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T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the Gramophone, and the Modernist Discourse Network

Juan A. Suárez

HERE IS A WELL-KEPT SECRET about modernism: during the period of composition of *The Waste Land*, throughout 1921 and early 1922, T. S. Eliot was attached to his gramophone much in the same way as Andy Warhol was later “married” to his movie camera, polaroid, and tape recorder. Both artists, representative of very different cultural moments and vastly separate in ideology, social and cultural positioning, self-understanding, and public personae, were nonetheless equally dependent on the technological continuum for the production of their work. While Warhol flaunted this dependence and a sense of kinship with the machine (“I’ve always wanted to be a machine”),¹ Eliot concealed it, recoiling into interiority, religion, myth, and tradition. But for a brief moment, Eliot’s writing, like Warhol’s multimedia projects, was uneasily entangled in gadgets, circuits, media networks, and technologies of textual production and reproduction. If Warhol mimed the workings of his gadgets, so did Eliot; if Warhol was a recorder-camera-xerox machine, Eliot was a gramophone. But the point here is not to pursue the (certainly contrived) parallel between these two wildly divergent figures. It is to rescue the technological dependency of one of the gray eminences of modernism and to resituate *The Waste Land*, an “apotheosis of modernity”² and mainstay of the twentieth-century canon, within the discourse networks of its time.

The term “discourse network” (English translation of *Aufschreibesystem*) was coined by German historian and theorist Friedrich A. Kittler to designate the material and ideological substratum of discourse and textuality—the web of “technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store and produce relevant data.”³ A discourse network is, then, a sort of unconscious, or *impensé*, of signification. In a way, the concept combines Michel Foucault’s concept of the “archive,” which had been applied mostly to print culture, with Marshall McLuhan’s insights on the influence of media technologies on thought and cultural processes. In Kittler’s work the term has a materialistic thrust. It seeks to deflect the interiorizing, psychologizing tendency of traditional literary hermeneutics by exploring how the material support, or hardware, of

signification shapes textuality. This hardware connects abstract meanings to real, tangible bodies, and bodies to regimes of power, information channels, and institutions. Discourse and information hardware filter out some signals as “noise” and process others as meaningful. At the same time, conceptions of “noise” and “meaning” are never sanctioned within a single discursive realm or medium. They are promoted and circulated by partially connected notation and information protocols. Hence in his description of “the discourse network of 1900” (where “1900” stands for the period stretching from the media revolution of the 1880s to the 1920s), to which modernism belongs, Kittler traces the traffic of ideologies, forms of discourse, and inscription mechanisms through the fields of psychophysics, psychoanalysis, the electronic recording media, and literature. Kittler’s proposals stem largely from his analysis of German literature and culture. In applying them to T. S. Eliot and to Anglo-American modernism, we will have to adapt them somewhat to preserve their validity. Hence in much of what follows, I will seek to situate *The Waste Land* within a discourse network that brings together the electronic media, language automatism, psychotherapy and the discourse of the unconscious, and the idiom of popular culture.⁴

This approach entails a shift in the customary parameters of discussion of Eliot’s most influential piece. Rather than an expansion of the usual hermeneutic debates on *The Waste Land*’s formal-conceptual unity (or lack of it), symbolism, sources, and meaning, what will be performed here is a surface exploration of its textual mechanics. The point is not to discover *what* but *how* the poem signifies. At the end of this path lie no further interpretations of the text but the unveiling of modes of inscription on which its meaning depends. These modes fragment the “organic” utterance; replay and recontextualize pre-recorded voices; and turn language into a tactile stimulus at the expense of its communicative potential. We will see modernism rendered other, traversed by a plurality of discourses (medical, technological, popular) which have been elided from the official histories of the modern. But this is at the end; at the beginning . . . the scratchy sound of the gramophone.

