escape, forced to run errands for his 'female tyrant[s]'.[417] This can be seen in the 'Transcript' lines quoted above, whose matter-of-fact dryness disguises a self-deprecatory sense of humour. There is a similarly satirical tone in 'Portrait', where, after the poet's female interlocutor finally finishes her meandering dialogue on 'What life is', we get these lines:

> I smile, of course,
> And go on drinking tea.[418]

This is almost a punchline. Again, in 'Prufrock' there is this sort of half-comedy, a mild chuckle at an old man (who is really in his twenties) having a mid-life crisis:

> Time to turn back and descend the stair,
> With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
> (They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')[419]

The reader is not sure whether to laugh or cry at this, such is the balance between comedy and sadness. Is this not the laughter tinged with melancholy, the 'English humour',[420] that

---

413 Eliot., 'Transcript', *Poems I*, p. 30, lines. 6-9.
414 *Ibid*., 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 13.
415 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast*, p. 7.
416 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 13.
417 Pratt, 307.
418 Eliot, 'Portrait', in *Poems I*, p. 41, lines. 10-11.
419 *Ibid*., 'Prufrock', p. 33, lines. 39-41.
420 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.

Blast so praises? It is a sense of morbid humour found in the other two Oxford poems, such as these lines from 'Aunt Helen',

> The shutters were drawn and the undertaker wiped his feet—
> He was aware that this sort of thing had occurred before.[421]

These lines are overtly a joke, a sarcastic statement of the obvious. The following lines from 'Cousin Nancy' have a similarly satiric tone:

> Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked
> And danced all the modern dances;
> And her aunts were not quite sure how they felt about it,
> But they knew that it was modern.[422]

Again, here there is sarcasm, aimed at the aunts' philistinism, their embrace of the 'modern' as a self-absorbed status-seeking posture. 'Modern' here carries the ironic weight that 'civilised'[423] does – an ironic subversion of haughty language designed to expose the conformist pseudo-liberalism of the 'ladies'[424] who espouse it.

The ladies in these poems are, like Olive Chancellor, prudish, lonely spinsters, with the implication being that, like Olive, they make up for their lack of genuine romantic relationships with an exaggerated devotion to social causes. This can be seen in all three Oxford poems. Cousin Harriet from 'Transcript' seemingly lives alone, as it is the poet and not a husband or servant who brings her the newspaper; indeed, even the unnamed 'street'[425] in the poem seems sparse and desolate. Both Aunt Helen and Nancy Ellicott are referred to as 'Miss'[426] – even, as is the case with Helen, during her implied old age. Indeed, the first word of both poems is 'Miss', suggesting its prominence. This is a world obsessed with social status and familial relations, and yet it is also ironically a world filled with spinsters. Aunt Helen cares about respectability and being seen to be in touch with modern tastes, even if

421 Eliot, 'Aunt Helen', in *Poems I*, p. 56, lines 6-7.
422 *Ibid*., 'Cousin Nancy', p. 57, lines 7-10.
423 *Ibid.*, 'The Man Who Was King', *Prose I*, p. 6.
424 *Ibid*., 'Afternoon', in *Poems I*, p. 365, line. 1.
425 *Ibid*., 'Transcript', p. 55, line. 3.
426 *Ibid*., 'Aunt Helen', p. 56, line. 1; 'Cousin Nancy', p. 57, line. 1.

such an interest is superficial and even, in her case, vain. Although she lives 'near a fashionable square', it is indeed only 'near' it, and only 'in a small house'.[427] This line could be spoken by Helen herself, as if she were bragging about her cultural connections and social status, which is in reality far from the lofty image she presents. She has in this 'small house' a fashionable, expensive 'Dresden clock',[428] and although she has no husband or children to speak of, 'The dogs were handsomely provided for'.[429] She has covered her lack of human relationships with material objects and superficial relationships with pets.

Even Helen's servants do not seem to care that she died. The 'housemaid […] Who had always been so careful while her mistress lived', does not wait long before she is 'on [the] knees' of the 'footman',[430] apparently a sexual innuendo. The maid's repression of her sexual desires is maintained through a kind of fear or subjection to artificial authority. The 'silence in heaven / And silence at [Helen's] end of the street'[431] seems only on the surface to be a mournful silence, performed out of social convention rather than genuine respect; it is really a silence due to a lack of interest in Helen's death, silent because there is literally no-one around to mourn her. These relationships are implied to be financially rather than emotionally sustained; the housemaid was 'careful'[432] around Helen not out of friendship or respect, but out of fear for her job. Eliot in these poems is mocking the, as Pratt puts it, 'narrowness of the New England capital and its female tyrants'[433] – but there is also a melancholy in these poems, a mourning for a culture that has ostensibly been squashed into spiritual death by its matriarchy. It has experienced 'death by boredom'.[434]

427 Eliot, 'Aunt Helen', in *Poems I*, p. 56, line. 2.
428 *Ibid*., line. 10.
429 *Ibid*., line. 8.
430 *Ibid*., 'Aunt Helen', p. 56, lines. 11-3.
431 *Ibid*., lines. 4-5.
432 *Ibid*., line. 13.
433 Pratt, 326.
434 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420.

The attitude that is mourned in 'Transcript' – and the starkest similarity with the Vorticist manifestos – is what Eliot calls 'the appetites of life'.[435] Whatever this 'appetite' means specifically, it comes with the arrival of the 'evening'; perhaps it is an appetite for 'the dances [and] the parties', the distinctly un-Puritan and 'savage' appetites of the modern age. Yet even this 'appetite' can be hollow and self-serving, the kind of 'snobbery (disease of femininity)'[436] that *Blast* ridicules. This philistinism appears in 'Cousin Nancy', whose un-feminine cowgirl antics,[437] 'smoking' (historically associated with prostitutes), and 'danc[ing] all the modern dances' is really as 'barren' as the 'New England hills'[438] – 'barren' likely being chosen for its connotations with childlessness and menopause. The 'futile rebellion' of Bostonian modernity, and the bourgeois obsession with 'respectability', is the theme in all three Oxford poems. The ladies in *Prufrock* are not really 'modern', they are aristocratic philistines, lacking 'life'. The 'modern' culture they superficially engage with has been hollowed out and made ridiculous by newspaper journalism and 'cant'. Like the Melanesians, they are being bored to death, without them realising. Disconnected from the natural world, they are no longer 'individuals' who can discern quality from hackery. They are no longer really natural, but social creatures, obsessed not with the 'absolute',[439] but in artificial social hierarchies.

Towards the 'King Bolo' verses

It was in these three Oxford satires, then, that Eliot's early cynicism towards his hometown culture was refined into actual published poetry. If some of the *March Hare* poems appear incomplete or lacking in confidence, there is no such lack of confidence in the Oxford poems.

435 Eliot, 'Transcript', in *Poems I*, p. 55, line 4.
436 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 15.
437 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, lines 1-6.
438 *Ibid*., line. 4.
439 *Ibid*., 'Spleen', p. 315, line. 16.

Still lacking the viciousness of his satires from *Poems 1920*, Eliot had not yet (and probably never did) fully embrace the Vorticist aesthetic of sharpness and brutality; but nonetheless, the beginnings of the sarcastic mockery that would appear again by the end of the decade are apparent.

If *Prufrock* is refined satire, then Bolo is unrefined satire. For even in the Oxford poems, there is a nastiness beneath the surface – the targeting of elderly women, the mockery of their perceived conceits – but in the King Bolo verses, this nastiness goes over the top. Crude, laddish, and poised deliberately to upset his betters, there is little in the way of Jamesian irony in the Bolos. Written early in Eliot's career, the close-reading that follows had to come last in this chapter because they are verses of such ridiculous offensiveness, such vulgar parody of sensitive material, that they required first an exploration of Eliot's mindset, his anxieties and his opponents, lest they be dismissed as merely mindless bigotry. Without this context, readers are perhaps prone to perceive Eliot as the shy, sexually anxious poet of 'Prufrock', and the Bolos will seem a bizarre and embarrassing turn – or perhaps will be the subject of apologetics, claims that Eliot was just a young man anxious to fit in and ignorant of the offense he was causing. Whatever the case, deliberately 'low art' they may be, the Bolo verses still anticipate the early beginnings of Eliot's cynicism towards manifest destiny and American world leadership, his simultaneous disgust and fear of sexuality, and his blasting of particularly feminine authority. Of course, the Bolos are not serious meditations on any of these subjects; they are closer to vaudeville, deliberately absurd and disgusting toilet humour, and their sheer offensiveness should not be downplayed. However, reading these verses with this historically informed position can lead to a truer picture of the Eliot that Lewis and Pound knew, and the poet that would include similarly bawdy songs in the drafts of *The Waste Land*.

The background to the Bolo verses

For several decades after Eliot's death, the Bolo verses were just a rumour, their existence hinted at by Eliot's friends but never published for the public until *March Hare* in 1996. Written in the *March Hare* notebook, they were torn out before its sale to Quinn. Perhaps Eliot was embarrassed about their existence, aware of their uncompromising vulgarity and sharp disparity with the tone and quality of, say, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; or perhaps Eliot considered them an inside joke that Quinn wouldn't be able to appreciate. Crude, irreverent, racist and antisemitic, the Bolos have attracted considerable scorn from many critics. Eliot's motives behind his decision to write such offensive verse is an important question for recent studies. Robert Crawford identifies the personal roots behind Eliot's attitudes in *Eliot After The Waste Land* (2022):

> The gulf between the world of Bolo and the world of Tom's hernia problems and Vivien's intestinal agonies was vast, awful and ridiculous. Scandalous humour was one coping strategy, immersion in work another.[440]

This is quite like Aiken's notion that Eliot was attempting to 'discipline'[441] himself out of the anxious masculinity. However, to consider the Bolo verses to be a mere 'coping strategy' does not fully capture them, as there is a clear satirical motivation behind the verses, even if the execution is juvenile.

Crawford is more apt in *The Savage and the City* (1987):

> The [Bolo] poems are dirty jokes, satires on 'tasteful' society, caricatures of a Baudelairean world, and […] partly in these accounts of absurd ritual a pastiche of anthropology.[442]

Indeed, 'in part an amiable satire on the way people, anthropologists especially, talk about the religion of others' is how Eliot's friend, and recipient of many of the Bolo verses, Bonamy

---

440 Crawford, *Eliot After The Waste Land*, p. 27.
441 Aiken, p. 20.
442 Crawford, *The Savage and the City*, p. 84.

Dobrée described the poems before they were published in *March Hare*.[443] Mara De Gennaro goes into detail as to what Eliot might have found so distasteful about this anthropological language, which he studied at Harvard:

> Social scientists, then, cannot penetrate to the 'internal meaning' of a religious phenomenon while remaining external to the belief system in which that meaning makes sense. They can describe the forms that rituals have taken but not their purpose, for beyond the description of the ritual itself '"*fact*" melts into interpretation, and interpretation into metaphysics'.[444]

The concern over anthropological language, then, was akin to Eliot's broader philosophical positions.

A 'pastiche of anthropology' they may be, but the technique is not subtle, and too often is deliberately offensive and bigoted. One cannot neglect the fact that although Eliot may have been 'satir[ising] the language of others', he does so by unnecessarily partaking in this language, and with seemingly no intention of challenging the attitudes of predominantly white and male fraternity audience. Indeed, he participates in this culture as a form of social status-seeking. 'As in blackface minstrelsy', Jonathan Gill says, 'the misspellings, mispronunciations, and ungrammatical usages of the Bolo poems evince a self-consciously illiterate literariness';[445] Eliot was playing on stereotypes of black manners of speech, in other words. Eliot relied on childish poetics to, as Kenner might put it, 'rest invisible'.[446] 'The rhyme, meter, and imagery are so grossly indecent, yet so innocently displayed',[447] Gill says – although the 'innocence' is surely feigned. Most of the time, Eliot's jokes rely on bigotry to make sense, as with the conflation of homosexuality with savagery, for instance. One cannot truly be ignorant when reading these poems. They rely on knowing winks – just as Marie

---

443 Dobrée, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 247.

444 Mara De Gennaro. 'Man is man because…: Humanism wars, Sweeney Erect, and the makings of modernist imagination', in *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, 41 (2014), 160. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43908244> [Accessed 06-04-2020].

445 Gill, Jonathan. 'Protective Coloring: Modernism and Blackface Minstrelsy in the Bolo Poems', in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 71.

446 Kenner, p. 92.

447 Gill, p. 75.

Lloyd might have done when performing sexual jokes. Nonetheless, these poems deserve careful attention as pieces written in Eliot's juvenile years, in a period where his interest in anthropology and his cynicism towards 'civilisation' come to a brutal fore.

The knowledge that the poet of such austere 'high modernism' as *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* wrote bawdy juvenilia is a bizarre fact of twentieth-century modernism. One might agree with Dobrée that they are satires of anthropology, for instance, without wanting to give the impression that they are somehow 'high' satires. Their intended audience was private and exclusively male, and this must be taken into account, also. The bigotry is part of their form and appeal, not a delusion of prudish or antagonistic critics, as other studies of the verses imply.[448] Even more shocking is the scope of Eliot's project. Some scholars believe that the Bolo verses were not just the occupation of a shy Harvard undergraduate, but, as Crawford says, 'accompanied Eliot all his life'.[449] Gabrielle McIntire concurs that 'the body of work these poems represent is incredibly vast, totalling at least seventy-five stanzas in all'.[450] All of these stanzas have been reprinted, with commentary, in Ricks and McCue's 2015 *Collected Poems* – albeit relegated to the second volume, *Minor Verses*. Light verses they certainly are, although considering their stark contrast of tone with his other poetry, and their sheer prevalence, they can hardly be called 'minor'. Indeed, their existence fundamentally challenges the image of Eliot as austere 'high modernist'.

If the Bolos really were such a preoccupation of the young Eliot, as Crawford and McIntire state, then the understanding of modernism as fundamentally in opposition to 'low' culture must be brought into question. Indeed, this observation has been a trend in modernism scholarship for roughly two decades. As Julian Murphet observes,

---

448 See, for instance, Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 116: 'It is difficult to accept such statements as 'Eliot's verse expresses revulsion of the carnal world' (Douglass 150) when one reads the Bolovian Epic. Sex is clearly part of the fun and there is no revulsion in these verses, except perhaps in the reader's response to them.'

449 Crawford, *The Save and the City*, p. 84.

450 McIntire, p. 14.

> A certain revisionist trend has been visible in Eliot studies these last ten years, patiently resituating the austere snob of legend within the broad cultural-material history of his protracted moment of maturation. Scholars as various as David Chinitz, Juan A. Suárez, Sebastian Knowles, David Trotter, Loretta Johnson, Barry Johnson, Barry Faulk, and Melita Schuam have contributed significant advances to our knowledge of Eliot's engagement with a variety of popular cultural form and traditions, from music hall, jazz and department stores to gramophones and the cinema.[451]

A thorough reading of the Bolos will certainly fit within this vein of recent scholarship. However, it is sometimes the case that this 'revisionist trend' wrongfully undermines the reactionary subtext of these poems. The Bolos are not fundamentally at odds with Eliot's ambiguous relationship towards modernity. 'Satire is a defence against ugliness', Eliot said in his second review of *Tarr*[452] – this is a fundamentally reactionary stance. What are the Bolos, if not a harsh (albeit crude) criticism of the true ugliness, as he saw it, of the American founding mythology?[453] Perhaps, in a sense different to how Dobrée meant it, they are a 'satire of the language of others': a satire of the language of the 'civilised' peoples, who Eliot disgruntledly considered himself borne of, yet wished to distance himself from.

Controversy over the composition and publication history

Acknowledgement of the Bolo verses' existence came initially not from Eliot, but from his Harvard friends. Conrad Aiken, one of these friends, wrote on the Bolos for the 1948 *Symposium*.[454] Aiken does not actually talk about the content of the verses themselves in much detail, preferring instead to give ample contextual information. Aiken is keen to dispel the notion that Eliot was too 'shy' to write such verses, claiming that Eliot still saw the

451 Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 125, note 1.
452 Eliot, 'A second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
453 Gill concurs; see Gill, p. 80: 'After all, do not the Bolo poems, where Columbus is forever discovering King Bolo and his Big Black Queen, obsessively re-enact the encounter between Europe and America, the Old World and the New, the modern and the primitive, tradition and innovation, the devouring binary at the very heart of Eliot's project?'
454 Aiken, pp. 20-3.

'necessity' in 'discipling oneself' into 'social circulation'.[455] Perhaps he meant to imply that Eliot saw the Bolos as a way of forcing an entry into the Harvard fraternity culture. Aiken cites Eliot's deliberate 'un-American' manners of dress[456] – perhaps implying that Eliot wished to leave behind his Unitarian ancestry, or self-consciously built a persona that signalled his departure from that background. Indeed, *The Columbiad*, as Ricks and McCue call it,[457] is a pastiche of the American founding narrative. Aiken also points to some unusual influences on Eliot, appearing to agree with Chinitz and others that the young Eliot's preoccupations were not stereotypically 'highbrow':

> It was the first 'great' era of the comic strip, of Krazy Kat, and Mutt and Jeff, and Rube Goldberg's elaborate lunacies: it was also perhaps the most creative period of American slang, and in both these departments of invention he took enormous pleasure. This rich creativeness was to be reflected, of course, in his poetry, notably in Prufrock […] But more immediately it gave rise to the series of hilariously naughty *parerga* which was devoted spasmodically to that singular and sterling character known as King Bolo.[458]

Quite where 'American slang' can be found in *Prufrock*[459] is hard to say – perhaps Aiken is referring to the provincial 'Observations' in the Oxford poems. Certainly, however, Aiken is trying to portray an Eliot quite unlike the buttoned-up prude he is sometimes unfairly characterised as. That being said, he is clear that the Bolos were 'naughty *parerga*' (a minor side project), 'a sort of cynical counterpoint to the study of Sanskrit and the treatise on epistemology.'[460] Although he puts it mildly, Aiken does rightly state that the Bolos are 'notable at times for their penetrating social criticisms',[461] a similar notion to Dobrée's satire on the language of anthropologists.[462] The first recipients of the Bolos, then, saw them as

---

455 Aiken, p. 20.
456 *Ibid*., p. 21.
457 *The Columbiad* is the title Eliot gives to a dozen stanzas in *Valeri's Own Book*. Ricks and McCue therefore choose to use this title for their own compilation of all the Bolo verses, despite the fact that Eliot uses the term 'The Boloviad' in his letters.
458 Aiken, pp. 21-2.
459 It is not clear if Aiken means the volume or the poem.
460 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
461 *Ibid*.
462 Dobrée, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 247.

minor departures from Eliot's usual poetry (albeit not unrelated to Eliot's well-established anthropological and popular culture interests), a way of forcing himself into an otherwise alien male atmosphere, and of signalling his disdain for 'the way people […] talk about the religion of others'.[463]

Ricks and McCue put *The Columbiad* together primarily

> from leaves among Ezra Pound's papers in the Beinecke Library, Yale. They appear in *March Hare* because they appear on leaves excised from the Notebook, and the same order is retained here [in *Poems II*].[464]

They complete their interpretive edit of the long poem with Bolo verses from Eliot's letters to Aiken, Pound, and Dobrée, and some one-off fragments from letters after 1927. However, the vast majority of the Bolos were written before 1927, and the fragments after this date are mostly reprints or slight variations of older verses as Eliot, late in his life, sought to involve friends outside of the original Harvard circle in on the joke.[465] The idea that Eliot wished to include all of these scattered verses into one long poem is tenuous. Indeed, so little is known about Eliot's original intention for the Bolos, even their original circulation is not well understood, sometimes dependent on hearsay:

> A. David Moody wrote that in autumn 1988, together with the leaves at the Beinecke, he saw 'a small black hard-covered notebook, containing a fair copy of the full King Bolo or Columbo epic, written in a very neat small hand, together with a considerable number of other similar verses. I should think that it was this fair copy, rather than the miscellaneous drafts and fragments, which EP [Ezra Pound] referred to as 'his earlier EPOS on King Bolo.' In 1994 Donald Gallup told me the notebook was no longer in the Beinecke Pound archive.[466]

Without an authoritative edition of *The Columbiad*, it is fair to say that what is printed in *Poems* is best described as a kind of editorial composite, done many decades after the fact and with no input from Eliot, Aiken, or the other original recipients of the verses. So,

---

463 Dobrée, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 247.
464 Ricks and McCue, *Poems II*, p. 269.
465 For instance, stz. 39 was sent to Howard Morris in 1929. See: *Poems II*, 270.
466 Ricks and McCue, *Poems II*, pp. 270-1.

although this is the edition I will be using for my reading, I do not necessarily subscribe to the notion that the verses can be ordered together into a cohesive plot, or indeed that such a composition is even relevant for what are essentially light verses written quickly and shared privately.

What has confounded critics is Eliot's unusual insistence that he tried to get some of the Bolo verses published in *Blast*. The evidence for this comes entirely from the following letter, sent to Ezra Pound in 1915:

> I have corresponded with [Wyndham] Lewis, but his puritanical principles seem to bar my way to Publicity. I fear that King Bolo and his Big Black Kween will never burst into print.[467]

On the one hand, it would make sense for Eliot to turn to *Blast* to publish his bawdy verses, considering his interest in Vorticism at this time, the movement's affinity with popular art forms, and their revival of 'English humour'.[468] On the other hand, it makes no sense at all that Eliot would want to publish the verses, considering their stark contrast to his other poetic output at the time. It makes little sense, also, that, of all people, Wyndham Lewis would stop the publication due to some 'puritanical' hang-up. Gabrielle McIntire, for instance, remarks how odd it is

> that it was Lewis – something of a bad-boy iconoclast of English modernism – who policed these representations of race, sex, and ribaldry out of the nascent canon of literary modernism.[469]

'Nascent canon' is a tenuous phrase (did they really believe they were doing anything of such importance with *Blast*?), but it is questionable, also, to take Eliot's letter to Pound seriously. Lewis himself pretended to 'stick to my naif determination' of not publishing anything with 'words ending in -Uck, -Unt and -Ugger',[470] despite the fact that 'Bullshit' and 'Lulu' (the

---

467 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (2nd February 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 93.
468 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.
469 McIntire, p. 28.
470 Wyndham Lewis, letter to Pound (Jan 1915), in *Poems II*, p. 248.

poems which provoked Lewis's 'puritanical' policing) contained no such words. The group appears to have crafted a running joke, 'pretending to lament that his [Eliot's] Bolo sequence would never 'burst into print''[471] – the joke of course being that Lewis really had no such 'puritanical principles' and shared Eliot's frustration at censoriousness. Indeed, it is no accident that Eliot jokily insulted Lewis by comparing him to radical Protestants; one might substitute the word 'puritanical' for 'Unitarian'. Clearly there is banter, in their letters, at the expense of what they saw as prudish and genteel publishers, hostile to their literary ambitions; indeed, *Blast* targets many such figures.[472]

Understanding the trio's private joke is important, because the context surrounding the Bolos – as Aiken understood – is just as important as the content of the verses themselves. As Jayme Stayer asserts, 'whether Eliot really intended to place bawdy lyrics in *Blast*, is not only one of historical accuracy; it is also one of audience, and thus of understanding the poems' rhetoric.'[473] The trio's running joke gives the Bolos a new light – not just vaudeville to get Eliot on the side of Harvard fraternity boys, but also jokes to get him initiated into the blustery 'Men of 1914'. For indeed, Lewis and Pound were odd friends for a shy boy from a Unitarian background, and the trio needed shared jokes like these to bond.[474] It is important to understand that Eliot knew these verses were transgressive,[475] a departure from his usual aesthetic – not part of some 'nascent canon of literary modernism'.[476] Indeed, they were

---

471 Stayer, 'The Short and Surprisingly Private Life of King Bolo: Eliot's Bawdy Poems and Their Audiences', in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual* (2017) 7 [Online] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridgecore/content/view/3868BF134FDA71C9C374F48C623D1A41/9781942954293c1_p3-30_CBO.pdf> [Accessed 08-11-2018].

472 For a detailed examination of the figures targeted in *Blast*, see: William C. Weed. 'Appendix Business: The Blasted and the Blessed' in *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 218-26.

473 Stayer, 'The Short and Surprisingly Private Life of King Bolo', 4.

474 Jeffrey Meyers. 'Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot: A Friendship', in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 56.3 (1980) 455 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26436044> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

475 Stayer concurs. See: Stayer, 'The Short and Surprisingly Private Life of King Bolo', 4.

476 McIntire, p. 28. Nor indeed are they, as McIntire says later, also p. 28: 'representations of race [and] sex' – unless one seriously considers such outright racist and sexist humour to be Eliot's attempt at 'representation'.

'naughty *parerga*', serving as a respite from his usual preoccupations with heavy avant-garde verse. This is the background of the Bolos, then, that is crucial to understand before close-reading the verses.

The published verses and their main themes

The Bolo verses were almost certainly based on an earlier ballad, sometimes called 'Christopher Columbo'. This older ballad, much like Eliot's Bolos, is an irreverent parody of the American founding myth. The influence can be made for certain, because some of Eliot's own stanzas are direct copies, or else slight variations, of stanzas from 'Christopher Columbo'. The most prominent copy is the much-derided antisemitic stanza,[477] which appears in 'Columbo' version '[B]', according to the editor of *The Erotic Muse*, where the entire ballad appears.[478] The editor, Ed Cray, puts the ballad in the 'Undergraduates Coarse' chapter; although he does not state it directly, Cray clearly implies that verses like these were spread around fraternities.[479] Eliot himself, when he began to send the Bolo verses to Dobrée in 1927, called this stanza one of 'the first stanzos of the Boloviad',[480] referring to its old roots in a sarcastic manner that mocks academicism. 'You should now […] be prepared', he jokily says,

> to accept the first stanzas of the Boloviad. You must not be impatient, as this great poem – only to be compared to the Odyssey and the Chansong de Roland – moves slowly.[481]

A few days later, he sent more Bolo verses to Dobrée, this time referring to 'THE CATALOGUE OF SHIPS' and 'SHIPMATES', the latter of which humorously was 'to be continued through 25 stanzoes',[482] a parody of the similar lengthy passages from Homer's

---

477 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 271, stz. 1, lines 1-4.
478 Unknown author, '[B]', in *The Erotic Muse*, p. 311.
479 Cray, p. 295.
480 Eliot, Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (7th August 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 259.
481 *Ibid*.
482 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (15th August 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 260.

Odyssey. This is roughly the history of the Bolos: they start out as individual verses, aping the 'Christopher Columbus' ballad, shared throughout his Harvard days; then, decades later, they are reimagined as parodies of ancient epics and modern academics (although the verses themselves are not re-written). No 'Boloviad' – that is to say, a cohesive narrative poem – actually exists, and indeed this constant merging of truth and reality in his letters is part of Eliot's satiric spirit.

The 'Columbus' ballad itself is not well documented (*The Erotic Muse* is one of the only attempts to reprint it) and, being primarily an oral tradition, it varied greatly even among written versions. It is hard to say just how many of Eliot's verses are from his own pen, and how many are either heavily influenced by the original ballad or are copies of it. The infamous 'bastard jew' lines are entirely copied, but are the other stanzas found on that same leaf also copies of 'Columbo' verses that Eliot wanted to commit to memory (some perhaps lost to time)? Or perhaps they variations on the theme, a kind of juvenile imitation that ironically apes the development of poets long past? Although it is impossible to answer these questions authoritatively, they should at least be acknowledged before claiming that the Bolos are solely Eliot's making.

Even if the stanzas were imitations or copies, however, the Bolos share themes seen in Eliot's other early writing, especially 'The Man Who Was King', and in this sense reinforce the image of the young Eliot as satirist. Worldly authority, especially feminine, is mocked, for instance – although in the Bolos, women are not prudes, but the opposite, 'famous […] whore[s].'[483] Queen Isabella and Columbo's tempestuous relationship is mitigated by illicit sex, as in this stanza:

> One day Columbo and the queen
> They fell into a quarrel
> Columbo showed his disrespect
> By farting in a barrel.

[483] Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 271, stz. 4, line 4.

> The queen she called him horse's ass
> And 'dirty Spanish loafter'
> The terminated the affair
> By fucking on the sofa.[484]

As with most of the Bolos, narrative build up is almost entirely neglected, the character's actions seemingly random (except to the extent that they are as vulgar as possible), and the poem's time and place jumps around without clear logic. These verses were presumably written in isolation, intending to convey as much plot in a single 8-line stanza as possible without much need of a wider narrative. Their objective, after all, was to make the audience laugh. Their jarring comedy is key to this; they are short explosions of toilet humour. Whether Eliot succeeded in this aim is hard to say; the verses certainly have not amused modern critics. 'By farting in a barrel'[485] is not really a punchline, it is merely a bizarre and disassociated action, chosen for its vulgarity. The laughs are visceral and simple – essentially juvenile. Yet there is still a semblance of something deeper beneath the Bolos. They hint at an author disdainful of the hypocrisy of worldly elites and civilisational founding myths, but who cannot quite formulate these thoughts yet, and so displaces them into a kind of childish disgust – one of the most visceral, but also one of the most important emotions for satire. 'Satire is the defence of beauty against ugliness', as Eliot said himself[486] – it is also the sign of a sensitive and defensive mind, as he said much later.[487] In the Bolos there is a semblance of both these sentiments. They are at once a bawdy blasting of the 'civilisation' the author felt alienated from, but they are also products of a juvenile man desperate to rid himself of his shyness.

Considering the importance of disgust in the Bolo formula, it is perhaps no surprise that, apart from sex, one of the primary themes is cooking. Cuisine is one of the richest

---

484 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 274, stz. 12.
485 *Ibid*., line 4.
486 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
487 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', p. 169.

symbols of the savage versus the civilised. Aristocracy 'dine' in banquets, whereas the savage merely 'eats' or 'consumes', usually 'vulgar' or 'exotic' (for Westerners) animals. Food – and the language around it – is also a symbol for the merging of the savage and the civilised in colonial activity. The 'vulgar' meals of the 'savage' are formed into 'delicacies' when appropriated and transported into 'civilised' hands. This principle, which Eliot probes for its irony, is displayed in this stanza:

> One day the king & queen of Spain
> They gave a royal dinner
> To Chris Columbo of Genoa
> That famous old prickskinner.
> They sat around the groaning board
> On cushions, (trimmed with tassels)
> & the queen served up a steaming dish
> Of butter-hot-apes'-assholes.[488]

The joke here is the sheer absurdity – not noticed by the characters, but certainly apparent to the audience – of the juxtaposition of 'high' and 'low'. The 'royal dinner' – served up by the 'queen' of a major European colonial superpower, no less – transforms, to Eliot's delight, the 'savage' and 'vulgar' dish of 'apes'-assholes' into a kind of exotic delicacy. These kinds of 'civilised' practices, then, is shown to be absurdly performative.

Another stanza has a similar theme, this time linking cuisine with death. Funeral rites are another example of the juxtaposition of the savage and the civilised: consider the elaborate funerals of Christian monarchs in contrast to primitive funeral rites, simple and shamanistic. Oddly, in this stanza, the 'king & queen' do not resort to a Christian burial for Columbo, but instead resort to a primitive cannibalistic ritual, again linguistically dressed-up as a 'royal dinner':

> One day the king & queen of Spain
> They gave a royal banquet
> Columbo having passed away
> Was brought in on a blanket

488 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, stz. 21, p. 276.

> The queen she took an oyster fork
> And pricked Columbo's navel
> Columbo hoisted up his ass
> And shat upon the table.[489]

Similar to the other Bolos, the narrative is fractured, here. The audience is not told how Columbo died[490] – or rather, how he managed to fake his death – or why the king and queen resort to cannibalism. The audience is also not told how the king and queen react to Columbo's apparent (messy) resurrection. The narrative is so bizarre as to resemble mythological rather than familiar narrative logic.[491] The queen strikes Columbo's 'navel', and his resulting excrement resembles a kind of comic birth. In ancient ritual, cannibalism of the dead was a symbol for rebirth and societal renewal – at least according to the anthropologists Eliot would have read, Rivers and Fraser. In the Bolos, however, that trope is subverted and satirised – 'shat'[492] out for comic effect.

In the letters to Dobrée, the unique symbolic significance of cooking became for Eliot not just a way to parody the 'civilised' in general, but to develop his specific target for academicism. Having spent time in Marburg, he was aware of the German academic scene, and even parodied it in drawings sent to Conrad Aiken.[493] In a letter, the following stanza becomes a useful lesson for his satire:

> Now while Columbo and his men
> Were drinking ice cream soda
> In burst King Bolo's big black queen
> That famous old breech l[oader].
> Just then they rang the bell for lunch
> And served up—Fried Hyenas;
> And Columbo said 'Will you take tail?
> Or just a big of p[enis]?'[494]

---

489 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, stz. 2, p. 271.

490 Ricks & McCue put this stanza at the start of their *Columbiad*, despite Columbo ostensibly being already dead.

491 Indeed, Eliot's experimental verse-play *Sweeney Agonistes* is similarly preoccupied with cannibalism and death, ostensibly as an attempt to revive ancient Aristophanic comedy, with its link to fertility rites.

492 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, in *Poems II*, p. 271, stz. 2, lines 6, 8.

493 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (19th July 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 45.

494 *Ibid*., p. 46. Square brackets are Eliot's.

Eliot prints this in a letter to Aiken in 1914, pretending to have unearthed some still-raging academic debate over the true meaning of the stanza. 'The bracketed portions', he says, 'we owe to the restoration of the editor, Prof. Dr. Hasenpfeffer (Halle).'[495] If this sarcasm wasn't clear enough, he mocks academic standards later in the letter:

> How much we owe to the hardworn intuition of this truly great scholar! The editor also justly observes: 'There seems to be a *double entendre* about the last two lines, but the fine flavour of the just has not survived the centuries'.—Yet we hope that such genius as his may penetrate even this enigma.[496]

The humourlessness of German academics, their imputed ability to complicate even the most obvious of mysteries, is here ironically displayed. One recalls Eliot's comments on philosophy's inability to appreciate 'common sense';[497] indeed there is a somewhat anti-intellectual streak in the young Eliot.[498] He parodies academic debate also, even capturing the petty viciousness of two rival German philologists:

> Was it really custom to drink ice-cream soda just before lunch? Prof. Dr. Hasenpfeffer insists that it was. Prof. Dr. Krapp (Jena) believes that the phrase is euphemistic, and that they were really drinking—SEIDLIDZ POWDER. See Krapp: STREITSCHRIFT GEGEN HASENPFEFFER I.xvii 367, also Hasenpfeffer: POLEMISCHES GEGEN KRAPP I-II. 368ff. 490ff.[499]

This is of course a needless, pedantic debate, one which ends in vicious 'controversies' and 'polemics'.[500] These academic pastiches are the most intelligent satirical aspect of the Bolos, and probably is what led Dobrée to say that they were parodies of anthropologists.

That Eliot could see through this academic pedantry is important to acknowledge. He parodied theological language in a similar manner in 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service',

---

495 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (19th July 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 46.
496 *Ibid*., pp. 46-7.
497 *Ibid*., Letter to Norbert Wiener (6th January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 87.
498 Perhaps bizarrely, as the man who claimed the modern world was too complicated for simple poetry in 'The Metaphysical Poets' also believed that 'common sense' should be fundamental to philosophical discourse.
499 Eliot, from a letter to Conrad Aiken (19th July 1914), in *Poems II*, p. 250.
500 These are Ricks and McCue's translation of 'Streitschrift' and 'Polemisches' respectively.

for instance.[501] His preference for 'common sense'[502] against intellectualism implies a similar attitude towards his own religious feelings. In a letter to Dobrée in 1927, the same year he joined the Anglican church, he wrote that 'Certain authorities (e.g. Schnitzel aus Wien, Holzapfel aus Marburg) think that the Bolovians were the Tenth (lost) Tribe of Israel.'[503] In his own mock-scholarship, he suggested that the Bolovians (which were by then an entire race of top-hat-wearing 'comic negroes',[504] not just a singular character) were the originators of many Western 'civilised' traditions, including 'Wuxianity', whose 'Modernist' and 'Fundamentalist'[505] factions satirised contemporary theological debates. The two sects worship the same idol from the front and the back respectively, mainly since they were too 'lazy' to make a second idol.[506] Like the queen's banquet, the sheer absurdity of this fake debate is that it is entirely abstract, entirely performative – and thereby, Eliot suggests, are real-world theological debates. Elsewhere he mocks Unitarianism and Trinitarianism, pretending to gain insights from a recently-uncovered Bolo verse by Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

> But as Miss Barrett says 'feet of a dux' it may be inferred that she inclined to the Duophysite or alternatively to the Duotheistic party. Four feet means two Gods. This is a serious check to my own opinions, which were that Wux or Wuxes were two Persons and one Substance, or alternatively two Substances and one Person.[507]

Nowhere in the fake Browning verse does it say anything about 'four' feet – it is a completely fabricated reading, hence the joke. That his satirical persona changes its opinion based on one line is deliberately self-damning – as is his careless interchanging of 'Substance' and 'Person', Thomist terms that here are intentionally sucked of their

501 Eliot, 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', in *Poems I*, pp. 90-1.
502 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (29th September 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 263.
503 *Ibid*.
504 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (10th May 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 257.
505 *Ibid*.
506 *Ibid*.
507 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (26th July 1927), in *Poems II*, p. 258.

specificity. The joke is of course at the expense of Christians so caught up in academic jargon as to flip-flop over their own matters of faith because of (what Eliot considers) mere words and hearsay.

The Bolo verses constantly parody religious hypocrisy. The ostensibly pious crew of Columbo are in fact sexual molesters and deviants, for instance:

> One Sunday morning out at sea
> The vessel passed Gibraltar
> Columbo sat upon the poop
> A-reading in the psalter.
> The bosuns wife came up on deck
> With a bucket full of cowshit
> Columbo grabbed her round the neck
> And raped her on the bowsprit.[508]

Columbo's displays of piety are ultimately fruitless; he is really a rapist, in the most violent and appalling fashion. This is not a particularly insightful criticism. Indeed, the notion that Christians are hypocrites, incapable of following their own moral code without constant err, is what motivates the Christian sacrament of confession; the cycle of sin and repentance is central to the Christian faith. Yet there is a sense, here, that Columbo's sin is more than normal, forgivable hypocrisy. Columbo is appallingly violent, and it is difficult to imagine him receiving any forgiveness at all. It speaks of the juvenile in Eliot, the anger of the sensitive mind unable to forgive one's enemies or to see their faults as also their own. One wonders what the Anglo-Catholic Eliot, after his chastisement of satire as mere defensiveness, would make of these lines.

From Greenleaf to Bolo, and towards Poems 1920

Often described as a shy and reserved character, the Bolo verses present Eliot in a very different light. Although perhaps they show a shy boy 'discipline[ing]'[509] himself into

---

508 Eliot, *The Columbiad*, pp. 273-4, stz. 10.
509 Aiken, p. 20.

involvement with a boisterous Harvard crowd, this is being kind to Eliot, who surely knew how offensive these verses were. Eliot's early intuitions were against the 'feminine […] nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age',[510] as James' character Basil Ransom put it. If this emasculating society was satirised in his more refined published poetry, the Bolos show an Eliot irreverent towards the American myth, and with a nasty impulse towards its true believers. For this is (one of) the targets of the Bolos: the 'civilized' American 'Paladin'[511] confident in their own place at the end of history. To be flattened and assimilated into this grand myth is Eliot's main fear; diverse races and cultures have all been forced into the Puritanical republican ideal, leaving a modern world full of alienated people slowly dying of boredom in an increasingly mechanised age.[512] There is no greater symbol, for Eliot, of this societal malaise than the 'elderly American spinster',[513] especially of the New England type. The antiquated bourgeois have long been a target of satire – 'parodic liberalism',[514] as Sherry terms it – and Eliot too presents this culture as foppish and self-absorbed. How much of his satire was an angry reaction to his own temperament and upbringing? Indeed, much of the *March Hare* poems appear to include Eliot in them, unable to share off the shackles of 'virginity'[515] that Unitarian life ostensibly imposed upon him. The overblown sexual vaudeville of the Bolos were a compensatory angry reaction to this culture, also – an attempt to signal to his Harvard friends that, despite his background, he was not an Olive Chancellor or an Aunt Helen.

There is a sense of futility in these rebellions. He would look back on his angry reaction to his prudish upbringing with regret later in his life. He never dared to risk his public reputation by publishing the Bolos – although he did joke about it with the similarly-

510 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 322.
511 Eliot, 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, line. 14.
512 This I take to be essentially the argument of 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose I*, pp. 418-20.
513 Verdenal, Letter to T. S. Eliot (25th July 1911), in *Letters I*, p. 24.
514 Sherry, *The Great War*, p. 41.
515 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.

minded Pound and Lewis. As Eliot got much older, he would virtually abandon bawdy satire altogether – the occasional Bolo-themed letter notwithstanding. His 'engagement with popular culture'[516] – as indeed the Bolos were, resembling and sometimes mimicking popular bawdy ballads – was typically rhetorical and, in a sense, hypocritical.[517] Eliot did not seem to see any real potential in his 'Boloviad' epic, and left it unfinished – if indeed he even intended to write such a poem at all. There is a futility about such 'low' forms: for although, in a sense, they are an opportunity for those who consider themselves rebels or on the margins of society (or in the case of the music hall, the lower class) to mock their rulers,[518] such rebellions are done through innuendo and knowing winks, just as Eliot mocked his family behind their backs in Harvard dorms. There is no genuine threat of rebellion. Even music hall was assimilated into establishment British society, becoming less and less authentically working class as time went on.[519] Indeed, the slow destruction of these 'low' forms garners Eliot's dismay in the second version of the 'Marie Lloyd' essay. Even on a personal level, the Bolo project was a kind of 'futile rebellion': such songs did not ultimately help Eliot rid himself of his shyness, and sexual anxieties would continue to haunt him at least until *The Waste Land*. Popular songs in Eliot's poetry, after the Bolos, are rarely alluded to sympathetically, but rather, like the dull 'tom tom'[520] in 'Portrait', are almost comic, a

516 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 52.

517 See: Sebastian D. G. Knowles. 'Then you wink the other eye: T. S. Eliot and the music hall', in *ANQ: a quarterly journal of short articles, notes, and reviews*, 11.4 (1998), pp. 27-8: '[M]usic hall is never mentioned in the first volume of his [Eliot's] *Letters*, except for a retracted invitation to John Rodker to contribute a rubric on cinema and music halls for *The Criterion*. […] His attention to Marie Lloyd may in fact be a response to the backfiring of Bel Esprit, as a way of reasserting his bankrupt credentials with the working-class world.'

