Joseph Kuhn

The Middle Ages of Late Brahmin New England: The Role of a Historical Figure in the Modernism of T.S. Eliot and Allen Tate

In the background of the works of the American modernists, T.S. Eliot and Allen Tate, hovers a curious historical hypothesis, that of the “perfect traditional society.” Tate admitted that this society had never actually existed and was only an “imperative of reference,” one that had always and would continue “to haunt the moral imagination of man” (“Liberalism and Tradition” 214). Nevertheless in such works as Tate’s “Religion and the Old South” (1930) and Eliot’s “Dante” (1929) the high Middle Ages is made the best approximation to this society. Eliot and Tate also drew upon the historical topos of the Renaissance or the moment of the disintegration of the medieval *ordo*, a moment whose “crossing of the ways” briefly flung off the intensely compressed recombinations found in Donne’s metaphysical conceits (an attempt to regain synthesis on the level of trope) but whose eventual outcome was dissociation (Tate, *Essays* 533). This schema of poetic history is perhaps most systematically at work in Eliot’s 1926 Clark lectures, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, in which Eliot sought to show that “[t]he *trecento* had an exact statement of intellectual disorder; the *seicento* had an exact statement of intellectual disorder; Shelley and Swinburne had a vague statement of intellectual disorder” (*Varieties* 174-75). But Eliot and Tate did not invent the *ordo* as a critical figure in American modernist literature: its creation as a historical image containing the notion of the fullness of the sensibility and of “moral unity” was the work of the late Brahmin writers of the 1870s and 1880s. In the field of Gothic architecture these works included Charles Eliot Norton’s *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860); *Historical Studies of Church Building in the Middle Ages: Venice, Siena and Florence* (1880); “The Building of the Cathedral at Chartres” and “The Building of the Church of St.-Denis” (both published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1889); Charles Herbert Moore’s *Development and Character of Gothic Architecture* (1890); and James Russell Lowell’s poem about Chartres, “The Cathedral” (1869). Henry Adams’ *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904) was only the last, if the most consummate, of these Brahmin works.

Harvard was also the center of the late-nineteenth-century outburst of Dante studies that predated T.S. Eliot’s discovery of the poet while studying at the university between the years 1907-1913. Longfellow, Norton and Lowell, all Harvard professors, set up the

Dante Society in 1881. Longfellow produced a translation of *The Divine Comedy* in verse in 1865-1867 and Norton a prose version in 1891-1892. Lowell wrote a long essay on Dante (1872) which, as the Italianist W.M. Thayer put it in 1909, once enjoyed the reputation of being "one of the best literary essays produced in America" (Norton, *Letters* 2: 105). Santayana brought this New England fascination to an idiosyncratic climax in his study of Dante in *Three Philosophical Poets* (1910), a book which Eliot praised as "one of the most brilliant of Mr. Santayana's works" and which he probably heard in lecture form while attending Santayana's courses at Harvard in 1909 (*Varieties* 48).

Slightly tangential to this New England revival of a "strong" or anti-romantic medievalism in Dante (which might be contrasted with the aesthetic nature of Ruskin's version of the Middle Ages) is a regional recommitment in C.S. Peirce and Henry Adams to scholastic realism, partly in reaction to what Santayana called the "systematic subjectivism" of Concord (Henfrey 91).[1] This recommitment, for all of its technical grounding, was not unconnected with the other filiations of Brahmin medievalism. For example, Lowell introduced into his essay, with a sidelong glance at the "Oriental" Emerson, the comment that since Dante was "transcendentalist… by nature, so much so as to be in danger of lapsing into an Oriental mysticism," it was fortunate for his art that "his habits of thought should have been made precise and his genius disciplined by a mind so severely logical as that of Aristotle" (46). In addition Peirce and Adams early made the comparison, which with Panofsky has since become commonplace, between Gothic architecture and scholasticism: there was, Peirce noted in "Critical Review of Berkeley's Idealism" (1871), the same heroic totality of belief in each instance, the same impersonality in craftsman and philosopher, and the intricate linking up of parts in the "immensity" of either a *Summa* or cathedral (77-78). What the Brahmin interests in Gothic architecture, Dante and scholasticism had in common was a new preoccupation with objective form and with system. The social counterpart of this turn to the outward was what Peirce called "the community."[2] The Peircean strain in postbellum New England philosophy, and its emphasis upon the catholicity of truth within a "community of interpretation" rather than on its origin within the individual Cartesian self, seems to have contributed – through Peirce's disciple Josiah Royce – to Eliot's slow gestation over the 1910s of the modernist concepts of tradition and impersonality (as scholars such as Frank Lentricchia have noted). Lentricchia notices that "[t]he cardinal sin in Royce's kind of world – Eliot teased out a career as a poet in meditation upon it – has come to be known, thanks to Eliot, as the cardinal modernist sin: the refusal of commitment, the sin of refusing together *to act*" (46). Eliot's insight in "What the Thunder Said" that "[t]hinking of the key, each confirms a prison" feeds into Tate's identification in his essay on "Ode to the Confederate Dead" of the "remarkable self consciousness of our age" with "solipsism, a philosophical doctrine which says that we create the world in the act of perceiving it" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 79; Tate, *Essays* 595). As Eliot was to write in his doctoral dissertation on the philosopher F.H. Bradley, solipsism is not defensible because "each centre of experience is unique, but is unique only with reference to a common meaning" (*Knowledge* 149).

---

[1] In his prefaces to an American edition of Ruskin's works published in the early 1890s Norton gently made the point that his friend Ruskin confused art with religion (Roger G. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900*; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, 251).

[2] Peirce observed, "[t]he real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase in knowledge" (69).

It might seem that Brahmin New England was the stoniest ground for any germination of interest in the Middle Ages. Henry Adams said that as a boy he had never heard of the Virgin "except as idolatry" (*Education* 383). Charles Eliot Norton constantly had to disentangle his inborn anti-Catholicism from a recognition that it was this religion at its most "irrational, selfish, barbaric" which had supplied "motives of supreme power" in the building of Chartres cathedral ("Building" 947). Even Dante had to be understood differently from the way he was seen in the United States in the early and middle years of the nineteenth century. At this time, when Dante was read at all, he was largely viewed as a morning star of the Reformation (a view lingering in the last of Longfellow's six sonnets on Dante, which were appended to his translation) or contrasted unfavorably with the more modern sensibility of Shakespeare (Lears 155-59).[3] As late as 1867, Emerson was still claiming in his journal that Dante, unlike Shakespeare, lacked "a beneficent humanity." Although Emerson admitted a certain awe at Dante's ability to dream his pitiless dream while still awake, this dream struck Emerson as being "abnormal throughout," "a curiosity like the mastodon," and he concluded his entry with the judgment: "A man to be put in a museum, but not in your house. Indeed I never read him, nor regret that I do not" (Porte 545). But by the 1880s a definite shift in attitude was gathering momentum. Frances Sanborn could write in 1882 that "the intense reality of Dante's faith is in refreshing contrast to the indifferent half-belief of the present day" (Lears 156).

