

Bertrand Russell and T. S. Eliot: their dialogue

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CONSIDERED TOGETHER, THE works of Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) reveal a long-lasting, reciprocal influence. The documents relating to this influence begin with the series of formal lectures delivered by Russell at Harvard while Eliot was a doctoral student in philosophy there and end in Russell's record of meetings and letters in his *Autobiography* (1967–69). Between the lecture series (on which Eliot took notes now in the Houghton Library, Harvard) and Russell's account lie more than fifty years of intermittent exchange, friendship, and tension—a development which amounts to a dialogue—between the two men, evident especially in Eliot's work. Although biographers of both men have referred to the relationship, Russell's and Eliot's mutual influence has not been made the major subject of a study by literary critics or philosophers, perhaps because literature and philosophy are generally regarded as separate disciplines. Yet an interdisciplinary study is demanded in the cases of Russell and Eliot because not only their personal lives but also their areas of expertise intersected: Eliot submitted in 1916 a dissertation on the idealist philosophy of F. H. Bradley, which was accepted by Harvard University and credited by Josiah Royce as “the work of an expert”; Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Through our study for our respective dissertations on Rus-

sell and Eliot, we have become convinced that each man conceived his role as a writer and social critic more clearly first in dialogue with and then in opposition to the other. This dialogue deserves to be isolated for more intensive study, a project toward which this article is a beginning.

Understandably, the majority of Russell scholars, because they are chiefly philosophers, mathematicians, or historians, have failed to note the dialogue; it is not their intention to study Russell in the literary tradition. Yet the role of man of letters and social critic was one in which Eliot was able early to perceive Russell, recognizing almost from the onset of their acquaintance that Russell was a significant spokesman in an age of debate. Of course, Russell scholars may have ignored the idea of mutual influence because they took seriously Russell's declaration in his *Autobiography* that any reciprocal influence was "without foundation".¹ They have overlooked Russell's contradictions. This denial is preceded by Russell's claim to having contributed to Eliot the visions of the dissociated sensibility of *The Waste Land*. Russell states:

After seeing troop trains departing from Waterloo, I used to have strange visions of London as a place of unreality. I used in imagination to see the bridges collapse and sink, and the whole great city vanish like a morning mist. Its inhabitants began to seem like hallucinations, and I would wonder whether the world in which I thought I had lived was a mere product of my own febrile nightmares. (A, II: 7)

Eliot's lines, suggesting in addition to Russell's image the influence of Plato, Dante, and a nursery rhyme, read

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1872-1914*, II (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967): 9n. Subsequent references to the *Autobiography*, 3 vols., will be cited in our text by the letter "A" followed by the volume and page numbers. Volumes I and II were published in 1967 and 1968, respectively; Volume III was published in New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969.

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.²

The reader of both men's works recognizes that Russell is claiming more than just a literary image: he is claiming what amounts to an influence towards a solipsistic theory of knowledge and a consequent world view. Russell's use of the words "imagination" and "hallucinations" recalls Eliot's discussion of unreal objects, and of universals and particulars, in Chapter 5 of *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (the title under which his dissertation was finally published in 1964; Russell is mentioned in this chapter). It is the question of unreal objects, a moot one in the epistemologist's theory of knowledge, that led Russell to formulate his theory of acquaintance—to which Eliot reacts so emphatically in his dissertation: "But I find the notion of acquaintance completely unsatisfactory."³ Implied in Russell's claim to have given the poetic image is the idea that he contributed philosophical impetus. But since this second claim is by implication, it is easy to overlook. Scholars who have neglected the question of influence, however, must also have underrated the importance of Russell's assertion in the *Autobiography* that he had loved Eliot as a son, together with the evidence he supplies there of close communication for a time. But biographer Alan Wood, in *Bertrand Russell: The Passionate Sceptic*, adumbrates our theory of the dialogue:

Sometimes Eliot read his poems aloud to Russell, and it is fair to say that Russell was one of the first to see their merits. Some ideas in them may possibly have been suggested by the talks Russell and Eliot had together. They certainly have points of affinity with Russell's writings⁴

² T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958). All poems discussed in this paper are from this work.

³ T. S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), p. 104.

⁴ Alan Wood, *Bertrand Russell: The Passionate Sceptic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 94.

In our view, Wood's assertions are correct, but limited. We regard the points of difference as even more significant for the two thinkers than the "points of affinity".

Turning to Eliot critics, the reader finds, surprisingly, only sporadic notes or hints and even silence in works whose titles and subjects suggest that the relationship will be discussed. In *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development: 1922-1939* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), John D. Margolis makes no reference to Russell at all. And in *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot*, Herbert Howarth refers to Russell only twice. The first instance occurs in the discussion of Santayana as Eliot's teacher when Eliot was a Harvard undergraduate. Howarth compares Santayana's style to Russell's and attests to the greater lucidity and ease of Russell's prose. The second instance is from a time a bit later in Eliot's life. Describing Eliot's studies in medieval culture, particularly the reviews of Dante that Eliot wrote as editor of the *Criterion*, Howarth mentions the friendship between Russell and Eliot and quotes Eliot's tribute to Russell's mind, the declaration that his "intellect would have reached the first rank even in the thirteenth century".⁵ But Howarth does not develop his hints into an assertion that Eliot engaged with this first-rank intellect in a significant dialogue.