518 See Gerrard, 497: 'Jokes helped alleviate any societal 'problems' [...] This was in an era of no divorce, of burgeoning families, of debt, poverty and strife. Joke reflected this and targets were usually mothers-in-law, sexual frustration, poverty, and drunkenness.' Interesting how Gerrard implies the cultural authority of 'mothers-in-law', a typically *March Hare*-eque target of blame.

519 See, for instance, Mackin, 53: 'Owners of the halls sought to appeal to middle-class audiences to promote the success of their enterprise [...] As the new style of the halls moved away from the old tavern atmosphere, advertisements for them represented music hall as 'healthy' entertainment suitable for women and families.'

520 Eliot, 'Portrait', in *Poems I*, p. 40, line. 32.

symbol of the unrefined mind's pointless rebellion against the 'feminine […] age'.[521] Eliot did not so much 'engage'[522] with the popular as bitterly lament for it. As in 'Marie Lloyd', popular culture was yet another authentic human experience flattened and sucked of life by modernity.

In terms of Eliot's satiric development, it cannot be separated from these political intuitions. In his early career, as he said himself, he sought to develop his poetics 'in the manner of Henry James',[523] ironising and probing the psychological underpinnings of the American bourgeois. 'Portrait of a Lady', a title that alludes to a James novel, is probably the best example of Eliot's Jamesian intuitions, but even the *Prufrock* volume as a whole, with its air of detached 'Observation' that coyly disguises its provincial satire, conjures a Jamesian mood. Eliot writes about what he knows, hence the focus on 'female society'.[524] A large part of *March Hare* is devoted to this aim, a Jamesian probing of New England liberalism. These same cynical intuitions, however, are what would lead him towards Vorticism, with its similar irreverence towards 'snobbery (disease of femininity)'.[525] Similarly seeing popular culture as a useful (but flawed) vessel against the 'philistine aristocracy',[526] Vorticism influenced Eliot's respect for Marie Lloyd's ability to capture the 'English nation',[527] the 'separating, ungregarious BRITISH GRIN'[528] of the 'North'[529] that *Blast* commends, explored more thoroughly in the following chapter. Vorticist fervour inspired Eliot to revisit his satirical mood. During his close friendship to Lewis, he would write three Bostonian satires present in *Prufrock*, all of which satirise the 'female tyrants'[530] of his birthplace.

---

521 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 322.
522 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 52.
523 Virginia Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
524 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.
525 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO', in *Blast*, p. 15.
526 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.
527 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose I*, p. 418.
528 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.
529 *Ibid*., 'V.', in *Blast*, p. 36.
530 Pratt, 326.

The Vorticist desire to brutalise and make honest the English language was a response to the 'hollow canting age'[531] of liberal wartime London, with its increasingly absurd and ever-present rhetorical defences of the war effort. An American who saw similar propaganda in Germany, Eliot was in a unique position to be cynical of the British government's rhetoric, and even would write his own 'blasts' targeting British Foreign Secretary 'Ed. Grey'.[532] Cynical of the American occupation of the Philippines in his youth, liberal rhetoric around 'civilising' imperialism was one of his main motivations for his distrust of liberal modernity. Accompanied with his blaming of Unitarianism for his 'virginity',[533] this distrust forms the basis of the reactionary politics he would become infamous for, as well as his 'high modernist' aesthetics of ambiguity and irony – and, indeed, the Bolovian satire of 'civilisation'.

Moving towards *Poems 1920* in the next chapter, then, we see a young, ostensibly shy boy, capable of real nastiness (at least in private) towards those that symbolised his sexual resentments and the boring, self-absorbed 'civilisation' that convinced itself into an atrocious war. More recognisably Vorticist in its angry, sharp-edged satire, *Poems 1920* reveals an Eliot increasingly embittered by a society that seemed to be falling apart and dominated by a literary establishment hostile to him and his aesthetics. In this spirit, he became increasingly isolated from his family, as he ran away to Europe to marry a woman quite unlike a Bostonian prude, Vivien Haigh-Wood.

---

531 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 322.
532 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (5th August 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 121.
533 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (31st December 1914), p. 82.

Chapter 2:
Modern Humour and Ancient Comedy

Eliot sought to modernise his satire in *Poems 1920*. To do this, he turned towards numerous sources. The most important influence was *Blast*, whose call to revive a distinctly English art energised the young Eliot. *Blast* praised English satire firstly for its ability to mix tragedy and comedy, and secondly for its 'savage' humour that cut through stultifying politeness. Eliot praised these qualities in his review of Wyndham Lewis's novel *Tarr*, but also found similar qualities in Ben Jonson. Eliot reads Jonson as a proto-Vorticist, cutting through the conformities of his age with sharp, abstract 'caricatures'. This caricature technique, or what he called 'externals', was utilised by Eliot for satirical effect in *Poems 1920*, especially in the character of Sweeney. The Vorticist revival of the tragi-comic mode also motived Eliot's avant-garde stage play *Sweeney Agonistes*, in which the satirical caricature of Sweeney reappears.

Eliot says in a letter to his brother that the Oxford poems gave him a reputation as a 'Wit or satirist', a reputation he wished to quell with the publication of his 'intensely serious' *Poems 1920*:

> Some of the new poems, the Sweeney ones, especially 'Among the Nightingales' and 'Burbank' are intensely serious, and I think these two are among the best that I have ever done. But even here I am considered by the ordinary Newspaper critic as a Wit or a satirist, and in America I suppose I shall be thought merely disgusting.[534]

Gabrielle McIntire is right to point out that Eliot here seems to have his tongue in his cheek; he 'evidently wants, all at once, to report his reception as a satirist, and to assert that his poems are *not* composed as mere satire.'[535] Eliot's remark that he did not want to be read as a 'mere' satirist should not be taken to mean that he intended to abandon satire altogether;

---

534 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
535 McIntire, p. 34.

rather, Eliot's project after *Prufrock* was to explore new directions for his satirical impetus. These new directions would point towards the past – specifically the Elizabethans, but also towards more ancient forms.

Eliot's reputation as a poet was not strong outside of his London literary circle. *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Hollis says,

> ought to have set the literary world alight, but instead it had met mostly with condescension and a soured bemusement ('erudition is one thing, the dictionary another, and poetry different from either of them', typified the response).[536]

It is in the context of this muted 'response' that Eliot writes the letter to his brother. Rulo goes into further detail regarding Eliot's critical reception in *Satiric Modernism*:

> The charge of mere satirist or wit was a bracing one, and it had gained a good deal of traction also in literary circles, even before the appearance of his more overtly satirical quatrain poems. A favorite adjective of critics was 'clever.' About *Prufrock and Other Observations*, an anonymous 1917 review asserts that 'Mr. Eliot is one of those clever young men who find it amusing to pull the leg of the sober reviewer.' A *New Statesman* review from that same summer finds Eliot's poetry 'decidedly amusing.' For Babette Deutsch of *The New Republic* Eliot is 'so clever a technician,' with his 'satiric fencings' and 'whimsically suggestive' allusions. […] It was Louis Untermeyer, though, who may have most succinctly expressed critical opinion when he stated that, while Eliot is an 'acrobatic satirist' with 'amazing virtuosity' and 'extraordinarily clever,' the quatrain poems in particular lack 'that combination of tenderness and toughness' that is the purview of truly successful poetry. Mark Van Doren, for his part, unshrinkingly describes Eliot as 'the most proficient satirist now writing in verse, the uncanniest clown, the devoutest monkey, the most picturesque ironist.'[537]

Clearly the charges against him – that he was less a poet and more a human 'dictionary'[538] – got under his skin, and pushed him towards a re-evaluation of his *March Hare* poetics. Indeed, such was the demoralising effect of these critical remarks – on top of the growing

---

536 Hollis, p. 19. See also: Hollis, p. 177: 'The *Prufrock* poems were worth the volume [*Ara Vos Prec*], wrote the *New York Evening Post*, in May, but the newer poems revealed an amateur ironist, a scholar rather than a maker.'

537 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, pp. 75-6.

538 Hollis, p. 19.

stress that Eliot was feeling because of his marriage – that Eliot, after *Prufrock*, experienced writer's block. Away from free verse, he turned again to France as an antidote, specifically the tight control of Gautier.[539]

Eliot's developing understanding of the nature of satire was spurred by the critical response to *Prufrock*, and drew him first towards Gautier and the Vorticists. It also drew him, however, towards a re-evaluation of his anthropological studies that began at Harvard – especially Francis Cornford, a key influence on *Sweeney Agonistes*. Cornford's thesis on the common ritualistic roots of Tragedy and Comedy were used to develop Eliot's earlier writing on Ben Jonson and the 'intellectual abstractions' of his detractors.[540] Eliot sought to revise common critical categories from the point of view of a creator as well as a critic. He had little interest in participating in the discourse of 'the ordinary newspaper critic'.[541] He rejected the label of 'satirist' not because of its untruth, but because of the people who charged him with it. The key word from the letter to his brother is 'merely'. Ben Jonson was considered 'merely' a satirist by critics who, likewise, received condemnation from Eliot for their inability to appreciate Jonson's full aesthetic scope.

Eliot's 1919 essay on 'Ben Jonson' is a key component in understanding his attitude towards satire. It explicitly links together many Vorticist ideas, chiefly the revival of an ostensibly English mixing of tragedy and comedy, a brutal yet discriminating laughter that Lewis says had fallen out of the 'snobbish' modern world. Take this remark from Eliot on a passage from Jonson's *Catiline*, for instance:

> This scene is no more comedy than it is tragedy, and the 'satire' is merely a medium for the essential emotion. Jonson's drama is only incidentally satire, because it is only incidentally a criticism upon the actual world. It is not satire in the way the work of Swift or the work of Molière may be called satire: that is, it does not find its source in any precise emotional attitude or precise

539 Hollis, p. 51.
540 Eliot, 'The Beating of a Drum', in *Prose II*, p. 473.
541 *Ibid*., Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.

> intellectual criticism of the actual world. It is satire perhaps as the work of Rabelais is satire; certainly not more so.[542]

Again, the word 'mere' is key, here: Jonson was no 'mere' satirist. In Eliot's terms, this meant that he has no 'precise emotional [or] intellectual criticism of the actual world', like Molière and Swift, in Eliot's view writers primarily of provocateurs and farce. Rather, Jonson's satire was only 'incidentally' so, like the extravagant caricatures of Rabelais. Caricature was a crucial interest for Eliot, since in its grotesque parody of the real, caricature is self-consciously fictitious – a quite different form of satire from, say, *A Modest Proposal*, in which the reader is implicitly presented with Swift's moral case through his sarcastic arguments. Eliot clarifies his position later on in the essay:

> [S]atire like Jonson's is great in the end not by hitting off its object, but by creating it; the satire is merely the means which leads to the aesthetic result, the impulse which projects a new world into a new orbit.[543]

Jonson's is not a satire of clear targets or intellectual opponents – of 'objects' – but is self-consciously fictitious, a creation rather than a mere presentation of the world, which only 'incidentally' satirises because of its reader's reaction to it. This is quite like Lewis's mode of sharply cutting through the fuzziness of the age: 'Mr. Lewis's humour […] is not too remote from Ben Jonson',[544] as Eliot would say in his second review of *Tarr*. In *Poems 1920*, part of Eliot's project was to obscure the barrier between poem and poet, or to maintain the appearance of a detached or impartial observer of modern events, shifting the responsibility of finding morals or narratives in the poems onto the reader.

After the success of *Prufrock*, Eliot sought to change his poetic direction, away from the ironic internal monologues of poems like 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait' towards this Jonsonian

542 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
543 *Ibid*., p. 159.
544 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

satire, which he described to Virginia Woolf in 1920 as the presentation of 'externals' or 'caricatures':

> He told me [says Woolf] he was more interested in people than in anything […] His turn is for caricature. In trying to define his meaning ('I don't mean satire') we floundered. He wants to write a verse play in which the 4 characters of Sweeny [*sic*] act the parts. A personal upheaval of some kind came after Prufrock, & turned him aside from his inclination – to develop in the manner of Henry James. Now he wants to describe externals.[545]

Here Woolf describes explicitly the turning away from Eliot's 'inclination' of Jamesian irony. Furthermore, there is a similar dismissal of mere 'satire' to that from Eliot's letter to his brother; Eliot was at pains to be specific about his 'turn […] for caricature'. Considering Eliot's remarks on Jonson, however – which came a few years before this conversation – Eliot's insistence that 'I don't mean satire' makes sense. Eliot saw himself in a similar vein to Jonson, content not merely with 'Wit', but interested in 'intensely serious'[546] creative exaggerations of the modern world, aimed towards an 'aesthetic result' that only 'incidentally'[547] satirises. *Poems 1920*, in the 'object[ive]'[548] fashion of Wyndham Lewis, baffle and bemuse the reader with bizarre contortions of metaphors and images, playing on the reader's own prejudices and sensibilities – quite unlike the relatively straight-forward satire of, say, 'King Bolo', with its obvious targets and crude juxtaposition of the savage and the civilised; and certainly unlike 'the manner of Henry James', with his ironic probing into the internal psychology of his characters. Rather, to 'describe externals' was to attempt a new satirical mode, an attempt to revive Jonsonian 'caricature'[549] and adapt it to the new age.

Blast helped to revive 'English humour', a kind of 'separating, ungregarious'[550] laughter, ostensibly absent from early twentieth-century English art. In Lewis's eyes, such art

---

545 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
546 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
547 *Ibid*., 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
548 Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.
549 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
550 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.

had become stale and academic. Key to this 'English humour' was the merging of tragedy and comedy. Eliot would, following the Vorticists, lament the loss of the 'English myth',[551] and praise Wyndham Lewis's satirical novel *Tarr* for its revival of this 'older British humour'[552] of separation and discernment. 'Eliot for his part w[ould] theorize Wyndham Lewis's practice as a framework for composing his own poetry',[553] as Rulo describes. Eliot's interest in 'English humour' would draw Eliot to the Jonsonian 'caricature' technique he described to Woolf, as well as to the possibility of the theatre to revive the 'externals'[554] approach that would eventually culminate in *Sweeney Agonistes*.

With these ideas in mind, there follows two close-reading sections in this chapter. The first focuses on *Poems 1920*, which is Eliot's most clear dive into the Jonsonian mode. The second close-reading is on Eliot's incomplete verse-play, *Sweeney Agonistes*, whose tragi-comic structure is derived from the theories of Cornford. It is useful, also, to compare *Sweeney Agonistes* with the Bolo verses, which take on a new significance as 'Phallic songs'.[555] Eliot's central project in this period of his career, post-*Prufrock*, was to explore the origins of satire and the ways that these ancient and Renaissance modes could be reconfigured into modern poetry.

Vorticism and 'English Humour'

Vorticism was a reaction to a kind of bourgeois order, perceived by Eliot as predominantly liberal and, in a not insignificant sense, similar to James's vision of an emancipationist but highly stultifying Boston. Vorticism revived the comic spirit in Eliot, who wrote the Oxford poems during his increasing friendship with Wyndham Lewis; but Vorticism also influenced

551 Eliot, 'The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism', in *Prose II*, p. 303.
552 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
553 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, pp. 16-7.
554 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
555 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.

Eliot in another important respect. As a movement, Vorticism was concerned with the revival of English art after an ostensible period of sterility which had seen its reputation diminish, at least in comparison to continental European movements such as Futurism. Geoffrey Wagner explains Lewis's goals and motivations:

> As he explained in *The Tyro No. 1,* Vortex was intended to throw English painting into the mainstream of the most advanced European art. Thus it was necessarily extreme.[556]

The 'extreme' rhetoric of Vorticism's blasts and blessings, then, was a tactic to get English art noticed amidst the excitement surrounding Futurism. As Lewis writes in one *Blast* manifesto, English art had become bourgeois, snobbish, and stultified, and could not compete with the pressure of its continental rivals unless something was done to revive its spirit.[557]

Lewis's method was to go toe-to-toe with the continental movements, explicitly calling out the failures of Futurism[558] whilst promoting superiority of his Vorticist aesthetic. He emphasised Vorticism's peculiarly English quality, as if there was something already apparent in the tradition of English art and literature, and even in the English climate, that necessitated this cold, sharp-edged aesthetic. Sharpness and precision are perhaps akin to the Classicist notion that modern art must be 'more technically demanding, more rigorously objective and (by implication) more scientific than Romanticism'.[559] Eliot would of course identify with 'Classicis[m] in literature'.[560] Ideally, this Classicist aesthetic should be 'more

---

556 Geoffrey Wagner. 'Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticist Aesthetic', in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 13.1 (1954) 16 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/427013> [Accessed 25-07-2019].

557 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II.', in *Blast,* pp. 32-3. See also: *Blasting*, p. 38: 'Take my next *Blast* – namely, 'Blast years 1837 to 1900'. The triumph of the commercial mind in England, Victorian 'liberalism', the establishment of such apparently indestructible institutions as the English comic paper *Punch*, the Royal Academy, and so on – such things did not appeal to me, they appeal to me even less to-day, and I am glad to say more and more Englishmen share my antipathy.'

558 *Ibid*., 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast,* p. 8.

559 Peter Parrinder. 'Science and knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century: versions of the modern Enlightenment', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 29.

560 Eliot, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.

'primitive' and more fundamental'[561] than Romanticism, and this is a notion that appears in *Blast* and in Eliot's praise of *Tarr*, which will be discussed later.

Vorticism put itself against continental European movements like Classicism, however, even despite the similarities. To Lewis, sharpness and objectivity were of a distinctly Northern mind. This distinctly English nature *Blast* number 1 calls 'English humour', a characteristic apparently found in Shakespeare (not primarily known as a comic) and also found, perhaps oddly, in the Anglo-Irishman Johnathan Swift:

> BLESS ENGLISH HUMOUR
> It is the great barbarous weapon of
> the genius among races.
> […]
> BLESS SWIFT for his solemn bleak
> wisdom of laughter.
> SHAKESPEARE for his bitter Northern
> Rhetoric of humour.
> […]
> BLESS the separating, ungregarious,
> BRITISH GRIN.'[562]

In both of these examples, the mixture of sadness and laughter is emphasised: Swift has a 'solemn bleak […] laughter', and Shakespeare a 'bitter […] humour'. There is a discriminating, 'separating' purpose to this humour. It is a bulwark against 'Apes of God', Lewis's term for mediocre phonies.[563] Furthermore, there is something about the 'Northern' European[564] climate of England that creates this bittersweet laughter, inaccessible to the Southern-European Futurists in the warm climates of Italy and France – a coldness, bleakness, pessimism perhaps, that possesses the English sense of humour.

---

561 Parrinder, p. 29.
562 Lewis, '3', in *Blast,* p. 26.
563 See Lewis' 1930 novel of the same name.
564 I am assuming that 'Northern' here means 'Northern Europe' rather than 'Northern England', considering neither Shakespeare nor Swift came from the North of England.

Lewis goes into detail regarding this peculiarly Northern quality in the *Blast* manifestos, beginning with a discussion of Shakespeare's 'bitter Northern […] humour':

> (5) But Shakespeare reflected in his imagination a mysticism, madness and delicacy peculiar to the North, and brought equal quantities of Comic and Tragic together. (6) Humour is a phenomenon caused by sudden outpouring of culture into Barbary.[565]

Here is the notion of the tragi-comic. In point (6) there is the link, later made by Eliot, of tragi-comedy with primitiveness, here called 'Barbary'. Lewis intriguingly capitalises 'Barbary' but not 'culture', perhaps similar to Eliot's rhetorical slights towards civilisation in the Bolos. Indeed, it is the irrational, the 'mystic' and the 'mad' in Shakespeare that makes him such a keen satirist of the liberal bourgeois order. Again, in the same manifesto, the dual tragic and comic nature of Northern humour is praised in characteristically polemic terms:

> (10) Tragic Humour is the birthright of the North.
> (11) Any great Northern Art will partake of this insidious and volcanic chaos.[566]

This is a point further elaborated on later in *Blast*:

> (9) We [the Vorticists] only want Humour if it has fought like Tragedy.
> (10) We only want Tragedy if it can clench its side-muscles like hands on it's belly, and bring to the surface a laugh like a bomb.[567]

This last passage especially highlights the 'extreme'[568] nature of Vorticist rhetoric; note their absolutist claims of 'only' wanting something if it fits with their aims of an English artistic revival. Wagner goes on to say that, 'Only by remembering what English art was before Vorticism can one appreciate Lewis's achievement here';[569] that is to say, only by understanding the stale, 'snobbish femininity' of the late nineteenth-century English art world, at least as Lewis perceived it, does such 'volcanic chaos' make sense.

---

565 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: V.', in *BLAST*, p. 37.
566 *Ibid*., p. 38.
567 *Ibid*., 'MANIFESTO.: I', p. 31.
568 Wagner, 16.
569 *Ibid*.

Ironically, this distinctly 'English humour'[570] and its revival, spurred on by the Canadian-born Lewis, would capture the imagination of the American-born Eliot. '[T]he early thrust of Eliot's literary modernism', Schuchard says, 'was in the revival of this comic mode',[571] this 'English humour'. It is perhaps not so strange that Eliot would be interested in what were, to him, foreign art movements. Indeed, as the Oxford poems demonstrate, Eliot was growing ever more distant from his American roots, and Vorticism was a final casting away of his Unitarian influence, a culmination of his growing alienation from America. After all, *Poems 1920* was written in the years after his decision to marry in England against his family's wishes.

Eliot's criticism of Tragedy and Comedy

Following the lead of the Vorticists, Eliot praised the tradition of English art for its distinctive humour, and lamented its ostensible loss. In 'The Romantic Englishman', he writes of an English archetypal comic character: the wealthy, cynical old gentleman:

> Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, Sir Giles Overreach, Squire Western, and Sir Sampson Legend […] are different contributions by distinguished mythmakers to the chief myth which the Englishman has built about himself.'[572]

Recalling his lament at the end of 'Marie Lloyd', Eliot mourns a culture of which, in truth, he was never a part. Nonetheless, he used its death as a springboard to criticise the spiritually hollow modern world: 'But in our time, barren of myths […] the English myth is pitiably diminished.'[573] Also recalling 'Marie Lloyd', Eliot, in 'The Romantic Englishman', sets up music-hall – and also, surprisingly, 'the cinema' – as the only modern 'opportunity for partial realization' of the English myth. 'The theatre, naturally the best platform for the myth', and

570 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 26.
571 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 90.
572 *Ibid*., 'The Romantic Englishman', in *Prose II*, p. 302.
573 *Ibid*.

the platform that Eliot would choose in his later career, 'affords in our time singularly little relief.'[574] Why was 'the theatre naturally the best platform for the myth'? Because the English dramatic tradition – primarily Shakespeare, as praised in *Blast*, but also, as he praised in other essays, Ben Jonson, John Webster, and Christopher Marlowe – established the theatre as the best candidate for delivering poetry to a broad audience. Eliot remarked in another essay:

> The Elizabethan drama was aimed at a public which wanted *entertainment* of a crude sort, but would *stand* a good deal of poetry; our problem should be to take a form of entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art.[575]

'Entertainment of a crude sort', in other words, was the vessel through which the sublime poetry of, say, Shakespeare, could reach an audience that it otherwise wouldn't. The task of the modern poet was to find and target this 'public' as it appeared in modern circumstances. To this end, Eliot again reaffirms:

> Perhaps the music-hall comedian is the best material. I am aware that this is a dangerous suggestion to make. For every person who is likely to consider it seriously there are a dozen toy-makers who would leap to tickle aesthetic society into one more quiver and giggle of art debauch. Very few treat art seriously.[576]

This final sentence, reminiscent of Lewis's charges against the unserious 'Apes of God', accuses Eliot's contemporaries who championed the music-hall, including the Futurists, of 'tickl[ing] aesthetic society' rather than 'treat[ing] art seriously'. Of course, this is polemic from Eliot, who at this point had not 'seriously' attempted to 'subject [entertainment into] a form of art' either. Nonetheless, the Vorticist influence on Eliot's art is displayed here: the 'bless[ing]' of music-hall and other forms of modern 'entertainment', the ostensibly 'English' character of their humour, and the lamentation for the loss of this 'English myth'.

---

574 Eliot, 'The Romantic Englishman', in *Prose II*, pp. 302-3.

575 *Ibid*., quoted in Carol H. Smith. 'Sweeney Agonistes', in *Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice: From Sweeney Agonistes to The Elder Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 37.

576 *Ibid*., p. 37.

Eliot's criticism from this period advances the idea of the inseparability of tragedy and comedy. Eliot supplemented Vorticist arguments with his own education in anthropology. In one essay, he described the linkage of tragedy and comedy as an inevitable consequence of 'the full horror of life' – a statement in tune with the 'extreme' rhetoric of the Vorticists:

> To those who have experienced the full horror of life, tragedy is still inadequate […] In the end, horror and laughter may be one – only when horror and laughter have become as horrible and laughable as they can be […] then only do you perceive the aim of the comic and the tragic dramatists is the same: they are equally serious [for] there is potential comedy in Sophocles and potential tragedy in Aristophanes, and otherwise they would not be such good tragedians or comedians as they are.'[577]

Tragedy is not enough in light of 'the horror! the horror!', to quote the line from Conrad Eliot would use as a preface to the draft of *The Waste Land*. What was needed in modernity, as the Vorticists desired, is 'a laugh like a bomb' – a severe, 'bitter […] humour' with a severe, 'separating',[578] 'intensely serious'[579] intention, 'the protection of beauty against ugliness'.[580] Even in this relatively early essay, Eliot speculated on the 'potential tragedy in Aristophanes', an idea that he found articulated in the anthropological theories of Francis Cornford, who will be examined in detail later.

Wyndham Lewis's Tarr

The Vorticist influence on Eliot came not just from *Blast*, but extended to Lewis himself. *Tarr* was Lewis's first novel, written around 1909-11, revised in 1914-15, and first serialised in *The Egoist* between 1916-17. Set in 'Bourgeois-bohemian' Paris before WWI, the novel follows two artists, the Englishman Frederick Tarr – a 'showm[a]n' for Lewis' own artistic

577 Eliot, quoted in Carol H. Smith., p. 58.
578 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 25.
579 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
580 *Ibid*., 'Second Review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

views[581] – and the German Otto Kreisler, whose character ostensibly foreshadows Adolf Hitler.[582] One of the main concerns for Tarr, in the arguments with other characters that make up the opening chapters, is the abandonment of the 'University of Humour that prevails everywhere in England'.[583] The problem with this 'Humour' is that it produced in the Englishman a '*deadening feeling*, a prescription for Stoicism'[584] unsuitable for the 'extreme' polemics necessary to revive English art. 'Humour' was unlike the tragi-comedy that *Blast* praised, the discriminating 'laugh like a bomb' that was the impetus for true satire and social change. Eliot echoed these sentiments in his reviews of the book. Like Tarr, Eliot claims that 'Humour is distinctively English. No one can be so aware of the environment of Stupidity as the Englishman'.[585] This remark echoes Tarr's statements from the novel:

> Many of the results [of humour] are excellent. It saves us from gush in many cases; it is an excellent armour in times of crisis or misfortune. […] Once this armature breaks down, the man underneath is found in many cases to have become softened by it.[586]

Eliot similarly makes the distinction between humour that is socially and artistically necessary, and humour that is not:

> Wit is public, it is in the object;[587] humour (I am speaking only of *real* humour) is the instinctive attempt of a sensitive mind to protect beauty against ugliness; and to protect itself against stupidity.[588]

Here he uses his own terminology, substituting 'wit' for Lewis's own idiosyncratic terms – but the substance of the argument is the same. 'Wit' is the kind of the 'stoic' humour to

---

581 Lewis, *Tarr*, p 15. 'In this book you are introduced to a gentleman named Tarr. I associate myself with all he says on the subject of humour. In fact, I put him up to it. He is one of my showmen; though, naturally, he has a private and independent life of his own, for which I should be very sorry to be held responsible.'

582 *Ibid*.

583 *Ibid*., p. 42.

584 *Ibid*.

585 Eliot, 'Second Review of *Tarr*', in *Prose 1*, p. 746.

586 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 42.

587 'Wit', I might add, is the word Eliot gets caught up on in the letter to his brother quoted in the introduction to this chapter. As I said, it seems to me that Eliot has idiosyncratic terminology, and his complaint against his reputation as a 'mere Wit' seems to be that his aims were a more 'serious' revival of the tragi-comic mode.

588 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

which Lewis refers, whereas '*real* humour' has the 'separating' purpose of the so-called Shakespearean humour that *Blast* praises. Eliot implicitly expresses the need to revive this '*real* humour', which has been lost to the past:

> The older British humour is of this sort; in that great but decadent humorist, Dickens […] Mr. Lewis's humour is near to Dickens, but on the right side, for it is not too remote from Ben Jonson.[589]

For Eliot, there is something lacking in Dickens's humour which the humour of Lewis rectifies. Jonson was a caricaturist, in Eliot's terms, and Lewis's technique in *Tarr* works because of its kinship with this technique. The sentimentalism of Dickens lacks caricature, however, and thereby appears quaint and 'decadent' by comparison. Dickens's laughter is of the stoic, Victorian sort that Eliot disparages in 'The Romantic Englishman'. Therefore, the modern satirist could not, in Eliot's view, model themselves on Dickens; rather, they must model themselves on Jonson. For Eliot, Lewis was a visionary in this regard.

In *Tarr*, there is a broad overlap with the concerns of Eliot's poetry from *March Hare* and the Oxford poems: Lewis's world is that stuffy, bourgeois phonies preoccupied with social standing and liberal emancipatory political ideology.[590] Like Eliot, Lewis views these figures as dishonest and philistine, harbouring some vaguely-defined but particularly modern neurosis. For instance, Tarr, in the early part of the novel, chastises his so-called friend Alan Hobson for his 'flabby […] Liberalism':

> You represent, my dear fellow, the *dregs* of Anglo-Saxon civilisation! = There is nothing softer on earth. = Your flabby potion is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent nineties, the wardrobe-leavings of a vulgar Bohemianism with its headquarters in Chelsea![591]

589 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

590 Lewis would similarly satirise these figures in *Apes of God* (1930), out of the time frame discussed here but still bearing some influence on my reading of Lewis as 'anti-liberal'. In particular I am indebted to: Robert T. Chapman. 'Satire and Aesthetics in Wyndham Lewis Apes of God', in *Contemporary Literature*, 12.2 (1971) 133-45 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1207731> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

591 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.

Hobson, as indicated by his dress sense,[592] has the 'bourgeois-bohemian' attitude Lewis so despised – a performance of poverty by sanctimonious members of the middle-class. For Lewis, bohemianism was a sign of a particularly effeminate decadence:

> This curious entity [Hobson], when taken any notice of, became rather friskily feminine. Tarr was fond of locating Hobson's sex there, for he had a theory that snobbery and sex, like religion and sex, were to be found together.[593]

This is a rather bigoted line, albeit important for understanding Lewis's views. 'Snobbery (disease of femininity)'[594] is cursed in *Blast* – a line that is almost repeated verbatim here. Roger Henkle points out that 'bourgeois degeneracy frequently takes on the shape of sexual deviation, particularly homosexuality, for Lewis',[595] and that women, similarly, 'in this and other works of Lewis' are reduced mercilessly to bourgeois commodities, to symbols of the softness and inertia of the culture'.[596] In common with Eliot and Henry James, Lewis reacting to the political upheaval of woman's suffrage – an environment ripe for 'parodic liberalism',[597] to use Sherry's term. *Tarr* lacks the subtlety of James, in this regard: there are many passages, like the one quoted above, where Lewis inserts himself into the narrative, and writes not so much a novel as a political tract. Lewis had little regard for subtlety; indeed the novel is quite 'like Rabelais'[598] in its boldness. However, just as Eliot 'modernised himself'[599] with his provincial satires of New England, so too was Lewis's anti-humanist satire particularly modern, with a reactionary slant. As Svarny says,

> We are here dealing with 'satiric modernism', in which in a modern awareness of social fragmentation and reification, psychological strategies, and socio-political biases interreact and elide, and the term 'dehumanization' takes on a

592 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 22. 'The Art-touch was very observable. Hobson's Harris tweeds were shabby. A hat suggesting that his ancestors had been Plainsmen or some rough sunny folk, shaded unnecessarily his countenance already far from open.'
593 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
594 *Ibid*., '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 15.
595 Henkle, 100.
596 *Ibid*., 102.
597 Sherry, *The Great War*, p. 41.
598 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', *Prose II*, p. 153.
599 Pound, quoted in Hollis, p. 79.

> precise period inflection, as a mode of literary treatment that proceeds by purposively denying interior consciousness.[600]

The flatness of Lewis's 'show-men', the unabashed cynicism of its political rhetoric, its fiery but perhaps not all too serious tone, is what set it apart from the broadly-termed 'Romantic' world that it sought to parody. It is the aesthetic of reactionary modernism.

The 'flabby' liberals in Lewis's novel are, like Eliot's *March Hare* poems, portrayed as marionettes, mindless 'Paladins'[601] parroting the views of 'the guardians of the faith'.[602] Lewis 'is not concerned with transcending the animalistic nature of the man', which is to say the primitive man that the '"advanced", perfected, democratic' Futurists wanted to be rid of.[603] Rather, Lewis was concerned with showing the conformist 'automaton'[604] beneath thea veneer of civilisation, the 'primitive and more fundamental'[605] mind that motivated even the most civilised of modern people. For Lewis, James English asserts,

> what makes people laughable is the fact that beneath all their pretentions to vitality and spontaneity, their claims to be more than mere creatures of animal instinct and social habit, they really are just 'machines, governed by routine': tedious, predictable, unreflective, and dull. But while this negation of our habitual self-regard may provoke a kind of laughter, it is not, says Lewis, 'a genial guffaw'; 'it is tragic, if a thing can be "tragic" without pity or terror'.[606]

English here is right to point out the 'tedious, predictable, unreflective, and dull' nature of Lewis's flabby liberals. What annoyed Lewis was not just the sanctimonious and obsequious attitude of the bourgeois-bohemians, but also their smug conventionality. This was a sentiment that also underpinned Eliot's 'ladies'. This is the power of '*real* humour' – the ability to cut through conformity and comfortable thinking. Melania Terrazas says that

---

600 Svarny, p. 147.
601 *Ibid*., 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, line. 14.
602 *Ibid*., 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 12.
603 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.:II.', in *Blast*, p. 33.
604 Terrazas, p. 70.
605 Parrinder, p. 29.
606 James F. English. 'Twentieth-century satire: the poetics and politics of negativity', in Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 858.

> Lewis's antagonistic, dissident, and provocative stance is the means through which the satirist expresses his opposition to the dehumanizing and utilitarian values that motivate the mechanistic behaviour and relationships of his fellow men.[607]

This view expresses a sympathetic stance towards Lewis, portraying his 'provocative stance' (as if the association of femininity with snobbery is mere 'provocati[on]') as a strange kind of sympathy; but it is the view that Lewis had of his own work, and the view that Eliot defended when he described '*real* humour' as a 'defence against ugliness'.[608] To these men, bold provocation was needed, offensiveness was required, if the foppish sterility of the age was to be adequately confronted.

English goes on to point out the nationalist purpose of this satirical stance. Lewis's strangely provocative sympathy for sentimental conformists had within it a nostalgia for the lost brilliance of the English tradition:

> The London art world represented in these [Lewis'] works is in fact a world of 'men without art,'[609] a world in which pampered, overgrown children, devoted followers of the fashion system, and mindless enthusiasts of one or another trendy 'cult' (the Youth cult, the Health cult, the Negro cult, the Cinema cult, the Suffrage cult, the Homosexual cult) squabble and sulk and pontificate and fanny about while imagining themselves 'noble geniuses.' We are invited to survey this appalling wasteland of cultural self-flattery, this infantilized and above all for Lewis *effeminized* sham-society, as a kind of tragedy: an unmanning of the once virile culture of England, which in its prime had been capable of producing the greatest works of literary art.[610]

The society was not just a 'sham', in other words, but also tarnished the legacy of the once-great 'English nation', whose imperial prime was fading rapidly. Its once cutting-edge industrialism was decaying into technologically-induced apathy.[611] Although English does not name it as such, this satire against 'cult[s]', meaning liberal-emancipatory causes, has a reactionary flavour, not only for its rather frank cynicism towards social progress, but also for

---

607 Terrazas, p. 70.
608 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose II*, p. 746.
609 See Lewis' 1942 book of the same name.
610 English, p. 858.
611 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, pp. 418-20.

its revival of tragedy within humour, a harking back to the English satirical tradition. English invites the comparisons with Eliot here, calling this world of faux-progress a 'wasteland'.

Against this '*effeminized* sham society' stands, as Eliot put it in his reviews of *Tarr*, the 'cave-man'.[612] This was an individual who did not repress his human weakness with technology and self-flattering political ideology, but rather was at one with his animalistic nature. The cave-man was an individual for whom art was not an object to be gawked at for fleeting social respectability, but for whom art was the manifestation of a spiritual impulse, the attempt of a truly 'separating' mind to achieve 'the absolute'. This is the vision of the modern artist Eliot defended in his reviews of *Tarr*, initially calling it

> a commentary upon a part of modern civilization: now it is like our civilization criticized, our acrobatics animadverted upon adversely, by an orang-outang of genius, Tarzan of the Apes[.][613]

This 'Tarzan of the Apes' was, of course, Wyndham Lewis. Only men like Lewis had the bravery to confront the rhetoric of the age. Eliot is almost Nietzschean here in his championing of the artist as over-man. To be 'primitive' was perhaps to be pre-Christian – to harbour the noble virtues chastised by hegemonic Unitarianism as 'pagan'.

Eliot used this same metaphor of a 'primitive' artist in his second review of *Tarr*:

> Primitive instincts and the acquired habits of ages are confounded in the ordinary man. In the work of Mr. Lewis we recognize the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man.[614]

Lewis, for Eliot, was a kind of over-man, capable of cutting through the confusion of instinct and morality found in the 'ordinary man', transcending modern 'thought' and convention with his primal 'energy'. The modern artist, Eliot emphasises, was 'more primitive, as well as more civilised'[615] than the stereotypical 'flabby'[616] liberal. '[M]ore civilised' is the key

612 Eliot, 'A second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
613 *Ibid*., 'Contemporanea', p. 720.
614 *Ibid*., 'A second review of *Tarr*', p. 747.
615 *Ibid*.
616 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.

phrase here. It is a phrase intended to provoke the self-consciously 'civilised' reader. The unsophisticated 'primitive' is 'more civilised' than you, he says; even 'primitive' man had a genuine spiritual relationship to art that you do not. To be a modern 'cave-man' is not necessarily to reject modern art, so much as to utilise it to recapture this 'absolute' essence – to become a true 'individual'[617] in an age of conformist complacency. Indeed, the Vorticist manifesto in *Blast* declares, 'We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World'.[618] Again in another manifesto, Lewis writes,

> The artist of the modern movement is a savage (in no sense an 'advanced', perfected, democratic, Futurist individual of Mr. Marinetti's limited imagination): this enormous, jangling, journalistic, fairy desert of modern life serves him as Nature did more technically primitive man.[619]

The modern world was 'jangling', full of clutter – which is to say, quickly-written, for-profit 'journalistic' hackery. It was at once a cultural wasteland and a canvas for naïve fantasy – a 'fairy desert'. However, the cave-man could make this 'serve him', unlike the 'ordinary man' who was 'confounded' by its whims.[620] As Henkle says, 'Lewis' diagnosis seems to be that the culture has been made impotent by its own cultural sensationalism.'[621] The artist who cut through the 'subjectivity' of this modern mess was the anti-democratic, anti-progressive 'savage' – the term being used ironically to distinguish him from the 'civilised' man of Furturist 'advancement', Unitarian 'perfect[ibility]',[622] and liberal 'democra[cy]',[623] which were all innuendoes for mediocrity.[624] The cave-man could in fact utilise modern mediocrity for his own art, 'as Nature did more technically primitive man'.[625]

---

617 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast,* p. 7.
618 *Ibid.*, 'MANIFESTO.:I.', p. 30.
619 *Ibid*., 'MANIFESTO.: II.', p. 33.
620 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I,* p. 747.
621 Henkle, 104.
622 Sigg, 'New England', p. 19.
623 *Ibid*, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 9.
624 James, *Bostonians*, p. 332.
625 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II.', in *Blast,* p. 32.

The reactionary yet radical seen in this satire was in keeping with the 'classicist'[626] spirit of Eliot's early years. As Terrazas observes,

> Lewis himself famously argues that 'the greatest satire is non-moral' in *Men without Art*, taking a contrary stance to one of the traditional topics of satiric theory, which positions the artist as moralist.[627]

This idea of 'non-moral' satire was taken to extreme theoretical lengths by Lewis, who went as 'far as to equate art in general with satire, implying that separation from the moral is definitive of the genuinely artistic.'[628] Hugh Kenner similarly describes Lewis's notion of 'non-moral' satire:

> Elsewhere he [Lewis] stated roundly: 'Wherever there is objective truth there is satire.' That is to say, whenever the externalizing inherent in the habits of written language so alienates us from our human interior as to permit us to see what it is that words are saying, then it will prove less creditable than we expect.[629]

On a theoretical level, Lewis's conflation of 'objective truth' with 'satire' is compelling. Satire was a way to observe and undercut the 'alienating' effects of 'externalizing' language. It is perhaps similar to Classicist notions of objectivity, in that satire was a way to show the falseness of the Romantic 'human interior'. On a practical level, however, the notion that satire is 'objective' seems a reflexive defence against criticism. Lewis's satire is plainly political. How can we seriously identify his tirades against 'the lees of Liberalism'[630] in *Tarr* as objective, or even non-moral (since his criticisms of liberalism come from an anti-humanist stance)? It is rather easy to see one's own worldview as cutting to the core of a reality that your ideologically-blindsided enemies cannot see or refuse to look at. Nonetheless, Eliot saw the potential in Lewis's technique to transcend his earlier, simpler

626 Eliot, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.
627 Terrazas, p. 62.
628 *Ibid*.
629 Kenner, 'Wyndham Lewis', 272.
630 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.

satire. Satire did not have to be just a vessel for his teenage grievances, it could in fact transpose him into a true artist, distinctly modern in his 'objectivity'.

