UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: May 18, 2007

I, Dirk Stratton **,**

hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

in:

English

It is entitled:

Disposable Odes

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: John Drury

Kathy Rentz

Disposable Odes

A dissertation submitted to the

Division of Research and Advanced Studies
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

in the Department of English Composition and Comparative Literature
at the College of Arts and Sciences

2007

by

Dirk Stratton

B.A., Whitworth College, 1979
M.A., University of Maine, 1995
M.F.A., University of Washington, 1995

Committee Chair: John Drury, M.F.A.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of a collection of original poetry by Dirk Stratton and a critical essay about T. S. Eliot's annotations of *The Waste Land*. The poems are about those things we throw away, and the culture that encourages so much disposability. A 17-syllable strophe (with the syllables being employed in a variety of line lengths) is used throughout and is meant to allude to the haiku form. The essay examines Eliot's "Notes" to *The Waste Land*, how they came to exist, and how they operate in the poem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Too many people, too little time. So to all who assisted—even if you are unaware of your assistance: thank you. Personal expressions of gratitude will be forthcoming.

Table of Contents

Proems	1
Disposable Abstract: First Meditation on Disposability	2
Addictions	4
Ashes	5
Authors	6
Blues	7
Body Odor	8
Cigarettes	10
Cigarettes	11
A Concrete Poet Hijacks *Disposable Odes*	12
Death	14
Disposable Abstract: Second Meditation on Disposability	15
Desire	16
Disposable Abstract: "Found" Couplet Plus Exegesis	17
Diapers	18
Fish	19
Garbage Bags	20
God	22
Hangers	23
Hindsight	24
Humor in Poetry	25
Individual Rights	26
Innocence	27
Disposable Abstract: Obsolescence	28
Isolation	30
Money	31
Muses	32
Disposable Abstract: Instruction Manual	33
Nuclear Waste	34
Odes	37
Disposable Abstract: Third Meditation on Disposability	38
Oil	39
Pounds	40
Prose Poems	41
Razors	42

Remote 43
Spouse 45
Stars 46
Umbrellas 49
Virginity 51
Virginity 53
War 56
Wilderness 57
Disposable Abstract: List of Potential Odes 58
These 59
Notes and Variants 60
A Survey of Part VI of *The Waste Land* 66

garbage has to be the poem of our time . . .
where the disposal
flows out of form

—A. R. Ammons

*

An aged temple
and a cracked clay pot tossed out
in the parsley patch.

—Buson

*

If you want these casserole
dishes, take them! I got new.

—Note found in an apartment
complex mailroom

Proems

not used much these days
nothing long enough to warrant their inclusion

so this will be short
the equivalent of a moment of silence

for those lost prologues
a blank spot signaling the changing of the bard

Disposable Abstract
First Meditation on Disposability

these odes: not elegies, not laments about absence and loss, rather

a focus on things' (discarded) presence, a swamp
of ontologic

ambiguity: disposed-of things aren't
gone, as in non-being, they're

relocated, e.g. count
how many times you
have to throw things out:

once: in the small waste-
basket by your desk emptied
into: a larger

kitchen trash can bulging under the sink with varieties of sludge

that soon will find a home in still larger garbage
cans or three: which then

get hauled to the curb and so forth and fifth:
garbage cans dumped into trucks

sick with six ways of stinking:
the trucks bequeathing
heavy mounds of junk

to a barge searching
for some seventh heaven, a
final resting place

but the barge floats homeless, overcome by a wealth of disposed things, help-

less to finish the job it's been given: to make
it all disappear:

no dump will adopt the scurvy scow's load:
no landfill means no landfall—

but we don't want to hear it
spare us the aching
remains of what we

ate last week, we don't
want our trash to have nine lives
we throw away so

much so often we'd rather forget the guilt, how our trash overflows

Addictions

how many times the last
time: as Twain said: "It's easy
to give up smoking—

I've done it hundreds
of times." whether sex, drugs, war
hypertext, money,

alcohol, shopping
(choose your poison): we want
to dispose of our

enslavements before
they destroy us, before they
truly define us

but temptation
finds an excuse for just one
(just one more!) last time

Ashes

smoke's heavy cousin
former shape a memory
color burned away

solid until touched
released heat leaves restless skin
almost nothing much

Authors

it was an inside
job, of course (who else could get
close enough to do

the deed?) the killers
boldly signed the death warrants
(a nifty bit of

hit crit: drive-by by
by-line). emulated for
their unashamed smack-

talking whackings these
assassins will royalties
to their heirs because

there is no question
who authored the killings and
they know that they will

not be receiving
the same death sentences they
have willed on others

Blues

my baby done left me like a can on the curb
my bank account is

empty and the universe
absurd, and I want
to tell you all: I've

more than paid my dues
but I can't sing worth a lick
use a guitar pick

it just makes me sick: disposable ode blues, disposable ode blues

Body Odor

it has been proposed
that our ancestors survived
not because they had

large brains and unique
thumbs and a way with language
and tools, but—to be

perfectly blunt, free
of our usual hubris
and our inflated

notions that we sit
near the peak of the Great Chain
of Being, rulers

of all we survey
and even of all we do
not—our ancestors

survived (that is, *we*
survived) hot naked acres
of hostile hunger,

we survived thousands
of years and a billion teeth
because, well, we stank.

that's right: humans smelled
so awful no predator
wanted to eat us.

if this theory is
correct, the implications
are humbling since all

our accomplishments
our vast cities, our immense
learning, our constant

striving towards beauty
and perfection in art, in life
all of it (even

our evil: just once
let's be honest about our
lies and our other

failures) all of it,
then, all that we are, all that
we ever hope to

be, everything—
when we come right down to it
when we put aside

our fastidious
pride and stick our noses deep
into the ripe musk

of history—thanks
must go to over-active
sweat glands, which we keep

under tight control
these days with aluminum
tetrachlorhydrex

and frequent bathing.
drenched in soap and perfumes we're
free of the sour stench

of olfactory
offense. time for dinner. we're
clean and edible

Cigarettes

when is litter not litter
when it's an exceptional conjunction

that is, when it's a but, a cigarette butt (and note: orthography

recapitulates destiny: double
t's remain when cigarette

burns down to butt: they then center themselves in litter, a double-cross

tripling from lips to pavement)
o.k., agreed, a bad joke—still, sadly,

much too accurate: how did discarded smokes become an exception?

what's happening in smokers'
rationalization apparatus?

that something lit isn't litter, that it somehow keeps burning until

its atoms rejoin the vast decomposing world?
that filters gently

unfold and melt into the air leaving all the tar behind which seals

some cracks in the asphalt which
helps direct rainwater more forcefully

towards the gutter which helps sweep all the butts off the street and down the drain?

Cigarettes

a friend of mine takes
smokers to task when he sees them flip a butt in

the gutter, he yells at strangers in public, and swears under his breath

about stupidity and ugliness and all
the other high crimes

against his happiness—he's
overwrought (my diagnosis: too much

strong coffee). I don't like litter, but I try to be sympathetic

how many minutes of a smoker's life
does each cigarette take, how

much slow dying bleeds into this burning
thus turning garbage into

memorials (like the small white crosses planted near dangerous curves)

A Concrete Poet Hijacks *Disposable Odes*

all right, before anything else you got to take care of the title

so you best take my advice
first, get rid of 'i': first person has no

place in poetry
authors interfere with the appreciation

of the artifact.
next, say goodbye to that 'p'—
a prissy letter

an impotent 'b'
dragging its sad tail below the line of scrimmage—

and speaking of 'b'
toss it, too, along with 'a'
its next-door neighbor:

both get too much attention just because
they're first and their grandparents

named the alphabet. lets see,
oh yeah, farewell 'l'—you anorexic

stick with pretensions
of one-dom: see you in hell—
that should do it. hold

on: duplicate 's'—one's got to go. how
about the one next to the 'i':

'is' simply can't be
trusted. it's a pernicious
verb that promises

way too much equality. there. after
clearing away the rubble

dee, (three holes) oh, ess, (three holes) ee remain:
and thus: Dose Odes! you know what

they say: fillet your prey. an anagram a day keeps poems in play

Death

the ultimate garbage man—
though you never see
death, you see effects,

the aftermath. what death takes
you couldn't see in
the first place. we find

what death leaves behind: the lack of the invisible made visible

Disposable Abstract
Second Meditation on Disposal

"what can't be disposed of," a friend asks me, "no, I mean *really* can't be

disposed of? people? stones?" how I wish people were
non-disposable

but as any newspaper proves, my wish
will not be granted soon. stones?

we like to keep them near us
to mark where our last
stab at presence is

taking place: out of
sight, a vortex of decay
against memory

Desire

Buddha preaches the ultimate in disposal:
everything, all

must go: forfeit all wants, then nirvana's
like peeling a banana—

but his enlightened answer seems to be
an impossibility

because wouldn't it require
that you finally give up the desire

to rid yourself of desire? paradox
and paradise in one box

doesn't mean he's wrong I guess
but it does demand a certain finesse

Disposable Abstract
"Found" Couplet Plus Exegesis

still around though thrown away / it's here and gone simultaneously

"Garbage is not something you throw away.
There is no such place as a-

way. Disposal is a myth." or to put
it another way (The Tao

of Away?): disintegration occurs:
by gravity, by the rust

of air and water, by explosions of
fire, in the cold envelope

of earth, but do these
count as disposal because atoms recycle

quarks keep barking, and strings vibrate in 10,000 unnamable ways

Diapers

. . . garbage disposal

has become more sweetly if broadly waste disposal
and guess what's two percent of permanent waste,

yep, disposable diapers, good to last
five hundred years: cute little babies' shit

—A. R. Ammons,

like garbage bags
both the instrument of disposal and subject

our bodies dispose
waste daily, shitting and pissing away poisons

so is this poem
about the shit, or the shit-collectors we use

to corral garbage
our dear infants produce? both, I suppose. plus, how

to throw away both,
which, as Ammons notes, is not that easy since

"permanence" prevails
there is no "away" and shit survives, preserved in

plastic, fermenting
coprolites like the world has never seen

Fish

salmon once spawned in the Spokane River
some 300 miles inland

from the Pacific (maybe more given
the twists of the river)

but the genetic memory of those
long death-driven swims is gone

now, wiped out by dams—
so many old legacies destroyed by progress . . .

on New Year's Day, I stand by the river
in a relentless downpour

and try to imagine silver bodies
writhing against white water

Garbage Bags

here a doubling blooms
we cannot *not* throw away
that which is designed

to be the instrument, the vessel, the manifestation, the pure

empty embodiment of disposal.
not all bags are created

equal however:
some are destined for dumping
others have dumping

thrust upon them. the former: first in plastic, first in sanitation,

first in the trash cans of our countrymen;
the latter, no less noble,

come to us first as
grocery sacks carrying
our once and future

trash: apples waiting to become cores, boxes of processed food a meal

away from being useless,
the empty cans, the styrofoam, the plastic wrap

denying fresh air
to the fresh vegetables—
all will leave the way

they arrived: in bags, garbage bags, both paper *and* plastic, the many,

the humble, the pristine and the ragged:
bags (or sacks, whichever you

prefer) we salute
you and thank you for making
trash much easier

to transport far away from our homes which helps us forget just how much

God

Nietzsche often gets the blame
not for the actual execution

but for being impolite enough to
acknowledge the years and years

of silence and then suggesting the most
obvious explanation

plus, his temerity to indict our
ripe culpability

remember, he said more than three words: "God
is dead! . . . And we have killed him!"