A few Eliot critics have remarked on Russell's influence on Eliot and thus have pointed scholars in the right direction. But even they have generally overlooked the pervasiveness and the endurance of that influence, simply relegating Russell's contribution to an early stage in Eliot's education. Or they have placed the relationship in so large a panorama of intellectual events that its importance seems diminished, as Russell Kirk, for example, does in *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1971). Similarly, Robert Sencourt, tracing Eliot's personal development, describes his relationship with many famous people. He does point out, however, that it was Russell who introduced Eliot to the Bloomsbury Group. Sencourt also quotes a letter from Russell to him, in which Russell denies that he had ever attributed out-

standing brilliance to Eliot and that Eliot had ever agreed with Russell's ideas. Another valuable bit of information that Sencourt offers relates to Russell's influence on Eliot's dissertation: he states that Eliot was absorbed in Russell's *Principia Mathematica* and symbolic logic while he was at work on his dissertation. He implies the presence of Russell's influence on *The Waste Land*, stating that some trouble between the Eliots and Russell developed which prevented Russell's seeing the work before it was published, remarking that the trouble accounts for Russell's delayed letter of congratulation, which was not written until October 1923.⁶ Another scholar sees a possible influence upon Eliot of Russell's essay "Mysticism and Logic". (See William Harmon's "Eliot, Russell and *The Hibbert Journal*", *T. S. Eliot Review*, 2 [Fall 1975]: 8-9.)

Other critics, drawn to Eliot's dissertation, seem to have searched the work only for transfer of Bradley's thought to Eliot's canon, ignoring the degree to which the document reacts to Russell's thought. It would impress scholars of both men if they were simply to review the number of times that Russell's name appears there, let alone to consider the implications of content, footnotes, and acknowledgements. Yet Hugh Kenner, whom Eliot credits with drawing attention to his dissertation in *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), ignores Russell. J. Hillis Miller, in *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth Century Writers* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), takes Eliot as a philosopher into account, but makes no mention of Russell. Richard Wollheim's study "Eliot and F. H. Bradley: An Account" lists Russell, but allows him to be swallowed up in a line of names in a footnote:

In addition to Bradley and Meinong, who form the centrepiece of the thesis, Eliot shows familiarity with the ideas of Stout, Russell, Bosanquet, G. E. Moore, William James, Samuel Alexander, H. W. B. Joseph, Prichard and the American New Realists: he also quotes from Peirce, Messer, Sigwart, McTaggart, Jerusalem, Cook Wilson, Tichener and Witasek.⁷

⁵ Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 75.

⁶ Robert Sencourt, *T. S. Eliot: A Memoir*, ed. Donald Adamson (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1971), p. 89.

⁷ Richard Wollheim, "Eliot and F. H. Bradley: An Account", in *Eliot in*

We would pull Russell's name out of the line. It is through Russell that Eliot achieves his understanding of Meinong. Although Russell's influence is somewhat obscured by the necessary focus on Bradley, he none the less looms in the dissertation as the major dialectical adversary in Eliot's metaphysic.

Biographical data support the notion of Russell's importance to Eliot during the writing of the dissertation and beyond. Eliot says in the Preface that his dissertation was prepared during the years 1911–15—part of which time he was Russell's student—and completed in 1916—following his occupancy of Russell's home in 1915. Their relationship, as already observed, began in the classroom.

In early 1914 Russell delivered at Harvard two series of lectures, on Logic and the Theory of Knowledge. In addition, he gave the Lowell Lectures, which appeared as *Our Knowledge of the External World* (1914). He says that he found Eliot (together with another student, Raphael Demos) to be outstanding, recalling that once, when he was praising Heraclitus to his class, Eliot responded by linking Heraclitus to Villon. Russell adds that he always wished Eliot would make another such remark (*A*, I: 327). In correspondence, Russell wrote of Eliot that he was

proficient in Plato, intimate with French literature from Villon to Vildrach, very capable of a certain exquisiteness of appreciation, but lacking in the crude insistent passion that one must have in order to achieve anything. However, he is the only pupil of that sort I have; all the others are vigorous intelligent barbarians....⁸

The next important encounter between the two men after the Harvard year took place when they met by chance on a London street in the fall of 1914. Of the consequences of the meeting Russell relates: "I became great friends with him, and subsequently with his wife, whom he married in 1915. As they were desperately poor, I lent them one of the two bedrooms in my flat,

Perspective: A Symposium, ed. Graham Martin (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), p. 192n.7.