From Vorticism to Eliot's defence of Jonson

Captured by the energy of Vorticism, Eliot built on Lewis's theoretical defences of satire in his own criticism. Eliot regarded Ben Jonson as particularly pertinent to modern avant-garde tastes. In his 1919 essay 'Ben Jonson', he laid out this defence:

> Of all the dramatists of his time, Jonson is probably the one whom the present age would find the most sympathetic, if it knew him. There is a brutality, a lack of sentiment, a polished surface, a handling of large bold designs in brilliant colours, which ought to attract about three thousand people in London and elsewhere. At least, if we had a contemporary Shakespeare and a contemporary Jonson, it might be the Jonson who would arouse the enthusiasm of the intelligentsia.[631]

Jonson's qualities are Vorticist: his 'brutality' and 'lack of sentiment' are the Lewisian qualities Eliot praised in *Tarr*, and his 'polished surface' and 'large bold designs in brilliant colours' recall Vorticist aesthetics, or perhaps related movements such as Cubism. The 'three thousand people in London' are, by implication, those sympathetic to Vorticism and their related avant-garde movements. Erik Svarny describes Eliot's defence of Jonson as being a de-facto defence of Vorticism:

> In designating Jonson's poetry a 'poetry of the surface', Eliot is coming close to discussing Jonson's work in terms applicable to the abstractionist, Vorticist arts, which eschewed sentimental 'literary values' in favour of formal design.[632]

So why was the hard-edged style of Jonson not appreciated by these 'few thousand people in London'? Eliot says there was no 'creative interest' from artists to modernise Jonson's legacy. As Svarny goes on to say,

---

631 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 160

632 Erik Svarny. *'The Men of 1914': T. S. Eliot and early Modernism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988) p. 128.

> Eliot's essay on 'Ben Jonson' is an act of advocacy. He wishes to assert Jonson's contemporary relevance against what he wittily designates as a 'conspiracy of approval', which relegates Jonson to the status of the important and respected but unread.[633]

This 'act of advocacy' is quite like *Blast* in its polemic defence of idiosyncratic literary values. For Eliot, it was the 'newspaper critics'[634] who had solidified Jonson's reputation, not the true poet-critics like himself who had a 'creative interest' in a reappraisal of tradition.

Jonson's satire, Eliot goes on to say in his 1919 essay, is suitable to these Vorticist aims in that it is not overt, but, similar to Lewis's 'non-moral' satire, is only 'incidentally' satirical. Jonson's satire comes 'incidentally' from his aesthetic representation 'of the actual world' – his 'objectivity'. Jonson's satire does not offer a moral or 'intellectual criticism of the actual world',[635] as Eliot sees in 'the work of Swift', but instead

> is great in the end not by hitting off its object, but by creating it; the satire is merely the means which leads to the aesthetic result, the impulse which projects a new world into a new orbit.[636]

Jonson did not seek to represent reality and then laugh at it: this would be mere humour. His satire, rather, was not the goal, but the method – a method of not merely presenting reality, but seeking to create it. Jonson was a 'cave-man', in a sense, capable of exploiting the 'confounded' sensibility of his age for his own art. Jonson's satire – quite unlike what Terrazas calls 'traditional' satire – avoided moralising altogether, at least according to Eliot, since it was not 'hitting off its object'.[637] It forms narratives that are constantly forming and reforming in conjunction with the reader's response.

Jonson's technique is one of caricature: a flattening of characters into their essential, dehumanising simplicity. This allows them to be 'filled in by much detail or many shifting

---

633 Svarny, p. 127.
634 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
635 *Ibid*., 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
636 *Ibid*., p. 159.
637 *Ibid*., p. 159.

aspects'.[638] Again, this view is reminiscent of the Vorticist privileging of bold simplicity. Wyndham Lewis's technique in *Tarr*, Svarny says,

> is to describe the human being as an object by employing a bizarre battery of tropes, analogies and similes that force the reader to view the human body as a structure divorced from any animating spirit.[639]

In the sense that this is an attempt to describe the human as a mere 'object', Lewis's satire is 'incidental'[640] – it 'force[s] the reader'[641] to contribute to the creation of its characters. As Svarny goes on to say,

> Being no more than puppets, machines, or insects, they [Lewis' characters] were at any rate fit as 'elementals' for satiric portrayal as slightly sub-human.[642]

It is significant that Svarny would call these characters 'puppets', as in line with the *March Hare* notion of 'marionettes',[643] or what Eliot would later term 'hollow men'.[644] To the 'cave-man', the 'ordinary man'[645] appears a sort of ghost, an unthinking automaton. This is a rather self-important, and at times bigoted position, but one that categorised much of Lewis's political writing and satire.

Jonsonian caricature was particularly important to modernist satire because it had a kinship with the 'abstractionist representational strategies' of Vorticism.[646] The notion of the rational and self-controlled individual agent was a defunct ideology in the age of world war and mass media. The mind of the 'ordinary man'[647] was increasingly dependent on 'jangling'[648] journalism and government war propaganda, unable to organise the 'broken

638 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 154.
639 Svarny, p. 132.
640 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
641 Svarny, p. 132.
642 *Ibid*., p. 139.
643 Eliot, 'Humouresque', in *Poems I*, p. 311, lines. 1, 21.
644 See: Eliot, 'The Hollow Men', in *Poems I*, pp. 127-33.
645 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
646 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 20.
647 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
648 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II', in *Blast*, p. 33.

images'[649] of their cultural heritage – images that were being ever-further buried under the alienating mediums of cinema and radio.[650] To Lewis and Eliot, only a man capable of deliberately making himself into a 'primitive' – that is, one who consciously rejects technological modernism – was capable of maintaining authentic individuality. Caricature, then, in being a deliberate attempt to dehumanise its subjects, was an attempt to expose this process of de-individualisation.[651] Eliot's technique of 'externalizing' his characters is particularly apparent in, for instance, the Sweeney poems, which will be discussed in more detail later. As De Genanro puts it,

> What we can bring to 'Sweeney Erect' from our readings of Eliot's prose is that in the teens and twenties he and a good many of his contemporaries equated individualism with the validation of self-absorption, social alienation, and moral relativism. Individualism is dangerous, in their estimation, for its potential effects on 'the popular mind' – politically in the form of democracy; aesthetically in the form of Romanticism and naturalism (including film); and through these means, morally.[652]

The character of Sweeney, a deliberately dehumanised automaton in the vein of Lewis's *Tarr*, was an attempt to expose the folly of liberal individualism, which had been exposed, after WWI especially, to be a 'dangerous[ly]' naïve view of human nature. As Eliot saw it, individualism had no answer to the decay of morals and public trust – and for that reason, it had to be 'blasted'.

---

649 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 136.

650 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420.

651 Svarny has a similar but slightly different reading to mine, p. 129: 'This difference [between Jonson and Lewis] can be comprehended by suggesting that while Jonson uses techniques of caricature and reification – here meant in its literal sense, as the translation of the animate to the inanimate – for traditional satiric purposes, to contest prevalent vices and follies, Lewis (and Eliot) wish, at least initially, to satirize the pervasive "reification" of modern life.'[651] I differ from Svarny in that, at least to Eliot, Jonson's caricatures were not meant for 'traditional satiric purposes', i.e. moral argument. Svarny may be right in his reading of Jonson as satirist of 'vices and follies', but this was not Eliot's reading.

652 De Gennaro, 186.

Eliot's *Poems 1920* stress the visual 'bold designs' of Jonson, a 'poetry of the surface'.[653] The poems are full of disembodied limbs, names without faces, and silhouettes ready to be filled in with the preconceptions of the reader. As Svarny puts it,

> This stress on the visible and material operates as a mode of fragmentation, and, as has been suggested, dehumanization. Eliot's characters, much like those of Wyndham Lewis, are mechanisms, automata, puppets[.][654]

In *March Hare*, Eliot's 'marionettes',[655] or 'puppets', were mere automatons, devoted to what English calls 'cults',[656] liberal social causes. However, in *Poems 1920*, Eliot emphasised simplicity of character – caricature. *Poems 1920* stresses fragmentation, severe reduction of form and narrative, a technique that baffles the reader into grasping at ambiguous interpretations. 'A caricature refers to the world', Rulo says, 'but it also and at the same time distorts the world, either by simplification or exaggeration.'[657] This dual representation and exaggeration is a challenge to the reader. In traditional satire, to understand what the author is satirising, the reader must look to the opposite of what is being presented – as with Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, for instance. However, Eliot was attempting a certain 'mode of literary treatment', similar to mockery in that presents its targets as grotesque, but transcending mere humour by 'blow[ing] open'[658] social mores. In *Poems 1920*, Eliot intended not just to annoy his opponents, but to step back from the poems, eliminate his 'personality'[659] from them. He wanted to do this in order to get the 'ordinary man'[660] to fill in the faceless characters with their own prejudices and resentments, which feminine 'snobbery'[661] otherwise forces him to deny. If modern man was 'confounded'[662] by the conflict between his primitive intuitions and

653 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 150.
654 Svarny, p. 138.
655 Eliot, 'Humouresque', in *Poems I*, p. 311, lines. 1, 21.
656 English, p. 858.
657 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 21.
658 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: I.', in *Blast*, p. 31.
659 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 108.
660 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
661 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 15.
662 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.

external modern manners, then it was the satirist's role to make him self-conscious of this internal battle, lest he succumb to it. The poet had to 'protect' him against the 'ugliness'[663] of the 'fairy desert'[664] which sought to diminish his individuality.

'The skull beneath the skin': Poems 1920

Unlike *March Hare*, which is rarely discussed in detail in Eliot scholarship, *Poems 1920* has drawn a fair amount of commentary, much of which justifiably remarks upon its satirical mode and influence from, amongst others, Ben Jonson and the Elizabethan satirists. Eric Sigg, for instance, writes that 'The quatrain poems, like Jonsonian drama, tried to be both satirical and "intensely serious" by simplifying the characters they contained.'[665] Here Sigg is quoting a letter Eliot sent to his brother, in which Eliot calls 'the Sweeney ones', including 'Burbank', 'intensely serious'.[666] Eliot, despite his insistence that he was not 'merely disgusting', was still eager to report his reputation as a satirist – and indeed appears to have relished this reputation, considering the overtly satirical intent of *Poems 1920*.

The Jonsonian influence on the volume is quite clear. Ronald Schuchard, for instance, writes in *Eliot's Dark Angel*,

> As he began to write the Sweeney poems in 1918, Eliot immersed himself in the savage and violent tradition of English comedy, from Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson to Charles Dickens.[667]

It is critical orthodoxy, then, to call *Poems 1920* satire, or to acknowledge its Jonsonian influences. I differ from this scholarly consensus, however, in that I do not consider *Poems*

663 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
664 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II.', in *Blast*, p. 33.
665 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 158. See also: Anne Stillman. 'Sweeney Among the Marionettes', in *Essays in Criticism*, 59.2 (2009) 119 [Online] <https://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/escrit/cgp002> [Accessed 02-03-2020].: '[Eliot's] quatrain poems, especially 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', rework aspects of the earlier marionette poems[.]'
666 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
667 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 89.

1920 a departure from Eliot's earlier poetry, but rather a development of the technique seen in *March Hare*. Indeed, where else would Eliot's reputation as a 'mere Wit'[668] come from, if not from the Oxford poems or from rumours of his Bolo verses? In the *March Hare* satires and Oxford poems, Eliot had a clear target – the puritanical 'ladies'[669] he condemned for being prudes and philistines – but *Poems 1920* moves away from these 'personal' satires, and instead externalises the Prufrockian alienation onto the reader. Eliot's 'poetry of the surface'[670] does not really present reality, but seeks to subliminally force the author's world into the mind of the unsuspecting reader. The reader, in other words, is invited to join in the condemnations of 'boring civilisation', while Eliot presents himself as the detached poet concerned only with 'the object'.

Although Schuchard does not explicitly say so, Eliot's reason for 'immers[ing] himself in the savage and violent tradition of English comedy'[671] was because of his interest in Vorticism and, to some extent, those forms of modern comedy that Vorticism championed, like music-hall. Eliot was participating in *Blast*'s call for a return to 'English humour'.[672] *Poems 1920*, then, was not Eliot's temporary departure into satire, but a continuation of his early satires of the 'womanized generation' – a form of tragi-comic 'English humour' that does not invoke laughter, but anger at the alienating modern world.

Poems 1920 marks Eliot's move away from narrow, provincial satire towards a broader, intellectual satire. As Atkins says, in going from *March Hare* to *Poems 1920*, 'we have moved from the social satire of Eliot's short, early poems toward the panoramic exploration of intellectual and spiritual malaise.'[673] This development was observed by Hugh Kenner, who said in *The Invisible Poet*,

---

668 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
669 *Ibid*., 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 61, line. 14.
670 *Ibid*., 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 150.
671 Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 89.
672 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 26.
673 Atkins, p. 50.

> These poems [*Poems 1920*] constitute an attempt to create a satiric medium for twentieth-century usage, nurtured by the perception that satire in verse works by assembling a crazy-quilt of detail, each detail an unchallengable fact.[674]

This 'crazy-quilt of detail', a particularly 'twentieth-century' mode of satire, is an apt description of the *1920* poems, which are full of allusions, scenes that suddenly appear and fade out with no resolution, characters that exist only as disembodied body parts, and so on. Sherry describes Eliot's technique in similar terms:

> Eliot's quatrain art concocts a rhetorical fiction of particularly sagacious high-jinks, sententious absurdity. His tautly formed stanzas employ normative syntax and mechanical metre to create a feeling of reasoned meditation that dissolves constantly, however, into imponderable propositions, unpronounceable words.[675]

The predominant mood these poems leave the reader with is bafflement. The reader is forced to confront their 'confounded'[676] sensibilities; their inability to understand the many references and allusions is a deliberate technique, intending to alienate the reader.

It would be a mistake to blame a vague 'modernity' for this alienation, because really Eliot's target is specific and, familiarly, political: as the invocations of Ralph Waldo Emerson indicate, alienation is a product of liberal, individualist, protestant culture. Sigg explores these political influences in detail:

> *Poems 1920* turned to the particulars to which adherents of traditional liberal values had given ground, recording the negative, often nebulous frustrations these social facts provoked. While politer members of the genteel class, mortally addicted to decorum, suppressed such responses as untoward, Eliot's art upset decorum with corrosive derision. To react passionately to the loss of a religious, social, and historical tradition, and to do so in the name of art and culture, meant merely to say that such things mattered.[677]

674 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 76.
675 Sherry, 'Literature and World War I', 166.
676 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
677 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 156.

Emerson is a target in *March Hare* and *Prufrock*, appearing by name in 'Cousin Nancy',[678] for instance. However, in *Poems 1920*, Eliot's technique is not to point and laugh at characters like Nancy, but to get the reader to realise that they are part of the same conformist, liberal milieu as Nancy. The satire of *Poems 1920* does not land unless the reader embodies this 'confounded' modern sensibility. As Sigg goes on to say,

> Unless the reader can perform the backward inference, distancing himself from these poems by imagining an extrinsic ideal against which to measure the behaviour within them, the poems' realistic and moral dimension will not emerge, and their comedy will be flat and gratuitous.[679]

The satire in *Poems 1920* is not just comic – having us laugh at silly characters – but also tragic, getting us to realise, and become angered by, the sins of the 'feminine age'[680] in which the characters uncritically inhabit. The moral dimension of the poems rest on this reaction from the reader, hence why alienation, dehumanisation and caricature are such important techniques.

Most of the characters in *Poems 1920* are faceless, hollow, existing only as names or flashes of body parts. This is especially so in the Sweeney poems, which Stephen Spender called

> narrations of an extremely detached ironic observer. They have the essential quality of satire, which is that they are by an outsider who makes glaring caricatures of contemporary life.[681]

This 'outsider' is essentially what Eliot meant by the 'cave-man' – a sort of over-man who sees through the ideologically-charged language of the age. Sweeney as a character exists not as a character, but as a name – as if he is merely an acquaintance, known only to us from the outside. His Irish name invites prejudice. He has no consistent character traits, modes of action, or precise physical appearance. Sometimes it is implied he is a savage murderer, as in

678 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 12.
679 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 159.
680 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 332.
681 Spender, p. 59.

'Sweeney Erect', and other times he is the implied victim of murder, as in 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' – although neither of these poems have any coherent plot or narrative that allows for an unambiguous interpretation. Indeed, Eliot would defend himself as a satirist by feigning impartiality, as in a 1933 where he recalled 'Among the Nightingales' as 'simply a series of images. I'm not sure it means anything at all.'[682] Of course, even the 'relativist'[683] Eliot did have morals (if not necessarily a worldview), but impersonality was so important to the experience of *Poems 1920* that he would not dare to offer anything as clear cut as an authorial intention.

In some sense, this caricature technique is a development of the marionettes from *March Hare*. However, a key difference between the two is that whereas the characters in *March Hare* are in a sense merely funny, meant to be mocked and condemned, the characters in *Poems 1920* are also victims, tragic as well as comic characters. Sigg puts it aptly:

> These human beings are funny, the quatrain poems argue, because they behave like animals, and tragic because their innocence of ideality bars them from their full humanity.[684]

Whereas the lack of humanity of the *March Hare* characters is merely pathetic, a conformism that must be condemned, in *Poems 1920* their 'hollow[ness]'[685] is also tragic. It is not their fault that they are alienated and confounded. One is hesitant to describe Eliot's attitude as sympathetic to these figures, however: his attitude is motivated by his (still-developing) Christian orthodoxy, which viewed Emersonian individualism as a kind of sin. Nonetheless, Eliot was trying to move away – not necessarily successfully – from the supercilious satire of his youth, towards a modernised, 'non-moral' satire. Eliot's caricatures are very much like Lewis's 'machine-men' found in *Apes of God*, funny because, as James English puts it,

682 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 770.
683 *Ibid*., Letter to Conrad Aiken (21st August 1916), in *Letters I*, p. 160.
684 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 161.
685 Eliot, 'The Hollow Men', in *Poems I*, pp. 127-33.

> beneath all their pretentions to vitality and spontaneity, their claims to be more than mere creatures of animal instinct and social habit, they really are just 'machines, governed by routine': tedious, predictable, unreflective, and dull[.][686]

Criticism of 'dull[ness]' appears in *March Hare* – the boring, prudish culture of New England makes the speaker retreat into the boisterous humour of music-hall and bawdy ballads. In *Poems 1920*, however, there is a sense that this boredom is not merely humorous but also tragic, a sign of a once-great culture that has lost its belief in itself. It is only in the late 1920s when Eliot would deem the solution to be orthodox religion, itself a development of his Baudelairean intuition that *ennui* can be a source of spiritual insight. However, in *Poems 1920*, this perspective had not yet been realised, and there still existed an anger at the modern world. If he did not sympathise with the victims of alienation, then he displayed an anger at what had been done to them.

The sections following are a close-reading of the entire volume, starting with the most important poem in the volume, 'Gerontion'. Despite being written last, 'Gerontion' was placed at the very start of the volume by Eliot, because its technique of inviting the prejudices of the reader colours their perception of the succeeding poems.

'Gerontion' and systemic knowledge

Eliot in his early career was a self-described 'relativist',[687] a point of view that appears to have motivated his broad and often disparate interests, and also allowed him to satirise his Bostonian marionettes whilst maintaining that the poems were mere 'Observations'. From 1917 onwards, when he began composing the poems that would make it into *Poems 1920* – a period which shortly followed from the composition of his DPhil thesis on F. H. Bradley – Eliot developed his relativism away from mere impulse or intuition (one that frequently looks

686 English, p. 858.
687 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (21st August 1916), in *Letters I*, p. 160.

like a defence tactic) towards a more coherent philosophical position that underpinned much of his poetry and criticism.

Eliot's internal conflict was between that of his belief in the relativity of knowledge and his growing desire for 'absolute' values. James Longenbach has discussed this conflict at length.[688] According to Longenbach,

> For Eliot, all knowledge is relative, and 'meaning' is necessarily the function of an interpretive strategy. Anything we assert as permanent or absolute is 'only the more stable of a vast system of categories in perpetual change.'[689]

Longenbach points to Eliot's use of the word 'system' as a clue as to how Eliot attempted to reconcile the conflict between relative truth and the need for an absolute. Longenbach goes on to say,

> From the time he began as a student of philosophy until the time he became a sage of literary criticism, he believed that since all interpretation is relative to its own *system*, then the critic with the most *whole* and *ordered* system can assay interpretations that approach the absolute.[690]

In other words, if all knowledge is relative, then the meaning of something is a function of an interpretative strategy. Since all interpretation is relative to its own 'system' of wider thought, the critic with the most complete, the 'most *whole* and *ordered*', system can escape the cycle of relativistic truth.

This idea of the 'systematic' nature of truth, furthermore, is key to Bradley's 'neo-idealist philosophy'.[691] According to Longenbach, Bradley proposes

> that all experience is originally a unified whole; our individual intellects abstract a fragmented, limited experience from that whole. In the mind of the 'uncritical' historian, all of his experiences continue to exist in 'a confused

---

688 See: James Longenbach. 'Guarding the Hornèd Gates: History and Interpretation in the Early Poetry of T. S. Eliot', in *ELH*, 52.2 (1985) 503-527. [Online] <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2872847> [Accessed 14-09-2020]. See also: James Longenbach. 'The Contrived Corridors of *Poems 1920*', in *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 177-99.

689 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 505.

690 *Ibid*.

691 *Ibid*.

> and unsystematized world of consciousness.' The mind of the 'critical' historian continually reorganizes his world into a new whole, a 'system'.[692]

Bradley does not mean 'systematic' in a conventional sense, that of deliberate and meticulous ordering; rather, 'it is not an imposed order, but an order that arises from the immediacy of experience'.[693] In other words, the absolute truth of the world, though it exists, is experienced only immediately, and then is broken apart by consciousness, which hastily imposes an order onto the fragments with varying degrees of accuracy. Hence this position is an attempt at reconciliation between the reality of relative knowledge and the necessity of an objective superstructure.

What does this mean for Eliot's poetry and prose? These Bradleian ideas appear in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', which calls for poets to comprehend the 'simultaneous order' of literature from Homer to the present.[694] Part of Eliot's project in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' was to show that there is no impartial observer of history, no detached 'uncritical' historian, but that we can only make sense of the past through the 'historical sense'.[695] We must, in other words, 'critical[ly]' reorganise the fragments of history into new systems. These ideas also appear, however, in 'Ben Jonson'. Jonsonian caricature does not merely present the 'absolute', but attempts to cut through 'incomplete systems' and force the reader to critically reorganise its otherwise abstract and disordered 'bold designs'. It is only through this process of that we can escape 'personality', the trap of solipsistic knowledge. Or to put it another way, only through the historical sense can the modern man confront the false narrative of Emersonian individualism, and gesture towards his more essential, primitive, absolute consciousness.

---

692 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 506.
693 *Ibid*.
694 Eliot, 'Tradition', in *Prose II*, p. 106.
695 *Ibid*.

In Eliot's poetry, the most explicit discourse on history and knowledge, at least in this period, is in 'Gerontion', with this now famous passage:

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
> What's not believed in, or is still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
> Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
> Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
> Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
> Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
> Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
> These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.[696]

Perhaps this passage reflects Eliot's own opinion – that is, he is using this character in the sense Lewis used his 'show men'[697] – although the precise epistemology conveyed here is not clear, containing multiple mixed metaphors. History is first a winding labyrinth, but then becomes a gossiping woman, a sort of siren or temptress, images which are mixed together disconsolately with 'famish[ment]', 'belie[f]', 'memory', 'passion', and 'father[hood]'. The dizzying intellectualism in this stanza recalls the Metaphysical poets. This stanza does not reconcile its disconsolate images into a coherent argument; rather, it seems like the garbled thoughts of a 'dry brain'.[698] What are we to make of the constant demands to 'Think now', growing ever more insistent? There is not only a contrived intellectualism here, but a demand that we take it seriously – that we heed its obscure message. The demand to 'think' makes us search for meaning behind the confusing metaphors, as if the struggle to comprehend this stanza is a failure rather on the part of its readers than a failure of the speaker to

696 Eliot, 'Gerontion', in *Poems I*, p. 66, lines. 33-47.
697 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 15.
698 Eliot, 'Gerontion', in *Poems 1*, p. 67, line. 75.

communicate. The speaker is arrogant in his moralism, pontificating on 'Unnatural vices' and 'virtues' that are never defined.

What we can discern is that the speaker is not at all happy with the state of society. 'Our heroism', he says, is in fact 'fathered' by our 'Unnatural vices' – in other words, we are only brave because we are wicked. Similarly, our 'Virtues' are 'forced upon us by our impudent crimes': we are only virtuous because of our fear of criminal punishment. History, to this speaker, is a sinister deceiver. Perhaps this stanza is spoken by the 'old man' who did not fight

> at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought.[699]

If so, do we take it as an anti-war message, consonant with Eliot's letters in Oxford and Marburg, where the justifications for the war are considered to be 'whispering ambitions, / […] vanities […] supple confusions'? 'History', of course, is sometimes associated with 'progress', and this Whig notion stimulates Eliot's disdain in later years.[700] Eliot, however, denied such readings identifying himself with the opinions of the old man, or that the message of the poem was one of despair at the decline of civilisation.[701] Rather than a political polemic, it was, as he put it in a letter in 1944, 'the expression of a mood, its variations and associated memories'.[702] Eliot often partook in this kind of disingenuous denialism.[703] In this instance, however, we should take seriously the notion that the poem is best understood as a 'mood'. It is not just the 'History' stanza, but indeed the entire poem that is a baffling mirage of disconsolate images, memories, and names without faces, a poem that

699 Eliot, 'Gerontion', in *Poems 1*, p. 65, lines. 3-6.
700 Sigg, *The American T. S. Eliot*, p. 9.
701 See: Ricks and McCue, *Poems I*, p. 662.
702 Eliot, quoted in *ibid*.
703 See the notion that *The Waste Land* was mere 'rhythmic grumbling', for instance: Ricks and McCue, *Poems I*, p. 824.

resists the heresy of paraphrase. On the other hand, we might be more sceptical of the idea that 'I [Eliot] wasn't thinking about declining civilisations when I wrote it.'[704] The poem was written in 1919, at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which complicated Eliot's work as a clerk in Lloyds Bank. The poem contains many allusions to war and to the Treaty, from the 'wilderness of mirrors' that recalls the Hall of Mirrors where the Treaty was signed, to the 'hot gates' that alludes to the battle of Thermopylae (literally 'The Hot Gates'). Add to this the disagreeable attitude that the old man has towards the cosmopolitan figures that surround him. We are invited into such readings, while at the same time being made to doubt ourselves – not just because of Eliot's faux-authoritative statements on the composition, but indeed from the poem itself, which resists such easy interpretation.

'Gerontion' is not traditional satire. The satire is at the expense of the reader, who is invited to draw associations and construct narratives, sometimes prejudicial, while the author stands back distanced from blame – 'rests invisible'.[705] In 'Gerontion', and indeed in the whole *Poems 1920* volume, Eliot does this primarily by using deliberately chosen stereotypical names. There is no 'John Doe' in Eliot's poetry, but there are many cosmopolitan characters, from 'Hakagawa' to 'Madame de Tornquist' and 'Fräulein von Kulp'.[706] Like the Bolo poems, Eliot is not afraid to use race or cultural identity as vehicles for his jokes; but unlike the Bolos, where the target of the joke is the American 'melting pot' narrative, in 'Gerontion' the target is the reader, who is invited to judge these caricatures.

What this technique does to critics and their interpretations is best explored by an analysis of this passage from Spender:

> Eliot excels in this poem ['Gerontion'] in an effect which he always shows great brilliance: condemning attitudes by attaching to them names and gestures which are in themselves prejudicial. By merely inventing a name like Fräulein von Kulp he can evoke in us the punishing hatred we have felt in a lodging

704 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 662.
705 Kenner, *Invisible Poet*, p. 80.
706 *Ibid*., 'Gerontion', in *Poems I*, p. 66, lines. 26-8.

> house, say in Vienna, for some unknown person in the next room who keeps us awake all night by expectorating in a peculiarly disgusting manner which we involuntarily seize upon as being the expression of her Central European personality. Eliot invents names for such targets of what seems an atavistic righteous indignation. Cosmopolitans, who signify for him the debasement of the sacraments of religion and art, are encapsulated in these thumbnail sketches.[707]

Ironically, Spender expresses here his 'punishing hatred' for his fellow lodgers in Vienna, bizarrely universalised, as if 'we' all share that hatred. His reading is full of assumptions about Eliot's intentions: is it Eliot who is 'condemning [the] attitudes' of the characters, for instance? Indeed, other than perhaps the lines on the 'jew',[708] whose description is overtly disparaging (he 'squats' and is 'Spawned' like an animal), in what sense are the other characters 'condemn[ed]'? 'Mr. Silvero' merely 'walked all night in the next room'; 'Hakagawa [is] bowing among the Titians'; 'Madame de Tornquist' is 'in the dark room / Shifting the candles'; 'Fräulein von Kulp' only 'turned in the hall';[709] and the others, 'De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel', simply appear by name in one line.[710] There is certainly a 'mood' of condemnation, a bitterness in the old man's tone of voice – but stripped from this context, the characters are empty vessels, 'hollow men'. Spender unintentionally hints at what is really going on: in the mind of the reader, these names, ostensibly 'themselves prejudicial', 'evoke in us' our prejudicial associations and memories.

The old man, with his tone of bitterness, invites us to share his 'righteous indignation' at these figures. However, Spender's final statement – that this is in fact Eliot's righteous indignation – is based on a prejudice of its own, as if the name 'T. S. Eliot' itself evokes the image of the humourless enemy of 'cosmopolitans, who signify for him the debasement of the sacraments of religion and art'. I do not necessarily deny Eliot held such attitudes, but

---

707 Spender, p. 62.

708 'Jew' was lowercase in the first edition of the poem, which again reinforces the idea that Eliot harboured overtly prejudicial attitudes towards this character in particular, and Jews in general.

709 Eliot, 'Gerontion', in *Poems I*, p. 66, lines. 23-8.

710 *Ibid*., p. 67, line. 67.

Spender's too-easy association of the old man with Eliot is thereby blind to Eliot's satirical technique here, which is that he is deliberately avoiding claims to his intention through ambiguity. Perhaps Eliot considered satire a technique to portray his socially conservative intuitions in a 'non-moral' way to a world apparently hostile towards them. Eliot eventually abandoned this technique, instead adopting an overtly orthodox Christian public persona – but in these earlier years, the development of his ironic detachment is a key motivator of both his public image and his poetics.

There are many questions raised by 'Gerontion', some of which seem deliberately designed to obscure the separation between poet and poem. For instance, are we meant to take the old man as an authoritative voice, a personification of Eliot's own views on cosmopolitanism and the modern world, as Spender reads it? Are we supposed to sympathise with the old man, or find his views repulsive? Or to phrase it another way, if we agree with Spender that the old man is Eliot, then are we supposed to begrudgingly agree with Eliot? Or is the poem self-parody, perhaps Eliot's way of examining his own prejudices? Furthermore, are we supposed to confront our prejudices towards the caricatures, or is Eliot trying to get us to voice them unconsciously while he laughs at our ignorance? In all of these questions, we return back to the central problem of Bradley: how to find 'the absolute'[711] beneath the fragmented shards of individual interpretation. To read Eliot, we might say, you must be a 'perfect' critic, one who has a unified 'system' of knowing[712] – and yet, Eliot denies this birds-eye view of reality, constantly denying his own intentions, constantly shifting his targets, constantly muddying the waters by invoking your own prejudices and assumptions. This is not the 'Humour' that *Blast* condemns,[713] but satire. Furthermore, unlike 'traditional'[714] satire, with its implicit morality, this satire rejects moral absolutisms,

711 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 505.
712 *Ibid*.
713 Lewis, '[5]', in *Blast*, p. 17.
714 Terrazas, p. 62.

preferring to probe at the variegated shards of interpretation that it invites. It is in this sense an amoral satire, in the vein of Lewis.

When we come to 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar' ('Burbank'), we are met with these same problems: how to craft a narrative, whether or not we should trust that narrative, and whether we should trust our intuitions towards prejudice at the characters that clearly invite them. Like the names in 'Gerontion', both Burbank and Bleistein may 'evoke in us'[715] prejudices tied to historical circumstances, some of which will be lost to modern readers. It is difficult to reconstruct these prejudices almost a century removed from the publication of the poem – but it is not too speculative to suggest that, for a contemporary of Eliot's, a traveller with a 'Baedeker' may have invoked similar images of philistinism that we see have seen in *March Hare*, or perhaps the image of Lewis' 'bourgeois-bohemian'[716] poseurs. Certainly, this prejudice is invited by the poem itself; Burbank has similar thoughts about vices and virtues as the bitter old man in 'Gerontion', who ends the poem asking

> Who clipped the lion's wings
> And flea'd his rump and pared his claws?
> Thought Burbank, meditating on
> Time's ruins, and the seven laws.[717]

Like the old man, it is easy to imagine Eliot himself saying this, or at least a common critical portrait of Eliot the reactionary. Yet, the tone here is sardonic, seemingly mocking Burbank's 'meditati[ons]'. To bemoan the transformation of the symbol of Venice, the winged lion, into a common house cat ('flea'd his rump and pared his claws') is surely a reactionary stance, a despair at the fall of a once-great civilisation – but again, we are left wondering who precisely holds this sentiment, either the caricature Burbank or Eliot himself. The poem suggests Burbank holds them ('Thought Burbank'), but, as with Spender, one is forced to

715 Spender, p. 62.
716 See the chapter title in Lewis, *Tarr*.
717 Eliot, 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar', in *Poems I*, p. 70, lines. 29-32.

acknowledge Eliot's reactionary temperament. Indeed, this seems to be part of Eliot's joke, resisting the conflation of the poet with the poetry through formal complexity and an air of Lewisian detachment.

The satire here is 'incidental',[718] a method for presenting the author's disdain for 'ugliness'.[719] Like Don Quixote – tilting at windmills after all the romances he reads – Burbank's travels are merged with fantasy and lofty classical allusions which seem to imply either his madness or his sanctimoniousness. Indeed, like Cervantes's masterwork, it is not obvious whether Burbank is a comic character worthy of ridicule, or whether the implicit moral is that chivalric passion has been regrettably lost from the modern world. Burbank enters a labyrinthine Venice not alone, but 'together' with the personification of Venice herself, the wolfish 'Princess Volupine'.[720] Volupine is dry and decaying, perhaps caused by sexual disease (she has a 'phthisic hand').[721] She feels the familiar Eliotian anxiety of the man in 'Portrait', having to keep up appearances for upper-class acquaintances – in this instance, a Jew with a German name, 'Sir Ferdinand / Klein'.[722] What it means for Burbank to 'f[a]ll'[723] in her presence is not clear; the next lines mention the 'music under sea',[724] perhaps implying that Burbank was so busy looking at his Baedeker that he fell over the 'little bridge'[725] into the canal below – but this feels, intuitively, like too literal a reading. The 'fall' of course recalls original sin, but also is an allusion to *Antony and Cleopatra*, which is to say, a fall from grace induced by lust. Perhaps Burbank has fell in love with the imaginary Volupine – which would suit his pathetic character. Yet only a stanza later are we invited to draw love implications, not with Volupine, but in a homosexual context with 'the God

718 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
719 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
720 *Ibid*., 'Burbank', in *Poems I*, p. 69, lines. 3-4.
721 *Ibid*., p. 70, line. 26.
722 *Ibid*., lines. 28-9.
723 *Ibid*., p. 69, line. 4.
724 *Ibid*., line. 5.
725 *Ibid*., line. 1.

Hercules', who Burbank, it is implied, is sad to 'Ha[ve] left him'.[726] Again, there is something satirical here: Burbank is a pathetic character, believing himself to be cultivated and sensitive, and we are invited to laugh at his lofty and misplaced intellect, but also to mourn for it. One thinks of Eliot's letter to Hinkley, disparaging 'American middle-class' intellects anxious 'to be broadminded (that is, to be vague) [and] to have wide interests (that is to say, diffuse ones)'.[727] Is Burbank this familiar target, the museum-attending pseudo-connoisseurs who treat art as social credit – or as Spender put it, 'Cosmopolitans'?[728] But perhaps to allow ourselves to construct this narrative – to laugh at Burbank's ideals – makes us, too, one of the philistines, cynical because of our place in history, ignorant of our fragmented knowledge of a place so rich in culture and history as Venice, just like the bitter old man in 'Gerontion'.

Constructing a chain of events, or a map of the perspective changes, is difficult. Take the notorious antisemitic lines,

> A lustreless protrusive eye
> Stares from the protozoic slime
> At a perspective of Canaletto.
> The smoky candle end of time
>
> Declines. On the Rialto once.
> The rats are underneath the piles.
> The Jew is underneath the lot.
> Money in furs. The boatman smiles[.][729]

The 'lustreless protrusive eye' apparently, if we are to trust the narrative unfolding in the poem, belongs to Bleistein, who appears by name only a few lines earlier.[730] The same owner of that eye, again if we are to trust the poem, is holding the titular cigar ('The smoky candle

726 Eliot, 'Burbank', in *Poems I*, p. 69, lines. 7-8.
727 *Ibid*., Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (3rd January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 86.
728 Spender, p. 62.
729 Eliot, 'Burbank', in *Poems I*, pp. 69-70, lines. 17-24.
730 *Ibid*., p. 69, line. 13.

end of time'),[731] again suggesting that the eye belongs to Bleistein. He is 'Star[ing]'[732] at a view of Venice he has seen on a postcard, but cannot comprehend. Regarding 'The Jew […] underneath the lot',[733] the antisemitism in these lines could possibly be explained by the conflict between German and Eastern European Jews in 'Chicago',[734] or in other words, that Bleistein is, say, a German Jew, disparagingly starting at an Eastern European Jew. Yet the following line, 'Money in furs',[735] suggests that the Jew underneath the lot is Bleistein (the Bleisteins, like many Jewish merchants, were furriers).[736] Knowing these contextual allusions barely helps in constructing a narrative for this poem. The perspective shifts at least three times, from Burbank's fantasies, to looking through Bleistein's eyes, and then back to Burbank's thoughts again – and there are likely more perspective shifts, hidden by the elusive metaphors.

The poem's technique is one of bafflement by layers of allusion and metaphor. This is best exemplified by the epigraph, which is a merging of quotations from such disparate sources as Gautier, St. Augustine, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and John Marston.[737] Drawing on these 'wide interests (which is to say, diffuse ones)'[738] seems almost a pastiche of Eliot's mosaic technique he would employ in *The Waste Land* – intentionally or otherwise. Presuming the reader is capable of recognising these allusions at all – and it is perhaps part of Eliot's intention that they should not – then they may draw on some fleeting clues, such as the theme of smoke (the Latin translates as 'nothing is permanent unless divine; the rest is smoke')[739] that appears here as well as the title (the 'Cigar') and later in the poem, where – as

731 Eliot, 'Burbank', in *Poems*, p. 70, line. 20.
732 *Ibid*., p. 69, line. 17.
733 *Ibid*., p. 70, line. 23.
734 *Ibid*., p. 69, line. 16. This interpretation is offered by Ricks and McCue in *Poems I*, p.700.
735 *Ibid*., p. 70, line. 24.
736 Ricks & McCue, *Poems I*, p. 691.
737 Eliot, 'Burbank', in *Poems I*, p. 34. For a detailed analysis of all the allusions, see Ricks and McCue, *Poems I*, pp. 691-2.
738 Eliot, Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (3rd January 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 86.
739 This is the translation given by Ricks and McCue in *Poems I*, p. 691.

if the poem isn't baffling enough already – a 'smoky candle end' becomes a metaphor for 'time', the implications of which are ominous, if not obvious. One feels, throughout this process of bafflement, that one's struggle to comprehend is part of the satire. To put it another way, the 'smoke' and allusive mirrors that obscures our vision is indeed what Eliot wants to show us, the futility of trying to make sense of fragmented experience without a perfectly unified system through which it can be ordered. The satire is, in a sense, against human experience itself; or to go even further, it is a satire against modern rationalist sensibilities and the progressive political movements that stem from these principles – movements which have forgotten that man is a fallen creature incapable of the omniscient knowledge. There is, then, we might say, an underpinning religious feeling in these poems, an implicit acceptance of original sin. Eliot's satire is against humanity's ultimately futile craving for an escape from our fragmentary experience.

Tragi-comic Christianity

Poems 1920 appears to have familiar targets: Bostonian ladies, hypocritical Christians, and rootless modern cosmopolitans. The targets appeared in *March Hare* and in *Prufrock*, but in *Poems 1920*, the tragedy beneath these comic caricatures, implicit in some of the earlier poems, is brought to the surface. Eliot aimed here not to merely point and laugh at these figures, but to blow open this society 'like a bomb'.[740] The satire is bleak and cutting, rather than the flippant snigger Lewis condemned in *Blast*.[741]

We can see this harsh comic condemnation of ugliness in 'A Cooking Egg', for example. 'Pipit' seems to be the familiar archetype of the Bostonian spinster: prudish and 'upright',[742] with large (likely unread) books in public view 'on the table'[743] and familial

740 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: I.', in *Blast,* p. 31.
741 *Ibid*., '[5]', in *Blast,* p. 17.
742 Eliot, 'A Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, p. 75, line. 1.
743 *Ibid*., line. 4.

'Daguerreotypes and silhouettes' resting 'on the mantelpiece'.[744] She recalls Aunt Helen, with her 'Dresden clock'[745] and exotic pet parrot[746] – that is, unless we take the speaker, first introduced in the second line,[747] to be male, perhaps even Eliot himself. Indeed, we might support such a reading with the fifth stanza:

> I shall not want Society in Heaven,
> Lucretia Borgia shall be my Bride;
> Her anecdotes will be more amusing
> Than Pipit's experience could provide.[748]

Lucretia Borgia was a rich, powerful duchess in sixteenth century Italy, wedded three times and had a reputation for 'excess'.[749] Eliot appears to have a taste for these sorts of women – from Vivien to the 'girl on the omnibus' – or at least he presents the image that he does, perhaps as an attempt to shake off his polite Unitarian sensibility. Borgia's 'anecdotes' are more 'amusing' to the speaker than Pipit's 'experience'[750] – a thinly-veiled sexual innuendo draped in sarcasm aimed at the much-maligned politeness of Pipit's middle-class civilisation. The sarcasm is also directed towards the pious: the speaker renounces worldly pleasures, prepared to be joined in marital union in Heaven, only for this union to ironically to be a symbol of worldly lust. The speaker, like the young man in 'Portrait', is stuck in this stale bourgeois world, longing either for some genuine spiritual life or else to just simply get out of its oppressive female clutches. Unfortunately, he dropped in this domestic boiling hell, of which the titular 'Cooking Egg' is a symbol.