Hangers

now, how did these get
included? I've never seen
discarded hangers

or known anyone
who actually admitted
to tossing some out—

not that it wouldn't
be a good thing now and then
given how they breed

in our dark closets
then huddle in empty herds
waiting for something

to have and to hold
to give shape to the darkness
or something to do

if the clothes run out
be a TV antenna
a drain unclogger

or an ungainly
hook slipped through a car window
seeking to unlock

the door (though that job's
vanishing, leaving hangers
barely hanging on)

Hindsight

difficult sometimes to throw
away something so
perfectly right though

also (obviously) absolutely, unforgivably worthless

Humor in Poetry

there's not enough! cried the poet, it's ignored or deemed problematic,

solemnity now seems almost automatic!—
so his current mode

is the lightened ode
that is neither too choleric nor phlegmatic

Individual Rights

either they're taken away
quickly by proud revolutionaries

(determined to be the last of their kind)
or we give them up slowly

to prevent the first, as if acquiescence made it less of a loss

Innocence

can't wait to get rid of it
then spend the rest of our lives in mourning

Disposable Abstract Obsolescence

as in "planned," as in how many consumer goods are designed to be
disposed of eventually, how our economy depends on
us getting rid of what we buy to insure that we will buy something
new. my brother worked for McDonald's when he was in high school and he
revealed the "genius" of their fast-food system: burgers were prepared
continually but if they weren't sold by a certain time, they were
discarded: freshness was guaranteed by the disposal of the "old"
burgers that had lingered too long under the heat lamps—that's the theory,
anyway, probably honored more in the breach than the observance,
since many of the franchisers are loathe to throw away their profits—
regardless, the ethic of obsolescence permeates this culture
in thrall to the new ("I got new") we program deterioration
into our consumer goods (while desperately attempting to stave
off the same in our own bodies: never a more capricious master
than youth) we make things to break, planning their funerals before they're born
we yearn for eternity but pay gladly for the temporary
the engine of capitalism demands that nothing last very long

so that the “new and improved” become the “old and obsolete” quickly

so that all that we have, all that we are, gets rushed to the dump to be

buried and forgotten: what we lov’st well is dross and does not remain

Isolation

as soon as the plane lands, out come the crackberries and the hellphones: too

much time away from our virtual families
is terrifying

contact contact contact contact contact
the horror of being out

of touch—the frantic checking
for messages means
we are lonelier

than ever, hobbled
by electronic crutches
addicted to "Hi!"

Money

automatically this category demands
to be included

but not because of the term disposable income (as we call it:

those dollars we can afford to spend without thinking)
rather consider

the fact of how ephemeral all money is, that a dollar bill

is simply a physical abstraction, value
represented by

a piece of paper that more and more is irrelevant, replaced by

digital bookkeeping: that is, where's the money,
really? it only

exists in some imaginary account that survives because we

would be lost without it, which suggests that faith still
underlies all things

human, though now we believe in the Federal Reserve not heaven

Muses

for men, gender becomes an issue: those sensitive to feminist
concerns decline to invoke a sexist construction; those with a more
unenlightened outlook resist enlisting a woman's assistance
for any reason, since poetry is testosterone-deficient
enough without depending on ethereal females who may or
may not even answer when called (how often does a muse shampoo her
hair on Friday night anyway or have a headache or think it'd be
best if she inspired other poets for a while but that we could still
be friends . . .)—for women, first, they are supposed to represent the muse, not
ask her for help; second, they have been excluded so long from crucial
matters, loyalty to creaky conventions is understandably
thin. for the rest of us, poetry doesn't always make lots of sense:
the lack of economic rewards, the miniscule audiences,
for example. all poems include an envoi (sometimes unwritten)
that denies their disposability, that pleads for readers, demands
attention for merely existing—so when the sole reward's the bare
act of authorship, with only you aware, why share that with a muse?

Disposable Abstract
Instruction Manual

Hey kids! Want to write your own disposable ode? It's easy and fun!

To make your DI(Y)sposable ode
follow these simple

steps: 1) Throw something away. 2) Now think
about what you have done. 3)

Begin writing a poem.
4) Count syllables
[to get that haiku-

like effect.] 5) Wait.
Ponder. Revise, if need be.
6) Do it again!

Nuclear Waste

nearly eternal and deadly: an unfortunate combination

(not unlike a certain desert deity who,
before his son gave

him a makeover, was known
for his omnipotent impatience: how

did he handle the inevitable
disappointments before they

happened? was he in denial about that calf
waiting to steal his

thunder? did he just
"forget" the future, ignore all the times whining

Israelites would piss him off? you can understand
how being remote

and invisible
could really initiate a serious case

of co-dependence: they need him, but he needs them,
too, to burn pure lambs

on their altars, and to lift their voices gladly
in thanksgiving and

praise, etcetera.
they weren't called the *children* of Israel for nothing:

out of sight and he's
out of mind which simply drove him crazy. and poor

Moses: imagine
being a therapist with such crazy clients:

a jealous god with proven homicidal
proclivities and

a group of mewling
ex-slaves constantly nostalgic for the blessed

state of bondage)—my apologies for the long parenthetical

but we're not that far from where this started: invented in the desert,

long-lived, deadly, out of sight and out of mind, residue of the best

intentions: the only difference seems to be that God is easier

to throw away—millions do it weekly (returning for Easter Clothes

Sunday and the "We've Lost the Spirit of Christmas" Candlelight Service)

—but nuclear waste just hangs around and hangs around, with each half-life

making a mockery of the fullest full life any of us could

hope to conceive: we slay our thousands of days, but waste slays its millions. . . .

a poisoned future that dwarfs any past we still clearly understand:

one man claims the pyramids are a 30,000 year-old warning

from ancestors hoping to spare us their downfall, but if so, they failed

since the decoding took too long. what warning, then, will last for over

50,000 years? some propose a government-created priesthood

to guard the waste, a religion with its own elaborate rituals

and taboos, a false faith to hide the truth from our descendants what fools

we were to worship in the cold church of science, a way to pass on

our last hope that blind faith might save them from the awful light of reason,

light that melts your eyes, then your bones, light that brings sunrise too close too soon

Odes

I guess I really didn't discard these odes, merely set them aside

for a time, hidden in the garbage that litters
my hard drive, gone but

not entirely forgotten—
still, I want them to be

disposable, in appearance, if not
in actuality. please,

I beg, hang onto these disposable
poems, read them, cherish them

I've thrown them away
in order that someone might find them and retrieve

them just as I did,
like taking something from the neighbors' trash

before the garbage men arrive because
you just can't believe someone

would throw something like that away when it appears to still be breathing

Disposable Abstract
Third Meditation on Disposability

Z says: Yeah, I threw away that old boomerang. . . And Y cuts in: How?

I mean, what goes around, comes around, right? Just like
Nietzsche's fierce notion

of "eternal recurrence." Maybe the
"ancient story" that claims God

likes to play hide-and-seek with
Herself is true, and
finally the game

ends, only to be-
gin again. Or, to mention
a more recent myth:

the Creator sets
up a "continu-
ous big-bang" omniverse, a

cosmic egg (that is also
like the torus of a jelly doughnut)

that is forever
circulating the matter of our universe

through one black hole after another until we're back where we started.

Z thinks. Or, he says,
the dog digs it up and puts
it back on your porch

Oil

we can't burn it fast enough
this blood of Gaia: we've become vampires

of the ecosystem sucking it out
then circulating it through

carburetors, coughing still
more carbon dioxide towards the clouds

like a hacking emphysema patient
lighting a cigarette next

to his oxygen tank—our
disregard for the future . . . do we care?

we say so, but most of us will be dead
before the consequences

become dire, and—surely—our
children will forgive our sad addiction

Pounds

our vernacular
suggests you "lose" these, as if
one morning you rise,

enter your bathroom, yawning,
bleary-eyed, patting yourself casually

about your waist, thighs and/or buttocks only to shockingly realize

(at which point you exclaim) "where did I put
that fat? I just had it yesterday . . ."

diets are much too
deliberate, exercise
too calculated

to classify the results
as loss . . . (though pounds lost can become pounds found

which does reflect an all-too-common experience, returning us

to endless [exer]cycles
of penance performed to expiate our

indulgent caloric sins) —
if our fat vanished
forever would we

be able to forgive our gluttony?
would we finally forget

the starving children in India our parents used as seasoning

for those last few bites
salty guilt lingering on the plate's empty shine

Prose Poems

you want to make a poem out of prose?
here's my simple recipe:

as with many translations, just dispose
of all hints of poetry

Razors

another instrument of disposal:
used to shave whiskers, despair,

and sometimes our lives
when we rashly pre-empt the Norns' scissors and beat

them to the final cut. at one time razors were
fairly permanent

a strop would bring their edges
to the present to insure prevention

of the future, but now they mount a short-lived assault on the always-

growing before succumbing
to that adjective that has been affixed

permanently to their name. now, when dulled, no strop
revives them. instead

into the trash, off
to a landfill, where their plastic handles defy

decay. years pass as their burial mound
awaits excavation by

distant archaeologists who'll ponder their shrinking amount of time

spent in our service, combined with an ever-growing number of blades

Remote

where humans go, their garbage goes with them
where humans have been, their trash

remains. how many have stepped foot on some
distant peak, or in some dark

jungle and thought: surely, I am the first—
and then a beer can catches

the eye and first becomes second, or worst.
I don't remember the day

JFK was killed—a stunned teacher with
red-rimmed eyes sending us home

to shell-shocked parents (I'm not sure why, since
I was old enough—perhaps

I was distracted that year by my dad's
first brain tumor)—but I do

remember the culmination of his
lunar legacy, watching

Neil's "small step" on a grainy black and white
television, not because

of the historical accomplishment
(which, to a boy steeped in *Star*

Trek and a steady diet of science
fiction novels, seemed . . . under-

whelming)—no, I remember because my
father began to cry when

Armstrong's foot touched the lunar soil: his tears
brimmed up and slipped down his cheeks

and he made no move to dry them: this crying—
the first time I'd ever seen

him cry—was the historical moment,
that rarity that never

would be forgotten. and today, when I
see the moon, I sometimes see

my father's tears, but more often I think
that humankind's lasting mark

of our most remote exploration is
a heap of trash left behind,

machinery of no further use, too
heavy to bring back to Earth—

like so many of our triumphant firsts:
we came, we saw, we littered

Spouse

an interesting word, a singular
noun that can't escape being

plural: to be a spouse, one
must have one, too (or three or four or more,

if polygamy or polyandry
is your thing). one can discard

a spouse, or be discarded,
but, really, all that's changed is the label

now you have an ex-spouse—though
given today's marketing trends, perhaps

this should be changed to X-Spouse,
no longer a badge of failure, rather

a new, cutting-edge lifestyle!—
but I digress . . . to have an ex-spouse is

to have an absence, to have
something you always had before you got

married in the first place: no
spouse. and think about what *this* means: we hope,

when we become a spouse, that we will be
that spouse forever and ever

but 50% of the time, we're wrong
and we become an ex, one

more thing crossed off someone's list,
and then we realize the irony:

the real forever starts now:
being an ex-spouse *ὠ* forever: you

will always have one and you will always
be one till death does its part

Stars

they're still there, of course, we just can't see them: city
lights have snuffed them out

in the dark bowl of the sky just a few pinpricks
of light survive, and

the star road of the Milky Way has been washed out
and only a slight

haze of clouds is required to hide the light: on clear
cloudless nights, the Big

Dipper is faint and barely points to heaven's nail
does north exist when

its star is hidden? can we navigate the dark
if the dark is filled

with light? with the sky a blank do we imagine
we're still so vital

that the universe again just revolves around
us? such arrogance

is embarrassing. face it: we're adrift, armed with
our GPS chips

that pretend to tell us exactly where we are—
but we aren't: we're no-

where microscopic blots of protoplasm living
on a puny rock sphere

circling a minor star on the far edge of our
galaxy, one of

millions, each filled with billions of stars, and trillions
of planets: and some

of those planets probably have sentient life forms
like us, and like us,

they think: we're unique, God surely cares about us
because isn't it

obvious that we're the most important creatures
in the universe?

aren't we? and their suns rise and their suns set, but the stars remain silent

Umbrellas

an umbrella's bones
crown the garbage can
a sharp spindly skeleton

whatever fabric
stretched to meet the rain
has completely disappeared

damned by the disgust
that seems to linger
near this public burial—

I'm projecting now
(my human frailty)
imagining a windy

day, the needled rain
slanting in, mocking
the poor umbrella's attempts

to serve and protect;
then, a sudden gust
rips away any pretense

of dryness. inside
out now and flapping
helplessly the umbrella

is tossed: a failure
obviously, but
not unusual really

since what can we make
that could possibly
survive nature's bland sublime

indifference? that's
why we curse you when
you tear, umbrella: we fear

all kinds of weakness
because we suspect
that is all that we possess

Virginity

we have little use
for the unused which explains
the presumed low rate

of retention, and the long limp history of futile stratagems

prick-proof belts with picked
locks, codes and ethics and laws
that unfailingly

fail to preserve the only purity the flesh can provide, i.e.