⁸ Quoted by Ronald W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), p. 231.

with the result that I saw a good deal of them" (*A*, II: 9). It is as a footnote to this passage that Russell adds his disclaimer that neither he nor Eliot influenced each other. Yet, reading elsewhere, we learn that Russell lent not only his London flat, but also a Sussex cottage, to the young Eliots and that he paved the way for Eliot's receiving a job as a reviewer of philosophical books for the *Monist*.⁹ In addition to the use of homes, Russell gave the young couple some independent income: "I held some debentures nominally worth £3000, in an engineering firm," he writes,

which during the War naturally took to making munitions. I was much puzzled in my conscience as to what to do with these debentures, and at last I gave them to Eliot [an act of generosity which implicitly criticizes Eliot's position toward warfare and hence prefigures the open ideological conflict the two men would later have]. Years afterward, when the War was finished and he was no longer poor, he gave them back to me. (*A*, II: 9–10).

The support Russell gave Eliot—and Eliot's wife—was emotional as well as financial. He attempted to resolve Vivien Eliot's emotional problems, even to the extent of accompanying her in 1916 on vacation in Eliot's place—Eliot "replaced [Russell] after a few days" (*A*, II: 68). About the holiday, Eliot wrote: "I believe we shall owe her life to you, even" (*ibid.*).

But the relationship was soon to develop strains at which we may only guess, evidenced in Eliot's letter of 15 October 1923:

It gives me very great pleasure to know that you like the *Waste Land*, and especially Part v which in my opinion is not only the best part, but the only part which justifies the whole, at all.... I must tell you that 18 months ago, before it was published anywhere, Vivien wanted me to send you the MS. to read, because she was sure that you were one of the very few persons who might possibly see anything in it. But we felt that *you* might prefer to have nothing to do with *us*: It is absurd to say that we wished to drop you.

⁹ Wood, p. 94. See also Elizabeth R. Eames and Alan M. Cohn, "Some Early Reviews by T. S. Eliot (Addenda to Gallup)", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 70 (1976): 421.

And again, in a letter of 21 April 1925, Eliot wrote to Russell: "I want words from you which only you can give. But if you have ceased to care at all about either of us, just write on a slip 'I do not care to see you' or 'I do not care to see either of you'—and I will understand. In case of that, I will tell you now that everything has turned out just as you predicted 10 years ago. You are a great psychologist" (*A*, II: 254–5). Reading between these lines, a reader can surmise that Russell had predicted an unhappy outcome for Vivien's emotional problems. By his own account, we find Russell concerned about Eliot and undecided about Vivien's future, at first. In a letter to Ottoline Morrell in November 1915, he wrote of Vivien that she exhibited toward Eliot a "Dostojevsky type of cruelty". He explains: "She is a person who lives on a knife-edge, and will end as a criminal or a saint—I don't know which yet. She has a perfect capacity for both." In the same letter he describes his own role: "I am every day getting things more right between them, but I can't let them alone at present ..." (*A*, II: 64). And, during this time described by Eliot as the period when Russell was a "great psychologist", Russell wrote to Lady Ottoline: "I shall soon have come to the end of the readjustment with Mrs. E. ... I think it will all be all right, on a better basis" (*A*, II: 93). While such passages have created speculation and gossip about Russell and Vivien, it is important to note that—although a man to admit other *affaires*—Russell denied having had such a relationship with Vivien, especially because of her illness.¹⁰ (However, because of conflicting evidence in the Russell Archives, the true nature of Russell's relationship with Vivien requires separate re-examination.) And it is evident that such a relationship must have made Eliot feel inadequate to manage his own life. The letters suggest that, for both men, the friendship held some of the feelings of the father-son relationship. For Russell, there were the desires to help and to manage. For Eliot, perhaps because of his youth and dependence, there seems to have been ambivalence. Moreover, together with other biographical information, the letters strengthen the insight that the personal side of the relationship was undergoing a deepening rift paralleling that forming in Russell's and Eliot's intellectual lives.

¹⁰ Clark, pp. 310–12.

A chief cause of the intellectual rift involved religion. In the mid-'twenties, while Eliot was becoming increasingly theological in his thinking, Russell was becoming more militantly atheistic. The metaphysical opposition of the early years now intensified into a religious confrontation. At length, on 6 March 1927, Russell delivered a lecture before the National Secular Society, "Why I Am Not a Christian". Russell's biographer, Ronald W. Clark, suggests several influences acting on Russell at this time to harden his anti-religious stance: "reaction against what he now saw to have been Ottoline's ameliorating influence"; the fact that "personal external influence, such as it was, now came from Dora (Russell's second wife) rather than from Ottoline"; and bitterness against Bishop Gore, the Christian spokesman whom Russell met in formal debate on the same day that his small son John was "dangerously ill after a double mastoid operation". Clark quotes Russell: "I was told that suffering is sent as a purification from sin. Poor little John never sinned in his life...."¹¹ When the lecture was published in pamphlet form, Eliot reacted immediately with a review (which appeared as "Why Mr. Russell Is a Christian"), calling Russell's work a "curious and pathetic document" and turning Russell's logic against him to describe Russell in Christian terms. Eliot declared that atheism is often merely a variety of Christianity—as a matter of fact, several varieties.¹² Worthy of note is the near simultaneity of Russell's anti-theological declaration and Eliot's baptism and confirmation in the Anglican Church during the late spring and early summer of 1927. Robert Sencourt goes further than remarking this conjunction of events in recalling Eliot's attitude: "He said at another time that he was driven to belief by seeing agnosticism pushed to its limits by Bertrand Russell, who, though so good a friend, was never his guide as a metaphysician."¹³

The recognition of Russell's growing role as a leading spokesman for the modernist position helps explain Eliot's curious "preoccupation" as editor of the *Criterion* (1922–39) with Rus-

¹¹ Clark, p. 413.