'A Cooking Egg' similarly has elements of social satire, particularly against plutocrats. This is best described by Matthew Hollis in *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem*, who is worth quoting in full:

---

744 Eliot, 'A Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, lines. 5, 7.
745 *Ibid*., 'Aunt Helen', in *Poems I*, p. 56, line. 10.
746 *Ibid*., line. 9.
747 *Ibid*., 'A Cooking Egg', p. 75, line. 2.
748 Eliot, 'A Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, p. 75, lines. 17-20.
749 Ricks and McCue, *Poems I*, p. 726.
750 Eliot, 'A Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, p. 75, line. 19.

> Eliot had read the poem ['A Cooking Egg'] at a literary soirée in London in December 1917 […] It was when Eliot reached these lines ['I shall not want Capital in Heaven… / In a five per cent. Exchequer Bond'], according to Richard Aldington who was present that evening, that 'there was a rumpus in the audience, and Lady Mond sailed indignantly out of the room'. Alfred Mond was the Liberal MP for Swansea West, but he was also an industrialist, whose chemicals company Brunner Mond made munitions during the war. […/] But it was his position in Lloyd George's wartime government as First Commissioner for Works and Public Buildings that brought him to the attention of artists […] Lewis and Pound had identified his wife as a target of 'Blasting' ('MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND?), while Eliot's contrast of the financier with the Elizabethan national hero Sir Philip Sidney – a contrast between 'Capital' and 'Honour' – has been read as a resentment that the Monds were not only industrialists, but Jewish.[751]

This is one of the clearest instances of Eliot's satirical persona. Indeed, to read these lines in front of the targets themselves, in a social setting, is virtually an act of stand-up comedy. This context is lost if one reads just the poems themselves. As with the Bolo verses, however, the satire becomes apparent once one recognises that they contained knowing nods and winks, were sometimes written and performed for a specific audience, and harboured specific ideological and political elements.

Poems 1920 was a turning point in Eliot's satirical impulse where his early natural impulses against bourgeois sterility became united with his higher spiritual intuitions. There are many examples of this development, but 'A Cooking Egg' is an especially pertinent one. After Pipit is introduced, there follows a perspective shift to the first person, with several stanzas that follow the same form of 'I shall not want' some worldly sin 'in Heaven'. These renunciations of sins are ironically tinged with the equally strong, ironically worldly desires to escape Pipit's stale society:

> I shall not want Pipit in Heaven:
> Madame Blavatsky will instruct me
> In the Seven Sacred Trances;
> Piccarda de Donati will conduct me.[752]

---

751 Hollis, pp. 81-2.
752 Eliot, 'Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, p. 76, lines 21-4.

Earlier in the poem there are renunciations of worldly desires – 'Honour',[753] 'Capital',[754] and 'Society'[755] – and yet here there is a renunciation of Pipit herself, a seemingly innocent woman (perhaps even the wife or a good friend of the speaker, it is implied in the first and final stanzas). Earlier in the poem, Pipit was rejected for her 'experience', meaning either her age or her sexual appetites, but here she is rejected in favour of the mystic 'Madame Blavatsky'. The speaker desires a mystical experience. This is supported by the next line, in which he desires to be 'conduct[ed]' by 'Piccarda de Donati',[756] a nun Dante meets in Paradise in the *Divine Comedy*, who was forced to marry a Florentine man by her brother, hence, due to her abandonment of a chaste life, her comparatively low placement in the spheres of Heaven; she is content with her placement, however, since blessed souls long only for what they have, in agreement with God's will.[757] By wanting to be 'conduct[ed]' by her, the reader is invited to suppose that the speaker, too, would be content with a comparatively meagre status in Heaven, if only he were to escape his bourgeois hell. This is not the orthodox Christianity that Eliot would eventually embrace, but it is still a spiritual impulse filtered through a satiric mode. There is something funny about the speaker's entrapment, both pathetic and provincial, and yet there is also a melancholy, a sense of loss at the childish love he and Pipit shared.[758] The 'eagles and the trumpets' of grand Roman Empire are mock-heroically 'Buried beneath […] buttered scones and crumpets / Weeping, weeping multitudes' in 'a hundred' commercial teashops.[759] Are we supposed to laugh at the speaker's pathetic existence, or lament how typical it is? Is modern domestic hollowness funny, or

753 Eliot, 'Cooking Egg', in *Poems I*, p. 76, p. 75, line. 9.
754 *Ibid*., line. 13.
755 *Ibid*., line. 17.
756 *Ibid*., lines. 21-4.
757 Ricks and McCue, *Poems I*, p. 728.
758 This is implied by lines, 'But where is the penny world I bought / To eat with Pipit behind the screen?' See: Eliot, 'Cooking Egg', p. 76, lines. 25-6.
759 *Ibid*., lines. 30-33.

desperate? And does the poem call on religion as the antidote, or would pious renunciation of the world be equally dull, hypocritical, and pathetic?

These spiritual questions come to a brutal head in 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', Eliot's most direct satire of religious intellectualism from this period. Like the Oxford poems, Eliot invites his reader to consider the poem a self-parody, given his name in the title. It is only much later that critics would conclude that the titular 'Mr. Eliot' to be not T. S. himself, but his cousin Frederick May Eliot, a Unitarian minister.[760] Eliot, of course, would deny these associations,[761] and indeed there does not seem to be any specific references to Unitarianism in the poem. There is in the poem, however, similar dismissive anti-religious attitudes to those seen in *March Hare* and *Prufrock*. 'In the beginning was the Word',[762] the poet states – and yet the technique of this poem is to bemuse the reader with oddments and obscurities: 'Polyphiloprogenitive',[763] 'Superfetation',[764] 'a gesso ground',[765] 'piaculative',[766] 'staminate and pistillate',[767] and so on. The reader is not supposed to understand these words, nor does the use of a dictionary help to decipher some hidden solution to the poem. The satire is in the tone, which is deliberately baffling and odd; it is meant to resemble the speech of these 'masters of the subtle schools',[768] who for all their intellect and 'devo[tion]', 'Burn invisible and dim.'[769] These men are ironically contrasted to Sweeney, who makes a sudden appearance in the ultimate stanza, as he 'shifts from ham to ham / Stirring the water in his bath.'[770] It is not the 'sapient sutlers of the Lord' who reach

760 Ricks and McCue, *Poems II*, p. 534.
761 *Ibid*.
762 Eliot, 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', in *Poems I*, p. 90, line. 5.
763 *Ibid*., line. 1.
764 *Ibid*., line. 6.
765 *Ibid*., line. 10.
766 *Ibid*., line. 20.
767 *Ibid*., line. 27.
768 *Ibid*., line. 31.
769 *Ibid*., line. 24.
770 *Ibid*., lines. 29-30.

'the memory of Jesus Christ', but the holy fool Sweeney, whose bath time antics suggests the ritual of baptism, Moses's parting of the Red Sea, and perhaps even Christ walking on water.

In 'The Hippopotamus', this religious satire reappears, this time suggesting in the epigraph that 'this epistle', which mocks the shaky claims of the 'True Church', should be 'read also in the church of the Laodiceans',[771] which is to say, towards agnostics or unenthusiastic believers. The poem, coloured by this epigraph, takes the form of ironic propaganda. Virtually all the stanzas take the same form: the hippopotamus is 'weak and frail',[772] whereas the 'True Chruch' is everlasting and immortal. Of all the quatrain poems in *Poems 1920*, this is the simplest in terms of its structure and rhyme scheme; there are few ambiguities, compared to 'Sweeney Erect' or 'Burbank'. However, the lack of ambiguity is part of the satiric tone. The almost childish form drenches every stanza in sarcasm. Take this one:

> The hippopotamus's day
> Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;
> God works in a mysterious way—
> The Church can sleep and feed at once.[773]

As with the named caricatures in 'Gerontion', these are matter-of-fact, neutral statements, only 'incidentally' satire because they are filled with the reader's prejudices and associations. We are invited to take 'God works in a mysterious way' as a mockery of Christian clichés, a dismissive answer towards the problem of evil, an answer that here is made to seem dishonest or contradictory. Eliot plays on these prejudices of the reader to great satirical effect. He deliberately never specifies which is the 'True Church', a title claimed by all apostolic churches. Catholic readers might take this poem to be a satire of Protestant's disregard for Christian tradition; Protestants might likewise take it as a satire on the Catholic Church's

771 Eliot, 'The Hippopotamus', p. 83, epigraph.
772 *Ibid*., line. 5.
773 *Ibid*., pp. 83-4, lines. 21-4.

false appeal to tradition to legitimise their misapplication of scripture. It is reminiscent of the mockery of theological debates in the Bolo letters. It is Jonsonian, however, in its deliberate abstraction or flattening of these debates, which shifts the content of the satire depending on the reader's own point of view.

'Sweeney Erect' is yet another poem whose satire works in this manner of invoking prejudice and deliberately obscuring the narrative. The poem opens in a kind of Classical dream: 'Paint me in a cavernous waste shore / Cast in the unstilled Cyclades',[774] thinks the speaker. Again in another stanza,

> Display me Aeolus above
> Reviewing the insurgent gales
> Which tangle Ariadne's hair.'[775]

It is a scene like that in 'Burbank', a Quixotic merging of legend with reality. Sweeney is reminiscent of the 'Jew […] underneath the lot',[776] the earthly brute that dispels this fantasy. Like Lewis's dehumanised caricatures, Sweeney is described in animalistic terms; not as a whole person, but as isolated movements and shapes: 'Gesture of orang-outang / Rises from the sheets in steam',[777] and again in the following stanza,

> This withered root of knots of hair
> Slitted below and gashed with eyes
> This oval O cropped out with teeth:
> The sickle motion from the thighs[.][778]

Sweeney is not a man, but a strange mass of 'hair', violently 'gashed with eyes', mouth a basic 'oval O' shape, his legs mere 'motion' without form. This dehumanisation performs a mockery of Emerson, whose faith in the individual is shown to be naïve:

> (The lengthened shadow of a man
> Is history, said Emerson
> Who had not seen the silhouette

774 Eliot, 'Sweeney Erect', p. 72, lines. 1-2.
775 *Ibid*., lines. 5-7.
776 *Ibid*., 'Burbank', p. 70, line. 23.
777 *Ibid*., 'Sweeney Erect', p. 72, lines. 11-2.
778 *Ibid*., p. 72, lines. 13-6.

Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)[779]

'[A]ll history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons', said Emerson in *Self-Reliance*;[780] but Emerson did not consider Sweeney, Eliot says – the ordinary man who has far more influence over history than 'flabby […] liberals'[781] would like to admit. Mockery of Emerson appeared in *March Hare*, and here it reappears in similar form, but with updated rhetoric from Lewis. The Emersonian vision of a 'self-reliant' individual is in total contrast to the average modern person (who is in some respect a result of American individualism), who is merely a cog in the machine, an automaton, worthy of mockery by the 'more civilised' cave-man. Eliot's anti-liberal sentiments merge with his new 'externals'[782] technique; rather than a mere Jamesian probing of the ironies and hypocrisies of this culture, Eliot simplifies and abstracts it, a deliberate straw-man that he can knock down.

In 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', there is a slight shift in attitude, away from the brutal caricature in 'Sweeney Erect' towards, if not a sympathy per se, then a shared defiance towards the world that made these 'hollow men'. The caricature of Sweeney is a familiar animalistic one,

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.[783]

But Sweeney, here the epitome of animalistic joy, is surrounded by dark silhouettes and sinister shadows, who all – or so the fractured narrative suggests – desire to do him harm. The shadows, like many of the poems from *Poems 1920*, are described as doing fairly mundane things, but here, as opposed to a sarcastic or satirical overtone, Eliot's method

779 Eliot, Sweeney Erect', p. 73, lines. 25-8.
780 Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 717.
781 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.
782 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
783 Eliot, 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', in *Poems I*, p. 93, lines. 1-4.

creates one of foreboding: 'The person in the Spanish cape / Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees',[784] 'The silent man in mocha brown / Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes'.[785] 'What are these people plotting?', we are invited to think. The only one of these figures who is named is 'Rachel *née* Rabinovitch', who menacingly 'Tears at the grapes with murderous paws';[786] and indeed, this poem is sometimes taken as a scene before a murder, especially considering the allusion to Agamemnon, whose murder is described in the final stanza.[787] Rabinovitch and

> the lady in the cape
> Are suspect, thought to be in league;
> Therefore the man with heavy eyes
> Declines the gambit, shows fatigue[.][788]

This is a world of intrigue and potential for violence, reinforced by its Classical allusions; indeed, the volume is consistently cynical of a supposedly moral Classical past, as we have seen. Spender describes this cynicism aptly, saying of this poem that it

> belongs to the opaque primitive Greek world of murder and vengeance, not the luminous Virgilian one of Roman civilization. It is the Greece of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* – eyes cut open onto frightful darkness. If there is common ground, it is perhaps of horror and violence – indeed, of inhumanity.[789]

This is the world Sweeney inhabits, and this complicates the image of him. He is not a mere brute or the crux of the joke, but also a sympathetic figure, unjustly conspired against, having an ironic similarity not just with Christ's mastery of water but also, in a sense, His martyrdom.

The truth of this violent, baffling world – against the comforting narrative of 'progress' that liberalism and modernity champions – is explored in 'Whispers of

---

784 Eliot, 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', in *Poems I*, p. 93, lines. 11-2.
785 *Ibid*., lines. 17-8.
786 *Ibid*., p. 94, lines. 23-4.
787 *Ibid*., lines. 37-40.
788 *Ibid*., lines. 25-9.
789 Spender, pp. 54-5.

Immortality'. The poem blesses, at least on the surface, the Elizabethans, particularly 'Webster', who 'was much possessed by death, / And saw the skull beneath the skin',[790] as well as John Donne:

> Donne, I suppose, was such another
> Who found no substitute for sense,
> To seize and clutch and penetrate;
> Expert beyond experience[.][791]

These poets were attuned to a sense of death and transcendence lacking from the modern age. The archetypal modern 'ordinary man' is a (familiarly) feminine caricature, 'Grishkin'. The above stanza on Donne is satirically contrasted with the limp, mere statement, 'Grishkin is nice'.[792] This is a frankly misogynistic portrayal: Grishkin is a superficial woman, not intellectual, perhaps a prostitute: 'Uncorseted, her friendly bust / Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.'[793] She resembles Pope's socialite women, which would be the model for Fresca in *The Waste Land*. Grishkin, quite unlike Sweeney, is not animalistic, but contrary to nature – a product of a socialised, bourgeois order. She is contrasted twice, for instance, with a savage jaguar:

> The couched Brazilian jaguar
> Compels the scampering marmoset
> With subtle affluence of cat;
> Grishkin has a maisonette.[794]

The jaguar's vagrant hunter existence is sardonically contrasted to the stale, city-dwelling habitat of Grishkin. Again in another stanza, she is satirically compared to the jaguar:

> The sleek Brazilian jaguar
> Does not in its arboreal gloom
> Distil so rank a feline smell
> As Grishkin in a drawing-room.[795]

---

790 Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality', in *Poems I*, p. 88, lines. 1-2.
791 *Ibid*., lines. 9-12.
792 *Ibid*., line. 17.
793 *Ibid*., lines. 19-20.
794 *Ibid*., pp. 88-9, lines. 21-4.
795 *Ibid*., lines. 25-8.

The 'arboreal' beast is not so terrifying as Grishkin's perfume, a symbol of feminine bourgeois civility. Quite apart from Webster and Donne, whose sense for death enriched their lives and art, Grishkin is a product of a scientific, materialistic age, which represses the primacy of mortality – 'our lot crawls beneath dry ribs / To keep our metaphysics warm.'[796] This image of 'dry[ness]' will appear again in *The Waste Land* as a symbol of the spiritual water sucked from the world by its complacent inhabitants;[797] but this 'metaphysic', no matter how comforting, merely keeps us warm, like the 'winter' that opens 'The Burial of the Dead.[798]

From Grishkin to Sweeney

Poems 1920 was Eliot's departure from Jamesian irony towards Lewisian caricature. The figures in the *Poems* are typically disembodied limbs, shapes without form, movement without an actor. This technique, which is essentially that of dehumanisation, is reminiscent of Lewis, whose novel *Tarr* Eliot reviewed alongside the composition of the *Poems*. It is a technique that was also influenced by Ben Jonson, who Eliot considered an 'incidental'[799] satirist. Eliot's project of his *Poems* was, building upon these two key influences, to strip down his poetry to bare minimums, fragmenting their form and narrative, presenting only a 'surface'[800] that he can detach himself from. The satire of many of the *Poems*, as a result, is not like the more traditional satire of *March Hare*, with its clear moral undertones and obvious (and often unfair) targets. Rather, Eliot intended to remain detached, provoking and enticing the reader to form their own 'imperfect'[801] system of interpretation.

796 Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality', in *Poems I*, p. 89, lines. 31-2.
797 *Ibid*., *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 78.
798 *Ibid*., line. 59.
799 *Ibid*., 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose I*, p. 153.
800 *Ibid*., p. 150.
801 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 510.

Eliot's notion of the systems of interpretation is best exemplified by the 'History' passage from 'Gerontion', in which Eliot deliberately weaves a baffling and muddled metaphor meant to entice the reader into conflating the 'old man' with himself.[802] He does this often in *Poems*, most notably 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', which, like the Oxford poems, plays on the familial connections to force the reader into projecting the moral against Unitarianism. The topic of Eliot's disdain, however, was no longer so provincial. As seen in 'The Hippopotamus', Eliot's satire is deliberately open-ended, inviting both Protestant and Catholic readers to fill the empty vessel with their own prejudices. All of this is meant to show the folly of the individual, so important to liberal worldviews but, to Eliot, incapable of reaching the 'systemic' knowledge needed to reach the genuine 'absolute'.[803] In a sense, the reader of *Poems 1920* is forced to confront their 'confounded' sensibilities; they are pushed into this insight but the 'cave-man' Eliot, the satirist who stands outside of society and shocks his readers into questioning their 'systems' of knowledge.

Eliot's caricature technique would lead him to find in the modern world a repression of death and nature, best exemplified by Grishkin, whose feminine comforts are really an escape from reality into a comforting (and 'imperfect' narrative of) Classical civility. Indeed, this is a running theme of *Poems 1920*: an almost Nietzschean reintegration of the real horror that underpins Classical antiquity, the model for democracy and rational progress. It is a theme that would lead Eliot towards scholarship like that of Francis Cornford, who would claim to have discovered that the common root of Ancient Greek Comedy and Tragedy lay in primitive, and often violent, fertility rituals. Cornford's theories would influence Eliot's later verse play, *Sweeney Agonistes*, where the *Poems 1920* caricature of Sweeney reappears.

802 Eliot, 'Gerontion', in *Poems I*, p. 65, line. 1.
803 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 505.

Sweeney and the fear of death

Cornford's 1914 study of Greek drama, *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, has been identified by scholars,[804] as well as by Eliot himself,[805] as an influence on Eliot's fragmentary verse-play *Sweeney Agonistes*. Eliot's interest in anthropology during his Harvard studies has been similarly noted,[806] and it is likely that Eliot's interest in Cornford is an extension of this earlier vein. Joshua Richards says that 'one of the very first contributors he sought for *The Criterion* was Cornford',[807] whom Eliot asked to write something 'on some subject which would be of interest to readers of your *Origin of Attic Comedy*.'[808] Richards additionally notes that Eliot called the book 'fascinating' in his essay on 'Euripides and Professor Murray'.[809] The most compelling evidence for Cornford's influence on Eliot is the latter's letter to Hallie Flanagan, 'the director of a production of *Sweeney* at Vassar College'; Eliot recommended that Flanagan read Cornford's book in order to better understand the 'Fragment of an Agon'.[810] The 'critical consensus', according to Richards, it that this correspondence with Flanagan is evidence that 'the structure of *Sweeney Agonistes* is based on Cornford's book.'[811] Of course, 'consensus' alone is not reason enough to believe this idea, but – as will be shown later through a comparative analysis of the play and Cornford's thesis – the Cornford influence can be reasonably demonstrated using textual evidence from the play.

---

804 See, for instance: Joshua Richards. 'Aristophanic Structures in Sweeney Agonistes, The Hollow Men, and Murder in the Cathedral', in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual*, 157-176 [Online] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/t-s-eliot-studies-annual/aristophanic-structures-in-sweeney-agonistes-the-hollow-men-and-murder-in-the-cathedral/2EE6169917481C72708E01B4EF3EE7C1> [Accessed 02-03-2020]; Smith, pp. 42-5.

805 Eliot, quoted in Richards, 159-60.

806 See, for instance: Chinitz, 'Cultural Divide', 238; Crawford, *Savage and the City*, p. 31; Smith, pp. 41-2.

807 Richards, 159.

808 Eliot, quoted in Richards, 159.

809 *Ibid*.

810 *Ibid*., 159-60.

811 Richards, 159-60.

Cornford's thesis is essentially this: the plays of Aristophanes, and by extension Attic Comedy in general, follow a plot formula that 'preserves the stereotypes action of a ritual or folk drama'.[812] In other words, the narrative of 'Old Comedy' is a fleshing out or expansion of what was initially a fertility ritual. Cornford summarises his theory in the conclusion to the book:

> The hypothesis we have been following throughout, has been based on the observation that, as a matter of fact, underlying the plots of a whole series of comedies on very diverse themes, we can distinctly make out the framework of a regular series of incidents. The hypothesis is that these form the moments in a ritual procedure.[813]

Cornford was following the theories of Gilbert Murray, who postulated that Greek drama was similarly built around the narrative framework of ancient fertility rituals; Cornford says explicitly that 'Athenian Comedy arose out of a ritual drama essentially the same in type as that from which Professor [Gilbert] Murray derives Athenian Tragedy.'[814] It was the consensus of these anthropologists, then, that Comedy and Tragedy shared their beginnings in this ancient ritual form.

It will be useful to briefly summarise this ritual-inspired narrative framework. The opening half of an Attic Comedy play has three parts: first, an expository *Prologue*; second, the *Parados*, in which the chorus enters and performs their initial song; and lastly, the *Agon*, which is a sort of trial or debate between two opposing principles, embodied in the Agonist and the Antagonist. The *Agon* only has a few characters: the Agonist and Antagonist, the Chorus, and a Buffoon, who is a friend of the Agonist. The Chorus opens the *Agon*, and encourages the two adversaries to argue; the leader of the Chorus first encourages the Antagonist (who always loses), and then the other half of the Chorus encourages the Agonist. The leader of the Chorus announces the winner after both adversaries have made their case.

---

812 Francis Macdonald Cornford, quoted in Richards, 160.
813 *Ibid.*, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 93.
814 *Ibid*., p. 190.

Cornford says that the '*Agon* is the beginning of the sacrifice in its primitive dramatic form – the conflict between the good and evil principles, Summer and Winter, Life and Death'.[815] In other words, the *Agon*, this formalised prolongation of the action, is the section of the play that most resembles its original ritual structure.

After this *Agon* comes the *Parabasis*, a break in the action in which the characters exit the stage and leave the Chorus alone to address the audience. Cornford says that the *Parabasis*

> is not the drama. It merely interrupts the actions of the play; the actors leave the stage while it is performed; its contents are irrelevant and in no way help out the course of the action.[816]

Nonetheless, despite its irrelevancy for the action, the *Parabasis* is an odd idiosyncrasy of Old Attic Comedy that requires explanation, and in Cornford's opinion can only be explained by linking it to the ritual structure. The *Parabasis* 'closely resembles the Phallic Songs we have studied'[817] in that, in order to aid fertility of the land, it is a ritual that 'curses' negative spirits and 'blesses' good spirits. Essentially, it symbolises the beginnings of rebirth and stability after the chaotic argument in the *Agon.* After the *Parabasis*, the good spirit, despite winning the argument, is slain, cooked, and eaten, and then brought back to life. In the *Kômos*, the resurrected spirit is then married to the character representing the Mother Goddess, which Cornford says is the 'necessary consummation of the Phallic ritual, which, when it takes a dramatic form, simulates the union of Heaven and Earth for the renewal of all life in Spring.'[818] The play ends with the departure of the Chorus in a procession called an *Exodus*.

---

815 Cornford, pp. 103-4.
816 *Ibid*., p. 47.
817 *Ibid*., p. 45.
818 *Ibid*., pp. 103-4.

As we can see, the structure of Aristophanic Comedy is, by modern standards, rather unusual, a total departure from more modern forms of comedy where the conflict is continuous throughout the plot and is resolved at the end rather than the mid-point. Quite why Eliot thought it would be an engaging form for modern audiences is not clear. It does, of course, have a certain mystical or archetypal resonance, capable of mythologizing otherwise mundane events on politics or domestic matters into cosmological debates between Life and Death, Summer and Winter, and so forth. If there was to be any appeal for modern audiences, it would be in this respect – just as Eliot famously praised Joyce's *Ulysses* for mythologizing a mundane June day in Dublin.[819] Interestingly, Cornford posits that the argument between the Agonist and Antagonist in the *Agon* shares the form not just with ancient fertility rituals, but also with the real life rise and fall of Kings and countries:

> The germs of Tragedy and Comedy in the original ritual […] [It] is generally a story of Pride and Punishment. Each Year arrives, waxes great, commits the sin of Hubris, and then is slain. The death is deserved; but the slaying is a sin; hence comes the next Year as Avenger […] Our supposed ritual, accordingly, as a representation of the cycle of seasonal life, of the annual conflict of Summer and Winter, provides the essential structure of the tragic plot […] It suggests a tragic analogy between the succession of life and death in Nature and the rise and fall of the great ones among mankind. The kings of the earth whose dizzy exaltation upsets their moral balance are, like those old divine kings of fertility, cut off lest their waning strength should bring famine upon their people.[820]

When reading this passage, *The Waste Land* comes immediately to mind – particularly the fall of spiritual civilisation symbolised by the sterile Fisher King and his equally barren land. Perhaps this is the motivation behind Eliot's fascination with Cornford: after the publication of *The Waste Land*, he wanted to recapture those themes in dramatic form for a popular audience. As he said in the 'Marie Lloyd' essay, drama was the best means of bringing poetry to an alienated audience.[821]

---

819 Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth: A review of Ulysses, by James Joyce', in *Prose II*, pp. 476-9.
820 Cornford, pp. 207-8.
821 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, pp. 418-20.

Understanding Cornford's theory and the plot structure of Aristophanic comedy can, in principle, aid an understanding of Eliot's 'Fragment of an *Agon*' in terms of how it might fit into the whole, completed play. Such a reading would have to assume that Eliot was following this established plot structure fairly rigidly. It is difficult to be certain of this, since only the *Prologue* and the *Agon* were published. Richards is probably right that 'Cornford's plot-formula is not sufficiently rigid to extrapolate the whole from these remaining parts.'[822] 'Its publication in the form of "fragments" suggested that a complete dramatic work would be forthcoming,' Carol Smith says – but 'such a work never appeared.'[823] Eliot probably had in mind some of his own modifications of the formula, although precisely what these may have been can only be speculated. However, Cornford's book can help to establish some otherwise not-immediately-obvious facts. First, the *Agon* is only part of the whole play, the mid-point in which the principles of Good and Evil debate each other in a formalised fashion; the Antagonist speaks first, and then the Agonist. This means, Richards says, that 'unless what remains is only the second half of the *Agon* (this would be the rebuttal), Doris is the protagonist',[824] not Sweeney, since she speaks after him. One might naturally expect to be the title character to be the protagonist; however, if Eliot really was following Cornford's formula, and the fragment starts at the beginning, then in fact Doris would be the protagonist. Indeed, it would make sense for Doris to be the Agonist, considering the 'established tradition of female protagonists in Aristophanes'.[825]

If in *Poems 1920* Grishkin was a model of a femininity terrified by and eager to suppress death, then Doris is this feminine archetype forced to confront her anxieties. Doris is the titular agonist, and Sweeney offers her his rebuttal. If Eliot intended to follow Cornford's structure rigidly, then this would mean that Doris's spirit, even after winning the argument,

822 Richards, 161.
823 Smith, p. 32.
824 Richards, 161.
825 *Ibid*., 162.

would be ritually cooked, eaten, and brought back to life, before being married to the Mother Goddess. These events are all foreshadowed in the fragment, from Doris's dreams of 'a wedding' proceeded by her death,[826] to Sweeney's jocular threat to cook her into a stew.[827] By now having formally joined the Anglican Church, it is perhaps no surprise that Eliot seemed to have planned a more overtly Christian flavouring of Cornford's structure, best exemplified by the epigraph from St. John of the Cross:

> Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created beings.[828]

Even from the fragment, it becomes clear that here Eliot is foreshadowing Doris's character development: from her love of divination and frivolous desires she must turn, and literally unite with a goddess to renew the seasons. That is to say, although she starts out as one of Eliot's typical feminine caricatures – vain, provincial, even stupid – she has a spiritual potential that Eliot's satirical targets do not have.

In Eliot's Prologue, we are introduced to Doris and her friend Dusty. One of Doris's key traits is that she is neurotic, eager to maintain civility but still possessing untrustworthiness even towards her ostensible friends, namely Pereira:

> DORIS: He's no gentleman, Pereira:
> You can't trust him!
> […]
> DUSTY: And *if* you can't trust him—
> Then you never know what he's going to do.[829]

Here Dusty reinforces Doris's attitude, their musical speech mixing their rhythms together as if they are not actually separate people at all. Often there are not even full-stops to delineate

826 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems 1*, p. 166, lines. 70-6.
827 *Ibid*., 'Fragment of an Agon', p. 172, line. 10.
828 *Ibid*., p. 163, epigraph.
829 *Ibid*., 'Fragment of a Prologue', p. 164, lines 8-9 and 10-11.

their speech. This is very effective in showing the fawning, gossiping speech of two friends,[830] as in this instance, where they immediately turn their conversation to 'Sam':

DUSTY: Now Sam's a gentleman through and through.
DORIS: I like Sam
DUSTY *I* like Sam
Yes and Sam's a nice boy too.
He's a funny fellow
DORIS: He is a funny fellow
He's like a fellow once I knew.
He could make you laugh.
Sam can make you laugh.
Sam's all right
DORIS: But Pereira won't do.
We can't have Pereira.[831]

Their speech follows on from each other in what would be, when performed, a quick, jazz-like rhythm. It is a musical representation of the 'jangling',[832] hollow, 'chattering age'.[833]

There is a similar style across the whole fragment, where ostensibly separate characters are merged together into one voice, sometimes choric. It reinforces the mythological aspect of the play; the characters are vessels for philosophical arguments, not three-dimensional characters. This mythical enchantment affects all the world; even the telephone ringing is presented as a character speaking, rather than stage directions:

TELEPHONE: Ting a ling ling
Ting a ling ling[834]

Doris's existence in this world is not of wonder, though, but of terror. Regarding the phone, she tells Dusty, 'Well can't you stop that horrible noise?'[835] At this moment in the play, her neuroticism is played for laughs. She gets Dusty to answer the phone call from Pereira, and to lie to him that she is unavailable to talk due to her 'terrible chill'.[836] This is her character at

830 Perhaps two women: it is not clear if Dusty is female.
831 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems I*, p. 164, lines 12-9.
832 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II', in *Blast*, p. 33.
833 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 332.
834 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems I*, p. 164, lines 18-9 and 23-4.
835 *Ibid*., line 26.
836 *Ibid*., line 34.

the start of the play (presuming this part of the Prologue is near the beginning): she is terrified of responsibility, but eager to keep up appearances; she and Dusty are gossipers, bouncing off of each other; her impulse to lie (and to get her friend to do it for her) is almost child-like in its petty cowardliness. It is a familiar image of femininity seen in Eliot's earlier poetry.

Doris's pass-times are suitably foppish. She considers herself a savant of the tarot-reading fad. Tarots, Eliot's favoured symbol of debased spirituality, appears in *The Waste Land*.[837] Tarot reading, for Eliot, was a kind of pseudo-spirituality that was inward-looking, lacking discipline and subjection to an institutional tradition, and thereby prone to individualistic speculations of the inner voice. Doris's fear of the world is channelled through these tarot cards, since, in their openness to interpretation, they can convey whatever the user wants them to convey. Dusty tends to push back on her interpretations, as in this passage:

DORIS: Oh guess what the first is
DUSTY: First is. What is?
DORIS: The King of Clubs
DUSTY: That's Pereira
DORIS: It might be Sweeney
DUSTY: It's Pereira
DORIS: It might *just* as well be Sweeney[838]

Why does Dusty insist that the King of Clubs must be Pereira, and why does Doris just as confidently affirm that it must refer to Sweeney? This is not clear to the audience, even if it is clear to the characters. To the audience, it appears arbitrary – even silly. Perhaps there is some foreshadowing: King of Clubs could be a pun on Sweeney's later embodiment of a primitive, club-wielding savage.

Eliot knew that the card reading would appear arbitrary to the audience (even if he did have something particular in mind), and he used this to his advantage to get the audience to

837 Eliot, *The Waste Land Facsimile*, pp. 7-8, lines. 96-113.
838 *Ibid*., *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems I*, p. 165, lines 49-53.

dislike Doris, or at least to see her faults. After Doris and Dusty read the cards and make their idiosyncratic divinations, Doris presents a particular kind of arrogance, one that takes pride in the pseudo-knowledge of flippant, self-absorbed things:

> DORIS: You've got to *think* when you read the cards,
> It's not a thing that anyone can do.[839]
> […]
> You've got to know what you want to know.[840]

One is reminded of the women who talk of Michelangelo, or the ladies in the British Museum: Eliot always harboured disdain towards this kind of pride in pretentious displays of knowledge. Whereas in the *March Hare* poems this joke is motivated mostly by disdain, an anger at an ugly and narrow provincialism, in the post-conversion *Sweeney Agonistes* Eliot sees it under religious eyes. The above passage might be read in light of the epigraph from St. John of the Cross. Doris's love of her (real or fake) powers of divination are not just something to be mocked, but something to be transcended. The prologue is important in setting up her character faults, because those are the faults that she must confront in the eventual *Agon* passage, and transcend in the *Parabasis*; and it is quite deliberate that her faults are modern fads like tarot-reading, as for Eliot these are the spiritual problems that must be transcended if the modern world is to be revitalised and reborn.

The sad irony behind Doris's faults is that her spiritual intuitions are not totally misplaced, but do have some truth to them. Eliot is not an atheist who laughs at ostensible ignorance or superstitions; he in fact pines for the proper place for the spiritual, and despairs at the modern world that perverts it towards the self instead of towards the 'complete system'. Much like Madame Sosostris in *The Waste Land*, Doris's tarot card prophecies bear some fleeting, if otherwise vague, semblance to the plot. One of the cards she and Dusty draw is the

839 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems I*, p. 165, lines 65-6.
840 *Ibid*., line 89.

two of spades, which, like the king of clubs, has some kind of resonance with the pair which the audience can grasp from the context but probably would not have understood fully:

DUSTY: The *two of spades*!
THAT'S THE COFFIN!!
DORIS: THAT'S THE COFFIN?
Oh good heavens what'll I do?
Just before a party too!
DUSTY: Well it needn't be yours, it may mean a friend.
DORIS: No it's mine. I'm sure it's mine.
I dreamt of weddings all last night.[841]

The two of spades, in tarot, means that you will be cheated on or lied to – not that your death is imminent, as Dusty and Doris appear to believe here. It is not clear why they believe that it means death, but Doris certainly believes it. Indeed, it is Dusty, supposedly the one of the pair most lacking in tarot knowledge, that first suggests the interpretation. The double exclamation mark suggests a tone of humorous exaggerated surprise, and Doris' immediate terrified question – 'THAT'S THE COFFIN?' – implies that she was unaware of this interpretation. This is a comedic passage: 'Just before a party too!' is her immediate, flippant concern, again demonstrating her socialite obsessions. However, she is not totally ignorant: her strange remark, 'I dreamt of weddings last night', seeming so arbitrary to an audience uninitiated with tarot, in fact clearly invokes the Aristophanic structure of the play, in which the 'good spirit' is wedded to the Mother Goddess after being ritually killed and eaten. Trite she may be, Doris does in fact possess a keen prophetic intuition somewhere beneath her 'civilised' surface.

In the *Agon*, of which again we only possess a fragment, Doris's principles are brought into conflict with the antagonist, Sweeney, who acts out the part of an uncivilised savage. This familiar Eliotian theme appears again here: the vitalism of the 'savage' is squashed and 'civilised' by arrogant modernity. The Bolovian theme of cooking – in the

841 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of a Prologue', in *Poems 1*, p. 166, lines 70-6.

Bolos, a symbol of the 'civilising' process – is in *Sweeney* transformed into the Aristophanic consumption ritual. This is foreshadowed in Sweeney and Doris's playful exchange:

DORIS: You'll carry me off? To a cannibal isle?
SWEENEY: I'll be the cannibal.
DORIS: I'll be the missionary.
I'll convert you!
SWEENEY: I'll convert you!
Into a stew.
A nice little, white little, missionary stew.[842]

'I'll convert you! / Into a stew' is the brilliant, angry joke-response of the primitivist bored with modernity. Sweeney's (or his savage persona's) vision of life almost resembles Eliot's 'Marie Lloyd' in its Luddism:

SWEENEY: Well that's life on crocodile isle.
There's no telephones
There's no gramophones
There's no motorcars
No two-seaters, no six-seaters,
No Citroën, no Rolls-Royce.
Nothing to eat but the fruit as it grows.
Nothing to see but the palmtrees one way
And the sea the other way,
Nothing to hear but the sound of the surf.[843]

There is a desire here to escape the modern world that is designed to appeal to Doris – recall her fear of 'telephones' – but it is also one that the worldly Doris surely could not accept, and indeed does not accept, because it lacks the social aspect, the gossip: 'Nothing to hear but the sound of the surf.'

Although reminiscent of Eliot's *March Hare* themes this passage may be, for the post-conversion Eliot these primitive longings take on a new form. Primitivism is again a 'love of created beings' that prevents transcendence. This is best demonstrated by a statement made later by Sweeney:

SWEENEY: Nothing at all but three things

842 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of an Agon', in *Poems I*, p. 172, lines 7-11.
843 *Ibid*., lines 17-26.

DORIS: What things?
SWEENEY: Birth, and copulation, and death.
[…]
DORIS: I'd be bored.
[…]
SWEENEY: That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks.[844]

'Birth, and copulation, and death' – the life of the primitive is here no longer noble, no longer free from the entrapments of modernity, but trapped in the world and the body. 'Birth, copulation, and death' is a pagan vision, yes – lacking the Christ that frees his followers from death – but it is also a Darwinian vision, a post-Christian vision. This is the other end of Lewis's 'cave man': vitalist he may be, he nonetheless struggles with transcendence. So Doris's sensitivity to 'boredom' is in fact a resistance to this kind of obsequiousness – not, as it is in 'Marie Lloyd', a sign of decadence.

DORIS: That's not life, that's no life.
Why I'd just as soon be dead.
SWEENEY: That's what life is. Just is
DORIS: What is?
What's that life is?
SWEENEY: Life is death.[845]

'I'd just as soon be dead' than sacrifice all the worldly things that make life worth living, Doris says; but you are already dying, and will soon be dead, Sweeney reminds her. It is a compelling argument against the soul distracted by the jangling 'created beings' of modern life. It is also an argument that, for Eliot, is plainly wrong. For 'Life is death' is again a pagan defeatism, and a post-Christian Darwinism, that is defeated by 'the Absolute'. Life does not end in death in the ritual drama the characters are unwittingly participating in; in the Aristophanic structure, the 'good spirit', even though it defeats the 'bad spirit' in the *Parabasis*, is killed and eaten – and then reborn. Sweeney is useful in teaching Doris her faults – but his argument is ultimately not the correct one.

844 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of an Agon', in *Poems I*, p. 173, lines 26-8, 31, 35.
845 *Ibid*., p. 176, lines 90-93.

Sweeney's argument is ultimately shown to be false, or at least shown to bear bad fruit, later on when he (perhaps jokingly) shares his fantasy of murdering a woman:

SWEENEY: I knew a man once did a girl in
Any man might well do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime, do a girl in
[…]
This one didn't get pinched in the end
But that's another story too.[846]

He tells the story as if it was someone else, 'I knew a man once did a girl in', although it seems as if this is a cover for himself. Indeed, he appears to gloat that 'the man' didn't get caught and is still out there intending to murder again – which looks suspicious in light of his jocular threat to turn Doris into a stew only a few lines earlier. Of course, all of this makes Doris uncomfortable, especially considering it fulfils the prophecy of her own death (and the king of clubs' indication that it will be a friend that does it). However, even Sweeney recognises that this power fantasy, this frightful desire to assert dominance over another life, does not transcend death. He says of the murderer, again implicitly talking about himself, that,

SWEENEY: He didn't know if he was alive
and the girl was dead
He didn't know if the girl was alive
and he was dead
He didn't know if they were both alive
or both were dead
If he was alive then the milkman wasn't
and the rent collector wasn't
And if they were alive then he was dead
[…]
When you're alone like he was alone
You're either or neither
I tell you again it don't apply
Death or life or life or death
Death is life and life is death[847]

846 Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Fragment of an Agon', in *Poems I*, p. 172, pp. 176-7, lines 103-6, 117-8.
847 *Ibid*., p. 178, lines 134-7, 142-6.

If not for the chorus that supports him in his argument, these melancholic lines would end the fragment. It is hard to know what to make of these lines; like 'Gerontion', they turn in on themselves, resembling a half-collected mind grasping at something beyond its reach. In Sweeney's view, life is a consuming force: the individual does not matter in grand slabs of Darwinian time; they are cooked and eaten, their death transformed into the sustenance of life. Presuming Eliot's play follows the rough structure Cornford lays out, Sweeney's view is partially correct: the spirit is literally killed and consumed by the principle of life or nature. However, unlike Sweeney, Doris's fate is to transcend her mere life, throw away her 'love of created beings', and transform into the vessel by which the land is renewed. The spirit is first consumed, yes, but afterwards is wedded to Nature – a transcendence Sweeney's nihilism can never grasp. Quite unlike Grishkin, terrified of death, Doris's fate is to transcend death – if only she knew.