to remain unused,
sealed and saved . . . for what? no one
quite knows, exactly

and in this country filled with doing and the done, honoring something

undone (meaning closed)
honoring the unbroken
(when breaking's the goal)

honoring that which hasn't happened runs against our national grain:

how can *not* doing
something be the goal, the best
thing to do? so we

give it away the instant a passable reason presents itself

love, for example
or alcohol (which is too
often mistaken

for the former). in this country founded on discovery, we're out

there exploring ways
to lose a part of ourselves
with some other lost

soul

Virginity

embarrassingly enough
the first stab at this topic (so to speak)

left a lingering nose-crinkling eyebrow
raising whiff of sexism

with the poem falling in-
to the obsessive (and possessive) trap

set by this culture, the mindset that sees
only one virgin gender

and sure, the patriarchy
defines the crime and women do the time

but might "seeing" be part of the problem?
or rather might "not seeing"

be the crux of imbalance
since with men, there's nothing to see, nothing,

that is, to dispose of never to be
seen again, no fragile veil

to be . . . hmmmm—sensitive, must
be sensitive— . . . no fragile veil to be

gently . . . pushed? no. gently . . . lifted . . . aside,
no trickled stain to mark this

rite of passage. men suffer
a semiotic deficit, they have

no sign announcing their resignation
from the ranks of purity

explaining, perhaps, the rush
to lose it, since it's hard to hold onto

something you can't see, something you've never
seen because it's a concept

about an event you might not
really see either if done nervously

in the furtive dark, only partially
undressed, your eyes firmly closed,

fervently hoping the whole
time that no one will interrupt you, no

cops, no parents, no siblings, no roommates,
hoping that nobody will

see your body being un-
done by the desperation to lose some

thing it hasn't ever had—and, again,
I have to wonder if loss

is really the proper term-
inology. like losing pounds, can an

activity so deliberately
undertaken truly be

characterized as loss: most
of us know where we lost it, and we know

we won't be able to find it again
(*particularly* where we

lost it!). not that every-
one believes such a "loss" is permanent.

in this country, the idea of a born-
again virgin has taken

hold in some circles and men
because of their natural signlessness

definitely have the advantage: they
just have to lie, which, since it's

about sex, they'd do any-
way. until circumcision is delayed

till after a boy's first consummation
who could tell? but for women

things are more complicated.
sure, their born-again virginity is

accomplished primarily by lying,
too, but making one's body

lie is trickier (unless
like a "compromised" Japanese girl you

submit to a hymen-restoration
operation)—I know, there's

lots of reasons a hymen
might be missing-in-action (wait, missing-

in-*inaction*?) but, still, men don't have to
consider anything like

a hymen when rebirthing
their virginity: they just have to change

their minds which, I think I've proven, was all
that happened in the first place

War

for too long every war has been the war
to end war, every weapon

the end of carnage: crossbows, TNT,
poison gas, atomic bombs—

but who are we kidding? war is never
going to be its own killer

because there will always be someone who
does not understand why we

must kill them or their loved ones to prove there's
been, at last, enough killing

Wilderness

we claim to love it, but, like our pioneer forbears, we're suspicious
and afraid. we approach it as though it's a large unruly garden
that needs fencing and management. and what has it done for us lately?
obviously, we're clear-cutting it into oblivion: lumber
for McMansions, and the space to plant them, on undersized lots in jammed
developments, wood for pulp to feed insatiable need for paper—
but even when we leave it relatively untouched we destroy it
by visiting: this campground, a maze of asphalt winding through the trees
is filled with cars, campers, and tents, and trailers with satellite dishes
when the wind blows the fir needles fall like dry rain into the instant
coffee boiling on a propane stove. among the many signs filled with
rules and directions, one reads: "A fed bear is a dead bear." we bring
so much "civilization" with us to keep us comfortable, we
have to kill the creatures tempted by the ease we demand for ourselves—
a tame wilderness is a dead wilderness: we're building a zoo in
the garden and the boundaries continue to expand, the cages
filled with interlopers cowering before the ancient wild that must
be made new, in our image: our policy, dominion, our tools, fear

Disposable Abstract
List of Potential Odes

because there is no end to what we can throw away, this series is
potentially infinite but I've reached my limit. however, you
dear reader, may want more. so, here's a list of potential odes, subjects
I considered but threw out: perhaps your luck will be better than mine:
appendix, tonsils, B-52s, batteries, books, bread crusts, children,
cameras, condoms, contact lenses, the elderly, fingernails, first
cars, friends, garage sales, grease, hair, houses, indigenous people, keys, light
bulbs, magazines, mementos, newspapers, paradise, pets, recycling,
species, vinyl LPs, refrigerators, time, so on, and so forth

These

meaning these damnable odes
it's time to give them
up, to whatever

readers may await—
like the poem-heavy leaves
Li Po slipped into

rivers, littery
letters to the world
unaddressed, so meant for all

Notes and Variants

. . . the "production of footnotes" resembles "the disposal of waste products."

Epigraphs

First Epigraph: Created by combining two lines from Ammons' poem *Garbage* (W. W. Norton, 1993), pages 8 and 28).

Second Epigraph: From *Haiku Master Buson: Translations from the Writings of Yosa Buson—Poet and Artist—With Related Materials* / Yuki Sawa & Edith Marcombe Shiffert (Heian International Publishing Co., 1978), page 77. I have taken the liberty of adding the word "cracked" to this translation, thus providing a seventeenth syllable for the English version of this haiku. The Romanized version of Buson's original poem is as follows:

Furudera ya horoku sutsuru seri no naka

Proems

prologues: prolegomenons, preludes, prelusions, preliminaries, preambles, prefaces, previews, exordiums, forewords, introductions, overtures

Addictions

hypertext: For those curious about how "hypertext" became part of this list, the following URL will help:

http://www.unknownhypertext.com/12steps.htm

Blues

can't sing worth a lick / use a guitar pick: Or: don't know any licks / broke my guitar pick Also, for best effect, accent the first syllable of the word "guitar" by pronouncing it gee-tar (hard 'g,' of course).

Body Odor

From *Time* magazine, July 16, 1979: "The late anthropologist Louis Leakey suggested that body odor was a key evolutionary defense mechanism—predators may have attacked early humans only as a last resort because they smelled too bad to be good food."

Cigarettes (page 10)

orthography / recapitulates destiny: Cf. the now discredited biological theory that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," which only goes to show that irresistible phrasing does not make for irresistible theory.

Cigarettes (page 11)

Lines that needed to be revised out of the poem, but that I couldn't bear to throw away entirely:

though butts are deadly
personal: tiny urns sown
in a public mausoleum after

the quick scattering of ashes from so many cremated minutes

A Concrete Poet Hijacks the *Disposable Odes*

see you in hell: Twice!

Dose Odes: Pronounced 'doze.'

Diapers

Epigraph: From *Garbage*, pages 60-61.

like garbage bags: Cf. *Garbage Bags*, page 20.

Disposable Abstract: First Mediation on Disposability

the barge: See "Garbage Barge Begins Lengthy Trek (March 22, 1987)" http://www.newsoftheodd.com/article1018.html

Disposable Abstract: "Found" Couplet Plus Exegesis

Garbage is not something you throw away. . . : From Nancy Cosper's *Knowing Home*. Quoted on page of 37 of *Holy Ground: A Resource on Faith and the Environment* (Washington D.C.: Sojourners, 1997).

Death

By the way, for the record: When I die, I hope
my whole life does not

flash before my eyes: some stupidities are best
not revisited,

some tears: not worth shedding again, some joys too sweet,
too precious to leave

behind. So, just point me toward that tunnel of light and let me go. Please.

Garbage Bags

doubling blooms: When I wrote this phrase I was thinking of (and punning on) Joyce's *Ulysses*.

some are destined for dumping . . . : Cf. "some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II, v, 159.

first in plastic . . . : Cf. ". . .first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." From Henry Lee's eulogy on the death of George Washington.

God

"God is dead! . . . : From *The Gay Science,* Book 3, Section 125. The complete quotation, without the ellipsis reads: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."

Hangers

how they breed: I read a science fiction story many years ago, the premise of which was that hangers were an intermediary stage of development of an alien life form (safety pins or paper clips were the embryonic stage, if I recall correctly; I can't remember what the fully developed aliens were like). According to the story, this explained why you sometimes had too many paperclips (or pins or hangers) one day, and then couldn't find any another day: your hangers had simply grown up.

to have and to hold: Cf. the marriage ceremony found in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Isolation

contact: Making this comparison is, no doubt, highly presumptuous on may part, but I've always admired *King Lear* V, iii, 310.

Disposable Abstract: Obsolescence

Re: McDonald's planned obsolescence of its hamburgers: It is my understanding that Dave Thomas (the founder of Wendy's) was once an owner of a McDonald's franchise and the way he improved on McDonald's system in his own restaurants was by recycling the "old" burgers and turning them into chili.

what we lov'st . . . : Cf. Ezra Pound, Canto LXXXI.

Nuclear Waste

blessed state of bondage: Cf. Exodus 16:3, 17:3; Numbers 11:18

we slay . . . : Cf. I Samuel 18:7.

pyramids: In *Fingerprints of the Gods* (Three Rivers Press, 1996), Graham Hancock postulates that the pyramids (among other ancient wonders) were warnings about a devastating shift of earth's magnetic poles, an event that happens every 26,000 years or so. According to Hancock's calculations (which he claims are based on deciphering the calculations of our ancient—and, of course, Atlantean— ancestors) this cataclysm will happen on the Winter Solstice of the year 2012. This date is a popular one among the apocalyptic crowd. Google that date and you will find over 3 million references. Of course, whether the world ends or not on December 21, 2012, if the planet remains in tact, unfortunately, so will all the nuclear waste we've generated in the past 60+ years.

priesthood: In 1981, Thomas A. Sebeok proposed establishing an "atomic priesthood" that would maintain legends and rituals designed to prevent future generations from tampering with nuclear waste sites. A revision of this proposal, "Pandora's Box in Aftertimes," can be found in *I Think I Am A Verb: More Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* (Plenum Press, 1986).

Disposable Abstract: Third Meditation on Disposability

eternal recurrence: Everything I know about this concept I learned from Walter Kaufmann's fourth edition of *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton University Press, 1974).

ancient story: Alan Watts' version of this story can be found in Chapter I of *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (Vintage Books, 1972).

jelly doughnut: To get a more cogent rendering of this model of the universe, consult Chapter 8 of Itzhak Bentov's *Stalking the Wild Pendulum: On the Mechanics of Consciousness* (Destiny Books, 1988).

Razors

despair: Here, I had in mind the practice of "cutting."

Remote

small step: What Neil Armstrong actually said when he first stepped foot on the moon has been much debated: i.e. did he forget that crucial article ("a") and therefore make his pronouncement an exercise in redundancy? Did he say: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." which is the usual rendering, or did he say what he intended to say: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Countering the conventional wisdom that Armstrong muffed his delivery, recent analysis seems to indicate that Armstrong got it right. See:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5398560.stm

we came, we saw, we littered: Cf. Julius Caesar's "Veni, vidi, vici" recorded by Suetonious in *Lives of the Caesars*, sec. 37.

Spouse

today's marketing trends . . . X-Spouse: I think it was John Ashbery who wrote that it was noteworthy that the Esso gas cans in Elizabeth Bishop's poem "Filling Station" now require a footnote. And so, I wonder how long my reference to the recent rush to label so many products "eXtreme" by prefixing an "X" to a product's name will be obvious to most readers and not require a footnote.

Virginity (page 51)

Given the times, it is perhaps best to shelter these irreverent, if not outright blasphemous, musings on the world's most famous virgin here in the notes.

and poor Mary, her holy
hymen reinforced by hundreds of years

of orthodoxy
such that it remains as inflexible as rock

the unique product of an immaculate con-
ception that requires

an immaculate delivery: did
some angelic midwife roll

aside the stone hymen and help Jesus
clear that inviolate gate

Notes and Variants

Epigraph: From *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* by Chuck Zerby (Invisible Cities Press, 2002), page 13. The quoted material within the Zerby quotation comes from Anthony Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Harvard University Press, 1999), page 6.