¹² T. S. Eliot, A review of *Why I am Not A Christian*, by the Hon. Bertrand Russell, *Criterion*, 6 (Aug. 1927): 177–9.

¹³ Sencourt, pp. 132–3.

sell's ideas and influence—if, indeed, we assume with critics like Herbert Howarth and T. S. Matthews that Eliot used his position as editor to further his own views. Matthews states: "... he was not infallibly even-handed: he tended to magnify the virtues of those whom he found praiseworthy, and to minimize the virtues of those he disliked."¹⁴ Howarth, calling the *Criterion* Eliot's twenty-year "autocracy", quotes Conrad Aiken, who "said that from time to time a literary 'assassination' was deliberately planned and executed."¹⁵ While not himself a contributor, Russell emerges as a leading thread in the pages of the journal, providing one organizing principle for reading the *Criterion*. In addition to obvious appearances in articles like Eliot's review of *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Russell achieves importance by a subtle process. He is sometimes anonymously reviewed, and the reviewers criticize adversely parts in which Russell's ideas are presented. Eliot appears to have envisioned Russell as a major spokesman for an anti-mystical, scientific-humanist world, and he used his position to neutralize Russell's influence. In 1931, midway in the years of his editorship, Eliot expressed this attitude openly in his pamphlet *Thoughts After Lambeth*:

I cannot regret that such views as Mr. Russell's or what we may call the enervate *gospel of happiness*, are openly expounded and defended. They help to make clear, what the nineteenth century had been largely occupied in obscuring, that there is no such thing as just Morality; but that for any man who thinks clearly, as his Faith is so will his Morals be. Were my religion that of Mr. Russell, my view of conduct would very likely be his also; and I am sure in my own mind that I have not adopted my faith in order to defend my views of conduct, but have modified my views of conduct to conform with what seem to me the implications of my beliefs. The real conflict is not between one set of moral prejudices and another, but between the theistic and the atheistic faith; and it is all for the best that the division should be sharply drawn.... Indeed, the gospel of happiness in the form preached by Mr. Russell in middle age is such as I cannot conceive as capable of making

any appeal to Mr. Russell in youth, so mediocre and respectable is it. It has nothing to offer to those born into the world which Mr. Russell and others helped to create.¹⁶

Such a judgment has its roots in Eliot's first apprehension of Russell, an experience captured much earlier in Eliot's poem "Mr. Apollinax". Russell identifies himself with the Apollinax figure in the *Autobiography*,¹⁷ saying that Eliot intended the poem to be about Russell's tea parties for graduate students (*A*, 1: 327). Eliot's response to the Apollinax figure is indeed to a figure of power and command, reflecting, in a sense, Russell's idea of his own role as a teacher: "In teaching able men it seems to me one's relation to them should be like that of Columbus to his crew—tempting them by courage and passion to accompany one in an adventure of which one does not know the outcome."¹⁸

The central persona in Eliot's poem, we are to assume from the title, is an offspring of Apollo, a figure of rationality; yet, as he is also depicted as a sinister figure, the poem radiates ambivalence. The name "Mr. Apollinax" suggests rationality, and the daylight conveys clarity. However, allusions to Frigilion, Priapus, a centaur, and the old man of the sea, combined with images of a foetus, a submarine world, and a jungle, create the notion that Mr. Apollinax's visit could be stirring and disturbing to a trivial social world. The ambivalence is most notable in an allusive image: Mr. Apollinax's severed head (recalling the prophetic John the Baptist), which the speaker expects to see experience a sea-change into

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Thoughts after Lambeth", *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), pp. 323-4.

¹⁷ Russell's *Autobiography* and the 1927 letter quoted below show that Russell spelled the name "Appolinax". Since Russell is considered to have been an excellent speller and since he corrected the typescript of his dictation of the *Autobiography*, even to the point of correcting the title of one of his own works on a page preceding the reference of "Appolinax", we conclude that Russell must have used the first edition of Eliot's *Ara Vus [sic] Prec*. In this edition, Eliot titled his poem "Mr. Appolinax". It is interesting to speculate whether Eliot had considered the name "Appleplex" as one for Russell at this time. It also raises questions about the change in printings of the *Autobiography* which attempt to correct Russell's spelling.

¹⁸ Clark, p. 231.

¹⁴ T. S. Matthews, *Great Tom: Notes Toward the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 79-80.