The Bolo poems as phallic rituals

One of the most striking facts about *Sweeney Agonistes* is that its composition coincides with the dispersion of some of the Bolo verses. 'In early 1922', Crawford says in *Eliot After The Waste Land*, Eliot

> had discussed Aristophanes with Pound, who had linked that ancient Greek dramatist to 'native negro phoque melodies of Dixee' in the context of raising 'the ball-encumbered phallus of man'.[848]

Admittedly, there is only one explicit example of Eliot's linking of the Bolos with the *Agon*, but it is a significant one, a letter to Pound in 1923:

> [H]ave mapt [sic] out Aristophanic comedy, but must devote study to phallic songs, also agons.[849]

848 Crawford, *Eliot After The Waste Land*, p. 19.
849 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.

Richards acknowledges this letter also, although he links it to 'The Hollow Men',[850] citing the fact that Eliot was composing that poem during the time he sent this letter. There may be some link between Attic Comedy and Cornford with 'The Hollow Men', but Richards admits that there is 'nothing resembling phallic songs'[851] in the poem, other than a tenuous link to Cornford's remarks on choruses.[852] But Richards ignores what appears immediately in the letter to Pound, a Bolo verse:

> King Bolo's big black basstart queen
> Was awfly bright & cheerful;
> Well fitted for a monarch's bride
> But she wasn't always keerful.
> Ah yes King Bolo's big black queen
> Was not above suspicion;
> We wish that such was not the case –
> But what's the use of wishin?[853]

In this first stanza we can see a slight development of the Bolovian form. There are more signs of a vernacular style, somewhat resembling Eliot's adoption of the 'hillbilly dialect' in his letters to Pound.[854] There is less overt vulgarity; instead, there are more puns, chiefly 'basstart', which Eliot, in familiar mock-academic fashion, says later in the letter is 'the feminine form of bassturd'[855] ('tart' being slang for a female prostitute).[856] Eliot even adds a refrain between stanzas:

> The dancers on the village green
> They breather light tales of Bolo's queen.[857]

This is Eliot's own development; there is nothing like it in the Columbus ballad. The crude humour does return in the final stanza, however:

---

850 Richards, 159-60.
851 *Ibid*., 165.
852 *Ibid*., 165-9
853 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.
854 Jeffrey Meyers. 'Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot: A Friendship', in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 56.3 (1980) 455 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26436044> [Accessed 08-07-2019].
855 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.
856 'Tart, n., 2.b' in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, September 2022) [Online] <www.oed.com/view/Entry/197925> [Accessed 13-11-2022].
857 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.

> The ladies of King Bolo's court
> They gossiped with each other
> They said 'King Bolo's big black queen
> Will soon become a mother'
> They said 'an embryonic prince
> Is hidden in her tumbo;
> His prick is long his balls are strong
> And his name is Boloumbo.'[858]

Is this meant to recall the fertility themes from Cornford? The 'sacred marriage' trope is here parodied. The 'prince', the masculine principle, becomes a grotesque parody of manhood, with his 'long' 'prick' and 'strong' 'balls'; any dignity or seriousness that 'prince' connotates is dispelled by this crude humour. So too is the dignity of 'queen' sullied by the preceding 'big black', recalling the 'comic Negroes'[859] in, say, minstrel shows. The 'savage' and the 'civilised' combine in the phrase 'big black queen'. In this respect, this Bolo verse does resemble a phallic ritual, with its mock-serious effigies of giant penises intended to invoke the spirit of fertility. They are satire in the same manner as the Greek rituals and their offshoots: as a tool for stimulating fertility'.[860] One might even compare this notion with that found in *Blast*, that only by violently 'cursing' and 'blasting' the inhabitants of the waste land will they be shaken into producing fresh and 'fertile' art.

This is not to say that Eliot composed all of the Bolos with Cornford in mind. Most of the Bolos were written much earlier than *Sweeney Agonistes.* They do broadly align with his interests in anthropology that he held at Harvard, but this is not evidence that they were inspired by Cornford in particular, who Eliot seems to have read much later. As I have said in the previous chapter, they were modelled on fraternity songs and bawdy ballads, and are more in line with Eliot's broad cynicism towards American 'civilisation' than with his revival

858 Eliot, Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.
859 *Ibid*., Letter to Bonamy Dobrée (22nd June 1927), p. 257.
860 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 37.

of 'primitive' tragi-comedy. However, there is some evidence that Eliot revisited the purpose of the Bolos as his interests changed.[861]

Towards The Waste Land

Eliot's interest in Cornford's 'fascinating' thesis probably stems from his anthropological interests at Harvard. Cornford's belief that Aristophanic comedy had the same ritualistic root as Greek tragedy would impact Eliot, who was already searching for a way to revive the savage humour praised by the Vorticists. The 'Tarzan of the apes'[862] mindset of Lewis motivated his praise for *Tarr* and *Blast*; so too might it have motivated his own experiment with an ancient satiric form, *Sweeney Agonistes*. This 'Fragment of an Agon' is a development of the *Poems 1920* depiction of Sweeney as a sexually violent savage, depicting him as one side in a debate between the principles of violent primitivism on one side and anxious, feminised modernity on the other. Eliot's bawdy experiments with Bolo and then *Sweeney Agonistes* would seem to bring him towards the conclusion that the only escape from the cycle of history – a unified system that the caricatures in *Poems 1920* lack – was a Christian vision. The play is a mixture of religious aspects – the final direction of which is hard to decipher, considering it is only a fragment – with a pop-culture-influenced style resembling jazz or vaudeville comedy. It is even accompanied, perhaps, by a reconsideration or reformation of the Bolo verses into modern 'phallic songs',[863] which Eliot shared with Pound half-seriously using his mock-academic persona.

After the publication of the Oxford poems in *Prufrock*, Eliot was anxious to express (in private) his desire to transcend the 'mere Wit'[864] of these early poems. Always keen to

---

861 Consider also Eliot's reframing of some of the Bolo verses as what Johnson calls 'Elizabethan drama'. See: Johnson, 'Feeling the Elephant', 113.

862 Eliot, 'Contemporanea', in *Prose I*, p. 720.

863 *Ibid*., Letter to Ezra Pound (3rd September 1923), in *Poems II*, p. 255.

864 *Ibid*., Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.

look to the past for ways to deal with modern problems, he looked towards Jonsonian caricature, an 'external' approach quite in contrast to the introspective probing of Henry James that had previously inspired him.[865] In his essays on Jonson, he called him an 'incidental'[866] satirist: not a comedian that laughs at the world, nor a kind of satire that has 'precise' and 'intellectual' targets, but a kind of poetry that uses satire as a 'medium for the essential'[867] emotion, typically a kind of tragi-comedy. Eliot's revival of Jonson is probably an extension of the blessing of 'English humour'[868] in *Blast*, and indeed, Eliot would positively review Lewis' satire of 'bourgeois-bohemians' *Tarr* around the time he composed *Poems 1920*.

Lewis's aims for modern satire (as he expressed using his 'mouthpieces' in *Tarr*)[869] is that it should be 'separating, ungregarious',[870] expressing a keen-edged anger towards the 'flabby'[871] liberals or progressives that he felt needed to be cast aside. Lewis's vision of a satirist is one who is not a moralist, but a 'cave-man'[872] that uses the glittering images of the modern 'fairy desert'[873] as a canvas for his (as indeed this is a masculinist movement) theoretical formulations of the world.

The purpose of caricature – what Svarny calls a particularly 'satiric modernism' – can be summed up in these lines from Eliot's 'Sweeney Erect':

> (The lengthened shadow of a man
> Is history, said Emerson
> Who had not seen the silhouette
> Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)[874]

---

865 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
866 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose I*, p. 153.
867 *Ibid*.
868 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 26.
869 *Ibid*., *Tarr*, p 15.
870 *Ibid*., p. 34.
871 *Ibid*.
872 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
873 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 33.
874 Eliot, 'Sweeney Erect', in *Poems I*, p. 73, lines. 25-8.

Caricature is an attempt to expose the folly of the liberal individual, so important for (in this instance) Emerson, that 'guardian of the faith' in progress that seemed so inadequate in the age of total war. For Eliot, the modern man is not an individual at all, but a mind colonised by a 'heap of broken images':[875] mass media, half-forgotten literary traditions, and alienating new mediums like cinema and radio. Modern man was increasingly becoming an automaton whose head was 'filled with straw'.[876] Eliot's deliberate dehumanisation of a character like Sweeney – whose name conjures Irish stereotypes, and whose existence is reduced to disembodied limbs and ambiguous 'externals'[877] – is not necessarily a condemnation of the modern 'ordinary man',[878] but a condemnation of the political rhetoric that naively ignores his inability to behave as an individual. This rhetoric was especially targeting language that was nominally liberal and progressive, as with Emerson or, in a darker instance, the language of the British Liberal coalition government who charged into 'the War to make England a place fit for heroes to live in'.[879]

In the case of *Poems 1920*, Eliot's own foray into this 'modernist satire', his response to modernity is typically that of anger and bitterness – but sometimes melancholy. Eliot does not necessarily sympathise with his caricatures, but rather possesses an anger at the world they are trapped in. Beginning in 'Gerontion', Eliot disguises his personality, exposing the reader's 'imperfect system' of interpretation.[880] He invokes the prejudices of his readers, inviting them not just to understand abstractly, but also feel for themselves, the alienation of modernity and their own 'confounded'[881] sensibility. This is the intention the fragmentary narratives, the faceless names, the actions without bodies, and the difficult to understand

875 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 136.
876 *Ibid*., 'The Hollow Men', in *Poems I*, p. 128, line. 4.
877 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
878 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
879 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 207.
880 Longenbach, 'Guarding', 510.
881 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose II*, p. 747.

verbiage: Eliot 'incidentally' satirises the modern 'fairy desert' by getting his reader to experience its 'jangling'[882] noise for themselves. Laugh at the characters we may, this laughter is always accompanied by a pessimism – an anger at, say, the tourist-city Burbank scours, or the seedy world that Sweeney inhabits.

Sweeney reappears again in *Agonistes* as a personification of vitalist energy that confronts the foppish Doris. The latter, like Grishkin in *Poems 1920*, is Eliot's typical vision of the modern woman fearful of death, who retreats into the safe and feminised world of 'coffee spoons'[883] and mock-mysticism. Sweeney challenges her complacency with a kind of primitive nihilism, a vision of 'mere life' that reminds Doris that she is already on the path of death. Useful for exposing Doris's attitudes he may be, Sweeney is ultimately shown to be wrong by (the now Anglo-Catholic) Eliot: Sweeney's vision of a terrifying all-consuming life force, shared by both pre-Christian paganism and modern Darwinism, is ultimately defeated by Doris's rejection of the 'jangling' world. Even if she is cooked and eaten, in her rebirth she achieves the marriage with Life that Sweeney bitterly longs for but can never reach.

The Waste Land, the subject of the next chapter, was written before *Sweeney Agonistes*, but shares many of its themes. It may even be the case that *Sweeney Agonistes*, free from the editorship of Pound, shares a resemblance to Eliot's original vision for *The Waste Land*: its vision of a modern, debased femininity destroyed by its own arrogance recalls the discarded passages on Fresca, for instance. However, even in the 1920s, Eliot (along with his editor and collaborator, Pound) was beginning to realise that modern problems could not be transcended by the biting satire of the Vorticists, and the original drafts of *The Waste Land* are some of Eliot's last forays into satire before his conversion in 1927 changed his poetic direction significantly. So, now I turn to that much-discussed long

882 Lewis, '[3]', in *Blast*, p. 33.
883 Eliot, 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 34, line. 51.

poem, which should be read in the light of Eliot's satirical development from *March Hare* to *Poems 1920*.

Chapter 3:
Parodying Pope

Poems 1920 was Eliot's most overt satire that was published. Indeed, it is sometimes taken to be his only overt satire to be published, or perhaps his last foray into the form. *The Waste Land* is, therefore, considered to be a departure from the style of *Poems 1920*. Satire was 'moving behind Eliot now', Hollis says; 'he was reaching for something more oblique and musical – a hovering intelligence and a departure from satire.'[884] But such a reading does not take account of the drafts, which in no small part was made up of Jonsonian caricatures and *Poems 1920*-style quatrains. Helmling similarly notes Eliot's need for a new form and style for what he calls Eliot's 'twentieth-century *Dunciad*':[885]

> Something like Marlowe's 'farce' was just what Eliot was looking for: a mode appropriate to the representation of what Eliot famously called, in his 1923 review of *Ulysses*, 'the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.[886]

Helmling here rightly points at Eliot's slight change in satirical attitude. In *The Waste Land* drafts, originally 'a hoard of fragments, accumulated slowly over seven and a half years',[887] there is evidence of a conflicted mood in Eliot, a sense that the type of satire in *Poems 1920* was no longer sufficient. Some 'fragments' are satirical couplets, others have no resemblance to satire, and Eliot struggled over all of them, with Pound, when trying to form them into a simultaneous long poem. It was not *Poems 1920*, but *The Waste Land* that began Eliot's eventual departure from satire.

I am not the first to consider *The Waste Land* in its satirical aspects. One of the most important pieces of scholarship on the subject is a 2009 essay by Robert Lehman, 'Eliot's

---

884 Hollis, p. 128.
885 Helmling, 147.
886 *Ibid*., 149.
887 Gordon. 'The Waste Land Manuscript', in *American Literature*, 45.4 (1974) 557. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2924096> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Last Laugh: The Dissolution of Satire in *The Waste Land*'. Examining the facsimile of the drafts of the poem, Lehman recognised that the common 'Fisher King' readings of the poem could not account for Eliot the satirist. Although Lehman does not go as far back to Eliot's juvenilia as I have in order to explain this disparity, Lehman nonetheless does recognise that the satire in the drafts of *The Waste Land* was largely removed by Eliot, either under the influence of Pound or on his own accord. Indeed, this is the key question that must be answered: why did Eliot cut out or edit the satirical sections? Lehman offers this explanation:

> Satire appeared in the early drafts of *The Waste Land* as an immanent means of managing literary history by reconciling the conflictual poles of Eliot's poetics: the critical-historical and the creative, tradition and innovation. Similarly, the disappearance of satire from the final version of Eliot's poem following the editorial suggestions of Ezra Pound, and satire's replacement by the so-called 'mythical method', reflects satire's inability to accomplish this task.[888]

To Lehman, then, Eliot's satirical method was primarily an intellectual one, a way of 'managing literary history' and of 'reconciling' the new and modern within Eliot's temperamentally reactionary mind. The reason Eliot abandoned satire was because he realised that it could not fulfil these aims. Only the sweeping symbolism of myth could control the intense innovation necessary in modern poetry, just as only myth could bring order to Joyce's ambitious epic.

In this narrative, Lehman relies on the notion that *The Waste Land* was changed in its compositional process after Eliot read *Ulysses*, and that Eliot intended to appropriate Joyce's 'mythical method' (as he called it in an essay of the same name) for his own poem. However, it is not obvious from a comparative reading of the published and draft poems precisely where the satire was 'replaced' by the mythical method; rather, the satire often seems not to have been replaced, but cut out completely. On the other hand, I do agree with Lehman's

---

888 Robert S. Lehman. 'Eliot's Last Laugh: The Dissolution of Satire in *The Waste Land*', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32.2 (2009) 66 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25511804> [Accessed 14-11-2017].

intuitions on why Eliot was so interested in satire in the first place, even if Lehman does not reach the same conclusions that I do:

> For modernist authors, satire was above all a tool by means of which they could distinguish their works and themselves from the fallen products of mass culture, as well as from the (no less fallen) mass of producers. The satirist mocks so as to demonstrate that he or she has not 'been taken in' by society at large. As Lewis reiterates in his autobiography, 'we are all in the melting pot. I resist the process of melting so have a very lively time of it'. Satire promises a bulwark against melting, against the omnipresent threat of cultural indistinction.[889]

Here, Lehman is essentially referring to the 'cave-man'.[890] The ability of the 'cave-man' to reorder his fragmentary surroundings is what separates him from what Eliot would later call the 'hollow man',[891] or else caricature in figures like Burbank. Indeed, the use of satire in *The Waste Land* has a similar 'separating'[892] intention, as with Eliot's disdain for the dull and particularly feminine 'bourgeois-bohemian' Fresca:

> Eliot's use of the satirical mode in the drafts of 'The Fire Sermon' – clearly signaled by his pastiche of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* – allows him to insist on a difference between his own poetic practice and the automatic practices embodied by the lady Fresca. […] The fundamental distinction between these two modes – digestive and satirical – is that while Fresca recollects the tradition automatically, the satirist recollects it critically.[893]

Seen this way, Lehman infers that Eliot's satirical method was not a way of reconciling himself with the 'popular culture'[894] around him, but of distinguishing himself from it, a kind of literary elitism. Satire was a means of trying to get the reader to transcend a mere consumerism, of realising their unpaid debt to the past that Eliot's caricatured philistines ignorantly cast aside.

Yet, Eliot removes these sections before they make it into the published poem. He clearly felt that they had failed. Or perhaps it was Pound who felt that they failed, and Eliot

889 Lehman, 69.
890 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
891 See Eliot's poem of the same name, in *Poems I*, pp. 127-33.
892 Lewis, '3', in *Blast*, p. 26.
893 Lehman, 73.
894 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 13.

adhered to 'the greater poet'.[895] Pound's criticisms of the satire in *The Waste Land*, especially as it manifests in the Fresca passage, is that it serves only to 'parody Pope'[896] rather than successfully appropriate him. Lehman essentially agrees with Pound:

> It is perhaps true that Eliot's couplets do not equal Pope's in wit or precision, and that Eliot descends into cruelty (perhaps learned from Lewis) where Pope remains playful[.][897]

It is this failure of 'wit or precision' that signifies the failure of satire in *The Waste Land*, to Lehman:

> In *The Waste Land*, then, satire (of satire) ends up inviting the dangerous proximity of literary history (including satire) that it was supposed to manage. The relatively stable system of differences promised by satire as a generic form dissolves into a vertigo of undecidable self-parody[.][898]

Eliot had to abandon satire because it could not control his ambitious method of ordering literary history; it served only to make him appear pretentious. Lehman's diagnosis is certainly not without merit. Perhaps Pound did think that the Fresca passage 'invit[ed a] dangerous proximity [to] literary history'.[899] However, this cannot be true entirely, because there are plenty of sections in the published *Waste Land*, approved by Pound, that surely invite this same 'dangerous proximity' to the past. Is the opening stanza of 'A Game of Chess', for instance, not a pastiche of *Antony and Cleopatra*? What about the many reconfigurations of Dante's verse, or Baudelaire? Granted, the Fresca passage is much longer and a more sustained 'parody'[900] of Pope than any of these sections, but if Pound really was sensitive to this kind of 'parody', why not get rid of all of it? What is missing from Lehman's narrative is the recognition that the Fresca passage is a different kind of satire to these other sections: the Fresca section is not much like an attempt at modernist satire at all, but is far

---

895 Rough translation of 'il miglior fabbro', found in the dedication to *The Waste Land*.
896 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 127, note. 1 to p. 23.
897 Lehman, 74.
898 *Ibid*., 76.
899 *Ibid*.
900 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 127, note. 1 to p. 23.

more in tune with the relatively simple target-oriented satire of *March Hare* and the Bolo verses. It is an old type of satire, in other words, that Eliot should have moved on from, in Pound's view. Eliot concurred, hence his adherence to Pound's advice.

I will explore this argument in more detail later in the chapter, in the penultimate section '"Complimenti, you bitch"', but first it will be necessary to establish the crucial contexts. In '"A grunt would serve as well"', I will examine the now often neglected and sometimes maligned first reviews of the poem, especially as they appeared in newspapers and literary magazines, in order to recognise that the poem, despite its modern reputation as an essentially 'mythical' criticism of certain strands of modernity, was not initially read this way. The poem, I contend, was actually written in the vein of *Poems 1920* and *Blast*: not a kind of reactionary tract against the modern world, but an anti-establishment piece of avant-garde art that intended (quite successfully) to annoy establishment literary figures who (rather correctly) perceived the poem to be a kind of joke at their expense. When I come to my extended reading of the drafts in 'The "horror" of the "cave-man"' (and following sections), then, I will emphasise the parts of its that are clearly satirical: the tickling of the 'hypocrite lecteurs'[901] who would see the poem as a joke, the dark parodies of 'philistine aristocracy',[902] the horror and (comic) disgust at modern sexual neurosis, and so on. My reading of the poem is essentially that it is the culmination of Eliot's sexual and social resentments, which in his previous satire was controlled, but – perhaps owing to the pressures of his personal life – spiralled out of control in *The Waste Land* drafts.

The poem, then, is not just the culmination, but also the end of Eliot as satirist; this is what I consider in the final section, 'Eliot's last laugh'. Satire was Eliot's early poetic impulse, and by 1922 was well-refined, but it was also beginning to be doubted by Eliot for

---

901 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 9, line. 130.

902 *Ibid*., Letter to Eleanor Hinkley (21st March 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 100.

its ability to truly achieve an 'incidental'[903] criticism of modernity. Eliot would much later in his life call satire the 'defence of the sensitive'[904] – a view which I believe is a reformation of Pound's chastisement of the too-easy, angry, and bitter Fresca passages. Eliot realises satire can no longer achieve his aims, especially considering his growing religious inclinations. *The Waste Land* was 'Eliot's last laugh', indeed.

'A grunt would serve as well': The Waste Land*'s first readers*

It is almost trite to say that *The Waste Land* is one of the twentieth century's most important poems. Certainly, it has provoked a huge scope of critical responses. The first readers of the poem were hardly complimentary. 'Some of the old timers and old academic critics hate it', John Quinn wrote to Eliot; 'The live ones delight in it'.[905] The 'old' versus 'the live ones' – this is a key aspect to the nature of the conversation surrounding *The Waste Land*. Quinn is essentially implying here that Eliot's poem successfully annoyed the literary establishment. Quinn seems rather pleased to inform his friend of that fact, which supports the idea that this reaction was Eliot's intention, or otherwise would have amused him. The critical reaction was in fact dual-natured, however, as Helmling describes:

> In the *succès de scandale* following its publication in 1922, the poem's detractors dismissed it as a joke or a hoax or an obscure satire, and its defenders, in consequence, were obliged to emphasize its seriousness.[906]

Dismissed as an 'obscure satire' at first, the scandal of the poem's reception was then followed by a counter-acting praise defending the poem's seriousness. The poem's 'unintelligibility', which was the chief charge made against it by its detractors, was spun by this second group of critics to be not a fault but a virtue: 'Unintelligibility, in my use of the word here', Humbert Wolfe wrote in 1923, 'conveys that rushing sense of suggestion hiding

---

903 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
904 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', 169.
905 John Quinn, quoted in Crawford, *Eliot After The Waste Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2022), p. 11.
906 Steven Helmling. 'The Grin of Tiresias: Humor in *The Waste Land*', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36.2 (1990) 137 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441818> [Accessed 21-11-2018].

behind the actual written word that almost stuns the receptive mind[.]'[907] Praise of 'unintelligibility' then itself became a topic of parody and scorn; to Eliot's detractors, to be pleased by the poem was to partake in 'the same sort of gratification attained through having solved a puzzle, a form of self-congratulation.'[908] The complex web of allusions was really nothing intelligent at all, as Munson put it:

> But our reader of good will is entitled, I think, to turn sour when he discovers that after all his research he has not penetrated into some strange uncharted region of experience but has only fathomed the cipher of a quite ordinary and easily understandable state of mind.[909]

Eliot was charged with being 'clever' earlier in his career, and this was initially the broad reaction to *The Waste Land*. The poem was an 'obscure satire', indeed: it is a common complaint, in these early reviews, that Eliot's technique of juxtaposed allusions was 'not fundamentally different from parody'[910] – 'a series of sardonic portraits',[911] as Gilbert Seldes put it in 1922.

One of the key points in the early debates about the poem were the use of allusions. What did it mean to juxtapose, say, Wagner with popular songs? Again and again, the reviewers cite the following stanza, a parody of Goldsmith:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand
> And puts a record on the gramophone.[912]

---

907 Humbert Wolfe. 'Waste Land and Waste Paper', *Weekly Westminster* 1 n.s. (Nov 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 120.

908 Louis Untermeyer. 'Disillusion vs. Dogma', *Freeman* 6 (7 Jan 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 82.

909 Gorham B. Munson. 'The Esotericism of T. S. Eliot', *1924* no. 1 (1 July 1924), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 123.

910 John Crowe Ransom. 'Waste Lands', *New York Evening Post Literary Review* 3 (14 July 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 100.

911 Gilbert Seldes. 'T. S. Eliot', *Nation* 115 (6 Dec 1922), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 79.

912 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 153, lines. 252-5.

To the minds of the 'old timers', this stanza is, to cite just a few examples, 'doggerel',[913] 'an outrage, a joke worthier of "Punch" than of a serious poet',[914] 'a considerable affront against aesthetic sensibilities',[915] and perhaps most pertinently, 'a minute simulacrum of the central process of the poem, which is to take ancient beauty by the neck and twist it to modern ugliness'.[916] To parody Goldsmith's verse in this way was to denigrate it, in other words. One might consider these remarks to be overly conservative, a total misunderstanding of Eliot's notion of the historical sense[917] – but on the other hand, they essentially echo Pound's charge against the Fresca couplets. Pound says the Fresca couplets are affront to Pope because they 'parody' him, and 'you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope – and you can't.'[918] 'The Fire Sermon', which contains both the Goldsmith stanza and the Fresca couplets, would be Eliot's most sustained piece of parody in the whole poem – and would also be the section (bar 'Death by Water') most heavily cut by Pound.

Eliot's 'doggerel' had its defenders, however. Most notable is Clive Bell, who despite admitting that Eliot's technique descends into 'obviously comic-weekly humour, unworthy of so fastidious a writer', nonetheless calls him a poet capable of writing 'in its modern way' verse that is 'as neat as Pope' in form and content.[919] Another notable defender is F. R. Leavis, whose influential *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) forcefully defended what a decade earlier was called Eliot's 'clever[ness]':

---

913 Untermeyer, p. 82.
914 Monro, p. 90.
915 Ransom, pp. 100-1.
916 Munson, p. 125.
917 See, for instance, Longenbach, 'The Contrived Corridors…', 185-6: 'The point of Eliot's historical sense is *not* that the past is better or worse than the present; such a comparison would assume that the historian could know the past 'as it was,' unaffected by his own subjective or historical prejudices. The past is either accessible or inaccessible for Eliot, part of a coherent 'system' or lost in the rubble of fragmentary vision. Any expression of historical progress or decline is thus an illusion, a product of an interpreter's inability to realize that he does not know the 'real' past but an interpretation of the past made possible by the present.'
918 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 127, note. 1 to p. 23.
919 Clive Bell. 'T. S. Eliot', *Nation and Athenaeum* 33 (22 Sept 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 111.

> The seeming disjointedness [of *The Waste Land*] is intimately related to the erudition that has annoyed so many readers and to the wealth of literary borrowings and allusions. These characteristics reflect the present state of civilization. […] The bearing of this on the technique developed in 'Burbank' and 'A Cooking Egg' does not need enlarging upon.[920]

The most remarkable comment here is the notion that *The Wase Land* was a 'develop[ment]' of the *Poems 1920* technique – the deliberate baffling of the reader through 'literary borrowings and allusions'. To Leavis, a contemporary of Eliot's, this development is obvious: it 'does not need enlarging upon'.[921] *The Waste Land* was first read, then – and indeed, was clearly – an 'obscure satire' that continued Eliot's established reputation as a 'clever' parodist of his 'hypocrite lecteur[s]'.

One of the most influential of the early reviewers was J. C. Squire. Intuiting that the cynical mood of the poem stemmed from Eliot's reactionary sentiments, Squire nonetheless could not pinpoint its exact origins, and in fact admitted that such readings relied on the Notes (added to the first book publication) rather than the poem itself:

> But though these [Notes] will tell those who do not know where Mr. Eliot got his quotations and symbolism from, they do not explain what these allusions are here for. The legend about the Cumaen, Sibyl, which Rossetti paraphrased in verse, combined with the title and one casual reference, suggest that Mr. Eliot believes the poem to be about the decay of western civilisation and his own utter sickness with life. But even with this knowledge, I confess that I do not know where it comes in.[922]

As with 'Gerontion' and some of the other *1920*s poems, Eliot invites comparison of himself with his characters, while insisting on the impersonality of his poetry. The same effect is evident in *The Waste Land*, and Squire's reaction is one of annoyance:

---

920 F. R. Leavis. 'T. S. Eliot', *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 166.

921 A similar remark is also made in 1934 by Geoffrey Bullough. See: Geoffrey Bullough. 'Herbert Read; D. H. Lawrence; T. S. Eliot', *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (1934), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 202: 'This volume [*Poems 1920*] is especially valuable as showing Mr. Eliot's preparation for the greater achievement of *The Waste Land* (1922). […] Satiric detachment replaced dramatic self-analysis.' The 'dramatic self-analysis' of *Prufrock*, in other words, was replaced by the 'satiric detachment' of *Poems 1920*, which reappeared in *The Waste Land*.

922 J. C. Squire, 'Poetry', *London Mercury* 8 (Oct 1923), in Graham Clarke ed., *T. S. Eliot: Critical Assessments: Volume II, Early Poems and The Waste Land* (London: Christopher Helm, 1990), p. 113.

> A grunt would serve equally as well; what is language but communication, or art but selection and arrangement?[923]

One wonders if this annoyance is the result of a kind of anxiety: a 'well-read' man utterly stumped by a poem that should be his forte, a poem steeped in literary allusion. He is right, of course, that the Notes have no such explanatory power; in fact, quite the contrary, they often to do the opposite of clarification, leading the reader down many false paths. However, a century removed from these first readers, it seems almost bizarre to us now to insist that 'language [is] but communication' (in regards to poetry); indeed 'ambiguity', that particularly Empsonian phrase,[924] is one of *The Waste Land*'s defining characteristics. This should serve as a reminder of just how new Eliot's poetry was. It was not a puzzle to be solved by close scholarship based on the Notes, but poetry that was deliberately alienating, provoking its readers – especially those that regarded themselves as 'well-read'. Eliot was 'blasting' these litterateurs off their pedestals.

Indeed, this was a common sentiment amongst the early reviewers; they were disgruntled at what they regarded as Eliot's mockery of them. These reviewers sometimes even resort to sarcasm and gentle mockery themselves. One of the most amusing of these cases is one critic, Harold Monro, who presented his review as a mock-conversation between himself and Eliot.[925] Monro essentially makes a similar observation to Squire, that the allusions are almost impossible to understand even for well-read men. Expressing this anxiety to their imaginary conversation partner, Eliot (in italics) gives only blunt one-word answers:

> I can only recognise a dozen or so [allusions]. This may be because my reading is not sufficiently wide. – *Possibly.* – *Well?*[926]

---

923 Squire, quoted in *Critical Assessments*, p. 113.

924 See, for instance, William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

925 Monro had a strained relationship with Eliot, refusing to publish 'Prufrock' and drawing Eliot's critical ire after Monro's controversial anthology *Some Contemporary Poets: 1920* neglected to include him. See: Hollis, pp. 100, 169, 223-4.

926 Harold Monro, 'Notes for a Study of The Waste Land: an Imaginary Dialogue with T. S. Eliot', from *Chapbook* no. 34 (Feb 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 87.

Even in this parody conversation, Eliot is typecast as an austere, aloof figure – a staunch defender of the avant-garde that regarded mere 'newspaper critic[s]'[927] with disdain. No doubt he would have built this reputation from his remarks on 'perfect' and 'imperfect' critics[928] in *The Sacred Wood*. It was a reputation Eliot built for himself, but also feared. He feared being misunderstood as being a merely 'clever' provocateur. However, beneath the surface of London literary in-fighting, the Monro arrives at an important observation, which becomes clearer upon reading this passage:

> I know it is not written for me. You never thought of me as among your potential appreciative audience. You thought of nobody, and you were true to yourself. Yet, in a sense, you did think of me. You wanted to irritate me, because I belong to the beastly age in which you are doomed to live. But, in another sense, your poem seems calculated more to annoy Mr. [Edmund] Gosse, or Mr. [J. C.] Squire, than me.[929]

Eliot's reputation (at least amongst literary journalists) was, to paraphrase, a kind of satirist. He was seen as one who desired to 'irritate', to provoke – to 'blast', even – the literary establishment and the 'Squirearchy', always from a place of moral fortitude. In Monro's review and in Squire's, their observation is that this satiric persona is expressed primarily through mockery of the reader, the inhabitants of the 'beastly age' which motivates Eliot's righteous disdain.

Eliot's criticism on the nature of satire

If Eliot's satirical targets were his readers, the 'hypocrite lecteur[s]'[930] as he says in 'The Burial of the Dead', then he knew his satirical method must change. Eliot's satire became less provincial and more broadly 'social' over time: less about a certain class of liberal New England 'ladies', and more about the decay of liberal society more broadly. It is most likely

927 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15th February 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
928 See: *Ibid*., 'The Perfect Critic', in *Prose II*, pp. 262-70.
929 Monro, p. 88.
930 Eliot, *The Waste Land Facsimile*, 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 9, line. 130.

the outbreak of WWI which made Eliot realise the true importance of his political temperaments. Certainly, Eliot knew the need for a more broadly 'social' satire in *Poems 1920,* and was successful in many respects: recall the caricatures that incited Spender to reveal his own prejudices, for instance. However, the longer form of *The Waste Land* opened up new opportunities for Eliot to refine this reader-oriented technique.

Conscious of satire's reputation as the 'lowest' of poetic forms, he defended it in his own prose as, rather, an intensely difficult and necessary genre:

> And there is no more difficult subject to treat in such a scheme than the subject of satire. For it has not – as has the drama, for instance – any definite technique. And the authors of satire have often occupied themselves with other literary activities as well; or like Chaucer, have not been primarily satirists at all.[931]

This recalls his comments on Ben Jonson, whose satire was a vehicle for poetry. There was really no such thing as a mere satirist, but rather a sort of satirical intuition that informed and developed the poetic intuition. In the modern age, classifying satire is especially difficult; this is what motivated Lewis to say that all true art must necessarily be satire. As Eliot said in his review of an anthology of satire, the task of the editor was problematised by the modern age:

> The most difficult part of the task is the latter half of the nineteenth century, where verse satire is rare, but where the mood of satire is widely diffused.[932]

The 'mood of satire' is the most important idea here, and it is a shame that Eliot does not define it. However, by calling it a 'mood', he is expressing the notion that satire is not a definitive technique, but rather should be seen as a feeling that permeates other (perhaps most) 'higher' forms of poetry.

If satire is a 'mood' that can be keenly felt by one generation, then perhaps it is the case that it cannot be felt as keenly by another. This is the thesis of his 1921 essay 'John

---

931 Eliot, 'English Satire: An unsigned review of English Satire and Satirists by Hugh Walker', in *Prose II,* p. 593.

932 *Ibid*., p. 594.

Dryden', where he condemns the nineteenth-century critics who ostensibly failed to grasp the true scope of Dryden's poetics. 'Dryden was much more than a satirist', Eliot says – recalling his own disgust at being called a 'mere Wit' – and 'to dispose of him as a satirist is to place an obstacle in the way of our understanding.'[933] According to Eliot, the word 'satire' itself had become bound with a 'fixed type', and this mindset needed to be expelled:

> [W]e must not allow our familiarity with the word to blind us to differences and refinements; we must not assume that satire is a fixed type, and fixed to the prosaic, suited only to prose; we must acknowledge that satire is not the same thing in the hands of two different writers of genius. The connotations of 'satire' and of 'wit', in short, may be only prejudices of nineteenth-century taste.[934]

The 'connotations' being what Lewis earlier called the destruction of 'humour':[935] a petty but stoic laughter at the ridiculousness of the world, leading nowhere. However, Dryden had something of the 'English humour'[936] of Swift and Shakespeare, the biting laughter that intended to destroy. Just as Dryden's art could not be understood by nineteenth-century critics, Eliot here implies a defence of his own poetry. It is as if Squire and Monro had fallen directly into his trap: because of their ostensibly 'imperfect'[937] critical notions, they failed to perceive that they are on the receiving end of Eliot's joke. They were exactly the sort of establishment critics who did not understand modern satire, unable to recognise it due to their 'fixed' and outdated notions.

Recalling Eliot's essay on Jonson, it is in the past, he said in 'John Dryden', that there is some semblance of the modern:

> Dryden's method here [in *MacFlecknoe*] is something very near to parody; he applies vocabulary, images, and ceremony which arouse epic associations of grandeur, to make an enemy helplessly ridiculous.[938]

933 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, pp. 351-2.
934 *Ibid*.
935 Lewis, '[5]', in *Blast*, p. 17.
936 *Ibid*., '[3]', p. 26.
937 See: Eliot, 'The Perfect Critic', in *Prose II*, pp. 262-70.
938 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.

The implication here, as with much of Eliot's criticism, is that in this old style there is something that can be rehabilitated into the new – a rehabilitation that Eliot already partook in. Indeed, 'Dryden's method', as Eliot describes it, sounds awfully like the bafflement technique that appears in much of *Poems 1920*. Dryden's method was not to set clear targets of attack – to merely disparage – but to provoke, to question, and even to celebrate in an ironic sort of way. '[T]he effect', Eliot went onto say, 'though disastrous for the enemy, is very different from that of the humour which merely belittles, such as the satire of Mark Twain. Dryden continually enhances.'[939] This 'enhance[ment]' idea is important to my reading of *The Waste Land*, because Eliot contrasts this technique with the 'merely belittle[ing]' humour of Mark Twain and Alexander Pope:

> If you compare any satiric 'character' of Pope with one of Dryden, you will see that the method and intention are widely divergent. When Pope alters, he diminishes; he is a master of miniature. […] The genius of Pope is not for caricature. But the effect of the portraits of Dryden is to transform the object into something greater [...] As in [Ben] Jonson, the effect is far from laughter; the comic is the material, the result is poetry.[940]

Eliot would of course 'parody Pope' in sections of *The Waste Land* – sections that would be intensely scribbled over by Pound. Initially removing them begrudgingly,[941] Eliot nonetheless does appear to have some sympathy with Pound's condemnation of Pope – a condemnation which, again, is assimilated into a rhetorical defence of Eliot's own poetics. Pope's genius is 'not for caricature', that prime technique of *Poems 1920*. Pope's style is 'miniature',[942] the trite humour that plays into the hands of stuffy Victorian critics. If one reads this essay as a piece of literary criticism, then it is bizarre and unfair (did Pope really diminish his opponents, and did Dryden really enhance his objects?), but it makes sense if one reads it as a coy admission of Eliot's own faults. He is essentially reconfiguring Pound's criticism of *The*

939 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.
940 *Ibid*., 354.
941 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems I*, p. 920: 'Pound induced me to destroy what I thought an excellent set of couplets'.
942 *Ibid*., 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 354.

Waste Land. According to Pound, the Fresca couplets were too easy, too belittling of their target, not capable of transcending mere laughter at ridiculousness, and by imitating Pope in this way – by thrusting him into modern contexts – Eliot served only to 'parody' him, to disparage him, when really Eliot should have had more respect for the satirical tradition. Eliot is implicitly acknowledging, in 'John Dryden', that he was wrong to use Pope as a model, since Pope's 'genius' was not for modernist 'caricature'.

Eliot's prose should bear an influence on our reading of *The Waste Land*. Looking for satire in the poem as if it were a genre or technique will not be adequate. At the time of writing the drafts, Eliot did not share such a notion of satire. There may indeed be parts of the poem that are more traditionally satirical in technique, but these are relatively few, and were mostly cut out by Pound or Eliot. Rather, it is more fruitful to consider the satirical 'mood' of the poem – a mood that stems from a specific time and place. I have already described, in earlier chapters, the satirical spirit that energised the 'Men of 1914', but it is worth briefly restating it here: their temperament is broadly reactionary, meaning they shared a discontent at modernity, but this is not a discontent at the injustice or lack of progress in modernity, but rather its opposite, a disgust at the overabundance of justice and so-called progress, the triumph of Nietzsche's last man. Condemned to 'this beastly age in which [they] are doomed to live',[943] they consider themselves 'cave-men',[944] reformers of the subverted traditions – the 'heap of broken images'.[945] They considered themselves parodists of the 'lees of liberalism',[946] which is to say, those 'hollow men' who take pride in such decadent 'progress'. Where in *The Waste Land* does Eliot 'calculate to annoy'[947] these 'last dregs of liberalism'?[948] This is the central question that motivates my reading. Furthermore, where

943 Monro, p. 88.
944 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
945 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 136.
946 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.
947 Monro, p. 88.
948 Lewis, *Tarr*, p. 34.

does Eliot 'annoy', and where does he 'enhance' like Dryden – and where does he fail to do either? These are my main concerns.

The poem as satire of the reader

The original drafts of *The Waste Land*, including Pound's edits, were sent to Eliot's long-time friend and patron John Quinn in late 1922. Quinn received them in New York in January 1923, and read them with 'great interest', remarking that 'Personally I should not have cut out some of the parts that Pound advised you to cut out'.[949] Quinn died a year later. The manuscripts were then sent to his sister, who died in 1934; her daughter inherited the manuscripts and stored them in her apartment until the 1950s, where they were finally uncovered 'after a prolonged search'.[950] She sold them to the New York Public Library in 1958. They were first published, edited by Eliot's second wife Valerie, in 1971.

Going against Eliot's critical stance of 'impersonality', Pound remarked in 1969, regarding the publication *The Waste Land Facsimile*, 'The more we know of Eliot, the better'.[951] One wonders what Eliot would have made of this statement. At the time, he had, at least publicly, a dismissive attitude to the poem, famously calling it merely 'rhythmical grumbling'.[952] He said to Richard Aldington shortly after its publication, 'As for *The Waste Land*, that is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style.'[953] On the one hand, it is hard to read the drafts and not notice glimpses of the author: the manuscript begins with 'old Tom' and his 'wife' 'old Jane',[954] for instance. The line from 'A Game of Chess', 'What you get married for if you dont [sic] want to have

949 John Quinn, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, 'Introduction', p. xxvi
950 Valerie Eliot, 'Introduction', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. xxix.
951 Pound, 'Preface', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. vii.
952 Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 2.
953 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems I*, p. 819.
954 *Ibid*., *The Waste Land Facsimile*, 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 5, lines. 4-5.

children',[955] was in fact added by Vivien, in what seems like a sly commentary on their own strained marriage. On the other hand, Eliot's remark that the poem was 'a thing of the past' as soon as it had been published, and that he was already moving onto 'a new form and style', has not been taken seriously enough. I ultimately agree with Lehmann that *The Waste Land* was a satirical failure, a source of great frustration for Eliot and indeed for Pound, a style that he quickly moved away from. Perhaps Eliot's theory (or more-so Lewis's theory) of a new kind of satire was just too convoluted, in practice: it proved too difficult to maintain the qualities of objectivity and amorality, too difficult to 'enhance'[956] his subjects while simultaneously satirising them. Certainly, his satire failed in some respect: why else would he remove the Fresca section, for instance, or the 'miscellaneous' poems that disparage Jews, or reconfigure the quatrains into longer and more fractured stanzas? If Eliot was trying to achieve 'real humour'[957] by the method of satire, Jonson-style, then he did not always succeed in this aim.