A Survey of Part VI of *The Waste Land*:

A Provisional Prolegomenon to a Study of Poets' Notes

Preliminaries

Years before he became our Poet Laureate, Donald Hall wrote a short article called "Notes on Footnotes" (later collected in his book *Goatfoot Milktongue Twinbird*) in which he railed against the notes the editors of *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* had attached to the poems:

> . . . Yeats, always unlucky in his critics, gets the most sordid treatment of anyone. His phrase "Gray Truth" (from "The Song of the Happy Shepherd") is glossed: "Yeats was dismayed, as he indicates in his Autobiography, by the rationalistic, anti-imaginative atmosphere of his time." If he was, I would like to ask what he would think of this dead metaphor, "atmosphere?" The editors footnote "Gray Truth" with prosaic clichés, and appeal from the poet's poem to the outside authority of poet's prose; both actions substantiate the internal argument of all these footnotes: "For prose read *sense* throughout." (203)

And to what motive does Hall ascribe this violation of poetry? Allow me to quote him at length:

> In a classroom, the first and longest standing enemies to the teaching of poetry are these notions, common among students, and obviously among many teachers:
>
> 1) that poems are *problems* which have answers;
>
> 2) that there is a meaning, which corresponds—in this barbaric esthetic and psychology—to "what the poet was trying to say": some doctrine of intentions accompanied by the poet's riddle-making perversity, or by her incompetence of expression;
>
> 3) that there is always, somehow, an answer in the back of the book, or in the teacher's manual, if only somebody will stop being coy and reveal it.
>
> Footnotes like those I have quoted support the back-of-the-book theory, and therefore commit themselves to the war against poetry.
>
> These footnotes deny that the poem is only itself. They indulge in the fallacy of paraphrase: that different expressions can result in emotional and conceptual identity.

These footnotes deny that the poem is multiple—that one can, as with the best sculpture, see different and equally valid poems as one walks around the three dimensions.

They deny that the poem will change from reader to reader, or within the same reader over the years—the way the color of Greek stone changes through the day, hour by hour, according to the sun's height and angle.

These footnotes, *by their existence*, testify that metaphor is aberration—a heresy popular among English teachers—and that prose has validity automatically greater than poetry's. (204-205)[1]

---

[1] Hall's animus seems primarily directed towards what will be called in this paper "explanatory" notes, notes that go beyond simply identifying the source of a line or image and dare to provide some fundamental exegesis, a way of understanding or interpreting the poem. For example, Hall writes: ". . . when Eliot speaks of 'the unprayable/Prayer at the calamitous annunciation,' an unspeakable footnote speculates, 'Perhaps meaning that when the annunciations is of calamity—of imminent death—it is no longer possible to pray.' *Let me do the speculating, please*" (*Goatfoot* 203, Hall's italics). Since *Goatfoot Milktongue Twinbird* was published in 1978, presumably Hall was responding to the first edition of the Norton anthology, which was published in 1973. I have been unable to locate a copy of that edition, but, for the record, the third edition published in 2003 (which is now called *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*), has apparently eliminated many of the explanatory notes, though not all. For instance, Hall complained about the following annotation: "Yeats's great lines, in 'Leda and the Swan,' combine Eros and history as no one else ever dreamed of doing:

> A shudder in the loins engenders there
> The broken wall . . .

Hall accuses English teachers of not only providing the footnotes, but demanding them because they are too timid to take poetry straight, with no chaser. In effect, though, Hall is accusing readers in general of preferring prose to poetry. And to me, this means Hall is engaging in a futile battle, because whether readers actually *prefer* prose to poetry, they most definitely seem to like their poetry surrounded by prose, whether it's a preface or introduction by the author to a collection of poems, or an afterword by the same. Or a short introduction offered by that same poet before reading a poem in public. Or a poet's essay on poetry. Or a long scholarly tome by an eminent critic that purports to explain a poet's work. Or a professor's explication of a poem during a classroom lecture. Or the baldest paraphrase given by an undergraduate in a poetry workshop.

If we read this poem in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, edited by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair, we find that the editors have supplied a footnote, incase we missed the point: 'The tragic conclusion of the events caused by Leda's daughters'—they tell us, in their broken-winged prose—'are here foreshadowed by the sexual violence'" (*Goatfoot* 202-3). In the most recent edition, the editors annotate the poem with two footnotes. First, about the title they write: "In the Greek myth, the god Zeus, in the form of a swan, raped Leda, a mortal. Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux were the children of this union. Yeats saw Leda's rape by the swan as the beginning of a new age, analogous with the dove's annunciation to Mary of Jesus' conception: 'I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda, remembering that they showed in a Spartan temple, strung up to the roof as a holy relic, an unhatched egg of hers, and that from one of her eggs came love and from the other war' (*A Vision*)." The second note comments on line 10, "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower": "That is, Troy's destruction, caused by Helen's abduction by Paris. Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army that besieged Troy, was murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, when he returned home" (Ramanzani 118).

Or a poet's note. And here is where Hall's critique of overbearing, footnote-wielding editors becomes a bit disingenuous. While Hall does mention the Norton editors' violations by footnote of "The Dry Salvages," (203) and "Prufrock," (204),[2] he conveniently ignores talking about notes the Norton editors append to *The Waste Land*,[3] perhaps because to do so would force him to comment on the infamous notes provided by Eliot himself. It's one thing to scold English teachers for having no faith in poetry's self-sufficiency, but what does Hall have to say about the poets themselves who, apparently, on occasion suffer moments of doubt that a "poem is only itself?"[4] There is no shortage of examples of 20th and 21st century poets[5] who have deemed it necessary to annotate their own poems. However, there are relatively few critical examinations of this increasingly common phenomenon and it is that gap which this study seeks to fill. Or to put it another way: which this study seeks to annotate.

---

[2] While Yeats has remained unlucky in his critics (as evidenced in footnote 1), the explanatory note that marred "Prufrock" for Hall—"'Presumably the room where Prufrock is going to speak to a woman friend.'" (*Goatfoot* 204)—has been removed. "The Dry Salvages" has been removed entirely, replaced by "Little Gidding."

[3] Which are voluminous—at least in the third edition (and there's no reason to imagine there were fewer in the first)—far outstripping in length and detail Eliot's originals.

[4] Hall also fails to mention what the Norton editors did to Marianne Moore's poems. Moore also indulged in poet's notes, which Hall surely knew very well since he wrote a critical book (in prose!) about Moore (*Marianne Moore: The Cage and the Animal*. New York: Pegasus, 1970).

[5] Meaning, unfortunately, 20th and 21st century poets who write in English. The annotative practices of poets writing in other languages will not be included for reasons of economy.

In his memoir about T. S. Eliot, Hall reminds us of the unique respect Eliot once commanded:

> It is hard to credit the authority Eliot's name commanded in 1949, much less his signature. Had his words begun, "Mr. Hall, I wish you to commit arson upon the person of an elderly gentleman residing in your vicinity," I would have set out to burn down a nearby old man. No one since has embodied, or seemed to embody, such authority— . . . (*Ancient* 75)

And while the shadow of this colossus does not loom as large as it once did, there can be little doubt that much of 20th and 21st century poetic practice can be profitably studied by beginning with Eliot's practice, whether subsequent poets emulated it or reacted against it. Eliot's prominence in such matters includes his annotative practices, specifically, the Notes he appended to *The Waste Land*.

When *The Waste Land* appeared in book form in 1922, Eliot added a set of notes, for reasons to be considered in more detail below. As the years went by, Eliot became increasingly uncomfortable with the notes; in his essay, "The Frontiers of Criticism," he labeled them "the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view today" and wished that he could somehow remove them from the poem, though he also admitted that "now they can never be unstuck" (Frontiers 121). In fact, the practice of annotating poetry in general can, apparently, "never be unstuck," as

proven by even a casual perusal of volumes of poetry published in the last 80 some years.[6] The first question is: why? What do footnotes provide that the poems, unadorned by notes, do not? Other questions: given the propensity of so many poets to follow Eliot's example: What forms do these annotations take? What do they tell us about how poetry is written and how it should be understood? What effect do poets' notes have on a poem? What do they suggest about the nature of poetry and the interpretation of poetry? Answers to these general questions have specific consequences for readers, students, teachers, and critics of poetry. For instance, should David Jones's understanding that his notes are "integral" (xiv) to his poems be applied to all poets' notes or can we follow Marianne Moore's suggestion and "disregard the notes" (375), if readers so desire?[7] In other words, are poets' notes part of a poem, or a detachable appendix that need not be referred to at all? And if notes are somehow "integral," just how integral are they? The challenge for the reader, then, is deciding how many of the poem's sources should be pursued, or need to be, in order

---

[6] A hasty survey of just one library's shelves yielded literally dozens and dozens of books of 20th century poetry that also included authorial annotations.

[7] David Jones in his "Preface" to *In Parenthesis* writes: "I would ask the reader to consult the notes with the text, as I regard some of them as integral to it" (xiv). And Marianne Moore's "A Note on the Notes" concludes as follows: "Perhaps those who are annoyed by provisos, detainments, and postscripts could be persuaded to take probity on faith and disregard the notes" (375). At first, Eliot took both positions: *The Waste Land* appeared without notes when it was first published in the periodicals *The Dial* and *The Criterion*; only when Boni and Liveright brought it out as a book shortly thereafter, did the Notes make their debut.

to fully grasp what the poet is trying to do. Is the poet's goal to send readers elsewhere, making the poem act as a conduit instead of being a final destination?[8]

For critics, poets' notes present an interesting challenge. When poets become their own scholar-critics, does their annotation, their implicit and explicit interpretive suggestions, have priority over other commentary? How are critics supposed to respond to what might be taken as a pre-emptive strike against their own enterprise? What should critics do when poets begin blurring the distinction between the creative act and the critical and scholarly interaction with the text? Poets' notes confound the strict boundaries that we sometimes imagine exist between reading and writing, between creativity and scholarship, and this, I think, demands investigation. While this paper will not presume to answer all the questions asked above, it will use Eliot's *Waste Land* Notes as, first, a template for the notes 20th century poets have appended to their poems, as a way of providing a rudimentary taxonomy of the various types of notes poets have seen fit to use. Once the taxonomic structure has been established, I will examine Eliot's Notes more closely to see how they can be used to begin answering some of the questions I've posed above, as they relate to Eliot's poetry.

---

[8] Though Ezra Pound did not, as a rule, annotate his poems (there are a few exceptions to be found here and there), particularly in the case of *The Cantos*, it seems as though he is continuing the project he began in *ABC of Reading*: compiling excerpts

But First, a Little History

While Eliot is the most famous annotating poet of the past hundred years, he was by no means a pioneer in the realm of poetic annotation. Notes, whatever their position, whether head-, foot-, end-, or marginal, have existed nearly as long as the printing press that made them possible.[9] And poets have been their own annotators for nearly as long, as well. In a note in his chapter on footnotes, Kevin Jackson writes:

> The late Jeremy Maule, of Trinity College, Cambridge, was kind enough to suggest that the first major example of an English poem with built-in footnotes is Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*; he believed that it could therefore be described, to warp a phrase, as an 'instant classic',

---

from books that constitute a massive (though implicit) reading list, a list his audience should avail themselves of if they wish to be properly educated.

[9] In Chapter 2 of *The Devil's Details,* Chuck Zerby seeks to track down the very first footnote by taking us back to Elizabethan London, circa 1568. Zerby suggests that printer Richard Jugge, who had "been put in charge of printing the Bishops' Bible" (19), devised the first true footnote in order to annotate a phrase in the Book of Job. At the time, annotations appeared in the right- and left-hand margins, but the first page of Job in the Bishops' Bible Jugge was creating had so many notes that the appropriate margin was already full; thus the need to find space at the foot of the page for the note designated (in retrospect, most appropriately): (f). (Elizabethan annotators, when they weren't using symbols like asterisks or daggers, usually used letters instead of numbers to signify their notes. The invention of the first footnote was quickly followed by the birth of the second with note (g) appearing directly beneath note (f).) Zerby's tale is an excellent one and seems quite plausible, but he modestly admits in a note of his own that he "expect[s] someday our research will be superseded by the discovery of an earlier footnote" (28n).

> coated with critical moss that Greek and Latin texts had taken centuries to accumulate. (145n)

In his delightful defense of footnotes, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*, Chuck Zerby provides other highlights in the history of poetic annotation. He appraises Abraham Cowley's notes and finds them to be satisfactory. When he next considers Aphra Behn, however, his conclusion is that she is the first poet to develop a "dramatically integrated note" by "mak[ing] the note (and the footnote, at that) a fully functioning actor in a poem." (57, 49)[10] And then, of course, Zerby must "confront" Behn's contemporary (and antagonist), Alexander Pope, whose *Dunciad Variorum* probably has more footnotes per line of poetry than any work until David Jones' *The Anathemata*.[11] Pope's excessively annotated mock epic—ostensibly an attack on dull poets—is, according to Zerby, actually an assault on footnotes: "a careful reader finds footnotes are *The Dunciad's* obvious target. . . .The centrality of footnotes is further shown as the poem names and defames several of the era's most formidable annotators" (54-5). Zerby agrees with Peter W. Cosgrove, whom he quotes in a note,

---

[10] A full explanation of how Behn accomplishes this feat can be found on pages 50-2.
[11] Zerby estimates that Pope's "358 lines of pentameter verse are chattered at from below by approximately 7,000 lines of notes" (54). I have no desire to go to all the trouble Zerby did to come with his estimate, but just by eyeballing *The Anathemata*, which has several instances where a half a page of poetry is weighed down by over a full page of notes, it seems possible that the ratio of poetry to notes in Jones' poem could match, if not exceed, *The Dunciad's* ratio. The difference, of course, is that Jones'

that "Pope's real intent may be seen, . . . not as a defense of individual word but as a defense of poetry in general against textual criticism" (55n). Zerby sadly concludes that Pope's "scurrilous and scattershot attack on footnotes" (53) ultimately undermined the use of notes in poetry:

> In scholarly circles the footnote flourished despite Pope's attack; it survived even in poetry—though there Pope's unfortunate influence was much more widespread—but never with the élan that Behn had endowed it. (58)[12]

Zerby will next pick up the tale of the poetic footnote with George Crabbe "whose life extended into the nineteenth century" (120), but rather than follow him there, I'd like to point out a few more of Eliot's annotative precursors, to fill out the "tradition" that would eventually inform his "individual talent."