¹⁵ Howarth, pp. 250, 185.

a Dionysian resurrection. Clark credits Eliot with being perceptive in that, seeing his tutor as "Mr. Apollinax", he was not slow to perceive the new and more sensual Russell now emerging.¹⁹ We would add that Eliot was perceptive in envisioning Russell emerging both in the role of prophet and as a fertility force in a sterile world. He recognized Russell's power to activate the potentiality of his students and to sway them toward his own ideas as well. Eliot's apprehension is captured in the comments which he hears others say:

"He is a charming man"—"But after all what did he mean?"—
 "His pointed ears ... He must be unbalanced."—
 "There was something he said that I might have challenged."

The last line could be interpreted to mean that Eliot himself felt awed in Russell's presence and unable to challenge Russell at that time. Russell's own comment to Lady Ottoline about the party was simple—that his pupil Eliot had been there, the only one who was civilized. Later, Russell did remark revealingly about the poem to Barry Fox: "Do you know T. S. Eliot's little poem about me, called 'Mr. Apollinax'? He seems to have noticed the madness" (letter of 27 November 1927).

After the Harvard lectures and the poem "Mr. Apollinax", the next point of association of their works is Eliot's review in the *Nation* of Russell's book *Mysticism and Logic* (a collection of essays published in 1918).²⁰ In January 1914—in part as an answer to discussions of religion with Lady Ottoline Morrell—Russell composed the essay from which the book takes its title. The book appears to have been a "high water mark" in the positive relationship of Russell and Eliot: Russell thought that Eliot's review best comprehended his purpose of any responses to his book; the work seems to have attracted Eliot both by its subject matter and its form; and it is only at this point in their relationship that Russell's

essay "A Free Man's Worship" (the third essay in the collection) receives praise rather than attack from Eliot. In the opening essay, "Mysticism and Logic", Russell defines mysticism and analyzes the tensions between what he sees as the "impulse" toward mysticism and the "impulse" toward science and logic, pointing to the "harmony" of these impulses in "the greatest men who have been philosophers", citing as examples Heraclitus and Plato. Russell thus early perceives the modern dilemma of the dissociated sensibility, but only in the notion of a "divorce" between philosophy and science (a dilemma for which, paradoxically after his tribute, he blames Plato). Russell equates the quest of the mystic with that of the "poet, artist, and lover". This subject matter is the focus of Eliot's criticism and poetry in the years that follow.

In *Mysticism and Logic*, the title essay refers to Heraclitus's work as mystical in theme and existing in fragments. Eliot later quotes Heraclitus's fragments in *Four Quartets* and is renowned for the use of the fragment as a form in his poetry, especially in *The Waste Land*. It is not recognized, however, because those interested in Russell's writings look for content rather than form, that Russell stands as a twentieth-century literary pioneer in exploring the creative possibilities of the fragment. As is well known, Eliot credits Jessie Weston with providing the form and much of the symbolism for *The Waste Land*—and his poem does indeed follow the journey back in time that she suggests. It is also well known that Pound is credited with contributing the notion that the fragment could serve as a building block for modern poetry. Eliot does not credit Russell. Yet in "A Free Man's Worship" (1903) Russell fuses fragments of a number of works to create a modern outlook. He opens the essay with a dramatic dialogue based on the Faust plays of Marlowe and Goethe; his rhythms echo those of Milton and Jeremy Taylor; he employs the imagery of the Book of Job and of the New Testament. Russell's "Dr. Faustus"—a persona who is the twentieth-century scientific sensibility in his study—faces the "débris of the universe in ruins." He seems a prototype of Eliot's Tiresias (1922), who "shores ... fragments against [his] ruin." As if substantiating the connection, one note appended to *The Waste Land*—the note relating Buddha and Augustine—stands out. Although the allusion is tenuous, given the context it is not difficult to hear Russell's

¹⁹ Clark, p. 232.

²⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, 1918). Eliot's review, "Style and Thought", *Nation*, 22 (23 March 1918): 768–9, is unsigned, but credited to T. S. Eliot by Bertrand Russell. (Cf. Donald Gallup, *T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography, A Revised and Extended Edition* [New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969], p. 201.)

phrase from "A Free Man's Worship" describing man in scientific terms as "the accidental collocation of atoms" transfigured and challenged by Eliot's note #309, which adds a religious dimension to this fragmented universe: "the *collocation* of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem is not an *accident*" (italics added).

Ironically, in creating *The Waste Land*, Eliot created a poem which earned him the title of spokesman for our twentieth-century malaise; he has become renowned as "the Waste Land Poet". Yet his was not a despairing vision, any more than Russell's was in "A Free Man's Worship". He later asserts in both "The Modern Mind" and *Thoughts After Lambeth* that he intended his response to be positive; he says that the poem embodies what others might feel about our time. The speaker says that he will take up the fragments in order to restructure them into a meaningful whole: "Why then Ile fit you." This quotation from a revenge drama expresses Eliot's intention to challenge the "modern dissociated sensibility", described metaphorically in the well-known poem "The Hollow Men". Eliot sees his role as answering the "Hollow Men" of the age—like Russell—in his poetry, his essays, and his editorial capacity: in "The Idea of a Literary Review", for example, he lists among those books that represent "that part of the present which is already dead" *What I Believe*, by Bertrand Russell. Russell Kirk comments: "Not simply, then, at the hollowness of nameless folk is 'The Hollow Men' directed: it is aimed, too, at such as Wells and Shaw and Russell, at the intellectual enemies of the permanent things, those who wander amusingly into contrived corridors of the spirit—and beguile others, less gifted, after them."²¹ The insight helps explain the ambiguity about Russell so evident in much of Eliot's work; not only was Russell's "first-rank intellect" misguided, but capable of swaying others.