Sanborn identifies the main reason for the late Brahmin turn towards Dante and his grasp of Latinate objective form. For this turn is surely not unconnected with a growing

---

[3] A rare exception to the early neglect of Dante in the United States was George Ticknor's class on the poet at Harvard in 1831. Ticknor was then a professor of French and Spanish languages.

dissatisfaction with "liberalism" in its theological sense, a phenomenon whose stylistic aspect was the relegation of the supernatural to diffuse metaphor and periphrasis. Adams gives uneasy testimony to this liberal impulse, its "habit of doubt" and its "tendency to regard every question as open," in the first chapter of *The Education of Henry Adams* (6). The New England of Adams' and Norton's youth was dominated by sectional arguments between Unitarians, Transcendentalists and Deists, who often give the appearance of outvying one another in seeing how much of the historical and dogmatic element of Christianity they could discard in the name of Protestant inner illumination. Theodore Parker, exponent of the Deist position, even made the claim that Christianity would stand firm if the gospels were proved to be a fabrication and it were shown that Jesus had never existed. "Christianity is a simple thing, very simple," Parker claimed. "It is absolute, pure morality, absolute pure religion – the love of man; the love of God acting without hindrance" (277). With the all too intimate insight of one raised on New England Unitarianism, Eliot explained in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) that "liberalism loses force after a series of rejections, and with nothing to destroy is left with nothing to uphold and nowhere to go" (*Christianity* 12). Thus Eliot's "inside" portrait of Adams' search for an education in his review (1919) of *The Education of Henry Adams* sees the undertaking vitiated by "scepticism," "a product, or a cause, or a concomitant, of Unitarianism" ("Sceptical" 795). Eliot's notorious depiction of Adams in "Gerontion" identifies the "nowhere to go" as the slippery historical consciousness and its "wilderness of mirrors" or what Lewis Simpson has called "the drama of the self's internalization of history" (73). Gerontion even querulously addresses a personification called "History," a pander who "deceives with whispering ambitions / Guides us by vanities" (*Collected Poems* 40). By 1901 even Norton, an old Know Nothing, was noting that "Protestantism as a religion has completely failed" because it has become "vacant of spiritual significance…. It has no spiritual influence with which to oppose the spirit of materialism." Norton predicted that "[i]n spite of Roman obscurantism, its seems to me likely that Catholicism will gain strength among us" (*Letters* 2: 304-05). He here anticipates a similar comment that Eliot was to make in a review of a book of neoscholastic philosophy in 1917: "The non-catholic reader will be unable to avoid a tribute of grave respect to the only Church which can even pretend to maintain a philosophy of its own, a philosophy, as we are increasingly aware, which is succeeding in establishing a claim to be taken quite seriously" (Margolis 16).

The particular schema of the medieval used by T.S. Eliot, and then by Tate, emerges in Norton's *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860), a record of the obligatory journey of the young Brahmin aesthete to the country (Norton was there just three years before the young Adams, who wrote of the eternal city in chapter six of *The Education of Henry*

Adams). Gothic architecture, Norton claimed, was the result of a supererogatory and quite unrepeatable focus of purpose. In building a cathedral "[n]o portion of their building was too minute, no portion too obscure, to be perfected with thorough and careful labor." But Norton was not an admirer of the feudal as such, contending that the cathedrals were "essentially expressions of popular will" and not the work of "ecclesiastics" or "barons," and he pointed out that in Rome there was "not one truly Gothic work" (*Notes* 102-06).[4] Rather his stress falls on what Santayana and Tate afterwards were to call "moral unity" and the assertion that the supernatural is the "hypothesis" on which this "has best been attained in this world" (Santayana 91). Finally, in the concluding section of the book, Norton puts forward a Renaissance which is profoundly at variance with that of Jacob Burckhardt, published in the same year, and his vision of the breaking forth of the "spiritual *individual*" from the medieval constrictions of type (hitherto, Burckhardt explained, men knew themselves only through "some general category" such as race or family) (Burckhardt 81). This is important because it was Norton's rather than Burckhardt's Renaissance that Eliot and Tate followed.[5] Thus for Norton the Renaissance marked the "birth of pseudo-classicism" and of a more "accommodating" human scale that had no need for theological "final terms"; the "intense moral consciousness of the works of the Middle Ages" was replaced by an indifferent, epicurean sway that would "find the things of this world all-sufficient for content." "Living was both easier and more civilized than before," Norton observes of fifteenth century Italy, before adding an Adornoesque qualification: "But living is not life" (as Adorno was to observe in *Minima Moralia*, "Wrong life cannot be lived rightly"(39)) (*Notes* 308, 15, 07, 12). A spirit of "imitation" of the ancients spread so that despite "the extraordinary intellectual activity" in the fifteenth century there was a "deficiency of intellectual force" (Tate also sees imitation, even the corpse's imitation of the body, as the rhetorical figure of the Renaissance: in "The Progress of Oenia" John Donne sleeps with a "sapphire corpse") (Norton, *Notes* 316; Tate, *Collected Poems* 27). For Norton Dante's work marked the end of an era – "not only the crown of the religious achievement of Italy, – but its close" – rather than, as in Burckhardt, the beginning of a new one (Norton, *Letters* 1: 451; Burckhardt 188).

---

[4] Norton read his own austere version of democracy (not its Gilded Age manifestation) into his medieval studies. In a letter he wrote,"[d]emocracy, ideally, means universal public spirit" (*Letters* 2:244).

[5] Norton's is indeed a foreshadowing of T.E. Hulme's critique of the Renaissance, a movement, which Hulme thought, had introduced into the human the perfection that belongs to the divine (Hulme 32). Eliot and Tate were both greatly influenced by Hulme's work. Eliot welcomed the publication of *Speculations* and said that Hulme "appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the twentieth century mind" (*The Criterion* 2 (April 1924, 231). A fundamental presupposition of Tate's essays and verse is Hulme's theory of the discontinuity of the physical and spiritual realms (*Essays* 198).