Milton, a poet Eliot wrestled with more than once,[13] found it necessary to attach head notes to each section of his epic poem in the second edition of *Paradise Lost*, as a means of providing the "Argument" of each section. Apparently, readers of the first edition had found the poem difficult going and they required the poet's assistance

---

notes were written in deadly earnest, while Pope's were parodistic and anti-annotation in character.

[12] Zerby continues: "In the end its use in the arts in general became suspect everywhere. In France the literary footnote's reputation sank so low that by the 1770s footnotes could be used by pornographers for mere titillation" (58).

in order to keep the narrative of the poem clear. Shelley appended voluminous notes to some of his poems, whole essays, in some cases, to explain a couple of words. However, unlike the Milton's notes (or Pope's, for that matter), Shelley's essay-notes could quite easily be separated from the poem proper and could stand on their own. Shelley uses his poems as a means to launch massive didactic excursions on subjects (e.g., atheism, vegetarianism) he feels the need to preach about to his audience; actual exegesis of the poems themselves is a secondary or tertiary consideration. In fact, many of the Romantics were quite fond of notes. Coleridge extensively glosses "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," in a fashion resembling Milton's practice: that is, by providing cues to the "plot" or "argument" of the poem. Wordsworth, long after some of his poems were published, provided extensive footnotes that explained how they were composed and from what materials. And one of Poe's most famous essays, "Essay on Composition" could be viewed as one immense footnote on "The Raven." In all these cases, the poets have succumbed to what Hall deems the primary sin of the English teachers and Norton editors: the idea that poetry is not sufficient in and of itself, that to be "understandable," it requires prose. So, if Eliot is guilty of the same sin, he is not without esteemed company.

---

[13] And who provided a phrase for *The Waste Land* that Eliot would reference in his Notes.

Having worked our way up to Poe, we're just one degree of influence away from Baudelaire and the rest of those French Symbolistes that Eliot found so inspiring: it's time to focus complete attention on what I've called Part VI of Eliot's *Waste Land*.

The Waste Land Notes are unique to Eliot's oeuvre; he never annotated another poem. In fact, he objected quite vociferously to the idea of his poems being annotated, by anyone:

> With the publication of my own verse I have always been firm on three points. First, I will not allow any artist to illustrate my poems. Second, I will not allow any academic critic (and there are plenty of these in America only too willing) to provide notes of explanation to be published with . . . my poems. Third, I will not allow any of my poems to be set to music unless they seem to me to be lyrics in the proper sense of being suitable for singing. My objection to all three of these methods of employing my works is the same, that I should be allowing interpretation of the poem to be interposed between me and my reader. An artist is providing the illustrations which should be left to the imagination of the reader, the commentator is providing information which stands between the reader and any immediate response of his sensibility, and the music also is a particular interpretation which is interposed between the reader and the author. I want my readers to get

their impressions from the words alone and from nothing else.

(*Inventions* xix).

So, why did Eliot add notes to *The Waste Land*? Hall blames "pressure from . . . publisher[s]" for the editors' notes he finds so objectionable in the Norton anthology (205). And as it turns out, Eliot faced similar pressure. During the latter stages of the poem's composition, in late 1921–early 1922, Eliot asked Pound to help him edit what had become a sprawling many-paged manuscript. As evidenced by The Waste Land*: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, most of Pound's edits were recommendations that vast portions of the poem be deleted, and as a result over a third of the original poem was eliminated.[14] Furthermore, though Eliot had been working on some shorter "independent poems" because of his "growing concern that his long poem might not be long enough to make an independent book," Pound vetoed the idea of adding them (*Annotated* 21). And when Eliot "suggested that "Gerontion" be used as an introductory section . . . Pound would not hear of th [at] addition" either (Miller 61). So, when Eliot sent the finished manuscript to his publisher, Horace Liveright, and Liveright subsequently complained to Pound: "I'm disappointed that Eliot's material is as short. Can't he add anything?"—Eliot was

[14] Until resurfacing in the *Facsimile*, of course.

forced "to furnish the poem with notes" (Rainey 37).[15] Years later, Eliot described what happened his essay, "The Frontiers of Criticism":

> Here I must admit that I am, on one conspicuous occasion, not guiltless of having led critics into temptation. The notes to *The Waste Land*! I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism. Then, when it came to print *The Waste Land* as a little book—for the poem on its first appearance in *The Dial* and in *The Criterion* had no notes whatever—it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter, with the result that they became the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view to-day. (Frontiers 121)

Eliot's version of events seems plausible, however Stanley Sultan makes a convincing case that, given the Notes were finished in time to be published in *The Dial* and *The*

[15] Margaret Dickie suggests another motive for adding the Notes: "Long in the time of composition, in the initial, and the final form, the Modernist long poem is concerned first and last with its own length" (6), meaning that once Pound had performed his length-altering surgery, Eliot sought to create a prosthetic way to extend that length. As noted below, the allusive nature of the poem made it, according to Pound, "the longest poem in the English landwidge," so the notes increase length in two ways: one, by actually physically prolonging the poem, two, by pointing out all the other literature attached to the poem, which lengthens the poem by association.

Criterion but were not, therefore one can conclude, "the Notes were withheld from a prior periodical publication to protect the value of the book, *not added later in order to make one*" (44, my italics). Sultan does not quote the Liveright letter I referred to above, suggesting he was unaware of its existence, and that certainly weakens his case to some extent. On the other hand, he does quote a letter Gilbert Seldes wrote *The Dial* which "establishes not only that the Notes were completed in time for publication in the magazine but also that they were explicitly denied to it. On August 31 [Seldes] wrote to its publisher:

> We must assume that Eliot O.K.'s publication in The Dial without the notes . . . which are exceedingly interesting and add much to the poem, but don't become interested in them because we simply cannot have them. (43-4)

It seems to me it is quite possible that both positions are correct. Liveright wanted more pages; Eliot obliged him by writing the Notes; and then, once they were finished, he further decided to "protect the value of the book" by withholding the Notes from the periodicals (which means, in the case of *The Criterion*, he withheld them from himself).

In any case, whatever the "true" story of the Notes creation, exactly how "bogus" Eliot's scholarship actually was will be considered in greater detail below, but before diving into the vast critical swamp surrounding the quality or the seriousness of

the Notes and how a reader is supposed to approach them, I first want to engage in some bald taxonomic classification in order to get a handle on just what kind of apparatus Eliot created. Questions of how well that apparatus turned out and further investigations into the question of what Eliot hoped his notes would accomplish, once he determined that such apparatus was necessary, will then be considered.

Taxonomy of the Notes

Fundamentally, all notes can be divided into two broad categories that I will label Citation and Explanation.[16] Each of these categories can be further broken down into further subcategories. To introduce each type, I will be use notes from *The Waste Land* as examples.

Citation notes can be divided into three separate subcategories, each with its own descriptive adjective. The first I call the Simple Citation. Simple citations simply direct the reader to the source of the line or phrase[17] in question. Almost all the simple citations for *The Waste Land* announce their "simplicity" by beginning with the

[16] I've decided to use the designation "Explanation" for the second category because of Eliot's use of that term in the quotation above in which he states that he does not allow scholars to provide "notes of explanation." I have seen these kinds of notes called "bibliographic," "content," "discursive," "substantive," and "annotative" (the latter being much too redundant for my taste) but since I will be discussing Eliot's notes, it seemed appropriate to use Eliot's terminology.

[17] Or word. Eliot uses a simple citation to identify the source of the word "laquearia" in line 92, indicating that he lifted it from the *Aeneid*, Book I, line 726.

abbreviation "V." (meaning Vide, or See) and go on to provide enough bibliographic information to allow those so inclined to easily track down the reference. So, for example, Note 31[18] reads "V. *Tristan und Isolde*, I, verses 5–8." Eliot is not always so precise, however, for reasons that no commentator I have consulted seems to be able to explain. His note for line 431 is "V. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*." But on the whole, Eliot makes it easy to discover from where he "stole"[19] his lines. These simple citations are probably what Eliot meant when he said he began a list that "at first intended only to put down all the references for [his] quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of [his] earlier poems who had accused [him] of plagiarism." Of the 52 notes in the "Notes," I've placed twelve in the simple category.

Sixteen *Waste Land* notes have been placed in the second subcategory: Comparative Citations. Instead of asking us to V(ide) these lines, Eliot asks us to "compare" (Cf.), because the quotations are not exact: Eliot has altered the source material in some way to create a new line. These types of notes could also be called "allusive." Perhaps the most famous example of a comparative citation is in Note 74:

---

[18] Since Eliot identified his notes using line numbers, I will be following that practice. Note 31, then, is shorthand for "The note for line 31." The text of The Waste Land I will use throughout this paper is the one found in *The Annotated* Waste Land *with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. The editor, Lawrence Rainey, explains that various editions of the poem have slightly different lineations, some counting the poem as being 433 lines long, others 434 lines long. Rainey has adopted the 433 line count for his *Annotated* text, and all my references to *The Waste Land* will be derived from that text which can be found on pages 57–74.

"Cf. The Dirge in Webster's *White Devil.*" As with some of the simple citations, Eliot does not provide complete bibliographic data for every comparative citations, but if you search *The White Devil*, you will find The Dirge Eliot refers to in Act V, Scene iv, and within that song you will find these lines: "But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men, / For with his nails he'll dig them up again." Eliot, of course, altered these lines to read: "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men, / Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!" Critics have spilled a lot of ink over the capitalized Dog (could it be an ironic reference to God?) and the shift from foe to friend. I will not pursue this enquiry except to say that it seems obvious that in this instance Eliot's comparative citation did exactly what he probably hoped it would do: that is, stimulate discussion.

I call the third type of Citation note, Contextual, and I've identified nine contextual notes to *The Waste Land*. A contextual citation can start out being a simple or comparative citation, but it goes a bit further, providing the means of accessing the context from which the line being borrowed or altered was taken. Sometimes the contextual material is contained in the note. Note 427, for example, reads: "V. *Purgatorio*, XXVI, 148," but then goes on to quote lines 145–48. Sometimes the contextual material is quite vast. Line 424 reads: "Fishing, with the arid plain behind me." Note 424 tells us: "V. Weston: *From Ritual to Romance*; chapter on the Fisher King": an entire chapter to gloss seven words.

---

[19] Recall his well-known maxim that "mature artists steal."

So, how do Citation notes function in a poem like *The Waste Land*? For me, the question is one of informational fluid dynamics. That is, are the Notes provided to facilitate information flowing into the poem or to take information, and readers, as well, out of the poem and into other texts? Eliot seemed to think that the Notes "stimulated the wrong kind of interest among the seekers of sources" (Frontiers 121). Instead of "spiking the guns" of this critics, he helped load them, and he regretted "having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail" (meaning outside and away from his poem) (Frontiers 122). My guess is that if Eliot had any motive other than simply adding pages for publication (and I will examine other possible motives later), his primary goal was to saturate the poem in the contexts of all the literature he borrowed from and alluded to. He wanted the entirety of Baudelaire's "Les sept viellards" to inform *The Waste Land's* description of the "Unreal City." He wanted readers to recall all of Ovid's version of the Philomela every time "Jug jug" or a nightingale appeared. Every allusion was supposed to bring with it as much baggage as possible. The success of this allusive method was attested to by Pound who wrote Eliot urging him not to add more material to the finished poem: "The thing runs from April . . . to shantih without [a] break. That is 19 pages, and let us say the longest poem in the English landwidge. Don't try to bust all records by prolonging it three pages further" (*Annotated* 25). For a poem of 433 lines to qualify as the "longest poem in . . . English," requires that all the literature attached to it via the

Notes come along for the ride. Which, apparently, if one surveys the vast amount of critical commentary *The Waste Land* has acquired, it has.