Thus, any borrowing of method and details from Russell's essay does not imply Eliot's approval. In fact, when "A Free Man's Worship" began to enjoy widespread popularity out of context of the collection of essays which modified its impact and to serve as a sort of manifesto for an heroic-atheistic stance, Eliot responded

²¹ Kirk, p. 127.

with sharp criticism, singling out the essay for disapproval in his own work "The Modern Mind" (1933). Criticizing I. A. Richards's technique for responding to poetry, Eliot points out that Richards assumes toward it an "intense religious seriousness" and that he proposes for its appreciation "nothing less than a regimen of Spiritual Exercises". Dealing with the five points of this regimen one by one, Eliot comes to the last, "The enormity (*sc.* enormousness) of man's ignorance". Asserting that "ignorance" is relative to our understanding of the term "knowledge", Eliot states:

Mr. Richards, who has engaged in what I believe will be most fruitful investigations of controversy as systematised misunderstanding, may justly be able to accuse me of perverting his meanings. But his modern substitute for the *Exercises* of St. Ignatius is an appeal to our feelings, and I am only trying to set down how they affect mine. To me, Mr. Richards's five points only express a modern emotional attitude which I cannot share and which finds its most sentimental expression in *A Free Man's Worship*. And as the contemplation of Man's place in the Universe has led Lord Russell to write such bad prose, we may wonder whether it will lead the ordinary aspirant to understanding of good poetry. It is just as likely, I suspect, to confirm him in his taste for the second-rate.²²

Part of Eliot's point is that attitudes, prose, and taste are related; Eliot feared the taste Russell was creating. Contrary to design, Eliot, by including Russell as a bad example in the discussion of Richards, Arnold, and others, dignifies and involves Russell as a man of letters, as a part of the literary tradition.

Eliot's critical shafts probably struck with effect, especially in the light of the earlier friendship. It is true that Russell himself had shown dissatisfaction with the style of his essay before Eliot's criticism: he had called his essay "too rhetorical" in a letter in 1925.²³ Later, he added a reflection on what we might call the

²² T. S. Eliot, "The Modern Mind", *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1959), pp. 133-4.

²³ K. B[lackwell], "How Russell Wrote", *Russell*, no. 8 (Winter 1972-3): 13-15.

ethical questions of rhetoric to "How I Write" in *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays* (1956):

Although what I now think about how to write is not so very different from what I thought at the age of eighteen, my development has not been by any means rectilinear. There was a time, in the first years of this century, when I had more florid and rhetorical ambitions. This was the time when I wrote *A Free Man's Worship*, a work of which I do not now think well. At that time I was steeped in Milton's prose, and his rolling periods reverberated through the caverns of my mind. I cannot say that I no longer admire them, but for me to imitate them involves a certain insincerity. In fact, all imitation is dangerous. Nothing could be better in style than the Prayer Book and the Authorized Version of the Bible, but they express a way of thinking and feeling which is different from that of our time.²⁴

Russell's coming to think less well of his essay was not the result of his change of opinion about the facts. After several decades, Russell wrote: "Fundamentally, my view of man's place in the cosmos remains unchanged ... [and] the attitude expressed in [*A Free Man's Worship*'] is, at any rate for temperaments like my own, the one which gives most help in avoiding moral 'shipwreck.'"²⁵ And in the Introduction to *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945), he says that one may answer the great questions of man's life "as a historian, or as an individual facing the terror of cosmic loneliness". The *History* is his attempt to give the historian's answer to the great questions; "*A Free Man's Worship*" is a lyrical outcry against "cosmic loneliness". Quite evidently, in 1945, Russell still shares the perspective of his essay; and, since he never totally eschews "rolling periods", we may well speculate that at least part of his dissatisfaction with his much-anthologized essay came from the external evaluation. A significant part of that external evaluation was Eliot's.

"Mysticism and Logic", "*A Free Man's Worship*" and *The*

Blackwell discusses the letter to Josephine K. Piercy which first appeared in *Modern Writers at Work*, ed. Piercy, a book now out of print.

²⁴ Bertrand Russell, "How I Write", *Portraits From Memory and Other Essays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. 212.

²⁵ Quoted by Clark, pp. 95-6.

Waste Land, then, reveal the height of Russell and Eliot's unity and the point of their divergence. Eliot's little-known work, published in two parts in 1917, titled "Eeldrop and Appleplex", dramatizes the reason for the divergence.²⁶ Part I presents two observers of man's lot who meet in a fallen world, a world devoid of traditional religious values. They rent two small rooms facing a police station. The work is linked by theme and linguistic detail to "Mr. Apollinax" and to "Mysticism and Logic", as well as to the Book of Genesis.