Norton's studies of medieval architecture have been criticized because he did not show how exactly the homogeneous spirit of medieval society could be extrapolated from specific details of building or iconography.[6] But it was rather the relationship in the abstract between the "moral unity" of that society and its forms of expression that Eliot and Tate took from New England medievalism. Brahmin "tourism" of the fine arts, it might be said, was neither instinctive to the author of "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" (1920) nor to the Tate of "Sonnet to Beauty" (1928). In this sonnet, written as it were in answer to the two chapters on the "legendary windows" in Adams' Chartres book, the aesthetic sublimation found in stained glass windows (the "familiar tale" of nineteenth century beauty) is redirected into the stony path of kenosis, a direction more in keeping not only with the "doctrine of the incorporate Word" but also with the modernist sense that the beautiful as radiant semblance is dead ("Mr. Rimbaud the Frenchman's apostasy"). Now, as the sonnet concludes, these windows of Adams' "twist and untwist / The mortal youth of Christ astride an ass." "Twist and untwist" binds and unbinds the two natures of Christ in such a way that ass-like physicality blocks Adams' temporary empathy with the Platonic "wonder of light" (*Collected Poems* 28). Instead of this submergence in a sense world, what Tate and Eliot valued in Brahmin medievalism was its recognition of the role of a homogeneous society in subconsciously ordering and purifying the images of the poet.[7] In "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927) Eliot claimed that the business of the poet was not to do "any thinking on his own" and that one reason for Dante's "clear visual images" and instinctive architectonic is that he could rely upon "thought [that] was orderly and strong and beautiful, and… concentrated in one man of the highest genius [Saint Thomas Aquinas]." In this regard, Eliot could observe in his 1929 book on Dante, "Dante's advantages [over Shakespeare] are not due to greater genius, but to the fact that he wrote when Europe was still more or less one" – this was what Eliot called Dante's "luck" (*Selected Essays* 136, 42). Tate compressed the insight in an early letter to Davidson: "Minds are less important for literature than cultures; our minds are as good as they ever were, but our culture is dissolving" (Fain 166). This might seem like a restatement of Matthew Arnold's claim in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864) that the romantic poets "did not know enough" and that in literary work "the power of the man and the power of the moment" must concur (Ricks 95). But the exemplary periods

---

[6] For example in John Tomsich, *A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971) 55; Robert Mane, *Henry Adams on the Road to Chartres* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) 129.

[7] Kermit Vanderbilt stresses the importance of Norton's concept of a homogeneous culture as a legacy to twentieth century traditionalists such as Eliot and Tate in *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959) 231.

of this concurrence for Arnold were the Athens of Pericles and the England of Elizabeth whereas Eliot and Tate came closer to the view expressed in Norton's medieval studies that catholic religion was inseparable from a high culture. Indeed Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) is a very Norton-like and homiletic exposition of how culture and religion are "different aspects of the same thing" (*Christianity* 102).

One might summarize the historiographic figure of the high Middle Ages that the Brahmin writers introduced to American literature by saying that the period came to constitute a synthesis, while modernity, beginning in the Renaissance, was motivated by analysis, the breaking down of parts. This is the argument of John Crowe Ransom's "Poets Without Laurels" (1938), an essay which Allen Tate considered "the *locus classicus* for insight into the relation of the modern poet to industrial-technological society" (*Memoirs* 44-45). Ransom claims that pre-Reformation religion constituted a "synthetic institution" which was able to "hold together nearly all the fields of human experience" but that the puritan temper sought to "perfect the parts of experience separately or in their purity." In doing this "Puritanism" moved from one field to another, beginning, in the sixteenth century, with its "analysis" of religion at the apex of the synthesis and proceeding through other fields until, in the 1920s, it settled upon the distillation of a "pure" poetry, a dissociation of reference in favor of private meaning or aesthetic surface (his two examples of this poetry of "modernity," respectively, are Tate's "Death of Little Boys" and Stevens's "Sea Surface Full of Clouds") (58-61, 63-68). Eliot presented a similar kind of interpretation in the Clark lectures when he observed that "[i]n order to get the full flavour out of Donne, you must construe analytically and enjoy synthetically; you must hold the elements in suspension and contiguity in your mind, as he did himself" (*Varieties* 124). In fact this double motion brings the Renaissance poetry of Donne and the "Southern Renaissance" poetry of Tate into "contemporary" proximity. This may be illustrated in two poems of Tate and Donne about deathbed scenes. In Tate's "Death of Little Boys" there are abstruse compounds of a boy's death, a "peeled aster" that "extends a fear to you," a maelstrom and a sinking ship that have to be broken down so as to form a common tenor and then built up again into a more integrated statement (which never quite "completes" itself, as Ransom noted) about the relation of premature, ritual-less death to a nature of scientific quantity or magnitude. Donne's "The Funeral" opens with the starkly exact scene of a corpse and the discovery of a "subtile wreath of hair" on the arm, but then this clarity of presence is dispersed in a tangled conceit, as the wreath becomes a "viceroy" of the soul and the limbs "provinces." Although this diversion is, as Eliot put it, "pleasing" as metaphysical wit, it also constitutes "an inward chaos and disjection" (*Varieties* 124). Tate likewise identified the problem of the Renaissance poet when he noted in an early review that "[t]he advantages the poet had in Dante's time are obvious: his chief interest focused on his method, the ordered differentiation of his perceptions within a given scheme. The modern poet has to construct, besides his personal vision, the scheme itself" ("Revolt" 330).