Most of the Notes fall into the Citation category, but there are a fair number of "notes of explanation," as Eliot called them, and they are, by far, the most interesting. I've identified four kinds of Explanation notes: Objective, Subjective, Compositional, and Interpretive. The first type, Objective is fairly direct in that it provides straightforward information, often definitional, as is the case for two *Waste Land* notes. Note 210 defines what "c.i.f." means ("carriage and insurance free to London"), and Note 433 defines "Shantih" and explains how it is used in the Upanishads. Subjective notes also might provide useful information, but they are always delivered from a first person point of view; that is, in these notes, the author of the poem addresses readers directly. Often these notes are a combination of personal statement combined with a simple or comparative citation, but it is the personal pronoun that makes them stand out.

So, Note 68 says simply: "A phenomenon which I have often noticed"—with the "I" clearly being Eliot himself. This note is keyed to the line: "With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine," but it would probably make more sense if the "phenomenon" being noticed included everything reported from line 60 ("Unreal City") to line 68 (i.e. the crowds—that death has "undone"—flowing over London Bridge, and "down King William Street," etc.). Since lines 63 and 64 already have

notes attached to them that direct the reader to Dante's *Inferno*, perhaps Eliot simply wished to avoid a duplicate annotation. And perhaps the Note 68 does implicitly refer to the notes that precede it. But maybe Eliot wanted to avoid directly connecting Note 68 with line 64, because, had he done so, then we would have the interesting situation in which Eliot admits that his is one of the voices in the poem, that the "I" in line 64: "I had not thought death had undone so many" is the same as the "I" who has "often noticed" the scene in the Unreal City (which, in fact, we know he did: he noticed it every day when he went to work at Lloyd's Bank). This insertion of an authorial presence, in an historical, even biographical sense, particularly by poet who advocated "impersonal" poetry is curious, to say the least, and I will return to this issue later.

The remaining three subjective explanation notes I've identified (199, 264, and 357) do not inject the author into the poem as Note 68 does, but they all rely on the personal pronoun as the final arbiter of source material evidence, and thus the authorial presence hovers over the annotative landscape. Sometimes, the authority of that "I" is limited, as in Note 199, which admits: "I don't know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken; it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia." However, the reader is supposed to accede that the lines are borrowed from somewhere, because the author says so; in this case, the author may not have been placed directly in the poem, as in line 64 via Note 68, but he is definitely haunting the Notes. And the haunting continues in Note 264, which almost qualifies as a non

sequitur: "The interior of St. Magnus Martyr is to my mind one of the finest among Wren's interiors. See *The Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches* (PS. King & Son Ltd.)." And this is important to know for what reason exactly? The establishment of the fact that this poem has a particular author, who has a "mind" that has definite opinions, seems to be the only concrete result of this note, a fact, which again, I will consider in more depth below.

The third type of Explanation note, the Compositional, could be seen as a subtype of the Subjective note. By compositional, I mean notes in which the author gives clues to his compositional techniques. In truth, I am probably stretching it a bit to claim that Eliot left any compositional notes to *The Waste Land*, certainly nothing like the compositional notes Wordsworth left behind. For example, in a note to "The Pilgrim's Dream," Wordsworth says:

> I distinctly recollect the evening on which these verses were suggested in 1818. I was on the road between Rydal and Grasmere where glow-worms abound. A star was shining above the ridge of Loughrigg Fell just opposite. I remember a blockhead of a critic, in some Review or other, crying out against this piece. 'What so monstrous," said he, 'as to make a star talk to a Glow-worm?' Poor fellow, we know well from this sage observation what the primrose on the river's brim was to him.
>
> (494)

And this is one of Wordsworth's more succinct explanations.

Eliot in Note 221 writes: "This may not appear as exact as Sappho's lines, but I had in mind the 'longshore' or 'dory' fisherman, who returns at nightfall." Again, the author's mind is entered into the conversation for our consideration. But this time, we get a glimpse of how Eliot transformed his source material, the glimpse being fairly vague given that Eliot has neglected to specify which fragment of Sappho he had in mind. Rainey informs us that "Eliot's note refers to Fragment 149 . . .: 'Hesperus, you bring home all the bright dawn disperses, / bring home the sheep, / bring home the goat, bring the child home its mother'" (*Annotated* 108). And these lines Eliot transforms into: "At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea," which strikes me as a fairly radical alteration, which further makes one wonder if Eliot's attribution is completely accurate. Some critics have suggested that Eliot also had *Purgatorio* VIII, 1–6 in mind (*Annotated* 108); others that the source being echoed is a Robert Louis Stevenson poem, "Requiem," which includes the line: "Home is the sailor, home from the sea" (Ramazani 481). The combination of Sappho, Dante, and Stevenson seems most probable to me and, as such, an interesting example with which to speculate how Eliot's mind worked.

The second note I suggest might be labeled compositional is Note 360: "The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of

explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted." What's interesting about this note is how it helps surround the lines in the poem by being the close parenthesis to the open parenthesis of the head note to Part V, which informs the reader that "In the first part of Part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus . . .." So, we're told Emmaus will be alluded to and, subsequently, it is, but then when we read Note 360 we're not given the Biblical reference (Luke 24:13–32) but instead we're told that what "stimulated" the lines in question was an Antarctic expedition. What came first, Emmaus or Antarctica? However one answers that question, it suggests the means by which Eliot composed his poems. Or, perhaps, more accurately, how he imagined—retroactively—how he composed his poems, which is just as interesting.[20]

Reading the Interpretive Notes

All the varieties of notes considered so far can, of course, be seen as interpretive lenses with which to examine *The Waste Land*, and critics have not been shy to use them in this manner, and to sometimes even impute such interpretive motives to Eliot himself as a way of making him own or endorse the critics' conclusions. But with the

[20] The way the "source parentheses" work seems to propose that the "reality" of the Antarctic "delusion" suggests that the reported Emmaus experience (which is deemed true—by believers, at least) might, in fact, also be a delusion. In effect, Eliot undercuts

last category of Explanation notes, the Interpretive, there is no need to slyly bring in Eliot draped in some guise of implicit intentionalism. In the Interpretive notes, Eliot quite baldly made his interpretive preferences known; starting with the initial head note, Eliot seeks to impose his conception of "the plan" of the poem, becoming, in effect, the first critical reader of *The Waste Land*. With the interpretive notes, Eliot puts aside the helpful author persona who only wishes to inform his readers why such and such a line might seem familiar to them, and instead, and rather aggressively, he tells us how to read, interpret, and understand his poem. At least, that's the impression you might have if you read nothing but the poem and the Notes. But if you read what Eliot had to say about *The Waste Land* and the Notes in subsequent years in various essays, speeches, and interviews, it becomes clear, at the very least, that Eliot became somewhat conflicted about what kind of poem *The Waste Land* was and whether the Notes accurately reflected the "true" nature of the poem. Likewise, critical responses to *The Waste Land* (and, consequently, to the Notes) have undergone significant changes since it was first published. The changes in perspective by both the author and his critics can best be studied, I think, in relation to what I've called the interpretive notes. Before engaging those notes specifically, however, let's return to story of how the Notes came into being.

---

the Gospel story by pairing it with an "empirical" report from a verifiable, modern expedition.

As pointed out above, Eliot claims the Notes we have today were the result of the need for more pages for the book publication of *The Waste Land*. But after learning of the need for more pages, Eliot did not create the Notes out of nothing: recall that he claims to have expanded a set of notes he had already begun making in order to "spike the guns of his critics."[21] So, according to his testimony, it appears that from the very beginning Eliot planned to include notes of some kind, if only citation notes. Evidence contemporaneous with the composition of the poem does not mention these ur-notes; the first mention of the Notes is in a letter to John Quinn in late June 1922. And as Rainey points out, this letter indicates that "more than five months after the poem had been finished, Eliot had still not completed the notes." Furthermore, a month later the Notes were still not finished, which suggests to Rainey that writing them was "a task which [Eliot] approached with diffidence, not to say indifference." Eliot's diffidence to the Notes is confirmed, Rainey believes, by the fact that there is no evidence that he ever "devoted his attention to proofreading them" (*Annotated* 30, 31, 51). Whether years later Eliot was remembering the sequence of events concerning the Notes accurately, whether, that is, there was some set of ur-notes that served as a foundation for the final Notes, Rainey's evidence does suggest that even in 1922 Eliot viewed the undertaking of producing the Notes as an unpleasant task that resulted in "bogus

[21] A set consisting of, I'm assuming, what I call simple and comparative citation notes.

scholarship." Thus, when given the chance, it was easy for him to disown the Notes and regret their existence.

Some early readers were also less than convinced by the Notes:

> F.L. Lucas attacked the notes in his review of the poem as being "as muddled as they are incomplete":
>
> > What is the use of explaining 'laquearia' by quoting two lines of Latin containing the word, which will convey nothing to those who do not know that language, and nothing new to those who do? What is the use of giving a quotation from Ovid which beings in the middle of a sentence without reference? And when one person hails another on London Bridge as having been with 'at Mylae," how is the non-classical reader to guess that this is the name of a Punic sea-fight in which a Phoenician sailor, presumably, the speaker, had taken part?
>
> (Kaiser 90)

William Carlos Williams famously objected to *The Waste Land* for taking "poetry back to the library" (Dickie 20) and certainly, Eliot's earliest reader was not convinced of the Notes' value:

> In 1924 Pound rebutted a piece of reviewer's acrimony with the flat statement that the poem's obscurities were reducible to four Sanskrit words, three of which are

> so implied in the surrounding text that one can pass them by . . . without losing the general tone of the passage. They are so obviously the words of some ritual or other. For the rest, I saw the poem in typescript, and I did not see the notes till 6 or 8 months afterward; and they have not increased my enjoyment of the poem one atom. the poem seems to me an emotional unit . . .
>
> I have not read Miss Weston's *Ritual to Romance*, and do not at present intend to. As to the citations, I do not think it matters a damn which is from Day, which from Milton, Middleton, Webster, or Augustine. I mean so far as the function of the poem is concerned. One's incult pleasure in reading *The Waste Land* would be the same if Webster had written "Women Before Woman" and Marvell the *Metamorphoses*. (Kenner 37-8)

Needless to say that Kenner, one of Eliot's most fervent champions, agrees with Pound and suggests that "we shall do well to discard the notes as much as possible" because, after all, Eliot himself gave us "license to ignore them" (36, 37).

Unfortunately, Eliot gave us that license only years after the Notes had been used innumerable times to support a myriad of theories; in other words, much too late for the license to have any meaning. From the beginning, the Notes became integral to

readers' responses to the poem. Even Edmund Wilson, who reviewed *The Waste Land* for the December 1922 issue of *The Dial*, and claimed that the poem was "intelligible at first reading" did so only after using "Eliot's own as yet unpublished notes . . . to explain the poem's 'complicated correspondences'" (Kaiser 82).

Besides, Eliot's ambivalence cut both ways: his allusive method of writing demands that readers recognize to what he is alluding, something he pointed out more than once:

> In one of my early poems [*Cousin Nancy*] I used, without quotation marks, the line 'the army of unalterable law . . .' from a poem by George Meredith, and this critic accused me of having shamelessly plagiarised, pinched, pilfered that line. Whereas, of course, the whole point was that the reader should recognize where it came from and contrast it with the spirit and meaning of my own poem." (*Inventions* xxiv)

> [About *Ash Wednesday*:] As for the allusions you mention, that is perfectly deliberate, and it was my intention that the reader should recognize them. (*Inventions* xxvi)

> Certainly I have borrowed lines from [Dante], in the attempt to reproduce, or rather 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. Readers of my *Waste Land* will perhaps remember that the vision of my city clerks trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices evoked the reflection 'I had not thought death had undone so many'; and that in another place I deliberately modified a line of Dante by altering it—'sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled.' *And I gave the references in my notes, in order to make the reader who recognized the allusion, know that I meant him to recognize it, and know that he would have missed the point if he did not recognize it.*
>
> (What Dante Means 128, my italics)[22]

Eliot seems to have difficulty negotiating a fine line between having a reader "recognize" an allusion—which is necessary in order that the reader not miss the point!—but not going beyond simple recognition to actually know exactly from where the allusion originated. Why does one reading benefit a reader, while the other does not? I think we can find a clue by reading the continuation of the second quotation above:

---

[22] Eliot continues: "Twenty years after writing *The Waste Land*, I wrote in *Little Gidding*, a passage which is intended to be the nearest equivalent to a canto of the Inferno or the Purgatorio in style as well as content, that I could achieve. The intention, of course, was the same as with my allusions to Dante in *The Waste Land*: to present to the mind of the reader a parallel, by means of contrast, between the Inferno and the Purgatorio,

> As for the question why I made the allusions at all, that seems to me definitely a matter which should not concern the reader . . . . That, as you know, is a theory of mine, that very often it is possible to increase the effect for the reader by letting him know . . . a reference or a meaning; but if the reader knew more, the poetic effect would actually be diminished; that if the reader knows too much about the crude material in the author's mind, his reaction may tend to become at best merely a kind of feeble image of the author's feelings . . ."
>
> (*Inventions* xxvi).