But perhaps it is just as likely that Eliot was being coy – a 'possum' playing dead, as Pound famously described him. *The Waste Land* is clearly more than mere 'rhythmical grumbling'. There is a clear anger and despair behind the words, as the earliest reviews perceived.[958] Indeed, some of them admit that anger is all they can perceive.[959] Perhaps, in fact, they are right to perceive the poem this way, as a mere 'mood'.[960] Perhaps it is accurate to describe the poem not as some highly articulate and complex web of allusions ready to be

---

955 Vivien Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 15.

956 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.

957 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.

958 See, for instance: Edmund Wilson, 'The Poetry of Drouth', from *Dial* 73 (Dec 1922), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 71: 'For this new poem – which presents itself as so far his most considerable claim to eminence – not only recapitulates all his earlier and already familiar motifs, but it sounds for the first time in all their intensity, untampered by irony or disguise, the hunger for beauty and the anguish at living which lie at the bottom of all his work.'

959 See, for instance: Humbert Wolfe, 'Waste Land and Waste Paper', from *Weekly Westminster* 1 n. s. (Nov 1923), p. 122: 'I don't pretend to understand, but end with the sense that the five moments are knit together by some invulnerable strand. There remains in my mind a sound of high and desolate music. So poetry should end.'

960 Eliot, 'English Satire', in *Prose II*, p. 594.

deciphered (as has sometimes been attempted), but as a baffling – deliberately baffling, even – attempt to provoke and alienate the reader. Eliot did not want to merely describe his despair at modernity, or else he would have just written social criticism, as he did for much of the subsequent decades. *The Waste Land*, it is important to remember, is poetry; it aims to move and to provoke its readers, not to merely communicate. Eliot defended the notion that satire was not just limited to prose, a mistake ostensibly promulgated by previous generations of critics.[961] Poetry involves the reader's imagination in a manner that some critical prose simply does not. Eliot allows his readers to experience for themselves the alienation from the 'civilisation' that so disgusted him – to experience their own detachment from their literary heritage. The poem's impenetrability is inextricable from this aim – indeed it is the means by which Eliot achieves it. The reader is made to become hyper-aware of their own imperfect system, their own failure to read; a simpler satire would do no such thing. Perhaps Eliot is laughing at them and their 'imperfect[ions]' – but perhaps it is not so simple, for he too was part of the same world, and he consciously (sometimes literally) inserts himself into the world and walks its streets. His laughter is not mere fun, but is tinged with tragedy. Not all of *The Waste Land* drafts succeeded; but in Eliot's published poem, he achieved not just the biting wit of conventional satire, but an 'enhance[d]'[962] satire that gets the reader to perceive their own entrapment in a world that, as Lewis said in *Blast*, attempts to sanitise and destroy the 'individual'.[963]

961 Eliot, 'English Satire', in *Prose II*, pp. 593-4.
962 *Ibid.*, 'John Dryden',, p. 352.
963 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast*, p. 7.

The 'horror' of the 'cave-man'

As with much of Eliot's poetry,[964] our expectations as readers are set up and manipulated by the epigraph. The draft epigraph to *The Waste Land* was from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a novella that helped to shape Eliot's cynicism towards 'civilisation'. In this particular quotation, Marlow recalls Kurtz's terror as his life flashes before him:

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath –
>
> 'The horror! the horror!'[965]

The notion of replaying one's 'desire, temptation, and surrender' before death resonates with the final lines from 'What the Thunder Said', where the thunderous 'DA's shake the humble listener into recognising his own entrapment within the cycle of desire and unwillingness to surrender to the 'controlling hands' of a higher power.[966] Even before the poem formally begins, we are invited by Eliot to think that the poem will have something to do with the momentary flashes of a 'life' filled with 'desire, temptation, and surrender'; that its form resembles a reflection on these themes, 'a supreme moment of complete knowledge' (or will lead to this moment, as indeed it does with 'Shantih'[967]); and that confronted with these moments, the narrator or subject of the poem can only exclaim in 'horror!' To put it more simply, we are plunged immediately into a world left reeling after the death of God.[968] This is the world the 'different voices'[969] of the poem inhabit. Confronted with the collapse of meaning, there can be only 'horror' and confusion. '*The Waste Land* is thus about desiring,

---

964 See the many epigraphs in *Prufrock*, for instance, or the epigraph to *Sweeney Agonistes* that I discuss in the previous chapter.

965 Eliot, *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 3, epigraph.

966 *Ibid*., 'What the Thunder Said', p. 77, line. 87.

967 *Ibid*., p. 81, line. 117.

968 Perhaps this is a Nietzschean notion, although Eliot's Notes suggest that it is an idea taken from Frazer's *Golden Bough*.

969 'He Do the Police in Different Voices' was the drafted title of the poem, an allusion to Dickens's satire *Our Mutual Friend*. Dickens as satirist was discussed by Eliot in his reviews of *Tarr*.

and desiring the wrong thing', says Atkins; 'Also about listening to the wrong voice(s), and half-understanding what is being said.'[970]

There is very little left of the natural environment in *The Waste Land*. The world is full of squalid alleyways,[971] seedy night-time establishments,[972] and mechanical objects.[973] Nature appears as a desert,[974] and as the dirty, polluted river.[975] Real nature has died long ago, it is implied. Real nature has been conquered by the social sphere, by the 'civilisation' that crushes 'primitive' societies.[976] The Thames is the perfect metaphor for this: that river is not a habitat for life, but a road for commerce and trade, which over years of increasingly expansive yet decadent use has turned the 'brown god'[977] into brown sludge. To try to fish in this river is a vanity, a luxury afforded only to pre-industrial (pre-'progress') man. Is this not why April is the 'cruellest' month? The start of spring, the renewal of nature, serves only to remind us that we are no longer part of the natural world. The allusion to *The Canterbury Tales* reminds us that we are no longer part of the world of 'Zephirus'.[978] April is also the time of Easter – not just the renewal of nature, but the renewal of God's closeness with the 'son of man', the opening up of our salvation. The inhabitants of *The Waste Land* no longer consider themselves a part of this story, which is now fractured into 'a heap of broken images'.[979] 'The cricket [gives] no relief'[980] from this emptiness. A Wordsworthian reverence of nature will no longer 'ke[ep] us warm'.[981] Death, for the wastelanders, just as it is for

970 Atkins, p. 17.
971 See, for instance: Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 35, lines. 176-80.
972 See, for instance: *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 5, lines. 1-54.
973 See, for instance: *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 43, lines. 121-4.
974 See, for instance: *Ibid*., 'What the Thunder Said', pp. 83-4, lines. 10-38.
975 See, for instance: *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 25, lines. 1-10; p. 49, lines. 1-25.
976 *Ibid*., 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420. See also: 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 31, lines. 106-9: 'London, the swarming life you kill and breed, / Huddled between the concrete and the sky, / Responsive to the momentary need, / Vibrates unconscious to its formal destiny[.]'
977 *Ibid*., 'The Dry Salvages', in *Four Quartets*, in *Poems I*, p. 252, lines. 1-2. Eliot also uses the phrase 'The Dry Salvages' in 'Death by Water', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 55, lines. 13-6. For a 'brown' river in *The Waste Land*, see: 'The Fire Sermon', p. 25, lines. 1-10.
978 Geoffrey Chaucer, 'General Prologue', in *The Canterbury Tales*, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 860, line. 5.
979 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, lines. 74-6.
980 *Ibid*., line. 77.
981 *Ibid*., line. 59.

Grishkin and in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, is a terrible emptiness, rather than something that has been redeemed by Jesus, or a part of the process of rebirth.

The opening of 'The Burial of the Dead' in the drafts is not this famous line, but a large passage of squalid nightlife, written in a sort of Bostonian demotic dialect. The first 'voices' we hear (for the original title, *He Do the Police in Different Voices*, invites us to recognise that this will be the form of the poem) are lower class, slang-driven, excitable. They talk of a rowdy night around town, drinking, singing, and inviting trouble from a policeman. This is the modern 'civilisation' that gives order to human life – or rather, does not give order, as is manifested in the form of the verse, which is a scattered and fast-paced rambling. Immediately we are introduced to 'Tom', suggesting – perhaps (deliberately) falsely – that this scene has something to do with Eliot's own memories. Indeed, Valerie Eliot suggests as much in her editorial notes.[982] She claimed that this original opening section was meant to be a scene set in Boston, reminiscent of Eliot's Harvard days.[983] If this was in fact a scene from Eliot's own life, it would have been from his youth; he enjoyed the nightlife and vaudeville shows of Boston, as Chinitz points out in *Cultural Divide*.[984] But the few years of Eliot's life leading up to the composition of this verse were not so charming: his controversial decision not to defend his PhD, his hurried fleeing from Germany after the outbreak of war, his drab and financially troubled lifestyle in London, all would have contributed to his despair and loneliness London, so far from home. Indeed, these lines are precluded by Marlow's realisation that Kurtz's civilising mission only masked an inescapable terror at the emptiness of the universe. It is perhaps no surprise that Eliot removed these Boston lines after he decided against using the Conrad epigraph, since it is the epigraph that gives them their

982 Valerie Eliot, 'Editorial Notes', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 125, note. 6 to p. 5.
983 Hollis, p. 228.
984 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 239.

satiric flavour. It is a similar mood to that of Cousin Nancy who 'dances all the modern dances':[985] behind the rollocking fun, there is empty despair.

In this opening passage, the speech is disordered, irregularly poetic – resembling something closer to *Sweeney Agonistes* in rhythm and style than the famous opening lines of the published poem. Eliot seems to have considered a few popular songs to be included, but eventually decided on

> I'm proud of all the Irish blood that's in me,
> There's not a man can say a word agin me[986]

and later the 'German club' is introduced as a setting for these songs, with the *Poems 1920*-style name 'Gus Krutzsch' also alluded to. The Irish-German connection is brought up again later, this time in a much 'higher' allusion, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*:

> Frisch weht der wind
> Der Heimat zu,
> Mein Irisch kind,
> Wo weilest du?[987]

These disparate allusions suggest to us that whatever malaise Eliot finds in modern culture transcends social class and nations. The final line of the low-class voice,

> So I got out to see the sunrise, and walked home.[988]

echoes the final remark of the high-class woman, the 'cousin' of a German 'archduke',

> I read much of the night, and go south in the winter.[989]

in that it is a melancholic reflection on something that is over or has been lost. Good times, either love or friendship, have been lost, remembered now with sadness. For Chaucer, April is the time where a diverse cast of pilgrims gather and form a spontaneous community around shared stories and amusing tales – but where is such a community in modernity? The church

985 Eliot, 'Cousin Nancy', in *Poems I*, p. 57, line. 8.
986 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 5, lines. 6-7.
987 *Ibid*., p. 7, lines. 85-8.
988 *Ibid*., p. 5, line. 54.
989 *Ibid*., p. 7, line. 72.

has died, and fairy stories have been replaced with the 'fairy desert'.[990] The only church-focussed gathering in 'Burial' is the procession for the dead, near the end of the section – and even here, it is suggested that those still living already have their souls trapped in hell.[991] Amusing Chaucerian tales have been replaced with horrific rumours from the trenches.

Eliot is not necessarily mocking these people straightforwardly. He inserts a figure that invites comparisons to himself, 'old Tom', into their world. The contrast of the 'Irish blood' song with *Tristan and Isolde* is not an easy, reactionary contrast of debased modern songs with high artistic tradition; rather, Eliot shows the kinship of human spirit between these two cultures. The 'old Tom' who is so detached from 'high culture' is not just a target for ridicule, some vulgar conservative condemnation of the lower class, because it is implied that the reader too contributes to modern apathy: 'Hypocrite lecteur – mon semblable – mon frère!'[992] The reader may laugh or condemn the caricatures that inhabit *The Waste Land*, but not without being a 'hyprocrite', for they too are condemned to this meagre age where the literary past constantly alluded to in the poem is detached and malformed into a 'heap of broken images'.[993] Did Eliot's contemporary critics not admit this themselves, in their hasty condemnation of Eliot as 'bookworm'?[994] Eliot already anticipated them, for he admits that he too is a hypocrite reader; they are his 'fellow m[e]n', his 'brother[s]'.

Eliot uses allusion, either to modern vaudeville or to the literary canon, as a method to exhibit this Baudelairian *ennui*. Consider the dialogue between the woman and the other voice (presumably her husband) in 'A Game of Chess'. Their relationship is clearly strained. 'My nerves are bad tonight', she says, perhaps dismissing his sexual advances[995] – and then

990 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II.', in *Blast*, p. 33.
991 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 9, lines. 116-7.
992 *Ibid*., line. 130. Rough translation: 'Hypocrite reader – my fellow man – my brother!'
993 *Ibid*., p. 7, line. 76.
994 F. L. Lucas, 'The Waste Land', *New Statesman* 22 (3 Nov 1923), in *Critical Assessments*, p. 115.
995 Eliot, 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11, line. 36. Perhaps as in, 'Not tonight, I have a headache'. Vivien was of course frequently ill, which likely affected the Eliot's sexual relationship.

the poem immediately moves towards memories. 'What branches grow out of this stony rubbish?'[996] A speaker remembers only 'The hyacinth garden',[997] recalling the 'hyacinth girl' from 'Burial of the Dead' (perhaps they are the same characters).[998] He also remembers 'Those are pearls that were his eyes',[999] a remark from Madame Sosostris,[1000] originally from *The Tempest*. The man also remembers some words to 'Shakespeherian Rag',[1001] a jazz song that resembles those sung by Old Tom and his friends in the unpublished opening to 'Burial of the Dead'[1002] (again, one suspects that these are the same characters). These 'broken images' are how the modern mind manifests itself. Our understanding of ourselves is filtered through stories, images, and cultural narratives, and the first casualty of the collapse of cultural confidence is, therefore, this distinctly human self-consciousness. In other words, the psyche that in one age would be formed through religious stories, folk tales, and so forth, is now formed through mass culture, pop songs and half-remembered remnants of literary tradition. It takes a 'cave-man'[1003] to navigate this world successfully, a 'man of genius' that is 'rare'.[1004] With a limited understanding of ourselves, we have even less of an understanding of others: the archduke's cousin, the husband and wife in 'A Game of Chess' have no solutions to their malaise, just a 'closed carriage at four',[1005] socialisation that masks their discontent. Perhaps it is indicative of Eliot's insightfulness into his own strained marriage that Vivien wrote 'WONDERFUL' against this section.[1006]

---

996 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, lines. 73-4.
997 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', p. 13, line. 50.
998 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 7, lines. 89-90.
999 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', p. 13, line. 50.
1000 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 7, line. 101.
1001 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', p. 13, lines. 53-5.
1002 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 5, lines. 7-8, 16.
1003 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
1004 *Ibid*., quoted in Lehman, 68: 'We only need the coming of a Satirist – no man of genius is rarer – to prove that the heroic couplet has lost none of its edge since Dryden and Pope laid it down.'
1005 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 13, line. 61.
1006 Vivien Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11.

This technique of allusion – capable of transforming all aspects of culture, high and low, into a satire of modern *ennui* – comes to a brilliant head near the end of the poem in a collage of obscure references that is surely 'calculated to annoy':[1007]

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
>
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
>
> *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*
> *Quando fia muti chelidon*—O swallow swallow
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
>
> Shantih shantih shantih[1008]

Here there are allusions to, amongst others, Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* that Eliot claimed explained the entire poem, a line from a popular children's rhyme, Dante's *Purgatorio*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and 'a formal ending to an Upanishad'.[1009] Most of these allusions are given references by Eliot in the Notes to the book edition; but as Lucas says in his 1923 review,[1010] what is a reader supposed to do with these fragments? Shall I order the 'arid plain', the Fisher King asks – as does the reader, looking anxiously at the Notes to guide them across the waters. Here is the most pertinent example of the inevitable alienation Eliot intends to instil in his readers. Vainly fishing in the dead river destroyed by civilisation, the Fisher King receives insight from the divine. There is almost a delight at the destruction, a childish dancing at the burning of London – such irreverence found in children's rhymes, 'London Bridge is falling down'. What does it mean that children are taught to laugh at the destruction of an historic city hundreds of years ago? It is like the

---

1007 Monro, p. 88.
1008 Eliot, 'What the Thunder Said', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 89, lines. 103-13.
1009 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems II*, p. 1020.
1010 Lucas, quoted in *Critical Assessments*, p. 118.

attitude of the Harvard fraternity boys laughing at his Bolo poems, those completely irreverent mockeries of American founding mythology. Rhymes like these are quintessential examples of the communion between tragedy and comedy; one forms into the other, if given enough time. It is the savage humour that *Blast* calls upon as an antidote to liberal complacency. However, here there is a faint echo of Eliot's growing spiritual inclinations; it is not satire that has the last word, but 'shantih'.

'To keep our metaphysics warm'

In the previous section, I discussed Eliot's attempts to provoke introspection and alienation in his readers; here, I turn to a more familiar topic, the satirisation of women. Most important of these caricatures is Madame Sosostris. Pound considered her tarot card deck to be the ordering mechanism of the draft poem.[1011] There is a truth to Pound's notion: Sosostris appears to predict Phlebas' 'death by water'[1012] and the 'wheel' that traps many of the poem's voices on the cycle of desire.[1013] However, Eliot always undercuts our trust in her, as with the lines that introduce here, where her inaccuracy is prematurely excused since she 'had a bad cold'.[1014] This line is one of the few outright jokes in the entire poem. Sosostris is a swindler, a con-woman, a parody of ancient oracles and shamans that were so respected in traditional societies. She is essentially a parody of a priest. 'Madame Sosostris', Helmling says, 'is comically, even with her bad cold, thriving on the anxiety and chaos of a culture whose supposed modernity should have left her and her kind no opening.'[1015] As Helmling continues later in the same essay:

> Eliot speaks for and to a culture whose pride in its own modernity remains haunted by the anxiety that its sophistication and enlightenment may endanger

1011 Pound, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 790.
1012 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 100.
1013 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 31, line. 112; 'What the Thunder Said', p. 79, lines. 95-8.
1014 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 7, line. 97.
1015 Helmling, 140.

> and corrupt sources of energy and feeling more immediate, spontaneous, and 'natural'.[1016]

After the death of the God referred to in the opening, the 'son of man'[1017] retreats into a kind of pagan fear of death, which Sosostris capitalises on. Indeed, this section is a sort of first draft for *Sweeney Agonistes*: like Doris, the wastelander, petrified of their own death, turns to soothsayers and tarot cards for divination – but in vain, for they must eventually have to confront the reality of death, either portrayed by the character Sweeney (in the play) or, here, in the war that had 'undone so many'.[1018] One also recalls Eliot's letters on the war, linked to his vague cynicism of civilisation: the war was fought on progress and belief in our civility, but where is this progress, and what has civilisation left us with? It has left a spiritual void for fraudsters like Sosostris to fill – Apes of God, in the literal sense of that phrase. Eliot harbours a tragi-comic laughter at this realisation.

As in *Sweeney Agonistes*, these pseudo-mystics are women. For Eliot, there is something especially feminine about the fear of death. However, as in Eliot's earlier poetry, these female figures are not powerless. In fact, it is as if all of society is condemned to participate in their vain illusions. This is shown nowhere better than in 'A Game of Chess', a pastiche of Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra from Shakespeare's play.[1019] The woman's beauty and magnificence are terrifying – best illustrated by the description of her perfume:

> In vials of ivory and coloured glass
> Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes
> Ungent, powdered, or liquid – troubled, confused
> And drowned the sense in odours[.][1020]

These smells 'lurk' like a predator in the shadows – 'strange' and 'synthetic', a scientific simulacrum of a woman's natural smell. Perfume's artificiality is sickening, uncanny: it

---

1016 Helmling, 143.
1017 Eliot, The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 74.
1018 *Ibid*., p. 9, line. 117.
1019 See: *Poems I*, note to lines. 11-12, p. 698.
1020 Eliot, 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11, 10-13.

'trouble[s]' and 'confuse[s]' the male sense, like a dog confused when it does not recognise the scent of its owner. The poet's senses are 'drown[ed]' like the sailor in Sosostris's prophecy:[1021] Was she warning against this woman – warning against the power of her 'synthetic' aura? Her entire presence envelops the room, of which she almost becomes a part. Perfume is a symbol not just of femininity, but of a stifling, expanding femininity, perhaps like the 'female tyrants'[1022] of Boston. It is also a symbol of technology, of the control over one's nature that makes one 'civilised'. There is nowhere to run from this Medusa; one is forced, like Prufrock or the young man in 'Portrait of a Lady', to keep up appearances in a life of tyrannical tea-parties.

On these walls are carved images 'And other tales'[1023] of rape and sexual lust. 'Philomel' is alluded to, whose 'inviolable voice'[1024] will reappear in 'The Fire Sermon' ('Jug jug').[1025] The presence of women here is both oppressive and terrifying on the one hand, but victims of male violence on the other. As in *March Hare* and indeed even the Bolos, woman is a vessel for lust and male sexual fantasies, a victimhood that has lasted for millennia – and yet women also have a commanding power over the male psyche, especially over those trapped in 'Virginity'.[1026] This is what makes them such pertinent symbols for modernity, in Eliot's mind: they are simultaneously victims and perpetrators of modern alienation. It is quite ironic that Vivien wrote of these lines, 'Don't see what you had in mind here':[1027] real women fail to see the mythic role Eliot's anthropological mind instils in them.

Indeed, Vivien's comments on *The Waste Land* drafts are often tinged with this sort of foreboding irony. Near the end of 'A Game of Chess', there is a scene where two lower-

---

1021 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 100.
1022 Pratt, 326.
1023 Eliot, 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11, line. 39.
1024 *Ibid*., line. 26.
1025 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 31, line. 102.
1026 *Ibid*., Letter to Ezra Pound (15th April 1915), in *Letters I*, p. 104.
1027 Vivien Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11.

class women are conversing in a pub, close to last orders (a metaphor, perhaps, for menopause). The lack of trust between men and women in the wasteland is telling:

> think of poor Albert,
> He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it to him, there's many another will.[1028]

Again, here is the dual nature of modern women: vessels for male lust on the one hand ('think of poor Albert', as if Albert's desires are paramount), but also voluntary participants in this sexual status-game, competing ruthlessly against each other for the expansion of their sexual destinies ('there's many another will'). If this game wasn't cruel enough, these lines are spoken to a woman whose teeth were destroyed by pills meant to induce an abortion, and it is even said that the pregnancy was life-threatening: 'She's had five already, and nearly died of young George'.[1029] Wasteland women are horribly callous to one another, all over a tiny speck of status in the eternal beauty contest. Their lives are tyrannised by a burning hastiness, an inability to settle and be still, thundering in their ears in all capitals: 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME'.[1030] Vivien, too, appears to be victim of this malaise. 'What you get married for if you dont want to have children',[1031] she inserts. This immensely powerful line encapsulates the bitterness of intra-female sexual competition, but is also a sly jab at her own doomed marriage, which remained childless. The scene ends with one of the 'bloody stumps' of the past: Ophelia's lines spoken in grief for her dead father Polonius' killer, her lover, Hamlet, who accuses her of being a prostitute – and for which she drowns herself, a literal 'Death by Water'.[1032] How are women meant to cope with such a culture, this allusion implies, without falling into madness and suicidal despair? 'Splendid last lines', Vivien grimly agrees.[1033]

1028 Eliot, 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 13, lines. 73-5.
1029 *Ibid*., line. 86.
1030 *Ibid*., pp. 13-5, lines. 67, 78, 91, 94-5.
1031 Vivien Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 15.
1032 See: *Poems I*, note to line. 172, p. 918.
1033 Vivien Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 15.

None of this is particularly amusing satire. It is more on the tragic rather than the comic end of the spectrum. There can be no doubt, however, that these caricatures of modern women blast open liberal sexual mores 'like a bomb'.[1034] The merging together of the past and the present is key to this sort of satire. The Fisher King is plucked out of his Arthurian myth and thrust into the modern wasteland; musing on the Thames, the dead land that surrounds him mirrors his own sexual impotence. Perhaps he reflects Eliot himself, so anxious about his own sexual inadequacy. Philomel from 'A Game of Chess' returns to haunt him – for indeed, is not the King responsible for the health of his female subjects?

> Twit twit twit twit twit twit twit
> Tereu tereu
> So rudely forc'd.
> Ter[1035]

The Fisher King has no real solutions to the sexual malaise that Eliot saw looming over modern culture. He is impotent, both as a man and as a king. He can only vainly ask, 'Should I set my lands in order?'[1036] The land has already died.

In the Notes, Eliot says Tiresias is the figure that unites the whole poem.[1037] Like Sosostris, Tiresias is a prophet or an oracle. He is no fake or fraud, however, but has genuine power 'gifted' to him by a jealous god. One suspects that Eliot was being facetious with this note. Indeed, there are notes that led to, as Eliot called it, a 'remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship',[1038] and much of these 'bogus' readings appear to have been deliberately incited by Eliot: the lie that the 'Mrs. Porter' ballad comes from Australia, for instance, or the note that cites the 'delusion[s]' of Antarctic explorers rather than the New Testament passages the quotation actually alludes to.[1039] Even the famous remark that 'a good deal of the incidental

---

1034 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO. II.', in *Blast*, p. 31.
1035 Eliot., 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 31, lines. 88-91.
1036 *Ibid*., 'What the Thunder Said', p. 89, line. 105.
1037 *Ibid*., 'Notes', p. 160, note to line. 218.
1038 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems I*, p. 813.
1039 Jo Ellen Green Kaiser. 'Disciplining The Waste Land, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation', in

symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend'[1040] seems only half-true, for there appears to be no such Fisher King narrative structure in the drafts.[1041] One must be careful, then, in trusting Eliot's remarks on Tiresias. Perhaps Tiresias, like Sosostris, has a 'bad cold'.[1042] This confusion is part of the satire of *The Waste Land*, however. The inability to say for certain what is truth and what is not is a key technique of the poem and a key aspect of the alienation it intends to criticise. The reader is forced to personally confront the breakdown of truth and order, the inability to confidently interpret. We may indeed look to these prophets as guiders for our reading – Sosostris's tarots do appear to predict Phlebas's death by water, for instance, and Tiresias similarly gives us insight into the breakdown of sexual relations later on in the section – but to say this is to be, again, a 'hypocrite lecteur',[1043] for it is not really these prophets speaking at all, but Eliot who designs their speech, Eliot who can manufacture their truthfulness or falseness as he pleases. The 'Different Voices'[1044] are all personas of Eliot's design. Invited into the logic of the poem, tricked into treating the 'different voices' as real, we are then mocked for our immersion.

Tiresias, the voyeur of modern sexual decay, has very Eliot-like disdain for the 'crawling bugs'[1045] of the city. Perhaps the 'voice' of Tiresias is a means for Eliot to express his reactionary disgust, dressed up as prophecy – an ironic inversion of Sosostris, peddler of liberal comforts. The figure of the typist Tiresias foretells is a sham cosmopolitan, like the ladies in the British Museum or Cousin Nancy, fond of fake ethnic or cultural relics:

> A bright Kimono wraps her as she sprawls
> In nervous torpor on the window seat;

Twentieth Century Literature, 44.1 (1998) 90-1 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/441698> [Accessed 15-08-2019].

1040 Eliot, 'Notes', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 159.

1041 How would Old Tom, Fresca, the long passage on Phlebas, and so on, fit into such a narrative?

1042 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 7.

1043 *Ibid*., p. 9, line. 130.

1044 *Ibid*., p. 5, title.

1045 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 45, line. 143.

> A touch of art is given by the false
> Japanese print, purchased in Oxford Street.[1046]

This is so like Eliot's voice that it was cut by Pound. There remains, however, the Eliotian disdain for his targets. The 'young man carbuncular' is the one who successfully woos the typist, but it could have been, on 'alternate nights',[1047] 'a cheap house agent's clerk'.[1048] This is the butt-end of Eliot's views on women's sexual competition seen in 'A Game of Chess'. These men are faceless: sexual partners, but nothing more. Indeed, the young man is called 'lover' when he leaves – an ironic word considering his advances were 'unreproved, if undesired'.[1049] To Eliot, women are submissive ('unreproved') even towards evils done against them ('undesired'). They merely persist with their state: 'I'm glad it's over'.[1050] She is portrayed, furthermore, as a kind of hollow man, thinking nothing ('Across her brain a half-formed thought may pass'), and she comforts her emptiness with a 'record on the gramophone'.[1051] The man, on the other hand, remains a deadbeat; he 'urinate[s]' afterwards,[1052] reminding us that the sexual organ is for waste as well as sexual pleasure, an insight Eliot had not employed since the Bolos.

To say this is a cynical depiction of modern people is an understatement. There is perhaps a faint sympathy for the woman who is wronged – but it is only faint. Much like the Fresca passage, which has similar sexual themes, Pound would cut much of this section, removing most of Eliot's more brutal lines and leaving the passage in a far subtler state, allowing the reader to fill in the blanks. All that remains of the urination passage is an ellipsis.[1053] This section is a good example, therefore, of how Eliot's original poem had

---

1046 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 45, lines. 136-9.
1047 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 45.
1048 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 45, lines. 153, 157.
1049 *Ibid*., line. 168.
1050 *Ibid*., p. 47, line. 184.
1051 *Ibid*., p. 45, lines. 183-8.
1052 *Ibid.*, lines. 177-80.
1053 *Ibid.*, p. 153, line. 248.

passages of brutal satire, originally composed in the quatrain form of *Poems 1920*, which were, after editing, either neutered or removed entirely.

'What to feel and what to think': miscellaneous poems

There are a number of 'miscellaneous poems' in *The Waste Land* facsimile that resemble Eliot's early satires of women. It is not clear whether Eliot intended to place these poems somewhere in *The Waste Land* but he couldn't find room, or whether they were just partially unrelated leaves gathered and posted to Quinn. Whatever the case, they are evidence that *Poems 1920*-style satire was still on Eliot's mind as he was writing *The Waste Land*. Even if they were not intended for the poem, some of them have themes, and even lines, that made it into the published poem. It was probably Pound, either directly through his edits or through the influence of his principles, that led Eliot to discard these miscellanea. Like the Tiresias and Fresca passages, they are too sharp-edged, too much like Eliot's earlier work, to warrant 'so much of it'.[1054]

Written much earlier, 'Death of the Duchess' is the most closely related to *The Waste Land* in satirical themes. It is reminiscent of the 'closed carriage at four' passage from 'A Game of Chess'. It perhaps 'recalls the hesitating, Jamesian voice of "Prufrock"'.[1055] Like the Oxford Poems, it targets the bored bourgeois, this time not New Englanders, but Londoners:

> The inhabitants of Hampstead have silk hats
> On Sunday afternoon go out to tea
> On Saturday have tennis on the lawn, and tea
> On Monday to the city, and then tea.[1056]

It is not often that Eliot repeats the same phrase in simultaneous lines ('and then tea'), but here it is effective in displaying the despairing boredom of these characters. Like 'Portrait of a Lady', this is a world of polite conversation and quaint interests, but dramatizes the

1054 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 45.
1055 Longenbach, 'The Contrived Corridors…', 182.
1056 Eliot, 'Death of the Duchess', Part I, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 105, lines 1-4.

difficulties of true understanding – this is a life 'measured out in coffee spoons'.[1057] It is probably the case that this episode reflected aspects of Eliot's life in England – indeed one gets this impression from his letters. There is little sympathy here, however. In familiar Eliotian satire, these 'inhabitants of Hampstead' are disparaged as marionettes or 'Paladins':[1058]

> They know what to think and what to feel
> The inhabitants of Hampstead are bound forever on the wheel.[1059]

This may have been woven into *The Waste Land*, if not for its too-specific placement of its targets; certainly it recalls the 'half-formed thought'[1060] lines from the Typist section. In typical sly Eliotian fashion, he draws the reader into this world, as if the poet's prejudices against these 'crawling bugs'[1061] are also our own:

> But what is there for you and me
> For me and you
> What is there for us to do
> Where the leaves meet in leafy Marylebone?[1062]

These lines would be reformed into the 'What shall we ever do?' passage from 'A Game of Chess',[1063] or at least share similar themes. 'What should we do?' is a burning question in *The Waste Land*, reframed by the Fisher King in the closing lines.[1064] In the published poem, there is not so much laughter as a kind of sympathy or sadness for these paralysed characters – but not so in the drafts.

There are flashes of Eliot's strange sympathy in 'Duchess', however. The satire is double-edged. 'Duchess' is split into two parts, and the second part becomes almost surreal in its imagery. 'In the evening people hang upon the bridge rail / Like onions under the

---

1057 Eliot, 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 34, line. 51.
1058 *Ibid*., 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, line. 14.
1059 *Ibid*., 'Death of the Duchess', Part I, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 105, lines 8-9.
1060 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 47, line. 183.
1061 *Ibid*., p. 45, line. 143.
1062 *Ibid*., 'Death of the Duchess', Part I, p. 105, lines 10-4.
1063 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', p. 19, lines. 56-64.
1064 As in, 'Should I set my lands in order?', from 'What the Thunder Said', p. 79, line. 109.

eaves'[1065] anticipates the lines at the end of 'Burial of the Dead', with the crowd over London Bridge and the sprouting corpses.[1066] Is Eliot mocking these figures, dehumanising them, or is there a strange envy of their ignorance? Later on, for instance, he transforms these figures into animals:

> Supposing that they have the heads of birds
> Beaks and no words,
> What words have we?[1067]

'[T]he heads of birds' may be disparaging – 'bird-brained', as it were – but one must remember that Eliot did have Lewisian respect for the animal and the primitive in man. Indeed, it is one of his chief criticisms of modernity, that we have dissociated ourselves from nature. Sometimes the dehumanisation is more on the disparaging side, as with the lines, 'The people leaning against another in the square / Discuss the evening's news, and other bird things'[1068] – but it is only a few lines prior where this disparagement leans into sympathy: 'I should like to be in a crowd of beaks without words.'[1069] Like Prufrock, the poet retreats from the world of chattering tea parties into the primeval slime of 'ragged claws'.[1070] In 'Duchess' he even goes as far to say, 'But it is terrible to be alone with another person.'[1071] The tone here is not that of a drab 'grouse against life'.[1072] Rather, here there is a deliberate and self-conscious irony. It is reminiscent of the lines from 'Portrait', where the poet just wants to escape to the park and read the sports pages of the newspaper.[1073] It is a shallow and emasculating hell in which he is trapped – but is there not something pathetic, perhaps even comedic, about a man who allows himself to be tyrannised so? It is a consistent mood in Eliot's early work, a jealousy towards the 'bird-brained', the ignorant, the spontaneous –

1065 Eliot, 'Death of the Duchess', Part I, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 105, line. 16.
1066 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 9, lines. 114-30.
1067 Eliot, 'Death of the Duchess', Part II, p. 105, lines 7-9.
1068 *Ibid*., lines 15-6. Perhaps recalls 'The Boston Evening Transcript' in theme.
1069 *Ibid*., line 10.
1070 *Ibid*., 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 35, lines. 73-4.
1071 *Ibid*., 'Death of the Duchess', Part II, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 105, line. 11.
1072 *Ibid*., quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 1.
1073 *Ibid*., 'Portrait', in *Poems I*, p. 41, lines. 31-2.

those who are uninhibited by stifling self-awareness. They do not require 'discipline' to feel at home in modernity. He oscillates between moods of bitter disparagement towards these people, as in Fresca, or strange envy, found here.

The disparagement is mostly towards women, but it is also sometimes directed towards Jews. In 'Dirge', the character Bleistein from *Poems 1920* reappears. It might be the case that Phlebas, Sosostris's 'drowned Phoenician Sailor',[1074] may have originally been Bleistein, for 'Dirge' bears a striking resemblance to 'Death by Water'. In *The Waste Land*, there are hints at Phlebas's status – 'he was once handsome and tall'[1075] – but in 'Dirge', the target is specifically a wealthy Jew:

> Lower than the wharf rats dive
> Though he suffer a sea-change
> Still expensive rich and strange.[1076]

There is no 'enhance[ment]'[1077] of the character here, no strange sympathy; it is pure dismemberment of the status of wealth. The rich Jew is here imagined 'Under the flatfish and the squids'.[1078] Death decays his bejewelled body:

> Flood tide and ebb tide
> Roll him gently side to side
> See the lips unfold
> From the teeth, gold in gold.[1079]

Perhaps Eliot intended a Poundian condemnation of usury and wealth-hoarding; it is insinuated that Bleistein was a wealthy fur merchant in *Poems 1920*. However, such condemnation of Jews in particular is a serious lapse into prejudice which often disfigures Eliot's satirical poetry. So too does it diminish the Shakespearean allusion that models these lines – they are a disrespectful 'parody' of *The Tempest*, as Pound might have put it.

1074 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 100.
1075 *Ibid*., 'Death by Water', p. 61, line. 93.
1076 *Ibid*., 'Dirge', p. 119, lines 5-7.
1077 *Ibid*., 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.
1078 *Ibid*., 'Dirge', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 119, lines 1-2.
1079 *Ibid*., lines 12-5.

'Diminishing' his target too much,[1080] it is no surprise that Pound encouraged Eliot to remove this passage in the final draft. Indeed, 'Dirge' is quite different from the published lines, with their more gentle embrace, 'Gentile or jew',[1081] placed into the section's prophetic warning.

Fresca's 'all-consuming itch'

I have already briefly alluded to some of Pound's edits, the notion that he excised the 'old' satire that was too disparaging or too weak. In this section, I will detail more specifically what I mean by this, using the Fresca section as an illustration, since it is by far the most pertinent example of Pound's anti-satirical edits.

The Fresca section made up the bulk of 'The Fire Sermon', before it was cut by Pound. At this point in the poem, the reader would have been introduced into the spiritual wasteland in 'Burial of the Dead', and the cynical sexuality that is a product of this degeneration in 'A Game of Chess'. The latter section ends with Ophelia's suicide, the ultimate reaction to woman's despair. In 'The Fire Sermon', we are introduced to a female character, one who voluntarily submits to the wasteland's sexual mores, Fresca the spinster. 'White-armed Fresca'[1082] recalls Cousin Nancy or Eliot's other Bostonian ladies ('Arms that are braceleted and white and bare'),[1083] but here Eliot's disdain is unmediated, barely constrained by the Popean couplets. Whereas 'A Game of Chess' ends with a woman destroyed by an untrustworthy and hypocritical sexual culture, Fresca is (or believes herself to be) the beneficiary of that culture. She is so perverted that Eliot writes that she finds 'pleas[ure]' in her 'rapes'.[1084] Her lifestyle is lavish and clearly upper-class, recalling the 'burnished throne' lines from 'A Game of Chess'[1085] – but here there is no male figure

1080 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.
1081 *Ibid*., 'Death by Water', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 155, line. 319.
1082 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 39, line. 3.
1083 *Ibid*., 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 34, line. 63.
1084 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 39, line. 4.
1085 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', p. 17, lines. 1-35.

terrified by her power. Her power is fickle and unreal. This is Eliot's vision of a modern woman, unconstrained.

Fresca is quite literally a 'female tyrant'.[1086] She is a bourgeois lady whose only company is her servant, 'Amanda',[1087] whom she barely acknowledges. We never receive an insight into what Amanda thinks of her mistress, unlike in 'Cousin Nancy', for instance. Even in the text, Fresca maintains a perspectival tyranny: the narrative is half inside her head, and even the half that is outside is still reflects the narrator's obsessive condemnations of her. She goes about her morning routine with barely any care or self-insight. The reader sees through her eyes by the free-indirect narration, which disguises her acts behind polite innuendo: 'Fresca slips softly to the needful stool […] Eases her labour till the deed is done.'[1088] This line is drenched in sarcasm, and intends to 'diminish'.[1089] There is barely a line in the Fresca episode that is not obsessed with Eliot's own bitter caricature of womanhood.

Eliot clearly finds it hard to sympathise with Fresca; it is as though her representation is mixed up with too many bad memories. If one steps back from the deceitful language that invites our prejudices, Eliot's constant condemnations of her are often unwarranted. Even in his own critical terms, there is no objective correlative, no object that reifies the emotion. Even in 'A Game of Chess' there is a strange reverence for the power of the lady on the 'burnished throne'[1090] – but in the Fresca passage, there are no lustrous descriptions of lavish perfumes or wealth or beauty, just,

> Odours, confected by the ~~cunning~~ artful French
> Disguise the good old hearty female stench.[1091]

1086 Pratt, 326.
1087 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon' in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 39, line. 6.
1088 *Ibid*., lines. 12-4.
1089 *Ibid*., 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.
1090 *Ibid*., 'A Game of Chess', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11, line. 1.
1091 *Ibid*., 'The Fire Sermon', p. 23, lines. 40-1.

Eliot often fixates on misogynistic stereotypes, the most 'flat' and grotesque image of femininity imaginable – in this case, strong smells. Perfume is a particularly feminine symbol – and for Eliot, a mark of the tempting yet terrifying presence of woman ('Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?')[1092] Here, however, there is none of this psychological subtlety, only crude condemnation. 'Good old hearty female stench' could almost be a line from the Bolo verses.

Furthermore, it is a crude condemnation that lacks self-consciousness – a quality that we normally associate with Eliot. Even Prufrock, for instance, has a paralysing anxiety over his physical appearance:

> Time to turn back and descend the stair,
> With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —
> (They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')
> My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
> My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —
> (They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')[1093]

But there is no such self-consciousness in the narrator of the Fresca episode. Fresca is judged for her appearance, but there is no male equivalent, or an attempt at psychological depth, to balance the weight of Eliot's disdain. Therefore, the passage descends into mere hatred, unrefined misogyny. Deane is right that is that this is not really a true reflection of Pope:

> Like Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, it [the Fresca couplets] has a very clear satiric intention, and while the butt of Eliot's attack is much the same as Pope's was – a particular human and social malaise – there is in the imitation of that particular style of satire a telling complication. After all, what we have in the Fresca passage is not simply, as in Pope, the trivial made ludicrous by being made mighty; Fresca is a parody of a parody, her tawdriness and the emptiness of her life accentuated by unflattering comparison with the trivial and idiotic Belinda, who next to her seems positively dignified.[1094]

The Fresca episode, then, particularly targets women in a crude and stereotypical sense. Even the Oxford poems set broader sights on the religious and political sensibilities of women; but

---

1092 Eliot, 'Prufrock', in *Poems I*, p. 34, lines. 65-6.
1093 *Ibid*., pp. 33-4, lines. 39-44.
1094 Deane, 85.

in the Fresca episode, Eliot largely forgets these socio-political concerns, and descends into a mere mockery of 'female nature':

> Women intellectual grow dull,
> And lose the mother wit of natural trull.[1095]

He is of course imitating Pope here – but Pope acknowledged the virtue and beauty of women, even when condemning them for their ostensible fickleness.