What is the evidence that T.S. Eliot as a student at Harvard was influenced by the late New England writings on Dante? Eliot was too young to have studied under Norton, who retired as Professor of Fine Arts in December 1897, but an unexpected, perhaps partly tribal, confederacy of feeling seems to have existed between Eliot and his distant relative (Norton was the second cousin of Eliot's grandfather). In Norton tentatively and in Eliot with a more trained literary sensibility there was the need to extend their Brahmin neurasthenia beyond private feeling and stamp it out in the discourse of modern life. When Eliot delivered the Charles Eliot Norton lectures on poetry, later published in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), he quoted, in the lecture on Arnold, from a letter of Norton's in which he claimed that "[i]t looks as if the world were entering upon a new stage of experience, unlike anything heretofore, in which there must be a new discipline of suffering to fit men for the new conditions." This observation was prompted by what Norton calls "the rise of democracy… of the uncivilised" in 1890s America and it was a call which in the course of the lecture Eliot found to touch upon that realm of experience denied to Arnold – namely, the "vision of the horror and the glory" (*Use* 103,06). In his introduction to his translation of *The Divine Comedy* Norton pointed to Dante's "perpetual contemporaneousness": in fact just before his death in 1908 his last words to the annual meeting of the American Dante Society were that Dante should be read "especially for his significance to us to-day" and these words could have been taken up as a challenge by the young Eliot (Norton, "Introduction"; Norton, *Letters* 2:104). This "significance" for Eliot meant incorporating Dante within his vision of the modern urban city, one that in moments of *visio* peered into "the horror and the glory." As Eliot was to say much later, in "What Dante Means to Me" (1950), he alluded to Dante's lines in such scenes as the city clerks crossing London bridge in "The Burial of the Dead" in order "to arouse in the reader's mind the memory, of some Dantesque scene, and thus establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life" (in this case Eliot refers to "I had not thought death had undone so many" and "Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled" from Cantos III and IV of the *Inferno*, which describe those who refuse to be alive and hence are consigned to either to the vestibule of hell or to limbo) ("What Dante" 128). Norton claimed that Dante was a contemporary because he penetrates to "the permanent and unalterable elements of the soul of man": these elements are etched all the more deeply in Dante's characters just because of the change in society and loss of faith subsequent to Dante's time – they are cut, as it were, in inverse ratio to temporality. Dante's work, as Eliot was to observe later, "can only be understood by accustoming ourselves to find meaning in *final causes* rather than in origins" and for Norton this means that a single action of the souls in the afterlife – imprinted in "sensible types and images" – represents the fate of that person (In Canto XIV of the *Inferno* Capaneus says, "What I was living, that am I dead") (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 274; Norton, "Introduction"). What the Dante allusions intend in *The Waste Land* or in *Seasons of the Soul* are Baudelairean intersections of the "transient" and the "eternal": "symbolic" readings of fugitive modern tempo or naturalistic immanence. This is indeed the core of Santayana's reading of Dante, the assimilation of physical image to *theoria*, "a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth" (Henfrey 1: 149).

As a general proposition Eliot and Tate's is the theological and "rational" Dante of the Brahmin writers, the poet of the two sacred imperia of church and empire, rather than the heterodox Dante of Ernst Robert Curtius and Harold Bloom, prophet of a "gnostic" scheme of salvation through the intervention of Beatrice (Curtius 377; Bloom 38-50). Dante, one learns from Lowell, is "like all great minds… essentially conservative" and is distinguished, as is Eliot's Dante, by "the intense realism of his imagination" (Lowell 51, 124). When Lowell wrote of Dante that "[e]verything, the most supersensual, presented to his mind, not as abstract idea, but as visible type" he was as convinced as was Eliot that in Dante "a philosophic idea… has become almost a physical modification" (Lowell 124; Eliot, "Dante" 162).[8] But it was Santayana's assessment of Dante as a "philosophical poet" which seemed to define crucial aspects of Eliot's and Tate's interpretation and therefore, because their criticism was what Tate called "programmatic," of their own poetic practice. In trying in the Clark lectures to define his own sense of "metaphysical poetry," particularly in the revived sense of the 1920s, Eliot observed that "[i]t is clear that for Mr. Santayana a philosophical poet is one with a scheme of the universe, who embodies that scheme in verse, and essays to realise his conception of man's part and place in the universe" (*Varieties* 48). Thus Eliot emphasizes Santayana's recognition of Dante's "architectonic ability" and he echoes his teacher in his first (1920) essay on Dante when he observed that the poet "does not analyze the emotion so much as he exhibits its relation to other emotions" and he delineates the "complete scale from negative to positive" (*Varieties* 58; "Dante" 169). In

---

[8] There are other ways in which Lowell's essay foreshadows Eliot's first two essays on the poet. For example, Lowell prefers Dante's beatific vision at the conclusion of the *Paradiso* to the "Calvinistic Zeus" of Milton; he makes a distinction between religious and devotional poetry; and he introduces the concept of "provincialism" in describing deviation from the Latin center represented by Dante, a concept which – via T.S. Eliot – eventuated in Tate's essay on "The New Provincialism" (1945) (54, 132, 76).

Santayana the example of Dante as one who can order "all things in their order and worth" offers a rebuke to the tendency that Santayana saw in modernity towards "sensation," the domination of the percept over the concept (thus, Eliot says at the end of his 1920 Dante essay, that the modern poet looks out upon "the odds and ends of still life and properties" and Tate sees "the thrust into sensation" as "responsible for the fragmentary quality of [Hart Crane's] most ambitious work" (Eliot, "Dante" 170; Tate, *Essays* 321).[9] This impulse ran counter to Santayana's primary insight that poetry "is itself a theoretic vision of things at arm's length." "Symbolism and literalness, in Dante's time," Santayana observed, "are simultaneous": the "symbolical imagination" is active in the very configuration of the literal image. Its operation was an unconscious act by the medieval poet, an intuition whose parallel in scholastic metaphysics was the positing of universals prior to, in and after particulars (84, 62, 63). Tate, adopting Santayana's phrase "symbolical imagination" in his title "The Symbolic Imagination: The Mirrors of Dante" (1951), says in that essay that this imagination has to "work with the body of this world": "Nature offers to the symbolic poet clearly denotable objects in depth, and in the round, which yield the analogies to the higher syntheses" (*Essays* 430). It is this which explains the relative absence of poetic metaphor in Dante which is noticed by both Eliot and Tate: "As the whole poem of Dante is, if you like, one vast metaphor, there is hardly any place for metaphor in the detail of it" (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 244). Indeed it is part of Tate's description of modern poetry, including his own, that it is a fall into an excess of local metaphor: it "spreads the clear visual image in a complex of metaphor, from one katachresis to another through Aristotle's permutations of genus and species" (*Essays* 430).