Apparently, to extrapolate a bit, recognizing the origin of an allusion is good, but knowing exactly the origin of that allusion (say, via a note) is bad, *because* the ultimate origin is the "crude material in the author's mind" which will result in the reader getting to close to the author's feelings. Eliot wants a reader to have the results of his mind (the poem and its allusive network), but no access to how that mind went about its "crude" work; a reader is allowed only so close to the author.[23] Such a stance from a champion of "impersonal" poets is perhaps predictable, but it is also countered by the

---

which Dante visited and a hallucinated scene after an air-raid" (What Dante Means 128).

[23] Admittedly, Eliot's reason for this reticence is one I find admirable: "a good poem should have a potentiality of evoking feelings and associations in the reader of which the author is wholly ignorant. I am rather inclined to believe, for myself, that my best

subjective explanation notes I detailed above, as well as by the interpretive explanation notes, some of which I would like to look at now.

The first major interpretive note (after the initial head note) is Note 46, which attempts to explain the importance of the Tarot cards Madame Sosostris[24] uses in her reading. Note 46 seeks to use a subjective explanation approach to establish an objective explanation which will properly steer a reader towards a correct reading of this section of the poem, and by extension, the entire *Waste Land*. However, the subjective authority seems curiously lacking in authority, which undercuts the (hoped for) objective conclusions. At first, Eliot claims to not being "familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards" but then tells us he has "obviously departed" from that "constitution." Obvious to whom? If Eliot doesn't know what's in a Tarot pack, why does he presume all his readers know and could thus identify his departures? For that matter, if he's not familiar with Tarot packs, how does *he* know what's a departure and what's not? He seems to know that the Hanged Man and the Man with Three Staves are "authentic" members, and that the Phoenician Sailor and

---

poems are possibly those which evoke the greatest number and variety of interpretations surprising to myself" (*Inventions* xxvi).

[24] The overthrow of a canonical note: for years, following the lead of Grover Smith, scholars have assumed that Eliot "borrowed" the name of his fortune teller from Aldous Huxley's *Chrome Yellow*. Even Eliot, years later, seemed to buy into the account. But Lawrence Rainey proves that Eliot wrote this section of the poem before Huxley even began writing his novel. See *Annotated* pages 79-80 and Rainey's *Revisiting the Waste Land*, Chapter 1.

the Merchant are not, so why the protests of ignorance? I would suggest its a way of distancing himself from whatever interpretations "naturally" inhere in the Tarot, because what Eliot *does* know is what he wants the cards to mean in the context of his poem ("to suit [his] own convenience"). He doesn't need to know the "constitution" of the Tarot or what those cards might actually mean because what's important for Eliot is to tell us the associations and crucial symbolic correspondences he makes between the cards and other characters in the poem that readers might otherwise: "The Man with Three Staves . . . I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself." The connection, Eliot feels, is crucial, but because it is arbitrary (i.e. personal and private to the author), it requires a note to make the link explicit to the public. So, ignorance is transformed into a kind of certainty, a local absolute, as it were, applicable only to *The Waste Land*.

This vacillation between the author of the poem (and the Notes) knowing and not knowing is repeated in Notes 199 and 360 (the Mrs. Porter ballad source and the reference to the Shackleton expedition): something is known, but not with absolute certainty. And the effect is similar in all cases: the reader is allowed to "recognize" an allusion, but is not given enough information to trace the allusion back to the "crude material" of the author's mind. Eliot asserts a subjective authority only to withdraw by simultaneously undermining that authority in some way: the reader is allowed to get close, but not too close.

And years later, Eliot regretted this note specifically, of "having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail" and of have "stimulated the wrong kind of interest among the seekers of sources" (Frontiers 121-2). Just what is this "wrong kind of interest?" According to Eliot, "wrong" equals "the attempt to understand a poem by explaining its origins" (Frontiers 122), that is, importing meaning from the literature from which he borrowed lines and allusions. But as already noted above, Eliot expects his readers to recognize the allusions, and are not those allusions, in some way, related to the origins of the poem? Recall what Eliot wrote in "Tradition and the Individual Talent":

> . . . the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. . . . No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. (4)

I resist allowing Eliot to have it both ways: he can't, on the one hand, say contemporary works operate within the tradition (which I presume has some "meaning" lurking about somewhere) but that sources absolutely cannot be used to determine a poem's meaning. And since I'm denying him the right to have it both ways,

I would suggest that being "penitent" (Frontiers 121) about sending critics off on wild goose chases is just another goose chase. Eliot's is trying to divert attention from something else. As James E. Miller, Jr. notes: "There is, clearly, a coy note that creeps into this disavowal of the notes toward the end suggesting that the secrets of *The Waste Land* remain to be discovered. If the notes "stimulated the wrong kind of interest . . ." if chasing after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail led far afield from the poem, what would be the right kind of interest?" (Miller 61). Miller believes that one of Eliot's motives was to divert attention from the "poem's deepest sources, the poet's biography" and his entire book is an attempt to read the entire poem in light of Eliot's biography. When Miller's book appeared 30 years ago, it still had the smell of heresy clinging to it. Eliot as confessional poet? How preposterous! Since then, however, "for the most part, criticism of *The Waste Land* has taken an increasingly biographical turn" (Rainey 127). Critics are finally willing to take seriously the suggestion of "[O]ne of Eliot's friends, Mary Hutchinson, who read *The Waste Land* soon after its completion, [and] said it was 'Tom's autobiography'" (Gordon, *Early* 87).

Eliot himself provided evidence in support of this kind of reading. For example:

> In his commencement address at Concord Academy in 1947, he insisted he had written *The Waste Land* "to relieve my emotions" and as a "purely personal act." (Mayer 241)

and

> Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling. (*Facsimile* 1)

Critics have also noted that Eliot's "later criticism was dismissive of the popular theoretical doctrines of his early years: 'impersonality', 'objective correlative', and a regrettable 'dissociation of sensibility'" and that in his "later essays he repeatedly owns to feeling as the source of his ideas" (Gordon, *New* 230, 231).

Following these clues and others, critics have freed themselves of taboo of noticing that what lies just below the surface of *The Waste Land*, and thus "[i]t seems unthinkable, now, to attempt to read the poem without considering in some way, the almost unbearable mental anguish under which Eliot was suffering at the time of its composition" (Selby 139). Randall Jarrell was prescient when he wrote:

> And then there is Eliot. . . . Won't the future say to us in helpless astonishment: "But did you actually believe that all those things about objective correlatives, classicism, the tradition, applied to *his* poetry? Surely you must have seen that he was one of the most subjective and daemonic poets who ever lived, the victim and helpless beneficiary of his own inexorable compulsions, obsessions? From a psychoanalytical point

> of view he was far and away the most interesting poet of your century. But for you, of course . . . his poetry existed undersea, thousands of feet below that deluge of exegesis, explication, source listing, scholarship, and criticism that overwhelmed it. And yet how bravely and personally it survived, its eyes neither coral nor mother-of-pearl but plainly human, full of human anguish." (Mayer 3)

Jarrell reminds us of the "deluge" of commentary that obscures *The Waste Land*, and we return once again to the question of the Notes. While I think Miller is correct that an initial motive for writing the Notes was to hide the poem's personal origins, though probably more from the author than any reader, I would like to propose that Eliot's later desire to be rid of the Notes stems not only because they sent readers in the wrong direction, away from the personal origins of the poem with which Eliot became more comfortable as the years went on—"These things, however, become easier to people with time. You get used to having "The Waste Land," or *Ulysses*, about" (Hall, *Ancient* 272)—but that, paradoxically, they did too good a job of revealing the biography behind the poem. That is, too good a job for one person in particular: Eliot himself, who recognized, as he gained some distance from the poem, just how strained some of his readings in the Notes were, and—admittedly, I am speculating here—that embarrassed him. He knew, for instance, that the head note's suggestion that "the plan" of poem was "suggested by Miss Jesse L. Weston's book" was stretching it, since

as Rainey points out: "Weston's book was not published till late January 1920, more than two months after Eliot's letter to Quinn. Whatever role it played in the poem's conception and composition, it formed no part of the 'poem I have in mind' in 1919" (16). Three years after the talk that became "The Frontiers of Criticism," in which he bemoans the Notes, Eliot admitted to Donald Hall that the poem was "structureless" even before Pound slashed and burned his way through the manuscript (*Ancient* 264). As Rainey points out: "The implicit acknowledgment that the 'shorter version,' or the published text of *The Waste Land* was 'structureless,' was a long way from the claim that it was governed by a 'plan'" (38).

Similarly, in retrospect, might not Note 218, in which Eliot tries to convince us of Tiresias' unifying power seem a bit desperate, imposing a structure onto the "structureless"? And isn't there a more than a hint of desperation behind Note 312: "The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident." Oh really? Has Eliot so little faith in his readers? Does he truly imagine that unless he emphasizes this non-accidental "collocation," readers might assume that the east and the west appear here arbitrarily? Who is he trying to convince, anyway? I suspect himself, mostly.

After all, he watched, probably often in despair, as Pound pruned his original manuscript with a blue-pencil-machete,[25] reducing it by over a third. Eliot trusted Pound's editorial judgment and let the cuts stand, even if now the poem seemed to be less than completely his own. The now "inconveniently" short poem, however, demanded expansion so that it could be published in book form and that offered the young Eliot a convenient opportunity to reclaim ownership over *The Waste Land*. What Ezra took away, Eliot would restore. Unsure himself about how to read the poem, Eliot attempted to discover a way of comprehending what had happened to his poem. To counteract the fragmentation Pound's editing had created, Eliot identified various ways of unifying the poem: Tiresias, his own observations, directions for reading, an assurance that the poem "is not an accident" however it might appear. These gestures, plus all the evidence in the Notes that demonstrated the poem was firmly located in the midst of the grand tradition of Western Literature, possibly assuaged the younger Eliot's anxiety concerning his own poem. Years later, though, with *The Waste Land* comfortably in the canon, Eliot's discomfort with his youthful attempt to "shore up his ruins" is such that he insists, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all."[26]

If what Eliot "meant" by the Notes changed for him over the years, what have those years done to the understanding of the Notes for the rest of us readers of *The*

---

[25] Actually, some of Pounds comments on the MS were in green crayon.
[26] Cf. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

Waste Land? Returning to the beginning of this essay, it seems that a couple of basic questions asked there have already been answered about Eliot's Notes: one, what form the annotations take, and two, what some of Eliot's motivations for the Notes might have been. To conclude, I'd like to pursue some of my other questions by extrapolating from Eliot's experience to a more general understanding of the whole issue of poets' notes.

As far as understanding the "nature" of poetry, how it is created, and how it should be read, I would suggest, first, that the prevalence of notes pages in poetry collections simply demonstrates something we take so much for granted that we don't even think about it: i.e., the triumph of literate print culture over the illiterate, oral/aural non-print world that was deemed quite adequate for thousands of years. Notes automatically suggest pages filled with print, particularly since they frequently refer to other texts filled with pages filled with print.[27] And the use of notes—whether with poetry or any other annotated text—suggests another "victory," one for capitalism and business. After all, notes are, first and foremost, devices for accurately recognizing property rights. In a pre-literate manuscript culture, there simply was not enough

[27] Oral annotation can and does occur, of course. During a poetry reading, introductory material or interjections during a reading are the verbal equivalents of notes. In fact, if you look closely at many of the conventions of the contemporary poetry reading, you will find consistent attempts to provide oral/aural equivalents of being able to visually see what is being read. The printed text dominates the proceedings and much is done to allow the audience to "see" it via their ears.