A number of factors—the characters' names, their actions, and their points of view—suggests that Eliot's characters allegorize himself and Russell. The dialectical relationship of the characters allegorizes what Russell calls in "Mysticism and Logic" "impulses of metaphysical thought". Furthermore, the names of both characters allegorically suggest the Garden and the Fall; "Appleplex", because of its similarity to "Apollinax", points to Russell (a similarity which Philip R. Headings, a noted Eliot critic, has also observed in his book *T. S. Eliot*—unlike Donald Gallup, the Eliot bibliographer, who saw a resemblance to Pound), and suggests the true concern of the philosopher, the perplexity over ways of knowing, the relationship between knowledge and guilt, symbolized by the apple and the Tree of Knowledge.

The story supports the view that Eliot envisioned Russell and himself as engaged in a dialogue:

There was a common motive which led Eeldrop and Appleplex thus to separate themselves from time to time, from the fields of their daily employments and their ordinarily social activities. Both were endeavouring to escape not the commonplace, respectable or even the domestic, but the too well pigeonholed, too taken-for-granted, too highly systematized areas, and—in the language of those whom they sought to avoid—they wished "to apprehend the human soul in its concrete individuality."²⁷

²⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Eeldrop and Appleplex, I", *The Little Review*, 4 (May 1917): 7-11; "Eeldrop and Appleplex II", *The Little Review*, 4 (Sept. 1917): 16-19, is signed T. S. Eliot.

²⁷ "Eeldrop and Appleplex, I", p. 8.

Having surmised Eeldrop's and Appleplex's allegorical identity, we find that the story offers a satiric consideration of Russell's metaphysics and theory of knowledge. It also allows Eliot to portray Russell's democratic political stance as well as his sense of Russell's emerging sensuality. Appleplex "had the gift of an extraordinary address with the lower classes of both sexes." On the other hand, "Eeldrop preserved a more passive demeanor ... [and] listened and registered" the suffering as well as the obnoxious characteristics of their neighbours. Eliot especially contrasts their metaphysical beliefs:

It may be added that Eeldrop was a sceptic, with a taste for mysticism, and Appleplex a materialist with a leaning toward scepticism; that Eeldrop was learned in theology, and that Appleplex studied the physical and biological sciences.²⁸

Appleplex is trying to answer the question as to what we can properly be said to know concerning the external world, indeed, to accept and apply Russell's view that a genuinely scientific philosophy cannot provide the sort of comfort included in the idealist view. When he collects his data, he can classify it only from "A" through "Y"; the "Z" is lacking. Yet, as Eeldrop observes:

For any vital truth is incapable of being applied to another case: the essential is unique.... With the decline of orthodox theology and its admirable theory of the soul, the unique importance of events has vanished. A man is only important as he is classed. Hence there is no tragedy....

They agree that they can classify the Fat Spaniard but that "when a man is classified something is lost", for, as with the case of Young Bistwick, "... what Bistwick feels when he wakes up in the morning, which is the great important fact, no detached outsider conceives." Punning on Bismarck's name—Russell's example in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", the last essay in *Mysticism and Logic*—Eliot challenges the adequacy of Russell's theory of knowledge. When Appleplex says that

the question is "what is to be our philosophy. This must be settled at once", Eeldrop declares that "our philosophy is irrelevant", and returns to his job as a bank clerk (the job held by his creator Eliot) and to his garden in the suburbs, leaving Appleplex to "call on Mrs. Howexden", a person whose name suggests Appleplex—Russell's continuing commitment to analysis as a philosophical method—to find out "how it's done".

Part II is set in a suburb in south London, the atmosphere of which recalls the urban atmosphere of Part I. The window of the room in which Eeldrop and Appleplex talk opens to a view which includes a police station. Again Eliot delineates the two men on the basis of thought—the divided mind. Eeldrop is entranced by "the smoky smell of lilac, the gramophones, the choir of the Baptist chapel, and the sight of three small girls playing cards on the steps of the police station." Appleplex, when asked by Eeldrop about a woman artist of their acquaintance, immediately turns to his files wherein he catalogues human beings by the cities in which they live and by such memorabilia as old laundry accounts, cheques, and letters. And he does a poor job of such filing, for he "misplaced" London, filing it between Barcelona and Boston. The discussion which ensues involves the nature of the artist, especially the separation of instinct from rational thought. Appleplex tries to analyze Scheherazade, alias Edith, into a "combination of known elements" and says that he fails "to touch anything definitely unanalysable". Eeldrop says that he "tests" people "by the way in which [he] imagines them as waking up in the morning." Eeldrop presents a lengthy discourse on the relationship of the artist to his work and the possibility of certain people who can be "material for art", concluding with a statement about the artist's possession of a "unified sensibility" which is "at the mercy of impressions" and, at the same time, "rational". He echoes what Russell had said about the "greatest men" in "Mysticism and Logic", those who possess "unified impulses". When this "chapter" of the dialogue ends, Eeldrop proposes another, to pursue a consideration of "Sets and Society". Appleplex, a "little embarrassed", informs Eeldrop that he cannot meet the following evening, for, again, he is to visit Mrs. Howexden. He leaves, wondering how to catalogue Edith and Mrs. Howexden: "I still wonder what Edith and Mrs. Howexden have in common."