For both Tate and Eliot the poet who initiates this dispersal into the complex of metaphor is Donne, of whom Eliot was noting, by 1926, a "*catabolic* tendency, the tendency toward dissolution." This came about, Eliot believed, because although Donne was a scholastic in education, he was of the Renaissance in mind and sensibility (*Varieties* 76, 67n.1). Eliot saw Donne as a prodigious magpie, concerned not with thoughts as part of a medieval synthesis but as "floating" objects, which may be detached and subjected to legalistic improvisation. For this reason Donne is drawn to conceits since these represent "the extreme limit of simile and metaphor which is used for its own sake, and not to make clearer an idea or more definite an emotion" (*Varieties* 138). For Tate the key to the "modernism" of Donne is that he tears a term away from "a self-contained, objective system of truths" and uses it as "the vehicle… of heightened

---

[9] This aspect of Santayana is recognized in Frank Lentricchia who argues that Santayana, James and Royce, the "philosophers of modernism at Harvard, circa 1900," created "collaborative modernist texts" and the "original metapoetic idiom" of the young Eliot and Stevens (12-13, 4).

emotion in the poet's dramatization of his own personality." Unlike the terms of Dante or Milton, in Donne's case "the vocabulary is merely vocabulary and it lacks the ultimate, symbolic character of a myth." It is only a step from this position, argues Tate, to "the frustration of historical relativity" of the nineteenth century (*Essays* 245,46). This step has been taken in the "concentrated metaphors" of Crane and Stevens – and, with clear implication, Tate – poets whose "controlled disorder of perception" renders "a direct impression of the poet's historical situation" (*Essays* 241). An example might be the use that Tate makes of the bleeding tree of the suicide Pier delle Vigne found in Canto XIII of the *Inferno*, which in the "Winter" section of *Seasons of the Soul* becomes a "rigid madrepore" or phosphorescent coral tree. It is submerged in the "tossed anonymous sea," the element of a purely naturalistic Venus. The goddess has retreated from the now "burnt earth," where she once constituted a living myth, to the salt or chemical matrix of her origin. When the Tate persona, like Dante, breaks off a branch of the coral tree:

> I heard the speaking blood
> (From the livid wound of love)
>
> Drip down upon my toe:
> 'We are the men who died
> Of self-inflicted woe,
> Lovers whose stratagem
> Led to their suicide.'
> I touched my sanguine hair
> And felt it drip above
> Their brother who, like them,
> Was maimed and did not bear
> The living wound of love. (*Collected Poems* 119-20)

The wound that afflicts the Tate persona is "livid" (purple) rather than "living." The paronomasia follows a Paterian melting of sound and of firmness of meaning: Christ's "living" sacrifice of his body in the Atonement has become the self-maiming of the merely corporeal or sexual life (shockingly depicted in the earlier image of the caged animal turning the "venereal awl" in this same "livid wound"). In the case of Dante's trees the stub, which bubbles with blood and words together, is an exact anagoge of the inability of the suicide ever to be resurrected in the body ("it is not just to have that of which one deprives himself" explains Dante). According to the fourfold medieval scheme of exegesis, that is to say, this Ovidian metamorphosis into the wrong form of a plant points to the anagogic level of the future state of the soul of the suicide and its place in the ultimate scheme of salvation. But in the surreal imagery of Tate's "sea-conceited scop" (scop means bard in Anglo-Saxon) Dante's "clear, visual image" has undergone "katachresis" and the resulting complex strains at the limits of the dream-poem, threatening to make it collapse into absurdity. Thus in Tate's lines the "tree" grows underwater and, although it is described as an "oak," it is made of coral. Doubtless Tate wishes to intimate that, in the words of his poem "The Eye" (1948), the modern has become "the mineral man," but in the process he loses the physiological proximity of sap and blood that is retained in Dante's image (*Collected Poems* 124). It is also perhaps not too carping to say that a liquid moving within another liquid does not "drip." Dante's anagoge of the sin of violence to the body has been "spread" and this corresponds to the transition from Dante's "high dream" to the "low dream" of the more naturalistic, even psychoanalytic, imagination (to adopt Eliot's distinction made in his 1929 Dante book: Tate explains in an earlier stanza that to submerge under in this water is "[t]o plumb the lower mind" (*Selected Essays* 262).[10] In Tate's poem part of the perspective of the "low dream" is that the "I" persona no longer sees with a completely objective vision: he merges with the suicides and his own hair drips blood. The Aristotelian distinctions and co-dependencies between soul and body on which Dante (and Aquinas) based their doctrinal understandings of suicide are lost, as is the ordering and logic of metaphor which is bound up with these distinctions.[11] Yet the peculiar rigor of Tate's position is that the poem does not collapse into the immanent logic of the low dream; it is placed in relation, albeit broken relation, to a Latin tradition and it needs the fourfold way of reading visions (which can, for example, define the anagogy of the tree image) for its intelligibility.[12]

---

[10] The foregoing analysis owes much to the stimulating comments of Frank Kermode in his short article on Tate in *Continuities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) 98-99.

[11] See for example Aquinas's statement in *Contra Gentiles* 4:79 that since the soul is the form of the body the immortality of souls seems to demand the future resurrection of bodies (quoted in F.C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955) 168). Eliot argued that one of the meanings that emerged after many readings of *The Divine Comedy* was that "the resurrection of the body has perhaps a deeper meaning than we understand," a meaning which he connected to Dante's depiction of the "state" of hell through "the projection of sensory images" (*Selected Essays* 250).

[12] One exposition, with extensive excerpts, of the fourfold method of exegesis is presented in a book which Tate much admired, William F. Lynch's *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960) (231- 243). Tate revives the method in "The Symbolic Imagination": for example, in the observation that the modern poet such as Crane tries to move directly the anagogical meaning without going through the preparatory stages of letter, allegory and trope (*Essays* 430). In *Seasons of the Soul* Tate pursues Dante's claim, in his letter to Can Grande della Scala (partly reprinted in Lynch's book, 239), that a poetical work such as *The Divine Comedy* can also be interpreted by a method more usually applied to scripture. There is an allegory of the poets as well as an allegory of the theologians.