"product" to make annotation practical or necessary.[28] The printing press provided the means to create editions of multiple copies, which could then be sold for a profit, which, in turn, made authorship and ownership vital concepts to establish and protect, with ideas like copyright, and the notion that one should be courteous when you "borrow" text from another author/owner and acknowledge the "fair use" theft. Use of notes of any kind, then, can be linked to various business decisions and assumptions; even the most "artistic" use of such annotation can't escape the primary reason notes were created: that owners get credit for their property or the use of their property. Explanatory notes do not escape this motive because, one, such notes appear within the context of the "property" notes, and so absorb a bit of the atmosphere from their surroundings; and two, because an explanatory note is just another way that an author establishes her ownership of the lines in question. So, with notes, authors can distinguish between what others own, and what they have written themselves (citation notes for the former, explanatory notes for the latter). In the end, though, all notes act as small deeds that help identify the property owners.

Notes also suggest a particular type of business, the kind found in the Academy, so the frequency of poets adding notes to their poems also suggests a triumph of academic thinking and practice in the realm of the arts. It is easy to forget that Eliot was just an ocean voyage and a dissertation defense away from obtaining a

[28] In a strictly oral culture, of course, there is no "product" at all.

Ph.D. in Philosophy (followed, quite probably, by an appointment to Harvard's Philosophy Department). That Eliot decided to forego his degree, and to stay in Britain to establish himself as a poet was a conscious career choice on his part, a business decision. But while he took himself out of the Academy, Eliot did not take all the Academy out of his approach to poetry. In fact, it would appear that Eliot was somewhat prescient in that he foresaw that the "salvation" of poetry would come from the Academy rather than the market. That is, canonization was the road to immortality[29] not sales figures; and nothing quite appeals to the Academy than a text festooned with footnotes. Recall, too, the other "business" reasons behind the *Waste Land* Notes: first, to "spike the guns" of critics accusing Eliot of plagiarism (i.e., past criticism makes Eliot decide to play by the Academy's citation rules and acknowledge his use of someone else's property); second, to increase the page count to facilitate book publication (i.e., a piece of property has to be a certain size in order to make it worth purchasing, its material presence must impose itself on the world to make itself known); third, to throw some red meat to the academic critics, who, it is hoped, will champion the poem, thus helping Eliot out in that "business" of being a poet.[30]

---

[29] Eliot's canon-construction is evident throughout his essays, and, obviously, the canon he proposed had a nice slot ready and waiting for himself—which the Academy obligingly gave to him.

[30] Admittedly, this "business" decision might not have been actually conscious when Eliot first decided to affix notes to *The Waste Land*, but the effect the Notes had on academics certainly did not escape his notice. Which might explain why Eliot never

Notes, then, primarily represent business decisions, rather than artistic choices. Notes can and are used artistically, of course, but at the outset, business trumps art. However, given the third reason for the Notes postulated above, which deposited the poem into the hands of the critics, now would be a good time to see what effect Notes have on their operations. How a critic might use a citation note seems obvious: track down the source, compare and contrast, evaluate the effects. So, when Eliot changes Webster's wolf into a Dog, the change means this, and he's done this for such and such and reason etc., etc. Even though I invoke the poet's actions in my example, please notice that such activity actually allows a fairly author-free method of literary criticism. Though, clearly, an author had to consciously choose a line from a Jacobean drama (continuing the Webster example), alter the line, and then insert it into a poem, it is not difficult for critics to elide the author and speak of what the text has done, since the note certifies that there has been a text-to-text transfer. For most of the past century, authors have been pushed to the margins of their work, so such "agent-less" literary effects are taken for granted. Beginning with Eliot's belief in an artist subsumed by his Tradition, to Wimsatt and Beardsley's dismissal of the Intentional

---

annotated another one of his poems: having done it once, having demonstrated the amount and variety of materials he commonly employed when writing his poems, he could leave any future annotating to the "professionals." See Rainey's *Revisiting* The Waste Land for more evidence of how business dominated the publication of the poem: Which journal or magazine would pay the most, for example? Have the most exposure? Etc.

Fallacy,[31] to the structuralists' and post-structuralists' various "death of the author" pronouncements, the idea that authors can be forgotten once their work has left their hands is widespread and informs a large percentage of critical practice. While citation notes do not trouble the "anti-author" crowd (just more "objective" information to study), I wonder about notes of explanation. When authors identify themselves using the first person pronoun in notes, how is that "subjective" information to be processed? Wimsatt and Beardsley, for instance, were concerned about the types of evidence that should be allowed when interpreting a poem and determined that only internal evidence was appropriate for literary criticism. Statements about a poem made by the poet during, say, an interview, anything that might reveal intent, are disallowed. My question for Wimsatt and Beardsley is this: are notes internal to a poem or external? If the latter, and the notes can be "disregarded" like Marianne Moore believed her notes could be, then there's no problem and the New Critical enterprise can keep moving along at a steady pace. But, if notes are internal evidence, then the poet's intentions become unavoidable. At the very least, it becomes much more difficult to ignore the author. I know of no way of proving this, but it looks suspiciously to me as if authors use the note to fight back against critical author-cide. As described above, notes take us into the belly of capitalism, with art getting all wrapped up in whose property is whose. But capitalism, despite all its talk about "market forces" and such depends on

[31] Which first appeared in *Sewanee Review* 54 (1946): 468-488.

independent, individual agents making rational decisions about what they make, what they sell, what they buy. Thus, even pure citation notes show us an author, because the property rights represented by those notes are being used, abused, refused by some agent writing the note. And authors become even more difficult to avoid if they've attached explanatory notes, particularly ones that contain the personal pronoun. Turning such an "I" into some sort of function of the text not connected to a flesh-and-blood human being strikes me as somewhat dubious. Via notes, authors can disinter themselves, rise from the dead, and reassert their ownership over texts the critics like to pretend have always been in the public domain, and always separated from their authors. Does this mean the Intentional Fallacy is fallacious or that the "death of the author" has been greatly exaggerated? Perhaps, but I'd like to think that all that needs to be eliminated is the either / or thinking such questions represent.

Whether New or post-structuralist, the critical stance seems to be all or nothing: if they let the author's nose into the tent at all, the game's over, and only the author's intentions will count for anything. The range of debate will be reduced to: what did the author intend, and did the author accomplish said intent? By kicking the author to the side of the road and substituting the "text" or the "language" or the "culture" as the conceiving and active intelligence behind a poem, critical possibilities and approaches can expand exponentially, providing enough fodder for all, with no actual authority (i.e., the poem's author) to answer to. Given the number of academics

in this world, all laboring under a publish or perish sword of Damocles, it is no wonder that this approach has met with success: blotting out the author allows for more "raw material" to be considered for transformation into career-furthering scholarship (we're also back in the world of business). While I understand the motivation behind eschewing authors while involved in interpretation, I fail to understand why it has to be made into some rigid doctrine: authors, either / or, no middle ground.

Eliot, Wimsatt, and Beardsley were responding to 19th century criticism, which focused on the author's biography or historical era to the exclusion, it seemed sometimes, of the actual piece of art. And that had to be remedied. But I would claim the pendulum has swung too far and (by way of mixing metaphors) the baby has been thrown out with the bath water. It's a matter of emphasis. The 19th century spent its time considering the Creator and the Times She Lived In. The 20th century turns its attentions to the Created, the artifact, the material result of a creative act. In the 19th century, the Created can be given minimal attention, because what is important is not what has been done, but rather who did it and how. In the 20th century, the act of creation is ignored to concentrate on the result of that creative act. It's as if in the 19th century, critics wanted to hang out in the artists' studios to get an idea how genius worked, while in the 20th century, critics avoid the studio for the gallery, where finished pieces await their appraisal (and, they hope, where the artist does not await,

being stuck in bed with the flu or something). Again, I don't understand the need for this divide.

It strikes me as nonsensical to separate, so entirely, a Creator from what she Creates. Surely, the residue of creation has to be present somewhere? If the poem has notes, the residue is right out in the open, even more so if those notes include the explanatory type. How a poem was written can tell us a lot about what that poem might mean. And what an author intended can also be useful knowledge, if only to give us a measure by which to calculate whether that intention was successfully realized. But neither of those assessments has to be taken as the final word on the poem. Like the New Critics, I do believe that once in print poems enter a domain in which author-hood becomes increasingly unauthoritative about how a poem might be interpreted. However, unlike the New Critics (or the post-structuralists, for that matter) I do not insist on the absence of the author. Rather, I would propose that once a poem is "finished," the author does not disappear, but instead becomes just another reader. True, the author is a reader with "special" knowledge, mainly about the compositional machinations the poem underwent, but I would argue that that knowledge should not grant the author any other special priority in the interpretive world: just one reader among many. The fear of the "author is dead" crowd is that authors have an unfair advantage as critics, that audiences will think their interpretations are more "valid," simply because the authors happened to write what they're interpreting. And while

intent is a heavy cudgel to wield, the fact is that it's also an extremely inaccurate weapon: the intention to do something guarantees nothing: an author's intention can be thwarted, even reversed (as the Deconstructionists are fond of reminding us). In other words, intentional readings, from an author, or with evidence garnered from an author, or should not be banned, but they should not be given ultimate priority either: everything should be thrown into the hermeneutical stew, allowing for no prejudice concerning the source of any point of view when it comes to ladling out the results. My stance is based on the irrefutable fact that writers are also readers (and when they're writing something, they're doing both: writing and reading). To say to a person: "We'll let you write a poem, but we don't want to hear how you read (interpret) what you've written" strikes me as an attitude similar to Plato's Socrates who claims poets can tell us nothing about their poetry because, one, they recite poetry about things they are not skilled at (e.g., carpentry, medicine) and, two, because when they do recite poems, they are "inspired," and "out of their minds."[32] If we don't allow an author's interpretation into a debate about a text's meaning, aren't we practicing the same condescension Plato puts in Socrates' lap? An author's interpretation may be as "wrongheaded"[33] as any other critics', of course, but I cannot think of any

---

[32] Cf. the *Ion* dialogue.

[33] And what determines wrong- and right- headedness? That's an issue for another paper. However, as uncertain as I am about how to determine the "fitness" of a particular interpretation, I return, once again, to the business model that is infecting

circumstances in which such an interpretation must necessarily be absolutely forbidden. Let interpretation thrive! We have nothing to lose but our narrow outlooks.

And if an author has gone to the trouble of appending notes to their work, don't shiver and quake at this "intrusion" by the author: rather, greet another reader and see where their reading has led them.

---

this whole discussion. That is, interpretations fend for themselves in a marketplace: the strong survive ("sell"), the rest fade away.

Works Cited

Aiken, Conrad. "An Anatomy of Melancholy" in *A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land."* Ed. Jay Martin. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Dickie, Margaret. *On the Modernist Long Poem*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1986.

Eliot, T. S. *The Annotated* Waste Land *with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. Ed. Lawrence Rainey. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005.

—."The Frontiers of Criticism" in *On Poetry and Poets*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1957.

—. *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909–1917*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

—. "What Dante Means to Me" in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965.

—. "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *Selected Essays*. New Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950.

—. The Waste Land*: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

Gordon, Lyndall. *Eliot's Early Years*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

—. *Eliot's New Life*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988.

Hall, Donald. *Goatfoot Milktongue Twinbird: Interviews, Essays, and Notes on Poetry, 1970-76.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1978.

—. *Their Ancient Glittering Eyes: Remembering Poets and More Poets*. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992.

Jones, David. *In Parenthesis: seinnyessit e gledyf ym penn mameu*. London: Faber & Faber, 1937.

Kaiser, Jo Ellen Green. "Disciplining *The Waste Land*, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation." *Twentieth Century Literature* 44:1 (1998): 82-99.

Kenner, Hugh. "'Notes' to *The Waste Land*" in *A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land."* Ed. Jay Martin. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Mayer, John T. *T. S. Eliot's Silent Voices*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Miller, Jr., James E. *T.S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1977.

Moore, Marianne. *The Poems of Marianne Moore*. Ed. Grace Schulman. New York: Viking, 2003.

Rainey, Lawrence. *Revisiting* The Waste Land. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005.

Ramazani, Jahan, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2003.

Selby, Nick, ed. *T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land*. Columbia Critical Guides. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

Sultan, Stanley. Ulysses, The Waste Land, *and Modernism: A Jubilee Study*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat P, 1977.

Wordsworth, William. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: Poems Founded on the Affectations, Poems on the Naming of Places, Poems of the Fancy, Poems of the Imagination*. Ed. E. de Selincourt. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon P, 1965, 1969.

Zerby, Chuck. *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*. Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities P, 2002.