²⁸ "Eeldrop and Appleplex, II", p. 8.

While the reasons for Eliot's divergence from Russell's point of view are contained in the above-mentioned works, one of the difficult aspects to present in this study is our consciousness, as we read the writings of Russell, that reference to Eliot is strangely missing for many years—he comes to exemplify the paradox of being conspicuous by absence. The lack emphasizes the realization that the rift between them must have been more than the “withering away” of friendship that it has been called.²⁹ We might ask, for example, why Russell did not choose to do a portrait of Eliot, a leading poet and critic of his age, to add to his *Portraits from Memory*, a work which includes sketches of Shaw, Wells, Santayana, and others. Or we might ask why Russell never sent manuscripts of his more creative work to Eliot for criticism, as he did to Joseph Conrad, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Lady Ottoline Morrell, the Whiteheads, and others. Any hint that he might have resented the idea of success for the younger man seems negated by the generosity with which Russell treated the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein, also his student and “rival”—although it is interesting that a “pattern” of enthusiasm cooling into alienation may exist in many of Russell's friendships with younger men, for the same thing happened with Wittgenstein, D. H. Lawrence and even Ralph Schoenman. Another possibility, that Russell disapproved of Eliot's making literary arts paramount to philosophy, does not hold up in the face of Russell's himself turning from logic to social commentary after World War I.

Yet Russell's work, in addition to the evidence given in the *Autobiography*, does give hints of the dialectic with Eliot in creative writing. The writing of fiction was essentially a new enterprise Russell took up after 1950. Except for unpublished works in his early years (chiefly “The Perplexities of John Forstice” [1912]), the writing of short stories was an adventure of his old age. It is tempting to speculate that it may have been the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950, given for his humanistic books and essays, that set Russell upon his artistic endeavour. As he began his eighties, he started to write short stories, the first collection, *Satan in the Suburbs and Other Stories*, making its appearance in 1953. Considering that Eliot left Eeldrop suspending his investi-

gation into the nature of evil to return on the weekend to the suburbs to his wife and children (Part I), it is interesting that Russell opens his title story by placing his narrator in a suburb—where he shortly encounters a satanic figure. This situation, of course, may be only a coincidence, representing in a fictional setting the interest that drew Russell and Eliot together in the early years: the fact that both were exploring the nature of good and evil. It may take its inspiration from lines spoken by Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, a figure who may have served as the genesis of Russell's notion of a “Satan in the suburbs”. It is interesting that Russell places a character where Eliot leaves him and then continues the exploration of good and evil. Of further interest—again, very possibly a coincidence—is the presence in Russell's story of a character, “Mrs. Ellerker”, who reminds the reader of Russell's account of Vivien Eliot—a woman who is intelligent, sensitive, bored with her husband, and (at least in the world's eyes) mentally unstable. The fact that Russell gives his characters the names, in order, of “Mr. Abercrombie”, “Mr. Beauchamp”, “Mr. Cartwright” leads us to think of the next—“Mrs. Ellerker”—as Mrs. E.” in order to follow the “A”, “B”, “C” = “Everyman” pattern Russell evidently set up; and “Mrs. E.” is the name by which Russell often designated Vivien Eliot in letters to Lady Ottoline. Whatever a reader's reaction to this possibility, it is likely that he will find overtones of suggestiveness (especially if he has recently been reading about Vivien Eliot's illness) when he reads the conclusion of Russell's story. Here the narrator, as he enters the sanatorium, writes: “Once a year I shall meet my dear Mrs. Ellerker, whom I ought never have tried to forget, and when we meet, we will wonder whether there will ever be in the world more than two sane people.”

Another obvious element in his creative writing is Russell's emphasis on the nightmare. His second collection of short stories, *Nightmares of Eminent Persons and Other Stories*, illustrates Russell's utilization of the “nightmare” as a medium for expressing his views of contemporary society. We find the speculation inviting that Russell, seeing Eliot's employment of Russell's “nightmare” as a basis for *The Waste Land*, may have decided after the success of that poem to utilize his nightmares for his own creative endeavours. Claiming credit for the vision as he does, Russell is

²⁹ Clark, p. 413.

plainly asserting his right to be considered in the literary discourse of his age.

Because Eliot wrote no autobiography and insisted upon having no biography written about him, and because of Russell's extraordinary life span, Russell's decision late in life to publish his own story gives the last word of the dialogue to him. His portrait of Eliot is sketchy and unsatisfying—a comment which can be made about his portraits of a number of his acquaintances and friends. Nevertheless, the three volumes of Russell's *Autobiography*, published after Eliot's death, contain enough material to suggest that Eliot was a significant voice in Russell's continuing dialogue with the world and its inhabitants, just as Eliot's works themselves testify to the evolutionary significance the encounters with Russell had for him.