Tate believed that such tensions made him a Renaissance poet in a special and partly pejorative sense. By a process of transposition he applied the topos of the Renaissance to the troubled southern literary consciousness of the 1920s and 1930s in such essays as "The Profession of Letters in the South" (1935) while in such essays as "Religion and the Old South" (1930) and "What is a Traditional Society?" (1936) he was to make a limited identification of the pre-Civil War South and the Middle Ages. He adapts, for example, Santayana's phrase "moral unity" to this supposedly "feudal" society: "Ante-bellum man, insofar as he achieved a unity between his moral nature and his livelihood, was a traditional man" (*Essays* 556). In referring to the "Southern Renaissance" as a Renaissance, Tate, as Michael O'Brien has pointed out, was employing a topos of romantic historiography found in such writers as Madame de Staël, Sismondi and, most trenchantly, Burckhardt (176). But in the celebrated conclusion of "The Profession of Letters in the South" he makes the Renaissance a much more ambiguous moment than they:

> From the peculiarly historical consciousness of the Southern writer has come good work of a special order; but the focus of this consciousness is quite temporary. It has made possible the curious burst of intelligence that we get at a crossing of the ways, not unlike, on an infinitesimal stage, the outburst of poetic genius at the end of the sixteenth century when commercial England had already begun to crush feudal England. The Histories and Tragedies of Shakespeare record the death of the old régime, and Doctor Faustus gives up feudal order for world power. (*Essays* 533-34)

This "curious burst of intelligence" and its insidious admixture with "historical consciousness" are subject to the same qualifications that Norton made in his *Notes* about "the extraordinary intellectual activity" of the fifteenth century. The parallel Tate enjoins between these two manifestations of Renaissance seems to show that it was for him a historical topos before it was an inference from the facts, coming before its possible application to the South in the 1920s rather than the other way around (thus the Louisiana writers of the 1880s and 1890s such as G.W. Cable and Kate Chopin, who had as good a claim to "renaissance" as did Faulkner and the Fugitives, are not included in this "good work"). It would seem, too, that Tate's understanding of this topos was actually quite dependent upon New England models of tradition and impersonality. It is not surprising therefore that in his critical essays Tate first applied this moveable Renaissance topos to mid-nineteenth century New England, several years before its use in his essay in *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930.[13] He wrote two articles – "Last Days of the

---

[13] The feudal and Renaissance topoi, therefore, become extendable figures that may be applied to various historical periods. Eliot had a sense of this as well as Tate. He responded approvingly to *I'll Take My Stand*,

Charming Lady" (1925) and "Emily Dickinson" (1928) – which expressed admiration for Puritan theocracy in giving a "final, definite meaning to life" before Emerson shifted the balance to "the personal and the unique in the interior sense." In Emily Dickinson's case it is her being balanced upon the fall of a "complete and homogenous society" that forms "the perfect literary situation": she is able to "probe" the "deficiencies of a tradition" (*Essays* 283, 84, 93, 94).

Of course, the claim that Eliot and Tate used late Brahmin topoi through which to understand the Middle Ages can be overstated. Yvor Winters' assertion that Adams' view of this period "has been adopted by Eliot and his followers" and "is merely a version of the Romantic Golden Age" is in danger of doing this (411). In fact Tate, one of these "followers," stated something like the opposite: he observes in one essay that the "medieval sense of mortality" survived in the work of the Elizabethan satirists, who used it "as a weapon of critical irony upon the vaunting romanticism of the Renaissance" and its Spenserian habit of ingenuous allegory (*Essays* 259,185). Further Tate and Eliot both had shaded, even antipathetic, responses to Adams' work and its half-skeptical use of romantic historicism. It is quite true that Adams' belief that "he might use the century 1150-1250, expressed in Amiens Cathedral and the works of Thomas Aquinas, as the unit from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything true or untrue, except relation" can be seen as an earlier version of Eliot's technique of comparative synchronicity found in *The Waste Land* and in Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead," "Causerie" and "Horatian Epode to the Duchess of Malfi" (Adams, *Education* 435). R.P. Blackmur says of Adams' strategy: "It was as if he had to dream the same theme twice, in two worlds, before he could find out what the theme was" (30). But Adams locates his two points of measurement on a monistic scale, the scale of forces. As a consequence he has no way of distinguishing – in Tate's language – nature as an "open realm of Quality" from another understanding of nature which holds it off and judges experience of it by the criterion of "an objective religion, a universal scheme of reference" (Tate, *Memoirs* 190). Thus Adams, according to Tate, finds in the Virgin of Chartres an archaic embodiment of a nature that cannot be judged morally. She is, from the point of view of an objective religion, nature as "moral contingency." Thus Tate writes in a review of Phelps Putnam in 1933:

> Henry Adams reconstructed the thirteenth century out of his impulse to find a rich world of sense, and the impulse carried with it the necessity to conduct his search in moral terms: when sensuousness and morality are added together (in New England)

---

saying that the Old South was "still in its way a spiritual entity" ("A Commentary" *The Criterion* 10 [April 1931] 40: 483-4).

> the sum is woman, and we get from Adams the abstraction, Nature is moral contingency the perfect symbol of which, for his devious and snobbish intelligence, was the Virgin of Chartres. (Brown 159)

Eliot's response to the Chartres book seems even more dismissive, although more by fiat than argument. This response is apparently restricted to a passing comment made in Eliot's review of *The Education*: "Adams yearned for unity and found it, after a fashion, by writing a book on the thirteenth century" ("Sceptical" 795). "After a fashion": Eliot's feline qualification does not indicate much conviction in the sanctuary Adams supposedly found. Indeed the indefinite way Eliot mentions "a book on the thirteenth century" seems to show that he had not read *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*.[14] But the core of Eliot and Tate's objection to Adams' and late Brahmin medievalism is that this approach is a complex product of the secularized New England imagination and its deployment of what Tate called "an aesthetic-historical mode of perception" (*Essays* 217). When Adams said he wished to rejoin the twelfth century by growing "prematurely young" and asked only "the right to see, or try to see, their thirteenth century with thirteenth century eyes" he reveals a connection with the historicism of early Romanticism and its partial continuation in nineteenth century German hermeneutic theory, for which empathy with expressive forms was the key to interpreting the past (*Mont* 7,80). In the language of Tate's "Three Types of Poetry" (1934) Adams' attitude could be seen as the projection of the "romantic will" into "a primitive world where scientific truth is not a fatal obstacle," a tacit concession of the case to positivism (*Essays* 184). Hans-Georg Gadamer provides an understanding of why the positivist and romantic approaches to history evident in Adams might interpenetrate with one another and constitute "the same break with the continuity of meaning in tradition." If the end result of pursuing the Enlightenment's critical understanding of the past was, by the end of the nineteenth century, to encounter "the frustration of historical relativity" (Tate) – and this is one lesson of Adams' "education" – then additional leverage is given to empathic understanding of this past "historically," that is by its own way of seeing itself

---

[14] It is not mentioned in the first, and so far only, published volume of Eliot's letters, which cover the years until 1922 (i.e. after the review was written) (*The Letters of T.S. Eliot. Volume 1:1898-1922* ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1988)). Eliot's possible objection to Adams' book may be gauged by his reservation about Huysmans' book on Chartres (published in 1898 and cited in Adams' book). In "Baudelaire in our Time" (1927) Eliot writes with reference to *La Cathedrale* that "Huysmans... might have been much more in sympathy with the real spirit of the thirteenth century if he had thought less about it.... he is much more 'medieval' (and much more human) when he describes the visit of Madam Chantelouve [in *La-bas* where the visit replays the typist and the clerk in *The Waste Land*] than when he talks about his Cathedral" (quoted in *Varieties* 115).