Fresca is a Popean figure, in many respects: a socialite, a gossip, an Ape of God – but she has no male friends, and certainly no husband, only lovers. There are no men in this scene, only the female servant and the female friend whose letter Fresca reads. Their true unhappiness is communicated light-heartedly, the humorous grin concealing agony that Wyndham Lewis so despised: 'I went last night', Fresca's friend writes, '– more out of dull despair – / To lady Kleinwurm's party'.[1096] She has a vague disillusion at her unhappy state, unable to be spoken, but hastily repressed by socialising and gossip:

> What are you reading? anything that's new?
> I have a clever book by Giraudoux.
> Clever, I think, is all. I've much to say –
> But cannot say it – that is just my way –[1097]

A persistent theme with Eliot, women are emblems of a bogus high culture keen to show off but having nothing to say. She can only call the 'Giradoux' book 'clever'[1098] – the same charge given to Eliot's early poems.[1099] There is much culture in the lives of these two women, but no families. Fresca too has no husband, only 'new lovers'[1100] – the plural here meaning that her relationship with at least one of these men will lead nowhere. This passage mimics a letter, and so perhaps it is a result of accident rather than intention, but nonetheless it is indicative of these women's lives that is emphasised but offset, we are made aware that

---

1095 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 41, lines. 54-5.
1096 *Ibid*., p. 23, lines. 25-6. Again the name here, German for 'small worm', invites disdain.
1097 *Ibid*., lines. 29-32.
1098 *Ibid*., lines. 30-1.
1099 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, pp. 75-6.
1100 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 23, line. 34.

Fresca has only a 'friend'.[1101] One gets the sense that unlike some of the other figures in *The Waste Land*, Eliot believes Fresca deserves her loneliness.

His relatively few attempts at sympathy, such as this one,

> Fresca! in other time or place had been
> A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene[1102]

still conceal a bitterness and mockery. Magdalene (in most traditions) was a prostitute who gave up her profession for life in Christ, but here there is no indication that Fresca would commit such a noble sacrifice. Eliot is clear on this point later in the episode, where his disdain for sexual licentiousness becomes unrestrained:

> (The same eternal and consuming itch
> Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
> Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,
> Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,
> Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,
> A doorstep dunged by every dog in town.[1103]

The cynicism towards modern sexual culture here reappears, far stronger and with no sympathy to mellow it. If *The Waste Land* really was a 'personal grouse against life',[1104] the grouse here is obvious. One wonders how much of the poem conceals resentment against his own wife, for he surely suspected her affair with Bertrand Russell.[1105] This resentment he disguises behind an allusion to Marvell's seduction of 'His Coy Mistress',

> But at my back from time to time I hear
> The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread ear to ear[1106]

but one cannot help but see this as posturing. As Eliot would say himself, his own sexuality was malformed – which makes his lack of any counter-narrative all the more concerning. At times this episode feels almost like a more refined return to the Bolos. The satire here

---

1101 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 23, line. 36.
1102 *Ibid*., p. 27, lines.42-3.
1103 *Ibid*., lines. 46-51.
1104 *Ibid*., quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 1.
1105 Indeed he himself had an affair in the period between Vivien's affair and the publication of *The Waste Land*. See: Crawford, *Eliot After The Waste Land*, p. 7.
1106 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 27, lines. 70-1.

condemns and diminishes, but it does not really lead one towards contemplation, draws the reader into a sympathy with the wastelanders, or lead us towards a difficult recognition at our own participation in the hollow world. Rather, it is mockery, laughter at an 'other'. However, by now, Eliot had (or should have) moved on from this kind of mere 'humour'.[1107] So perhaps it is no surprise that Pound regarded the Fresca passage as irredeemable, and advised cutting the entire thing.

'Complimenti, you bitch': Pound's edits

In 1920, Pound published *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* in fragments ('mutilations', as he called them later), to a poor reception. He was determined not to let Eliot make the same mistake with his long poem, insisting that the fragments had to somehow be ordered into a coherent whole. This context is best described by Matthew Hollis:

> [*Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* was] the greatest original effort of Pound's career: he had aimed at a withering assault upon establishment Britain, its hypocritical war, the slaughter of its young men in a futile cause, the failure of art to adequately respond to the trauma of the time, the unwillingness of a society to listen, the widening chasm between art and everyday life, the farewell to failure, to a bygone world: for all that effort, the reward would be four brief sentences in *The Times* that culminated in a hope that *his poems would be sweeter*.[1108]

This remark must have been painful for Pound. It reminds one of Eliot's disdain at his reputation as a 'mere Wit'.[1109] The general reading public, it seemed, did not have room for the aspirations of these men. Pound, like his friend, grew weary of the French quatrain form, now considered too rigid for his broader social aspirations. In this mindset, he began to edit *The Waste Land*.

1107 Lewis, '[5]', in *Blast*, p. 17.
1108 Hollis, p. 193.
1109 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15 Feb 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.

Pound's edits are mostly formal, getting rid of verse he considered too regular or not sufficiently 'made new'. There are a few basic rules that Pound appears to follow with his editorial decisions, which become clear as he continuously makes the same criticisms repeatedly. 'A distinctive cadence. A personal modus of arrangement. Remote origins of a personal quality'[1110] – these are Pound's main aesthetics, according to Hollis. 'One must have emotion or one's cadence and rhythms will be vapid and without any interest', as Pound said himself, many years earlier.[1111] Pound does not always apply this rule consistently – there are plenty of times where he does not criticise Eliot's long stretches of iambic metre – but rather is selectively applied only when particular instances offend his rather idiosyncratic ear. 'Too tum-pum at a stretch', he says of one passage from 'A Game of Chess'. '[T]oo penty' and 'wobbly', he says of another passage, even drawing the accents of metre, '- / - / - /'.[1112] 'London, the swarming life you kill and breed' has similar marks over the words.[1113] Strictness in verse was a long-standing gripe of Pound's, as far back as his Imagist days. Indeed, a Laforguen disregard for metrical strictness is surely what fascinated him with 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' when he first read it almost a decade earlier. It is no surprise, then, that he would make similar criticisms when editing his friend's new long poem. It is probably also no surprise that the Fresca passage, written in couplets that ape Pope, should be so 'tum-pum', and so numerous, that he would not attempt to edit them, preferring to cross out the entire section.

In Pound's Imagist rules developed years prior, Pound several times attacks imprecision or sloppiness of Eliot's vocabulary, particularly the word 'perhaps', or 'dam per'apsey' as he called it in the drafts.[1114] Sloppiness, imprecision, a sense perhaps of

---

1110 Hollis, p. 232.
1111 Pound, quoted in *ibid*., p. 16.
1112 *Ibid*., quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 11.
1113 *Ibid*., p. 43.
1114 *Ibid*., p. 31.

emotional ambiguity – these are anathema to Pound's aesthetic of sharpness, precision, and a striving after objectivity. However, then in other cases, Pound underlines words that he calls 'dogmatic', including 'one' and 'little'[1115] – terms that specify or clarify a quantity or a particular feeling, in other words. He says that Eliot's usage of the word 'one' is 'too much like Kipling'[1116] – too Victorian, too authoritative, too personal, perhaps. 'Pound didn't want to see Romanticism', Hollis says,

> and he didn't want realism either, marking 'photography' and 'photo' against the nerves passages as if they were somehow too realistic to be art. And he most certainly did not want anachronism. He ringed 'the closed carriage' at four as a 'Blot' between '1922 & Lil' of the pub scene, and just to clear up any doubt, dated the lines he thought dated: '(1880)'.

Pound's standard, then, is not so much for precision or imprecision broadly conceived, but rather, he wished to protect a certain tone, that of sharpness and detachment, as opposed to sentiment or untempered personality. This 'ferocity, intensity',[1117] as it might be called, was of course privileged by Eliot as well: he concurred with Pound's excisions on virtually all occasions. The aesthetic of Eliot's early career, influenced as it was by Lewis and Pound, was not yet completely lost. Hence why Pound suggested to completely cut the entire Fresca passage. Pound had no sympathy for Popean decorous innuendo, even if Eliot's lines were self-consciously a parody.

In regards of the notion of poetic 'voices', this is the point of greatest interest in Pound's edits. A large part of Pound's editorial ethos is disturbing – not eliminating fully, but severely muddying – the narrative of the poem. Large parts of 'The Burial of the Dead', 'The Fire Sermon', and 'Death by Water' are cut out completely, scrawled through with his discerning pen – and mostly they are sections with identifiable characters, settings, or contexts. 'Death by Water' is the most ruthlessly cut, going from one of the largest sections

---

1115 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 13.
1116 *Ibid*., p. 11.
1117 Rainey, 51.

in Eliot's original draft to barely half a page in the published poem. Pound's rationale for this edit is characteristically vague and brief:

> Phlebas is an integral part of the poem; the card pack introduces him, the drowned phoen. Sailor, and his is needed ABSo-loootly where he is.[1118]

This implies, of course, that the tarot card motif is some kind of structural device, at least in Pound's reading, and that perhaps he edited the rest of the poem with that in mind. Lawrence Rainey describes the effect this note has had:

> 'She [Madam Sosostris] must,' one critic has observed, 'provide the dots that the rest of the poem must connect into a semblance of plot.' This is a perceptive account, provided we understand that its key word is really 'semblance,' to be taken in the strong sense as 'an assumed or unreal appearance of something; mere show.' What *The Waste Land* needed wasn't plot or narrative coherence, but the likeness of a plot, one that would instantly dissolve into illusion. For it requires only a moment to recall that Madame Sosostris is a charlatan, or that the drowned Phoenician sailor isn't even a card in the traditional Tarot pack.[1119]

The 'semblance' of plot is an important notion, one that ties together Eliot's ideas on the historical sense and Pound's editorial process. Part of what Pound was trying to do in his ruthless excisions of *The Waste Land* drafts is complicating the evidence that the poem, as Eliot said of Pound's work, 'had been written by somebody'.[1120] Their shared aesthetic, going into the 1920s, was one of deliberate narrative confusion, of deliberate muddying of the author's presence – a development of the *Poems 1920* aesthetic, but more broadly, a necessity of modernist principles itself, writing as they were in a time of 'great variety and complexity', as Eliot famously put it in 'The Metaphysical Poets'.[1121] An age categorised by a lack of self-confidence could not have the 'personality' of previous ages – there could be no confident belief in social principles, anymore. Seen in this light, Fresca does not fit: she is too particular of a target, too much of a grotesque figure that invites moral scorn – and Eliot's

---

1118 Pound, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 790.
1119 Rainey, 49.
1120 Eliot, 'The Method of Mr. Pound', in *Prose II*, p. 143.
1121 *Ibid*., 'The Metaphysical Poets', p. 381.

condemnations of her vanity and lack of moral fortitude hold little weight in a culture that does not share his moral foundations. The power of satire to morally outrage its readers was a power long ago diminished. If Eliot was to write satire, Pound contends, then he must take account of this fact.

Pound possibly also had one eye on the censors. Well-aware of the London magazine culture, and also aware of the obscenity scandal surrounding *Ulysses*, Pound shows, at points, a lack of nerve. He cut the 'urinate and spit' lines from the typist passage, possibly keeping in mind the similar scene from Joyce's novel; 'probaly [sic] over the mark',[1122] he says, advising Eliot to eliminate the lines – which Eliot obeys. Indeed, Pound's 'puritanical principles', as Eliot might have jokingly put it, may have been a reason behind Pound's complete condemnation of the Fresca passages, in which she also, like Bloom, defecates – a remarkably irreverent passage of (somewhat refined, but nonetheless) toilet humour. Pound often removes this sort of humour from the drafts, as Rulo says in *Satiric Modernism*:

> Pound's edits suppress the more overt satire and the grotesque. The 'broken breakfast' is now just 'breakfast.' The 'food in tins' was once 'squalid'; the 'camisoles' were once 'dirty.' The 'cheap house agent's clerk' becomes a 'small house agent's clerk.' 'Knowing the manner of these crawling bugs' is crossed out for being 'Too easy.' The young man after leaving the apartment building originally 'Delays only to urinate, and spit,' but this was deemed 'probably over the mark' by Pound.[1123]

Indeed, this is more-or-less Pound's sentiment towards the whole Fresca section: it is too 'personal', too 'easy', too far 'over the mark' to be considered seriously.

In the drafts, Eliot does not just disparage women in general, but particularly the literary culture of women. Perhaps Pound's fear of the censors was warranted. Despite their jokes in private, the pair must have had a very real disdain for the puritanism of their age. Eliot himself wrote, for instance,

---

1122 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 47.
1123 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 98.

> I am putting a short notice of the Cantleman trial [a short story by Lewis, subject to an obscenity trial in 1917] in this month's *Egoist*. I think the typical American attitude in such matters is like that of Miss Amy Lowell, who is always decrying abstract Puritanism, but who when faced with some particular work of art offensive to Puritan tastes curls up like a hedgehog. The American Liberal Varnish.[1124]

Eliot would eventually succumb to Pound's decision to cut the entire Fresca passage, and one wonders how much of this was submission to Pound's insight into the publishing world, rather than just his poetic prowess.[1125] Indeed, Eliot himself would eventually adopt what Edwards calls a 'po-faced strategy' in 'his respectable magazine, *The Criterion*',[1126] and would continue to associate himself with the Bloomsbury group despite Lewis's condemnation of them. Much later still, of course, he would further refine his public persona as the 'Pope of Russell Square'. Arriving in England as the satirist of Boston, intensely interested in the fiery rhetoric of Vorticism, he eventually learned that he must conceal this side of himself, lest he end up 'sensitive'[1127] but ostracised like Lewis. Pound's tough-love reminder that some of the lines from *The Waste Land* were 'over the mark' had an important bearing on Eliot's change of 'strategy'.

This is not to say that Pound was always protective of his friend. Pound's cutting of the Fresca passages, unlike some of his other edits, was disparaging and ruthless: he had repeatedly run his pen downward across the entire passage, with nine swift gashes, one so deep that it scored the paper and allowed the ink to bleed through to the verso side.[1128] His chief criticism of the section is not that it parodied women, however, but that it parodied Pope. What he says is that the '<u>verse</u> [is] not interesting enough'[1129] – meaning not the

---

1124 Eliot, Letter to John Quinn (4th March 1918), in *Letters I*, p. 254.
1125 *Ibid*., *The Waste Land*, in *Poems I*, p. 96, dedication: 'For Ezra Pound / *il miglior fabbro*.'
1126 Paul Edwards. 'Futurism, literature and the market', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 150.
1127 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', 169.
1128 Rainey, 31-2.
1129 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land*, p. 45.

subject matter of bourgeois ladies, but the verse itself, which is deliberately archaic. 'If you mean this as a burlesque of Pope', Pound said, 'you had better suppress it, for you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope – and you can't.'[1130] Some critics agree with Pound's assessment: David Ward calls the couplets 'nerveless and slack',[1131] whereas Marjorie Perloff says that the lines Pound cut are both 'offensive' and 'weak'.[1132] Deane says that

> it is surely clear that the Fresca episode is not a literary satire but a pastiche, its aim not primarily to mock a style, but rather to use that style – however unusual and outdated – to mock something else.[1133]

'These were prurient, damning and lustful reductions without clear motivation', Hollis says; 'As a literary trope it didn't work; as an evocation of personality it was repellent.[1134] Philip Cohen hints at the misogyny behind Eliot's 'parody', claiming that he 'has none of Pope's occasional playfulness and very real fascination with Belinda'.[1135] Pound himself makes similar remarks to Cohen, disparaging Eliot's inability to compose couplets as subtly as Pope: the 'trick of Pope etc [is] not to let the couple[t] diffuse 'em', he wrote in one of the margins.[1136] This is again an essentially Imagist criticism, that the couplet form ostensibly 'diffuse[s]' – widens and scatters – the poetry. The Fresca episode is several pages long, and as with 'Death by Water', Pound tended to favour cutting large sections that could in essence be stripped to a few lines. There was no need to have 'so much of it'.[1137] Satire, in his and Lewis's formulation, should be sharp, hard, and objective. Believing Eliot had this same aesthetic, he was confused whether or not Eliot intended to 'parody' Pope (rather than imitate him), since in their formulation, this intricate Augustan style was basically dead, replaced by

---

1130 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land*, p. 127, note 1 to p. 23.
1131 David Ward, quoted in Lehman, 74.
1132 Marjorie Perloff, quoted in *ibid*.
1133 Deane, 85.
1134 Hollis, p. 282.
1135 Philip Cohen, quoted in *ibid*.
1136 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land*, p. 39.
1137 *Ibid*., p. 45.

condensation and precision. If Pope was to be revived, it should be in essence if not altogether in style – as in the lines praised as Popean by Clive Bell, for instance. Perhaps Eliot did succeed in this aim; Yeats called Eliot 'an Alexander Pope', after all.

Pound's criticisms are not always wholly aesthetic, however. The notion that the satire should have been sharper and shorter is certainly the main driving force behind Pound's comments, but it is not the only one. His remark that the couplets 'parody Pope' is rather strange, on the surface.[1138] The passage does not parody, but pastiches Pope. Surely Pope was just a vessel for Eliot to channel his misogynistic satire – yet another allusion to poetry's past, alongside the many (which Pound didn't cut) to Dante, Shakespeare, and so on. Indeed, Pope is the poet who chastised 'dullness'[1139], and so does seem, in a sense, to have a sort of affinity with the 'Men of 1914' in his scathing attacks of bourgeois femininity, the hollow romance of the characters of women. '[M]ost women have no characters at all', as Pope put it in one of his epistles[1140] – a line that Eliot alludes to.[1141] So why would Eliot parody Pope?

Pound meant, by this phrase, that Eliot misread Pope as a moralist. Pope had a 'real fascination with Belinda',[1142] as Cohen says – but Eliot has no fascination with Fresca. Eliot's couplets are virtually all condemnatory. At points, this condemnation is so strong that it appears as misogyny, compared to Pope's ostensible moralism. Take these lines, for instance:

> Not quite an adult, still less a child,
> By taste misbred, by flattering friends beguiled.[1143]

This is supposed to be mocking Fresca, but it also – unintentionally or not – ends up mocking Pope's characteristic feigned arrogance. Its criticism of Fresca is rooted in concepts long

---

1138 Lehman, pp. 74-5.
1139 Alexander Pope, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 920.
1140 *Ibid*., 'Epistle to a Lady', in Pat Rogers ed., Oxford World Classics edn., *Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 106, line. 2.
1141 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 27, lines. 54-5: 'Women ~~grown~~ intellectual grow dull'.
1142 Cohen, quoted in Lehman, 74.
1143 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 27, lines. 67-8.

dead: the idea of a 'misbred' sensibility, for instance, so strong in Pope's day but almost laughable in the 1920s. To turn back towards the Augustan mode would succeed only in confusing the modern reader, rather than defend a particular social philosophy or achieve the moral 'edification' intended by Pope.[1144] Pound generally avoids poetry that strays into the realm of 'social utility', Deane says; and 'as one might predict, this makes Pound particularly unsympathetic to English literature of the very period that Eliot came to find congenial: the eighteenth century.'[1145] Indeed, this was even the case with Lewis, whose 'non-moral' satire influenced Eliot's earlier poetry, but which Eliot clearly did not find as congenial during his more conflicted state of mind in which he wrote *The Waste Land*. 'The satirist today does not engage in the satire of "edification" because he cannot be relied upon to be a guarantee of social values', Rulo says;

> If the modernist did attempt this kind of traditional satire, he would jeopardize his aesthetic project by foregrounding, even if inadvertently, the question of value (because the 'values' of the satirist would likely not be the values of the established social order). As a result, the effort must be toward a '"satire" *for its own sake*' founded not on ethics but on truth, for 'Satire in reality often is nothing else but *the truth* — the truth, in fact, of Natural Science.' The 'objective, non-emotional truth' is disinterested and therefore one whose ethical valuations can be left to the reader.[1146]

The satire of *Poems 1920* was in part an attempt to move towards this 'satire for its own sake' – away from 'Swift' and 'Molière' and towards 'Rabelais' and Jonson.[1147] Eliot even said himself that, to a modern reader, Pope succeeds only in 'diminish[ing]'[1148] his targets. All of Pope's fascination with the moral complexities of his ladies is lost on the modern reader,

---

1144 Eliot would also defend the Augustan value of 'edification' in his prose, starting an argument between him and Pound. See: Jo Ellen Green Kaiser. 'Disciplining *The Waste Land*, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 44.1 (1998), 82-99 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/441698> [Accessed 15-08-2019].

1145 Patrick Deane. 'Rhetoric and Affect: Eliot's Classicism, Pound's Symbolism, and the Drafts of *The Waste Land*', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 18.1 (1992) 81. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831548> [Accessed 31-03-2020].

1146 Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, pp. 107-8.

1147 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.

1148 *Ibid*., 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.

whose morals are but 'a heap of broken images'.[1149] In other words, the Fresca passage is 'diffuse'[1150] not just in its archaic style but also in its confused satirical sensibility – a piece of 'rhythmic grumbling'[1151] that does not split open modern mores, but merely displays Eliot's 'antique'[1152] resentments out in the open, aligning himself with a now-ineffective moralism.

Eliot's last laugh: the death of a satirist

According to Lehman's thesis, satire was removed from the drafts of *The Waste Land* and replaced by the 'mythical method' because it could not adequately order the poem's many disparate images.[1153] No doubt Lehman is right that satire was removed from the drafts, but I do not wholly concur with his diagnosis, for the 'mythical method' also does not appear in the drafts. Indeed, Pound tends to cut the narrative-oriented sections like 'Death by Water'. Pound believed the tarot cards were the ordering device of the poem (or at least had an intuition that they were),[1154] and so his removal of all but a 'semblance of plot'[1155] was done with this in mind. Indeed, apart from the note referring to 'Miss Weston's book'[1156] in the book edition, and some vague allusions to a figure resembling the Fisher King, it is hard to see where the grail myth, and Eliot's 'method' in presenting it, features in the poem at all. It makes more sense, especially after a formal analysis of the drafts, to acknowledge that the drafted poem stemmed primarily from his sexual resentments and the satirical themes he had been writing on since *March Hare*. Pound's revisions drew the poem towards abstractness rather than narrative, towards efficiency and clarity of image rather than moral purpose. He

1149 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 76.
1150 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 39.
1151 Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 1.
1152 Hollis, p. 348.
1153 Lehman, 66.
1154 Pound, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 790.
1155 Rainey, 49.
1156 Eliot, 'Notes', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 159.

did not share Eliot's admiration for the satirical couplets, and considered the imitations of Pope to be an unworthy direction to go in. What was to be done with the satire was the main concern of the editing process.

I do agree with Lehman, however, that one of the main purposes of Eliot's satire was to signal to his readers, both sympathetic and unsympathetic, that he had not 'been taken in'[1157] by modernity. This motives Eliot's allusive technique; he did not intend to belittle the present by unfavourable juxtapositions with the past, but to show a shared affinity between ages – to order the 'jangling' images in a way that cannot be done by the 'confounded […] ordinary man'.[1158] At many points, it is Eliot's intention that the reader should feel confused, baffled by the bizarre literary collage before them. The reader is made to realise that they are a 'hypocrite lecteur'.[1159] Eliot must have thought that the initial reviews had proved his point. Critics expressed disgust at a poem that they thought was 'calculated to annoy',[1160] and indeed, rather than disparaging these critics for being philistine or reactionary, I see these responses as important (albeit accidental) insights into the satirical nature of the poem, responses that capture the real experience of first-time readers.

The wasteland's inhabitants run from 'The horror'[1161] of this disjointed, fractured world. Nightlife and socialisation are the main retreats – as indeed it was for Eliot himself. As Eliot showed in 'Cousin Nancy', he saw this kind of retreat ultimately as a quaint rebellion, an alignment with stale liberalism that, for all its promised freedom, was no cure for loneliness. In *The Waste Land*, mysticism is another one of these futile rebellions; Pound is right that the tarot cards signal the main themes of the poem. God is 'hanged' in this wasteland, but the need for Him endures. Of course, the widespread horror of WWI was a

1157 Lehman, 69.
1158 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 747.
1159 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 9, line. 130.
1160 Monro, p. 88.
1161 Eliot, *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 3, epigraph.

contributor to Eliot's mindset, but I think *The Waste Land* is more than a war poem; it is a poem about boredom, confused gender roles, and sexual instability, all of which were brought about through the rise of liberalism, and which Eliot experienced in his own fractured personal life. Eliot sough to mock the wastelanders (especially those who, like Fresca, willingly embrace sexual freedom), but not always in a straightforward manner; for he sought to 'enhance', not merely 'diminish'[1162] his subjects – and as 'old Tom'[1163] he walks the world with them, embracing his role in a hell he cannot escape.

The Waste Land Facsimile reveals just how prophetic Eliot's cynical vision really was. Many of the wastelanders foreshadow own life, especially his strained first marriage. Vivien's comments in pencil are often darkly ironic, unintentionally proving Eliot's insights into the dual symbolism of modern woman. Women, in the poem, are entrapped by male lust both new and old (the Typist and Philomel, for instance), but they are also femme fatales who terrify men with their enticing aromas, or Machiavellians who seek to exploit the sexual hierarchy for their own gain (the woman in the pub who threatens to sleep with Albert – and especially Fresca, the joyful spinster). Most of these lines would make it into the published poem, but it is not until the *Facsimile* was published in 1971 when readers could understand how much of a 'personal grouse against life'[1164] the poem really was. Pound excised most of the more brutal satire of these ladies, protecting them from being too 'diminish[ed]'[1165] by Eliot's disdain – as well as protecting Eliot from damaging his own reputation. Most of the *Poems 1920*-like 'Miscellaneous poems' were cut, too – if indeed they were ever intended to go in – since they also verged too close to that volume's tone of bitter disparagement.

1162 Eliot, 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.
1163 *Ibid*., 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 5, line. 2.
1164 *Ibid*., quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 1.
1165 *Ibid*., 'John Dryden', in *Prose II*, p. 352.

The most interesting satirical passage cut from the drafts was the 'parody',[1166] as Pound called it, of the 'master of hatred' himself, the Popean couplets on Fresca that made up the bulk of 'The Fire Sermon'. Unlike the Typist, Ophelia, or Philomel, Fresca is delighted at modern sexual culture. She is 'dunged by every dog in town',[1167] and does not believe it tarnishes her bourgeois status, which in fact is virtually all she has. Eliot finds it difficult to temper his disdain, for Fresca is the 'female tyrant'[1168] that Eliot – in his Unitarian upbringing, and later in his life trapped in marriage to Vivien – blames for his crippling shyness and emasculation.

Pound's edits are mostly formal, but he did take particular offense at the Fresca passage. He regarded it as succeeding only in 'parody[ing]' Pope, a superior satirist to Eliot. '[Y]ou cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope', he said – 'and you can't.'[1169] Eliot's couplets, lacking Pope's sharp wit and 'real fascination'[1170] with his characters, are 'diffuse'[1171] and scatter his verse, which offends Pound's aesthetic tastes. Pope's satire, furthermore, relied on the reader's shared moral sense – but Eliot's readers are 'hypocrite lecteur[s]',[1172] as he said himself, and so how could he deign to rely on such a sense? So the couplets appear to be mock-archaism, a parody of Pope's moralism – not the sharp laughter that blasts open 'like a bomb'.[1173] The satire was not sufficiently modernist.

Sensitive to Pound's aesthetic criticisms and tactful advice not to step 'over the mark' – almost all of which Eliot adhered to – and disappointed at the 'bogus scholarship'[1174] that misunderstood his poem, Eliot realised, almost immediately after publishing *The Waste Land*, that satire itself may be a futile rebellion. He wrote soon after publication to Richard

---

1166 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 127, note. 1 to p. 23.
1167 Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 27, line. 51.
1168 Pratt, 326.
1169 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 127, note. 1 to p. 23.
1170 Cohen, quoted in Lehman, 74.
1171 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land*, p. 39.
1172 Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 7, line. 130.
1173 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: I.', in *Blast*, p. 31.
1174 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 813.

Aldington, 'As for *The Waste Land*, that is a thing of the past as far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style.'[1175] His now famous declaration of his conversion to 'Anglo-Catholic[ism]'[1176] would come only a few years later, and indeed *The Waste Land* is virtually the last step before Eliot's 'religious turn' in his poetry. As he would say in 'Poetry and Drama' in 1951, after much time for reflection on these issues,

> It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a creative order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to the condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed to a region where that guide can avail us no farther.[1177]

There is pessimism, here, that poetry, indeed 'art' in general, can only get us to faintly perceive some divine order. '[I]mposing a creative order upon ordinary reality' was the task of the 'cave-man', but here there is not the optimism and energy from the *Tarr* reviews. Rather, Eliot is acknowledging the limits of that role – the limited power of the modernist satirist. Eliot would finally conclude, late in his life, that only in religion where we can truly unite with the 'order' art only partially 'guide[s]' us towards. 'The Hollow Men' appeared shortly after *The Waste Land* and shares its satirical targets, but otherwise, a few late comedies[1178] and *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* notwithstanding, Eliot the satirist was over.

1175 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 819.

1176 *Ibid*., 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.

1177 *Ibid*., 'Poetry and Drama', in Iman Javadi and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Volume 7: A European Society, 1947-1953* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), p. 603.

1178 See: *The Family Reuinion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), and *The Confidential Clerk* (1953).

Afterword:
Two Meanings of Sensitivity

The story of Eliot as satirist is the story of a shy boy, discontent in the 'civilised'[1179] world in which he was 'doomed to live',[1180] who 'disciplined'[1181] himself out of his 'virginity'[1182] and 'modernised himself'[1183] in the process. The key defining feature of modernity, for Eliot, was 'boredom',[1184] and the search for a vital, exciting art capable of existing in the 'jangling fairy desert'[1185] of newspapers and 'Romantic' war 'propaganda'[1186] was the chief aim of the 'Men of 1914'. Satire was the means for Eliot to engage with this 'desert' – this 'waste land' – whilst maintaining his distance and ability to critique it, rather than merely laugh or despair at it. Indeed, the fundamental satirical technique for Eliot is not 'humour'[1187] but 'externals',[1188] a Jonsonian style of writing revived and reformulated for use in the modern age. Caricature creates at the same time as it critiques, and so it was the preferred means for Eliot to theorise a rapidly accelerating world whilst 'incidental[ly] criticis[ing]'[1189] it. Much of the purpose of Eliot's satire, in fact, was to draw the reader into feelings of alienation and inadequacy: readers are baffled, confused, and 'annoy[ed]'[1190] by Eliot's demonstration of our detachment from living tradition.

The beginning of Eliot's satirical impetus can be found in *March Hare*. In Chapter 1, I explored the sources of this impetus, utilising the new collected *Letters* and *Prose* only recently published. Eliot was not then the 'royalist'[1191] he would infamously proclaim himself

---

1179 Eliot, 'The Man Who Was King', in *Prose I*, p. 6.
1180 Monro, p. 88.
1181 Aiken, p. 20.
1182 Eliot, Letter to Conrad Aiken (31 Dec 1914), in *Letters I*, p. 82.
1183 Pound, quoted in Hollis, p. 79.
1184 Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', in *Prose II*, p. 420.
1185 Lewis, 'MANIFESTO.: II', in *Blast*, p. 33.
1186 *Ibid*., *Blasting*, p. 250.
1187 *Ibid*., '[5]', in *Blast*, p. 17.
1188 Woolf, quoted in Schuchard, *Dark Angel*, p. 109.
1189 Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', in *Prose II*, p. 153.
1190 Monro, p. 88.
1191 Eliot, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.

to be, but his satirical intuitions emerged early on and were probably encouraged by his talks with Verdenal, as well as his Unitarian upbringing. The outbreak of war and the hurried justifications for it – of which he experiences both sides, having lived in Marburg and Oxford – only justified the cynicism he already harboured towards 'civilising' missions of the liberal Anglosphere. To 'civilise' was to squash under the boot heel of liberal Protestantism – the 'feminine […] nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age'[1192] probed by Henry James – as Eliot himself felt he had been. 'Blasting' open the complacency of liberal self-congratulation was the aim of this still young poet. It is no wonder, then, that Lewis's *Blast* magazine would fascinate him so much, enough to encourage him first to write his own lists of 'blasted' targets, but then to revive his satires of bourgeois civility in *Prufrock*, surpassing his previous efforts in *March Hare* and marking a move away from the crude bawdiness of the Bolo verses.

Eliot moved closer to Lewis and the Vorticist project as time went on, and explicitly defended it in his growing volume of reviews and essays, some of which I examined in Chapter 2. Concerned that the Oxford poems had done too much to establish his reputation as a 'mere Wit',[1193] Eliot searched for a development of his satirical aesthetic, before writing the 'intensely serious'[1194] – by which he means, not merely humorous – *Poems 1920*. He looked primarily to Lewis, the key theoretician of satire in his social circle and the 'Tarzan of the Apes'[1195] that had condensed so many of their shared resentments into *Tarr*. Lewis' vision of satire was amoral, cold and flat, in order to probe the hypocrisy of his 'Apes of God'. The modern 'cave-man',[1196] in Lewis's formulation, could refine and reorder the fractured 'broken images'[1197] of modernity into something new, something that resisted the age's drift

1192 James, *The Bostonians*, p. 322.
1193 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15 Feb 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
1194 *Ibid*.
1195 *Ibid*., 'Contemporanea', in *Prose I*, p. 720.
1196 *Ibid*., 'Second review of *Tarr*', p. 747.
1197 *Ibid*., *The Waste Land Facsimile*, 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 7, line. 136.

towards democratic accountability without simply shunning society altogether. This is to say that the Vorticist 'engagement with popular culture'[1198] was not a humanist sympathy for the lower classes – 'detestable animals'[1199] – but a championing of the great 'individual'[1200] above the mass. No doubt, Eliot the ambitious but shy, over-worked bank clerk must have seen something of himself in this notion of the individual squashed by boring modern life.

Apart from Lewis, Eliot's other influence in this period was Ben Jonson, who he defended in characteristically idiosyncratic terms as a kind of proto-modern satirist. Jonsonian caricatures appear all over *Poems 1920*, from Sweeney to Bleistein, to the persona of Eliot as 'bookworm'[1201] narrator himself. There is much anger in these poems, mixed with a strange sympathy for their victims. Always self-consciously stereotypical, Eliot's caricatures, like Jonson's, are deliberately flat, inviting the prejudices of his ostensibly 'civilised' readers. Inviting anger, but also expressing a bittersweet compassion for characters that, like himself, were unwittingly trapped in a hegemony that, in the time of global war, grew even more rhetorically fervent even as it was coming apart at the seams.

If *Poems 1920* was a bitter but probing caricature of modern 'Hollow Men', then *The Waste Land*, read closely in Chapter 3, was the aftermath – a tragi-comic cry of despair on both Eliot's own personal life and society at large, both crumbling under the weight of their anxieties. In some sense, it is misleading to talk about *The Waste Land* in this way, since the published poem is not the same entity as the fractured collection of drafts, some of which were probably never intended to be part of the published poem. The published poem is Eliot's 'rhythmical grumbling'[1202] about, amongst other things, his sexual anxieties and doomed marriage, told through mythological parallels, hastily performed like a minstrel show by

---

1198 Chinitz, *Cultural Divide*, p. 52.
1199 Lewis, 'Long Live the Vortex!', in *Blast*, p. 7.
1200 *Ibid*., p. 8.
1201 Lucas, p. 115.
1202 Eliot, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 2.

many 'different voices':[1203] women pressured into illegal abortions, sexually assaulted by sleezy men, and trapped in doomed marriages, to figures speaking from outside history like the prophet Tiresias, or the Fisher King doomed to rule a desert as impotent as himself. The *Facsimile*, however, is angrier, more visceral like *Poems 1920*; indeed, some of the miscellaneous poems are probably leftovers from that volume. The caricature of Fresca builds on the ladies from *March Hare*, but blows it into ridiculous proportions. Eliot can barely contain his disgust at the modern woman 'dunged by every dog in town'[1204] – possibly a sly comment at the unfaithful Vivien, who likewise penned her own jabs at their childless marriage. If the published *Waste Land* shows hints of Eliot's future religious conversion, it is difficult to find this mood in the original papers, in which Eliot's long-standing 'Virgin' cultural background comes to an agonising apex.

It is important to remember the literary atmosphere in which Eliot was writing in. The poem, even in its published form, was shocking, an attempt to 'annoy'[1205] established literary culture – an extension of the *Blast* project, and the *Poems 1920* aesthetic of deliberately provoking alienation. One cannot help but be alienated by *The Waste Land* (in either of its forms), whose dense web of allusions and fractured narratives mocks our modern impulse to explain, rationalise, and piece together Eliot's allusory red herrings. The poem was considered a kind of satire, in this sense at least, by its earliest readers – even if our sense of mystery and confused anger has now been lost, after almost a century of what Eliot called 'bogus scholarship'.[1206]

It is hard to know exactly what motivated Pound's excisions, but generally one gets the impression that he was never quite on board with Lewis's bombardier tactics, and wanted Eliot to move away from satire that was, as he said of one line from the typist section, 'too

---

1203 See the title of the original poem, *He Do the Police in Different Voices*.
1204 Eliot, The Fire Sermon', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 23, line. 51.
1205 Monro, p. 88.
1206 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 813.

easy'.[1207] Pound championed the sharpness of Imagist aesthetics, but *The Waste Land* is a confused puzzle of many different styles, brutal and Vorticist in one section but filled with 'damn per'apsy'[1208] the next. The social satire of Fresca simply annoys Pound, who did not share Eliot's admiration for 'edification'. Whatever the case, Eliot seemed to take Pound's criticisms more seriously even than Lewis's influence; he would acquiesce to virtually all of Pound's suggested edits, even cutting what he 'thought to be an excellent set of couplets',[1209] the Fresca section. He would not write satire ever again.

'Sensitive' and 'sensitive'

In Chapter 3 I focussed mostly on the drafts of *The Waste Land*, but it is worth briefly talking about the Notes, which appeared later, in the first book edition of the poem, but still fit the mould of Eliot deliberately attempting to 'annoy' his readers. Accused of being deliberately obtuse by his earliest critics, the Notes attempted to rectify this, although in reality many of them deliberately led the reader down what Eliot would later term 'bogus scholarship'.[1210] Indeed, the inclusion of the Notes and other 'mock-pedantic features' like line numbers adds to what Helmling calls 'a pseudo-scholarly aura that has always seemed funny.'[1211] This would not be an unusual satirical topic for Eliot, considering the similar jokes towards academics in his Bolo letters. One considers the note on 'Mrs. Porter', for instance, which Eliot cites in deliberately useless fashion ('I do not know') as coming from Australia,[1212] and we are reminded of the mock scholarship of 'Prof. Dr. Krapp'[1213] painfully investigating false

1207 Pound, quoted in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 45.
1208 *Ibid*., p. 31.
1209 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 920.
1210 *Ibid*., p. 813.
1211 Helmling, 146.
1212 Eliot, 'Notes', in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 159, note to line. 199.
1213 *Ibid*., from a letter to Conrad Aiken (19th July 1914), in *Poems II*, p. 250.

ends. The Notes were ‘not more a skit than some of the things in the poem itself’, Eliot coyly told Arnold Bennett; ‘I understood him’, Bennett knowingly writes in response.[1214]

Kaiser’s essay ‘Leading Critics into Temptation’, explores this notion of Eliot’s deliberate misleading of scholars; Eliot was ostensibly ‘parodying the two theories of reading then dominant in the professional literary field, philology and impressionism.’[1215] I prefer to stress the argument that Eliot was parodying not only professional literary critics, but general ‘hypocrite lecteur[s]’,[1216] as he does with Fresca, the reader of ‘clever’ Giradoux.[1217] One contemporary of Eliot, F. L. Lucas, wrote of the Notes in 1923 that they were ‘not unlike a picture with ‘This is a dog’ inscribed beneath’[1218] – apparently missing the irony that such an inscription is exactly the kind of ‘book club’ approach to literature that Eliot parodies all throughout his satirical career. Eliot invites his readers to simplify his poetry, but miss the point. However, one has sympathy for Lucas, because some of the sections that give the Notes this ironic context were cut by Pound. Lucas is not wrong in claiming that the Notes cheapen the experience of reading – not in the least of a poem so baffling as *The Waste Land*. This, I think, was Eliot’s point – but he grew disgruntled at the increasing number of critics who started defending the poem as a coherent ‘criticism of civilisation’. He insisted that it was they, not he, who harboured ‘disillusionment’ at the modern world.[1219] But Eliot could do little to deflect these note-based readings, the most influential of which were from Leavis[1220] and Brooks.[1221]

1214 Helmling, 146.
1215 Kaiser, 83.
1216 Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 9, line. 130.
1217 *Ibid*., ‘The Fire Sermon’, in *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 23, lines. 30-1.
1218 Lucas, p. 118.
1219 Eliot, quoted in *Poems I*, p. 576.
1220 See: Leavis, ‘T. S. Eliot’, from *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), in *Critical Assessments*, pp. 159-87.
1221 See: Cleanth Brooks. ‘The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth’, from *Modern Poetry and Tradition* (1939), in *Critical Assessments*, pp. 212-36.

Eliot was always concerned about being seen as a 'mere Wit',[1222] about having his project misunderstood; it is what motivates his many changes, subtle and large, in aesthetic direction. I want to suggest that Eliot's 'religious turn', that is his general departure from avant-garde movements around the late 1920s, also involved his satirical 'failures', including the cut sections in *The Waste Land*, the 'bogus scholarship'[1223] that followed it, and the abandonment of *Sweeney Agonistes*. Edwards says,

> Modernism would 'succeed' through the po-faced strategy of T. S. Eliot in his respectable magazine, *The Criterion*. His own attempt at a full-blooded avant-garde strategy, *Sweeney Agonistes*, would come to nothing.[1224]

No doubt, the archive material recently released will allow for a more subtle picture of Eliot's changing social attitudes. A possible starting point could be with the modernists' reflections on themselves, such as this passage from Wyndham Lewis:

> What I think history will say about the 'Men of 1914' is that they represent an attempt to get away from romantic art into classical art, away from political propaganda back into the detachment of true literature […] And what has happened – slowly – as a result of the War, is that artistic expression has slipped back again into political propaganda and romance, which go together.[1225]

It is almost quaint to see Lewis assume here that 'history' will remember and value the romantic/classical distinction so important to his own time, even as he admits that romanticism was once again becoming a new hegemony. One senses a jibe at Eliot, who would, post-war, 'descend' into 'political propaganda'; perhaps one even senses a jealousy at Eliot's more 'respectable' status. It was Eliot, not Lewis, who was awarded the Nobel Prize and became an establishment literary figure and later achieve the 'reactionary' notoriety Lewis craved. Edwards is basically correct, I think: the modernists who achieved the widest audience and impact on popular culture were 'po-faced' like Eliot, not figures like Lewis,

---

1222 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15 Feb 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
1223 *Ibid*., quoted in *Poems I*, p. 813.
1224 Edwards, p. 150.
1225 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 250.

who constantly presented himself as an outsider spreading harsh truths. In short, the satirists like Lewis did not succeed.