(Gadamer 275). “For us,” says Adams of medieval Normandy, “the poetry is history, and the facts are false” (*Mont* 213). The literary sign in the Chartres book of this double kind of historical consciousness is a split in the narrator, who on the one hand merges with the “child-like” medieval worshipper and on the other hovers over the scene with the irony of the “old man,” that same “old man” who acts as the guide of the young niece as they cross the “*pons seclorum*, the bridge of ages” (*Mont* 11). Adams maintains the right to be on both sides of the bridge. That Adams’, Lowell’s (especially in “The Cathedral”) and Norton’s medievalism can be regarded as a peculiarly liberated form of secular historical thinking may be seen in contrasting their attitude towards the Middle Ages with that found in the principal Roman Catholic thinker of antebellum New England, Orestes Brownson. A more antithetical work to Adams’ *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* can hardly be imagined than Brownson’s “The Church in the Dark Ages” (1849). Brownson contends that Catholics are “indifferent” to medieval history, that they seek faith not in “the dead past, but in the living present,” and that the Oxford movement’s rehabilitation of Gothic art is a product of “the romantic school… of Protestant German origin” (254).

A change in language and sensibility was needed before late Brahmin medievalism could become the modernism of Eliot and Tate. The influence of T.E. Hulme upon these authors would shift the Middle Ages out of its historicist framework so that it could be seen as a period holding to “certain absolute values” and a conception of original sin. In *Speculations* (1924) T.E. Hulme observed:

> I have none of the feelings of *nostalgia*, the reverence for tradition, the desire to recapture the sentiment of Fra Angelico, which seems to animate most modern defenders of religion. All that seems to me to be bosh. What is important, is what nobody seems to realise – the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. (9, 70-71)

In their poetry Eliot and Tate iterate the Hulmean sense of limit, of that which checks the romantic urge towards excess (for Hulme the Renaissance was essentially romantic). Tate’s verse is permeated by the sense of mortality and in Eliot’s, particularly in “Ash Wednesday,” there is the arduous climbing of the purgatorial stair. Unlike the Brahmin writers, Eliot and Tate explore the religious dimension in the “immediate experience,” that given of modernist verse. It would therefore seem an overstatement for Philip Rahv to claim that the “center of gravity of traditionalism is seldom in religious experience” and that what Eliot and others were attracted to was a *polis*, the social order of a past age in which religion played an integral part. It would appear too that Rahv’s claim that “traditionalism is really a form of perverted historicism, in the sense that it is fixated on some period of the past idealized through the medium of the historical imagination, that uniquely modern product" is more apposite to the Brahmin writers than to Eliot and Tate (170-71). In *Four Quartets* and *Seasons of the Soul* there is an attempt to place the maze-like structure of historical relativism in relation to the final anagoges of "stillness" and "silence": "to apprehend / The point of the intersection of the timeless / With time" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 212).

Although the late Brahmin writers showed unease with the drift of "liberalism" in its theological sense they were unable to bring this disquiet into decisive focus in the way that Eliot and Tate did. Eliot's poetry marks a unique way of joining the two ends of the question – the "liberal" dispersal into disconnection and the need to render action in objective form and with some sense of its "final end." Tate had a peculiar insight into the emergence of Eliot's technique from the unraveling fabric of New England Unitarianism. In a case that he had been building up over forty years Tate argued in a late essay "Poetry Modern and Unmodern" (1968) that Eliot had adapted to verse the Jamesian method of assessment of character through indirect qualitative depiction. This method was applicable to what Tate had called, in a previous essay on "The Beast in the Jungle," James' discovery of "the great contemporary subject: the isolation and the frustration of the personality" *(Memoirs* 159*)*. This very subject was a result of a regional and post-Protestant hemorrhaging of the sense of sin: in his Emily Dickinson essay Tate observed that there "lies an epoch" between Hawthorne and James. James was the hard-headed post-Emersonian who realized that there was left to him only the "historic role" of the Puritan "rejection" of the world, not *contemptus mundi* but its secularized simulacrum (*Essays* 287). In characters such as John Marcher and Gilbert Strether there is disavowal as an instinctive gesture, but no longer disavowal for a reason or an action. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Gerontion," Tate contends, Eliot took over James' technique of rendering moral inaction "qualitatively by means of perception and sensibility" (*Essays* 234). This technique was called for because the characters are not defined in the Aristotelian manner by their acts (Gerontion says, for example, "I was neither at the hot gates / Nor fought in the warm rain" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 39)). But such a technique went against what Tate called "the way of the poet" for it is "the business of the symbolic poet to return to the order of temporal sequence – to *action*" (*Essays* 428). In the case of the poem of qualitative depiction this primary "tropological movement" had to be supplied by a "motion" through the poem that proceeded by the association of sensation or feeling rather than by a more logical cohesion or one based on narrative.

The occasion of "Poetry Modern and Unmodern" was to defend Eliot's verse against Yvor Winters' negative characterization in *Primitivism and Decadence: A Study of*

American Experimental Poetry (1937) of this “motion” as “qualitative progression” and his coupling it with what Winters called “pseudo-reference.” Winters categorizes these collectively under the name of “imitative form”: the notion, which he attributes first to a statement by Adams at the end of the Chartres book, that chaos must be expressed in a chaotic language. However Tate insists that in Eliot this technique of “qualitative progression” takes place in an “implicit rational order.” To illustrate imitative form Winters had quoted from a section of “Gerontion” where Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa and others are captured, after having eaten and drunk something “[a]mong whispers,” in a succession of enigmatic gestures of which Winters says that “the motivation, or meaning... is withheld.” But his quotation, Tate shows, is truncated and it removes the explanation of what it is that Mr. Silvero and his companions eat and drink among themselves. The preceding lines (actually the earlier part of the grammatical sentence) are: “In the juvescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger / In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas….” These lines identify the meal as a “secularized” or “anthropological” version of the Eucharist and carry the implication that “the renewal of nature in the spring, the renewal of human life through the Resurrection are now merely naturalistic phenomena.” Instead of uniting the communicants in one “Mystical Body,” however, this repast serves only to disperse them in scattered half-actions (*Essays* 232). One might go further: if Gerontion is a portrait of the Adams of Eliot’s review of *The Education*, an old plum in Eliot criticism, then this amoral nature begets that same “rich world of sense” out of which – in Tate’s view –Adams’ Virgin of Chartres emerges. Eliot in his review placed Adams’ skepticism, “wherever this man stepped the ground… flew into particles,” within an American history of theological liberalism that stretched back to Emerson’s refusal as a young minister to serve the communion, a refusal which Eliot suggests is “provincial” (“Sceptical” 795). “Gerontion” is, among other things, an arcane commentary on the history of the “dogma” of the Eucharist in New England: “modernism” in religion seeks out an expressive form in the aesthetic modernism of “qualitative progression.”

In Eliot’s verse the Unitarian and the Dantesque parts of the Brahmin inheritance are assimilated on the level of form, specifically modernist form. This joins up the two ends of this inheritance: the “isolation and frustration of the personality” found in John Marcher and Gerontion that needs to be rendered symptomatically in “imitative form” and the more Dante-like reaching out towards comprehensive objectification, in other words that assessment that, as Santayana noted of this poet, seeks “to value events and persons, not by casual personal impression or instinct, but according to their real nature and tendency” (66). Thus Tate says of Eliot’s depiction of Mr. Silvero and his companions: “There is a stern moral judgment implicit in the way they are rendered.” Further Tate locates this principle of judgment actually within the qualitative progression: “Insofar as the people are judged, they judge themselves in what they cannot do” (there seems an echo of Capaneus’ self-judgment here) (*Essays* 234). The conjunction touches its nub in Tiresias’s observation of the seduction of the typist by the clerk in “The Fire Sermon,” where, according to Eliot’s notes, what Tiresias sees is “the substance of the poem” (*Collected Poems* 82). The seduction scene seems to rise spontaneously out of the qualitative montage of the city but it is fixed, evaluated in the judgment of Tiresias, an observer who has like Dante “walked among the lowest of the dead.” In words from the original draft of this section of the poem –lines which are bad Eliot, but which make explicit his purpose –Tiresias can

> …trace the cryptogram that may be curled
> Within these faint perceptions of the noise,
> Of the movement, and the lights! (*Waste Land Facsimile* 31)

Tate in his essay on “Ash Wednesday” (1931) found the seduction scene “the most profound vision we have of modern man” and he meant “vision.” The distance between the seer and the clerk is that, Tate believes, of “classical irony” since “the seduction scene shows, not what man is, but what *for a moment* he thinks he is”: his identification with “overweening secular faith.” Such “classical irony,” grounded in a “center,” is at odds with the “romantic irony” Tate connects with romantic historicism, which is concerned with “fictitious alternatives” to “the total meanings of actual moral situations” (*Essays* 427, 66-67, 185).[15] In Tate’s poetry too the speaker’s voice seeks out a “center” and cannot remain immanent to its apparent naturalistic scene.

WORKS CITED

Adams, Henry. *The Education of Henry Adams*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973.

—. *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 1974.

Blackmur, R.P. *Henry Adams*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.

Bloom, Harold. *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.

---

[15] The opposition in Tate’s criticism between classic and romantic irony owes more to Irving Babbitt than to Schlegel. “Greek irony,” explains Babbitt, “always had a centre. The ironical contrast is between this centre and something that is less than central.” The romantic ironist, however, seeks evasion of any center because holding to a center implies an acceptance of limit (*Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 242-243).

Brown, Ashley and Frances Neel Cheney, ed. *The Poetry Reviews of Allen Tate, 1924-1944*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Brownson, Orestes. "The Church in the Dark Ages. " *The Works of Orestes A. Brownson*. Vol. 10. New York: AMS Press, 1966. 239-66.

Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance*. Trans. S.G.C. Middlemore. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1945.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Bollingen Series 36. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

Eliot, T.S. *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards a Definition of Culture.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.

—. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.

—. "Dante. " *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism.* London: Methuen, 1928.159-171.

—. *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. London: Faber&Faber, 1964.

—. "A Sceptical Patrician. " *Great Writers of America*. Ed. Perry Miller. Vol. 2. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962. 793-796.

—. *Selected Essays.* London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

—. *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. London: Faber and Faber, 1933.

—. *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*. 1993. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

—. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. London: Faber and Faber, 1971.

—. "What Dante Means to Me. " *To Criticize the Critic, and Other Writings*. London: Faber and Faber, 1965.

Fain, John Tyree and Thomas Daniel Young, ed. *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 1994.

Henfrey, Norman, ed. *Selected Critical Writings of George Santayana*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Hulme, T.E. *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924.

Lears, T.J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

Lentricchia, Frank. *Modernist Quartet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Lowell, James Russell. "Dante. " *The Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell.* Vol. 5. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904. 3-170.

Margolis, John D. *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Norton, Charles Eliot. "The Building of the Cathedral at Chartres. " *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 79.474 (1889): 944-955.

—. "Introduction. " *The Divine Comedy, Volume 1, Hell. By Dante Alighieri*, 1891. 10 March 2005 <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1995>.

—. *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton.* 2 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913.

—. *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860.

O'Brien, Michael. *Rethinking the South: Essays in_Intellectual History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

Parker, Theodore. "A Discourse of the Transient and the Permanent in Christianity. " *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*. Ed. Perry Miller. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950. 259-283.

Peirce, Charles S. *Selected Writings*. New York: Dover Publications, 1966.

Porte, Joel, ed. *Emerson in His Journals*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Rahv, Philip. *Literature and the Sixth Sense*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Ransom, John Crowe. *The World's Body*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938.

Ricks, Christopher, ed. *Selected Criticism of Matthew Arnold*. New York: New American Library, 1972.

Santayana, George. "Dante. " *The Works of George Santayana*. Vol. 6. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. 49-91.

Simpson, Lewis P. “The Southern Republic of Letters and *I'll Take My Stand*. ” *A Band of Prophets: The Nashville Agrarians after Fifty Years*. Ed. William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1982. 65-91.

Tate, Allen. *Collected Poems 1919-1976*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1977.

—. *Essays of Four Decades*. Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1968.

—. “Liberalism and Tradition. ” *Reason in Madness: Critical Essays*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941. 196-216.

—. *Memoirs and Opinions 1926-1974*. Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1975.

—. “The Revolt against Literature. ” *The New Republic* 49 (February 9 1927): 329-330.

Winters, Yvor. *In Defense of Reason*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1947.

kwieslaw@ifa.amu.edu.pl