One returns to Yeats's preface, which was written at the same time as Lewis's above statement from *Blasting*. It is remarkable that Yeats and Lewis have almost the same narrative, albeit from different perspectives. To Yeats, Eliot as satirist was 'grey, cold, and dry'[1226] – ironically, all considered virtues by the Vorticists – but Yeats seemed to know, unlike Lewis, that these values would not survive past their brief London moment. For Yeats, it is only when Eliot abandoned this aesthetic post-conversion that he found his true voice. Before then, he was a 'satirist rather than a poet'[1227] – a statement sure to offend the young Eliot anxious not to appear as a 'mere Wit or satirist',[1228] as well as Lewis himself, who was always at great pains to defend the notion that all great art was ultimately satirical. The fact that this view would be expressed, too, by another Nobel Prize winner, in an anthology as institutional as the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, is as damning evidence as any that Vorticist-influenced satire, after the brief explosion of the 1920s, would be overtaken 'again' by its aesthetic enemy, a modern Romanticism.

It is perhaps also true that Pound's criticisms of the satirical sections of *The Waste Land* affected Eliot's shift in attitude. During composition, Eliot would defend his own aesthetic, saying, 'We only need the coming of a Satirist – no man of genius is rarer – to prove that the heroic couplet has lost none of its edge since Dryden and Pope laid it down.'[1229] Here is he is of course laying the groundwork for his own Fresca section – and declaring himself a rare 'man of genius' in the meantime. However, his tone would drastically change after Pound cut him down. '[Y]ou cannot write satire in the line of Pope or

1226 Yeats, p. xxi.
1227 *Ibid*., p. xxii.
1228 Eliot, Letter to Henry Eliot (15 Feb 1920), in *Letters I*, p. 441.
1229 *Ibid*., quoted in Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 113.

the stanza of Byron',[1230] Eliot wrote in 1934, echoing Pound's chastisement of Eliot's Popean 'parody'. So much for reviving the satirical heroic couplet. Eliot's prose is often self-serving – from the tactical defence of Marie Lloyd as he was reading *Blast*, to these statements from later decades after he became a public 'classicist'[1231] – but one also wonders how many of Eliot's critical pronouncements were a 'po-faced strategy',[1232] or were otherwise a self-conscious attempt to integrate Pound's criticisms of his own work.

Eliot is a key figure in the satirical tradition of the twentieth century because he existed on both of these 'sides', the Vorticists and the post-Vorticists. One only has to put two statements, decades apart, side-by-side to demonstrate this. See first Eliot's defence of satire in 1918:

> Wit is public, it is in the object; humour (I am speaking only of *real* humour) is the instinctive attempt of a sensitive mind to protect beauty against ugliness; and to protect itself against stupidity.[1233]

Here is Eliot the satirist, as he envisioned himself: a part of an 'ugly' world he was doomed to participate in, but detached from, not duped by. Satire was not only a signal that he was not taken in by the world, but also an attempt to 'protect' himself from being taken in. He writes here almost as if he was an anthropologist, observing a culture from the outside, having to remind himself that it was a culture that, although interesting, remained dead. Of course, this is a juvenile, almost arrogant way of viewing oneself. I think Eliot realised this later in his life, and humbled himself. Contrast the previous quotation with this reflection on Lewis in 1951:

> [Lewis] was rather, it now seems to me, a highly strung, nervous man, who was conscious of his own abilities, and sensitive to slight or neglect. […] Temperament and circumstances combined to make him a great satirist: satire can be the defence of the sensitive.[1234]

1230 Eliot, quoted in Rulo, *Satiric Modernism*, p. 113.
1231 *Ibid*., 'Lancelot Andrewes', in *Prose III*, p. 513.
1232 Edwards, p. 150.
1233 Eliot, 'Second review of *Tarr*', in *Prose I*, p. 746.
1234 *Ibid*., 'Wyndham Lewis', 169.

This is ostensibly a remark on Lewis's character, but I think Eliot is simultaneously reflecting on himself. Eliot's satire too began from the mind of a 'highly strung, nervous man'. The word 'sensitive' in Eliot's 1951 remark loses the positive connotations it has in the second *Tarr* review. In 1918 'sensitive' meant 'cave-man', a rare 'man of genius' capable of ordering the nonsensical modern world; but in 1951, it means 'eager to please', pretentious, arrogant. Eliot is essentially accusing Lewis of being one of the obsequious 'Paladins'[1235] from *March Hare*. There is a dismissive relativism here: Lewis's satire was born of 'temperament and circumstances', not political necessity (which is how Eliot saw his own satirical project). For Eliot, the 'circumstances', personal and social, changed after the war – 'art has lapsed back into political propaganda',[1236] indeed – and Lewis was just too 'sensitive' to accommodate this change. 'Eliot's respectability, religion, success, wealth, and fame' annoyed Lewis, Meyers writes. 'He [Lewis] believed he had a superior intellect and never quite understood why he could not make the same artistic impression that Eliot did.'[1237] Eliot accuses Lewis of not growing up and moving beyond his juvenile satirical bitterness, as he himself had done.

Eliot would move away from satire, but he would not abandon the 'twelve year-old boy'[1238] persona. It may be true that the moral anger inherent in satire had to be abandoned – or perhaps no longer spoke to Eliot, who found happiness after his conversion and second marriage. However, Eliot's satirical spirit never quite went away, it only reformulated into something else. Although rarely brought up in critical scholarly discussions of Eliot's influence – perhaps because of the overshadowing achievement of *Four Quartets* – his late career was dominated by the composition of three comedic plays,[1239] as well as the volume of

1235 Eliot, 'Convictions', in *Poems I*, p. 313, line. 14.
1236 Lewis, *Blasting*, p. 250.
1237 Meyers, 461.
1238 Auden, p. 20.
1239 Namely: *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958).

poems for children, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. The latter volume was first composed as letters which Eliot – who remained childless until his death – sent to his beloved godchildren and young relatives. Eliot began his literary life sending ridiculous, racist Bolo poems to Harvard fraternity boys, and ended it sending cheerful, Edward Lear-inspired poems about cats to his godchildren: there is probably no better indication of Eliot's change in personality than this. One can only imagine the disgust of someone like Wyndham Lewis, however, who would surely have been dismayed that Eliot had reverted into the comedian, the dispenser of 'mere humour', that he had condemned decades prior. A more far-reaching study of Eliot as satirist might explore these late comedies, and consider their departure from Eliot's youthful satires, in closer detail.

It is likely that Eliot's religious beliefs were the main influence over this change of values and style. *Practical Cats* certainly displays some surface-level influence from Christianity, from the names of the cats themselves[1240] to the covert moral messages the poems contain.[1241] There are elements of self-parody in these poems, namely of course in the title of the volume – 'Old Possum' clearly refers to Eliot – but also in the surrounding poems,

---

The most influential scholarship on these plays for me is: Helen Gardner. 'The Comedies of T. S. Eliot', in *The Sewanee Review*, 74.1 (1966) 153-75 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27541390> [Accessed 27-07-2018].

1240 As in 'Mr. Mistoffelees' (Mephistopheles), 'Old Deuteronomy', or the three names of cats, one of which is 'ineffable', like YHWH. See, for instance.: Elizabeth Sewell. 'Lewis Carroll and T. S. Eliot as Nonsense Poets', in *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium for His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Braybrooke, Neville (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958), pp. 49-56; Marion C. Hodge. 'The Sane, the Mad, the Good, the Bad: T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*', in *Children's Literature*, 7 (1978) 129-46 <https://doi.org/10.1353/chl.0.0381> [Accessed 18-05-2018]; Felix Clowder. 'The Bestiary of T. S. Eliot', in *Prairie Schooner*, 34.1 (1960) 30-7 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40625587> [Accessed 13-06-2018].

1241 When the volume is read as a whole, I contend, one can compile the traits that make 'good' and 'bad' Cats. 'Good' Cats are spoken of positively and referred to as figures of respect and dignity. They are, I believe: Old Deuteronomy, Jennyanydots the Old Gumbie Cat, Gus, Bustopher Jones, the Great Rumpuscat who appears in 'The Awefull Battle of the Pekes and Pollicles', the Jellicle Cats, and Skimbleshanks. The 'bad' Cats are, I believe: Macavity, Growltiger and his cronies, Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, the Rum Tum Tugger, and Mr. Mistoffelees. Thievery, deception, stubbornness and sneakiness are the key traits of 'bad' Cats – traits that exist in relatively harmless form in Mr. Mistoffelees and Tugger, but which reappear in genuinely bad Cats like Macavity. Eliot does not display these morals overtly, but suggests it to his audience – young children – through musical accentuations.

such as 'How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!',[1242] which mocks Eliot's reputation as a 'church-warden'.[1243] Perhaps the relationship between Christianity and modernist satire is not so strained. Eliot was not the first satirist to convert: consider Evelyn Waugh, for instance, or G. K. Chesterton, both converts to Catholicism around the same time as Eliot. One might also consider the life of John Donne – an established influence on Eliot's poetry and thought[1244] – who similarly reformed himself from satirist in his youth to Anglican priest later in his life.

However the narrative of Eliot's late career might be formulated, there is surely no doubt about his early career: that from *March Hare* to *The Waste Land*, Eliot's chief poetic project was the development of a modernist satire.

1242 Eliot, *Five-Finger Exercises*, 'V: Lines for Cuscuscaraway and Mirza Murad Ali Beg', in *Poems I*, p. 193, lines. 1-2: 'How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot! / With his features of clerical cut[.]'

1243 Auden, quoted in *Poems II*, p. 39.

1244 See: 'The Metaphysical Poets'.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Clarke, Graham ed. *T. S. Eliot: Critical Assessments: Volume II: Early Poems and The Waste Land* (London: Christopher Helm, 1990). Referred to as *Critical Assessments*.

— Anon. 'A Fragmentary Poem', *Times Literary Supplement* no. 1131 (20 Sept 1923), pp. 106-8.

— Anon. 'Comment', *Dial* 73 (Dec 1922), pp. 68-70.

— Anon. 'Review of The Waste Land and notice of first issue of the Criterion', *Times Literary Supplement* no. 1084 (26 Oct 1922), pp. 65-6.

— Bell, Clive. 'T. S. Eliot', *Nation and Athenaeum* 33 (22 Sept 1923), pp. 109-12.

— Brooks, Cleanth. 'The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth', *Modern Poetry and Tradition* (1939), pp. 212-36.

— Bullough, Geoffrey. 'Herbert Read; D. H. Lawrence; T. S. Eliot', *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (1934), pp. 201-11.

— Leavis, F. R. 'T. S. Eliot', *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), pp. 159-87.

— Lucas, F. L. 'The Waste Land', *New Statesman* 22 (3 Nov 1923), pp. 115-9.

— Monroe, Harriet. 'A Contrast', *Poetry* 21 (Mar 1923), pp. 92-5.

— Monro, Harold. 'Notes for a Study of The Waste Land: an Imaginary Dialogue with T. S. Eliot', *Chapbook* no. 34 (Feb 1923), pp. 87-91.

— Munson, Gorham B. 'The Esotericism of T. S. Eliot', *1924* no. 1 (1 July 1924), pp. 123-9.

— Ransom, John Crowe. 'Waste Lands', *New York Evening Post Literary Review* 3 (14 July 1923), pp. 96-102.

— Seldes, Gilbert. 'T. S. Eliot', *Nation* 115 (6 Dec 1922), pp. 76-80.

— Squire, J. C. 'Poetry', *London Mercury* 8 (Oct 1923), pp. 113-4.

— Tate, Allen. 'Waste Lands', *New York Evening Post Literary Review* 3 (4 Aug 1923), pp. 103-5.

— Thompson, T. H. 'The Bloody Wood', *London Mercury 29* (1934), pp. 188-94.

— Untermeyer, Louis. ‘Disillusion vs. Dogma’, *Freeman* 6 (7 Jan 1923), pp. 81-3.

— Wilson, Edmund. ‘The Poetry of Drouth’, *Dial* 73 (Dec 1922), pp. 71-5.

— Wilson, Edmund. ‘T. S. Eliot’, *Axel’s Castle* (1931), pp. 133-153.

— Wolfe, Humbert. ‘Waste Land and Waste Paper’, *Weekly Westminster* 1 n.s. (Nov 1923), pp. 120-2.

Eliot, T. S.

— Ricks, Christopher and Jim McCue eds., *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Volume I: Collected & Uncollected Poems*, Kindle edition (London: Faber & Faber, 2015). Referred to as *Poems I*.

— Ricks, Christopher and Jim McCue eds., *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Volume II: Practical Cats and Further Verses* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015). Referred to as *Poems II*.

— Eliot, Valerie ed. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971). Referred to as *The Waste Land Facsimile*.

— Ricks, Christopher ed., *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917 by T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996). Referred to as *March Hare*.

— Brooker, Jewel Spears and Ronald Schuchard ed., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Volume 1: Apprentice Years, 1905-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014). Referred to as *Prose I*.

— Cuda, Anthony and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014). Referred to as *Prose II*.

— Dickey, Frances and Jennifer Formichelli and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 3: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015). Referred to as *Prose III*.

— Javadi, Iman and Ronald Schuchard and Jayme Stayer eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: Volume 5: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017). Referred to as *Prose V*.

— Javadi, Iman and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Volume 7: A European Society, 1947-1953* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018). Referred to as *Prose VII*.

— ‘Wyndham Lewis’, in *The Hudson Review*, 10.2 (1957) 167-70. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3848852> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

— Eliot, Valerie and Hugh Haughton eds., *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume I: 1898-1922*, Revised edition (London: Faber & Faber, 2009). Referred to as *Letters I*.

James, Henry. *The Bostonians*, Oxford World's Classics edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Joyce, James, *Ulysses* (Project Gutenberg, 2008) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300-h/4300-h.htm> [Accessed 30-08-2018].

Kipling, Rudyard.

— *The Man Who Would Be King* (New York: Open Road Media, 2016).

— 'The White Man's Burden', in *Rudyard Kipling: The Complete Verse* (London: Kyle Cathie Limited, 1990), pp. 261-2.

Lewis, Wyndham.

— Lewis, Wyndham ed. *Blast*, no. 1 (London: John Lane, 1914).

— *Blasting and Bombadiering*, Revised edn. (London: John Calder, 1982).

— *Tarr: the 1918 Version* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1990).

Pope, Alexander. 'Epistle to a Lady', in Pat Rogers ed., Oxford World Classics edn., *Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 106-14.

Yeats, W. B. 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. v-xivii.

Secondary sources

Ackerley, Chris. *T. S. Eliot: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and The Waste Land* (Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks, 2007).

Ackroyd, Peter. *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon, 1984).

Aiken, Conrad. 'King Bolo and Others', in *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium Compiled by Richard March and Tambimuttu* (London: PL Editions Poetry, 1948) pp. 20-3.

Ardis, Ann L. 'The gender of modernity', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 61-79.

Asher, Kenneth. *T. S. Eliot and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Atkins, G. Douglas. *T. S. Eliot and the Failure to Connect* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Badenhausen, Richard. *T. S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Bae, Soon-Jung. 'The Relationship of T. S. Eliot and Friedrich Nietzsche: Death of God and Eternal Recurrence', in *Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society of Korea*, 24. 2 (2014) 27-65.

Bailey, Peter. 'Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', in *Past & Present*, 144 (1994) 138-70 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/651146> [Accessed 29-11-2018].

Baker, Carlos. 'T. S. Eliot: Apostate from Romantic Rule', in *The Echoing Green: Romantic, Modernism, and the Phenomena of Transference in Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 237-76.

Beasley, Rebecca. *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

Benson, Donald R. 'Eliot's and Conrad's Hollow Men', in *CEA Critic*, 29.4 (1967) 10. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44419466> [Accessed 09-11-2020].

Bevis, Matthew. 'Eliot Among the Comedians', in *Literary Imagination*, 16.2 (2014), 135-56.

Birsanu, Roxana Stefania. *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land as a Place of Intercultural Exchanges: A Translation Perspective* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014).

Bloom, Harold. *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land* (New York: Chelsea House, 2007).

Booth, Allyson. *Reading The Waste Land from the Bottom Up* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Bradshaw, David. 'Modern life: fiction and satire', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 218-31.

Brewer, Susan A. *Why America Fights: Patriotism and Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Brooker, Jewel Spears.

— 'Dialectical Collaboration: Editing The Waste Land', in Gabrielle McIntire ed., *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 102-15.

— *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018).

— *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Brooker, Peter.

— *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

— 'The Modernist moment in the metropolis', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 117-31.

Brown, Janice. *The Lion in the Waste Land: Fearsome Redemption in the Work of C. S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, and T. S. Eliot* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2018).

Boehmer, Elleke. 'Empire and Modern Writing', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 50-60.

Bogel, Fredric V. *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

Bush, Christopher. 'Eliot and the Contemporary', in Julia E. Daniel and Frances Dickey eds., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 4* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022), pp. 73-90.

Bush, Ronald. 'In Pursuit of Wilde Possum: Reflections on Eliot, Modernism, and the Nineties', in *Modernism/modernity*, 11 (2004), 469-85.

Callison, Jamie. 'Transmuting F. H. Bradley: T. S. Eliot's Notes Towards a Theory of Poetry', in Morgenstern, John D., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 1* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 99-113.

Chapman, Robert T. 'Satire and Aesthetics in Wyndham Lewis' *Apes of God*', in *Contemporary Literature*, 12.2 (1971) 133-45. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1207731> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

Cheyette, Bryan. 'Eliot and Race: Jews, Irish, and Blacks', in David E. Chinitz ed., *A Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 335-49.

Childs, Donald J.

— *From Philosophy to Poetry: T. S. Eliot's Study of Knowledge and Experience* (London: Athlone, 2001).

— *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

— 'Mr. Apollinax, Professor Channing-Cheetah, and T. S. Eliot', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 13.1 (1986) 172-7 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831440> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Chinitz, David.

— *A Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

— 'A Jazz-Banjorine, Not a Lute: Eliot and Popular Music before *The Waste Land*', in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000) pp. 3-24.

— *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

— 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', in *PMLA*, 110.2 (1995) 236-47 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462913> [Accessed 27-11-2017].

— 'T. S. Eliot's Blue Verses and Their Sources in the Folk Tradition', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 23.2 (1999-2000) 329-333 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831929> [Accessed 04-11-2018].

Chung, Kyung-Sim. 'Eliot's Early Ladies beyond Gender Binary', in *Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society of Korea*, 24.2 (2014), 157-71.

Cianci, Giovanni and Jason Harding eds. *T. S. Eliot and the Concept of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Coit, Emily. 'Henry James's Dramas of Cultivation: Liberalism and Democracy in *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*', in *The Henry James Review*, 36.2 (2015) 177-98 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/582078> [Accessed 21-03-2019].

Colon, Susan E. 'This Twittering World: T. S. Eliot and Acedia', in *Religion & Literature*, 43.2 (2011) 69-90. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347031> [Accessed 09-11-2020].

Cornford, Francis Macdonald. *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).

Cotter, Sean. 'The Sacramental Dada of T. S. Eliot', in *The Comparatist*, 26 (2002), 69-82. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44367152> [Accessed 02-03-2020].

Coyle, Michael. 'Afternoon at the British Museum', in Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern eds., *The Edinburgh Companion to T. S. Eliot and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 36-50.

Crawford, Robert.

— *Eliot After The Waste Land* (London: Jonathan Cape 2022).

— *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

— *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to The Waste Land* (London: Vintage, 2015).

Cray, Ed, ed. *The Erotic Muse: American Bawdy Songs*, Second edn. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

Cuda, Anthony. *The Passions of Modernism* (Columbia: University of Southern Carolina Press, 2010).

Cuddy, Louis A. *T.S. Eliot and the Poetics of Evolution: Sub/versions of Classicism, Culture, and Progress* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2000).

Davidson, James. 'The End of Sweeney', in *College English*, 27.5 (1966) 400-3. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/373262> [Accessed 14-09-2020].

Davis, Alex. *A History of Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Deane, Patrick. 'Rhetoric and Affect: Eliot's Classicism, Pound's Symbolism, and the Drafts of *The Waste Land*', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 18.1 (1992) 77-93. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831548> [Accessed 31-03-2020].

De Gennaro, Mara. 'Man is man because…: Humanism wars, Sweeney Erect, and the makings of modernist imagination', in *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, 41 (2014), 159-93. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43908244> [Accessed 06-04-2020].

De Villiers, Rick. *Eliot and Beckett's Low Modernism: Humility and Humiliation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

Dickey, Frances.

— ‘Mandarins at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston’, in Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern eds., *The Edinburgh Companion to T. S. Eliot and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 9-24.

— ‘May the Record Speak: The Correspondence of T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale’, in *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 66.4 (2020) 431-62.

— ‘The Stale Dregs of Revolt’, in Morgenstern, John D., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 1* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 85-88.

Donoghue, Denis. *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Edwards, Paul. ‘Futurism, literature and the market’, in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 132-51.

Ellis, P. G.

— ‘The Development of T. S. Eliot’s Historical Sense’, in *The Review of English Studies*, 23.91 (1972) 291-301. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/514431> [Accessed 09-12-2019].

— *T. S. Eliot: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2009).

Ellmann, Maud. *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Emery-Peck, Jennifer Sorensen. ‘Tom and Vivien Eliot Do Narrative in Different Voices: Mixing Genres in The Waste Land’s Pub’, in *Narrative*, 16.3 (2008), 331-58. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30219610> [Accessed 29-11-2018].

Engel, Adam J. ‘Talking Heads: Bodiless Voices in Heart of Darkness, The Hollow Men, and the First World War’, in *Conradiana*, 45.3 (2013) 21-46. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24643284> [Accessed 09-11-2020].

English, James F. ‘Twentieth-century satire: the poetics and politics of negativity’, in Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 856-71.

Epstein, Josh. *Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

Evans, Suzannah V. ‘Philosophical obscenity rather like Laforgue’, in Julia E. Daniel and Frances Dickey eds., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 4* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022), pp. 265-78.

Faulk, Barry J.
— 'Eliot and the Music-Hall Comedian', in Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern eds., *The Edinburgh Companion to T. S. Eliot and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 189-201.

— 'Modernism and the Popular: Eliot's Music Halls', in *Modernism/modernity*, 8.4 (2001) 603-21 [Online] <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2001.0082> [Accessed 13-11-2018].

Free, Scott and Michael Bell, eds., *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

Freer, Scott. *Religion and Myth in T. S. Eliot's Poetry* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

Frisch, Katrin. *The F-word: Pound, Eliot, Lewis, and the Far Right* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2019).

Frye, Northrop. *T. S. Eliot*, Revised edn. (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1968).

Fuchs, Dieter. ''Myth Today': The Bavarian-Austrian Subtext of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*', in *Poetica*, 44.3/4 (2012), 379-93 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43028538> [Accessed 31-03-2020].

Gagnier, Regenia. 'The Victorian *fin de siècle* and Decadence', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 30-49.

Gallup, Donald.
— *T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound: Collaborators in Letters* (New Haven: Henry W. Wenning/C. A. Stonehill, 1970).

— *T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969).

Gardner, Helen.
— *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London: Cresset, 1949).

— 'The Comedies of T. S. Eliot', in *The Sewanee Review*, 74.1 (1966) 153-75 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27541390> [Accessed 27-07-2018].

— *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: Norton, 1999).

Gerrard, Steven. 'The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to British Culture and The Trivial', in *Culture Unbound*, 5 (2013).

Gill, Jonathan. ‘Protective Coloring: Modernism and Blackface Minstrelsy in the Bolo Poems’, in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot’s Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000) pp. 65-84.

Gordon, Lyndall.

— *Eliot’s Early Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

— ‘The Waste Land Manuscript’, in *American Literature*, 45.4 (1974) 557-570. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2924096> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

— *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: Norton, 1999).

Grant, John Angell. *Women and Religion in the Drawing Room Plays of T. S. Eliot* (Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2016).

Greening, Jonathan. *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Gubar, Susan. ‘The Female Monster in Augustan Satire’, in *Signs*, 3.2 (1977) 380-94. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173290> [Accessed 07-03-2021].

Gupta, Suman. ‘In Search of Genius: T. S. Eliot as Publisher’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27.1/2 (2003) 26-35. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831832> [Accessed 04-06-2019].

Gwynn, Frederick L. ‘Eliot’s ‘Sweeney among the Nightingales’ and the Song of Solomon’, in *Modern Language Notes*, 68.1 (1953) 25-7. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2908893> [Accessed 14-09-2020].

Habib, Rafey. *The Early T. S. Eliot and Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Hadjiyiannis, Christos. *Conservative Modernists: Literature and Tory Politics in Britain, 1900-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Haffenden, John. ‘Literary Dowsing: Valerie Eliot Edits The Waste Land’, in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 2* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 113-50.

Hankins, Gabriel. *Interwar Modernism and the Liberal World Order: Offices, Institutions, and Aesthetics After 1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Harding, Jason, ed. *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Hargrove, Nancy D. ‘T. S. Eliot’s Year Abroad, 1910-1911: The Visual Arts’, in *South Atlantic Review*, 71.1 (2006) 89-131. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20064709> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Harmon, William. 'T. S. Eliot, Anthropologist and Primitive', in *American Anthropologist*, 78.4 (1976) 797-811. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/675145> [Accessed 13-11-2018].

Harris, Donal. 'Understanding Eliot: Mass Media and Literary Modernism in the American Century', in *Modern Language Quarterly: A Journal of Literary History*, 76.4 (2015), 491-514.

Hart, Matthew. 'Visible Poet: T. S. Eliot and Modernist Studies', in *American Literary History*, 19.1 (2007) 174-89. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4123638> [Accessed 07-03-2021].

Hawkes, Terence. *That Shakespeherian Rag: Essays on a Critical Process* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005).

Hay, Eloise Knapp.

— 'Conversion and Expatriation: T. S. Eliot's Dual Allegiance', in *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 23.2 (1990) 89-106. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24780629> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

— *T. S. Eliot's Negative Way* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Helmling, Steven. 'The Grin of Tiresias: Humor in *The Waste Land*', in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36.2 (1990) 137-54 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441818> [Accessed 21-11-2018].

Henkle, Roger B. 'The 'Advertised' Self: Wyndham Lewis' Satire' in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 13.1 (1979) 95-108. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344954> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

Holder, Alan.

— *Three Voyagers in Search of Europe: A Study of Henry James, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

— 'T. S. Eliot on Henry James', in *PMLA*, 79.4 (1964) 490-7. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/460755> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Hollis, Matthew. *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber & Faber, 2022).

Jaidka, Manju. *T. S. Eliot's Use of Popular Sources* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Johnson, Loretta.

— ‘Feeling the Elephant: T. S. Eliot’s Bolovian Epic’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 37.4 (2014) 109-29 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.37.4.109> [Accessed 12-02-2018].

— ‘T. S. Eliot’s Bawdy Verse: Lulu, Bolo and More Ties’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27.1/2 (2003) 14-25 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831831> [Accessed 27-11-2018].

Julius, Anthony. *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Kaiser, Jo Ellen Green. ‘Disciplining *The Waste Land*, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation’, in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 44.1 (1998), 82-99 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/441698> [Accessed 15-08-2019].

Kennedy, Sarah. *T. S. Eliot and the Dynamic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Kenner, Hugh.

— *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot*, Reprinted edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

— ‘Wyndham Lewis: The Satirist as Barbarian’, in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 14 (1984), 264-75. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3508314> [Accessed 28-05-2019].

Kift, Dagmar. *The Victorian music hall: Culture, class and conflict*, trans. Roy Kift (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Kineke, Sheila. ‘T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, and the Gendered Operations of Literary Sponsorship’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 21.1 (1997) 121-36. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831579> [Accessed 07-03-2021].

Kirk, Russell. *Eliot and His Age* (New York: Random House, 1971).

Knowles, Sebastian D. G. ‘‘Then you wink the other eye’: T. S. Eliot and the music hall’, in *ANQ: a quarterly journal of short articles, notes, and reviews*, 11.4 (1998) 20-32.

Koestenbaum, Wayne. ‘The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot’s and Ezra Pound’s Collaboration on Hysteria’, in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 34.2 (1988) 113-39. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/441073> [Accessed 15-08-2019].

Lee, Man-Sik. ‘The Subject of T. S. Eliot’s Early Poetry’, in *Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society of Korea*, 24.1 (2014), 129-56.

Lehman, Robert S. ‘Eliot’s Last Laugh: The Dissolution of Satire in *The Waste Land*’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32.2 (2009) 65-79 [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25511804> [Accessed 14-11-2017].

Leitch, Vincent B. ‘T. S. Eliot’s Poetry of Religious Desolation’, in *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 44.2 (1979) 35-44. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3198931> [Accessed 12-02-2022].

Litz, Walton A. *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Lockerd, Benjamin G., ed. *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2014).

Longenbach, James.

— ‘Guarding the Hornèd Gates: History and Interpretation in the Early Poetry of T. S. Eliot’, in *ELH*, 52.2 (1985) 503-527. [Online] <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2872847> [Accessed 14-09-2020].

— *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

— ‘The Contrived Corridors of *Poems 1920*’, in *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 177-99.

Luckhurst, Roger. ‘The Music Hall & Popular Culture (Review of Barry J. Faulk. *Music Hall and Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture*)’, in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 49.2 (2006) 194-7 [Online] <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/366371/summary> [Accessed 29-11-2018].

MacCabe, Colin. *T. S. Eliot* (Tabistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2006).

Mackin, Jonna. ‘Raising Life to a Kind of Art: Eliot and Music Hall’, in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot’s Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000) pp. 49-63.

Malcuit, William Q. ‘The Poetics of Political Failure: Eliot’s Antiliberalism in an American Context’, in *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 62.1 (2016), 75-95.

Manganaro, Marc. ‘Dissociation in Dead Land: The Primitive Mind in the Early Poetry of T. S. Eliot’, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 13.1 (1986) 97-110. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831434> [Accessed 12-02-2022].

Marek, Jayne E. *Women Editing Modernism: Little Magazines & Literary History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

Marshik, Celia. *British Modernism and Censorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Matthews, Steven.
— *T. S. Eliot and Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

— *The Waste Land after one hundred years* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2022).

Matthiessen, F. O. *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

McIntire, Gabrielle.
— 'An unexpected beginning: sex, race, and history in T. S. Eliot's Columbo and Bolo poems', in *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 10-38.

— *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

McLuhan, Marshall. 'Mr. Eliot and the St. Louis Blues', in *Antigonish Review*, 62-3 (1985) 121-4.

McNeilly, Kevin. 'Culture, Race, Rhythm: *Sweeney Agonistes* and the Live Jazz Break', in in Cooper, John Xiros ed. *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000) pp. 25-47.

McVey, Christopher. 'T. S. Eliot, Modernism, and Boredom', in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 2* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 67-86.

Mead, Henry. *T. E. Hulme and the Ideological Politics of Early Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

Menand, Louis.
— 'T. S. Eliot and Modernity', in *The New England Quarterly*, 69.4 (1996) 554-79. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/366554> [Accessed 09-12-2019].

— *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and his Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Meyers, Jeffrey.
— *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge, 1982).

— 'Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot: A Friendship', in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 56.3 (1980) 455-69 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26436044> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Miller, James.

— *T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977).

— *T. S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet, 1888-1922* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

Miller, Tyrus. 'The avant-garde, bohemia and mainstream culture', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 100-16.

Moffett, Joe. *The Waste Land at 90: A Retrospective* (New York: Rodopi, 2011).

Moor, Geoffrey. 'The Significance of Bloomsbury', in *The Kenyon Review*, 17.1 (1955) 119-29. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4333555> [Accessed 04-06-2019].

Morgenstern, John. 'The 'Centre of Intensity': T. S. Eliot's Reassessment of Baudelaire in 1910-1911', in *Religion & Literature*, 44.1 (2012) 159-67 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347066> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Morrison, Paul. *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Morrow, Bradford. 'Blueprint to the Vortex', in Lewis, Wyndham ed., *BLAST*, 1 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1914), pp. i-vii.

Moses, Omri. *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Mozejko, Edward. 'Two Versions of Classicism: O. Mandelstam and T. S. Eliot', in *Russian Language Journal*, 40.136/137 (1986) 111-21. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43674374> [Accessed 12-02-2022].

Musgrave, David. *Grotesque Anatomics: Menippean Satire since the Renaissance* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014).

Nadel, Ira Bruce ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Narita, Tatsushi. 'The Young T. S. Eliot and Alien Cultures: His Philippine Interactions', in *The Review of English Studies*, 45.180 (1994) 523-5. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/517810> [Accessed 25-07-2019].

Newton-De Molina, David ed. *The Literary Criticism of T. S. Eliot: New Essays* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Noel-Tod, Jeremy. ‘The Hero as Individual Talent: Thomas Carlyle, T. S. Eliot and the Prophecy of Modernism’, in *The Review of English Studies*, 64.265 (2013) 475-91. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42003654> [Accessed 09-12-2019].

North, Michael.

— *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

— ‘The Dialect in/of Modernism: Pound and Eliot’s Racial Masquerade’, in *American Literary History*, 4.1 (1992) 56-76. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/489936> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

— *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

— *The Waste Land*, Norton Critical Editions (New York: Norton, 2000).

Olsen, Flemming. *Between Positivism and T. S. Eliot: Imagism and T. E. Hulme* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2008).

Opest, Michael. ‘Dull Tom-Tom’s Absurd Prelude: Ludic Modernism in Early T. S. Eliot’, in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 31-56.

Oser, Lee. *The Ethics of Modernism: Moral Ideas in Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Parrinder, Peter. ‘Science and knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century: versions of the modern Enlightenment’, in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 11-29.

Patterson, Anita. ‘The American Legacy of Prufrock’, in Morgenstern, John D. ed., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 1* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 67-71.

Penda, Petar. *Aesthetics and Ideology of D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

Platt, Len ed. *Modernism and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Pound, Ezra, and Wyndham Lewis. *Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, ed. Timothy Materer (New York: New Directions, 1985).

Pound, Ezra. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941*, ed. Michael John King (New York: New Directions, 1976).

Pratt, William. ‘Eliot at Oxford: From Philosopher to Poet and Critic’, in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 78.2 (1995) 321-37 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41178706> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Rabate, Jean-Michel. *1922: Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Raine, Craig. *T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Rainey, Lawrence.

— *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

— *Revisiting The Waste Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

— *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot’s Contemporary Prose* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

— ‘With Automatic Hand: Writing The Waste Land’, in *Revisiting The Waste Land* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 1-70.

Rasula, Jed. *What the Thunder Said: How The Waste Land Made Poetry Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

Read, Herbert. ‘T. S. E.: A Memoir’, in *The Sewanee Review*, 74.1 (1966) 31-57. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27541383> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Rees, Thomas R. *The Technique of T. S. Eliot: A Study of the Orchestration of Meaning in Eliot’s Poetry* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019).

Richards, Joshua.

— ‘Aristophanic Structures in Sweeney Agonistes, The Hollow Men, and Murder in the Cathedral’, in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual*, 157-176 [Online] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/t-s-eliot-studies-annual/aristophanic-structures-in-sweeney-agonistes-the-hollow-men-and-murder-in-the-cathedral/2EE6169917481C72708E01B4EF3EE7C1> [Accessed 02-03-2020].

— Richards, Joshua. *T. S. Eliot’s Ascetic Ideal* (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2020).

Ricks, Christopher.

— *Decisions and Revisions in T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 2003).

— ‘Poetry (June 1915)’, in Morgenstern, John D., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 1* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 73-84.

— ‘The Eliots’ Letters’, in *Grand Street*, 8.4 (1989) 233-42. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25007289> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

— *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988).

Robey, Kinley E. ed. *Critical Essays on T. S. Eliot: The Sweeney Motif* (Boston: Hall, 1985).

Rosenbaum, S. P. 'Preface to a Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group', in *New Literary History*, 12.2 (1981), 329-44. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468674> [Accessed 04-06-2019].

Rulo, Kevin.

— *Satiric Modernism* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2021).

— *Modernism, Satire, and the Men of 1914: Eliot, Joyce, Lewis, and Pound* (2012) The Catholic University of America, PhD thesis.

Rzepa, Joanna. *Modernism and Theology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Samarrai, Ghanim. 'Rejuvenating T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land', in *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 41.2 (2014), 112-25.

Sanders, Charles. '*The Waste Land*: The Last Minstrel Show?', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 8.1 (1980), 23-38. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831308> [Accessed 31-03-2020].

Schechner, Richard. 'The Conservative Avant-Garde', in *New Literary Review*, 41.4 (2010) 895-913 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23012712> [Accessed 02-03-2020].

Schmeling, Gareth L. and David R. Rebmann. 'T. S. Eliot and Petronius', in *Comparative Literature Studies*, 12.4 (1975) 393-410. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40246104> [Accessed 04-06-2019].

Schuchard, Ronald.

— 'Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Toward a Revaluation of Eliot's Critical and Spiritual Development', in *PMLA*, 88.5 (1973), 1083-94. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/461641> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

— 'Eliot's Allusive Legacy and Obscurity in Prufrock', in Morgenstern, John D., *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 1* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 93-7.

— *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Schwartz, Sanford. *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Sherry, Vincent.

— 'Literature and World War I', in Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 152-72.

— *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

— *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Sheppard, Richard W. 'Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*: An (Anti-) Vorticist Novel?' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88.4 (1989) 510-30 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27710234> [Accessed 25-07-2019].

Sigg, Eric.

— *The American T. S. Eliot: A Study of the Early Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

— 'New England', in Harding, Jason ed. *T. S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 17-24.

Skaff, William. *The Philosophy of T. S. Eliot: From Skepticism to a Surrealist Poetic, 1909-1927* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

Smith, Carol H. 'Sweeney Agonistes', in *Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice: From Sweeney Agonistes to The Elder Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 32-75.

Smith, Grover. *T. S. Eliot and the Use of Memory* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996).

Solomon, William. 'On Comic Modernism: Impersonality in Eliot and Keaton', in *Mosaic: an interdisciplinary critical journal*, 50.2 (2017) 205-22. [Online] <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/663698> [Accessed 4-11-2018].

Spender, Stephen. *T. S. Eliot* (London: Fontana, 1976).

Spurr, Barry.

— *Anglo-Catholic in Religion: T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2010).

— 'Anglo-Catholicism and the Religious Turn in Eliot's Poetry', in *Religion & Literature*, 44.1 (2012) 136-43. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347063> [Accessed 09-11-2020].

— 'Eliot on Pound and James', in *Time Present*, 84 (2014), 9-10.

Spurr, David. 'Myths of Anthropology: Eliot, Joyce, Levy-Bruhl', in *PMLA*, 109.2 (1994), 266-80. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/463121> [Accessed 13-11-2018].

Stayer, Jayme.

— *Becoming T. S. Eliot: The Rhetoric of Voice and Audience in Inventions of the March Hare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

— 'I Grow Old: T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and *Inventions of the March Hare* 100 Years On', in *Literature Compass*, 9.4 (2012).

— 'The Short and Surprisingly Private Life of King Bolo: Eliot's Bawdy Poems and Their Audiences', in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual* (2017) 3-30 [Online] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/t-s-eliot-studies-annual/short-and-surprisingly-private-life-of-king-bolo-eliots-bawdy-poems-and-their-audiences/3868BF134FDA71C9C374F48C623D1A41> [Accessed 08-11-2018].

— 'T. S. Eliot as a Schoolboy: The Lockwood School, Smith Academy, and Milton Academy', in *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 59.4 (2013), 619-56.

— *T. S. Eliot, France, and the Mind of Europe* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2015).

Stillman, Anne. 'Sweeney Among the Marionettes', in *Essays in Criticism*, 59.2 (2009) 116-141 [Online] <https://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/escrit/cgp002> [Accessed 02-03-2020].

Stough, Christina C. 'The Skirmish of Pound and Eliot in The New English Weekly: A Glimpse at Their Later Literary Relationship', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 10.2 (1983) 231-46. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831123> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Strauss, Walter A. 'The Merchant of Venom? T. S. Eliot and Anti-Semitism', in *South Central Review*, 14.3/4 (1997) 31-44 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3190206> [Accessed 23-07-2018].

Suarez, Juan A. 'T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, the Gramophone, and the Modernist Discourse Netwo'k', in *New Literary History*, 32.3 (2001), 747-68. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20057690> [Accessed 13-11-2018].

Svarny, Erik. *'The Men of 1914': T. S. Eliot and early Modernism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988).

Symons, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, ed. Matthew Creasy. (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014).

Tearle, Oliver.

— *T. E. Hulme and Modernism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

— *The Great War, the Waste Land and the Modernist Long Poem* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

Terrazas, Melania. 'Wyndham Lewis's Theories of Satire and the Practice of Fiction', in Miller, Tyrus ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Wyndham Lewis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 61-71.

Torrens, James. 'Charles Maurras and Eliot's 'New Life'', in *PMLA*, 89.2 (1974) 312-22 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/461454> [Accessed 08-07-2019].

Tratner, Michael. *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

Trousdale, Rachel. 'The Right to Smile: Humor and Empathy in Prufrock and Other Observations', in *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual: Volume 2* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 37-46.

Wagner, Geoffrey. 'Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticist Aesthetic', in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 13.1 (1954) 1-17 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/427013> [Accessed 25-07-2019].

Wees, William C. 'Appendix Business: The Blasted and the Blessed' in *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

Wilson, James Matthew. 'Ancient Beauty, Modern Verse: Romanticism and Classicism from Plato to T. S. Eliot and the New Formalism', in *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, 67.1 (2015), 3-40.

Wilson, Keith. 'Review: *Music Hall & Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* by Barry J. Faulk', in *Victorian Studies*, 47.4 (2005) 621-3 [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3829660> [Accessed 29-11-2018].

Zilcosky, John. 'Modern Monuments: T. S. Eliot, Nietzsche, and the Problem of History', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29.1 (2005) 21-33. [Online] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831619> [Accessed 07-03-2021].

Ziolkowski, Theodore. *Classicism of the Twenties: Art, Music, and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).