The gramophone is heard in a prominent, if squalid, segment of *The Waste Land*. It appears in part three (“The Fire Sermon”), in one of the emblematic moments of modern degradation which the poem seeks at once to portray and to overcome. This is the sexual encounter between a jaded typist and a “young man carbuncular”—“A small house agent’s clerk . . . on whom assurance sits / As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.”⁵ Their tryst is prefaced by elliptical views of the city (the polluted Thames and its banks; the bustle of traffic); invocations of death and decay; and by a brief passage, “under the brown fog of a

winter noon," in which the ever-mutating first-person narrator receives an ambiguous invitation from a Mr. Eugenides, "the Smyrna merchant": "Asked me in demotic French / To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel" (*WL* 208, 209, 212–13).⁶ These contemporary scenes are haunted by gadgets, mass-produced objects, and industrial landscapes which render the present mechanical, jarring, lifeless, and disenchanting. Take, for example, "the sound of horns and motors" (*WL* 197) in city streets; the "empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends / Or other testimony of summer nights" (*WL* 177–79) on the river banks; the "gashouse" by "the dull canal," where the rats scurry over moldy bones (*WL* 189–90); or the customs forms which fill Mr. Eugenides's pockets (*WL* 211).

As one more vignette of present-day decadence, the exhausted rendezvous between the typist and her suitor also unfolds under emblems of industrial modernity. It takes place in the early evening, after work, when "the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing, waiting" (*WL* 216–17). Home from the office, the typist lights up her stove, tidies up, and "lays out food in tins" (*WL* 223). Presently, her guest arrives "with one bold stare" (*WL* 232). Once dinner is over, he makes his advance, which meets with neither resistance nor encouragement. The encounter is unspirited; the insistently mechanical rhythm of the lines underlines its somnambulistic quality. After he leaves, she remains prey to automatism and machine conditioning:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass
 Paces about her room again, alone,
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

(*WL* 249–51, 254–56)

The canned music of the gramophone clinches the mechanical squalor of the entire scene, and comes to stand for the vulgarity and disenchantment of contemporary existence. Similar connotations accrue around this device in other parts of Eliot's corpus. In the short story "Eeldrop and Appleplex," for example, gramophones provide a soundtrack for the dismal suburban setting: "the gardens of the small houses to left and right were rank with ivy and tall grass and lilac bushes; the tropical South London verdure was dusty above and mouldy below; the tepid air swarmed with flies. Eeldrop, at the window, welcomed the smoky smell of lilac, the gramaphones [sic], the choir of the Baptist chapel, and the sight of three small girls playing cards on the steps of the police

station.”⁷ In a very different piece, Eliot’s homage to British music-hall artist Mary Lloyd, the gramophone, along with the cinema and the radio, are blamed for replacing the “organic,” participatory, popular arts with the standardized, lifeless output of the culture industry.⁸ And in “Portrait of a Lady,” the stale pretentiousness of the lady’s manners and quarters (which have “An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb”) is underlined by the music streaming from—where else?—a gramophone:

—And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets
Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins.⁹

Later on in the poem, canned music is aligned once more with lackluster existence; its sound unnerves the hypersensitive first-person “narrator,” the lady’s interlocutor:

I remain self-possessed:
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.

(79–83)

But to return to *The Waste Land*, the gramophone’s sound closes the poem’s bleak, nechromantic first half. Shortly afterward begin the intimations of rebirth and redemption. Already the following stanza evokes “the pleasant whining of a mandoline,” heard in a pub on Lower Thames Street, and the neo-classical splendor of the church of Magnus Martyr, by Christopher Wren (*WL* 261, 264). The folk performance and the “Ionian white and gold” of the monument offset debased modern existence and its accoutrements. The following section, “Death by Water,” contains a poignant *memento mori*; and in the closing fragment, “What the Thunder Said,” the scorched, rocky earth breaks into new life. The oppressive present is obscurely redeemed then. Modern city scenes are replaced by timeless landscapes, while the shrill sounds of contemporary life are displaced by the rumble of thunder; by mythic invocations drawn from the *Upanishads*; and by literary allusions ranging from antiquity to the Renaissance. In the end, the choral voice of tradition drowns the artificial sounds of modernity—among them, the mechanical grinding of the gramophone—and restores to life a hard-won, new organicity. And yet I will try to show that, if one listens closely, it becomes apparent that the sounds of tradition are played back by a gramophone.

The organic, mystic unity with which, it is generally agreed, the poem ends, is entirely dependent on it. The gramophone's prerecorded sound is the condition of possibility for the entire work. In his attempt to modernize the idiom of modern poetry, Eliot was shaping an old medium in the image of a new one.¹⁰

Modernism's mediality has not gone unnoticed. A classic critic like Clement Greenberg located in it the emergence of modern aesthetics: "This is the genesis of the 'abstract.' In turning his attention away from subject-matter or common experience, the poet or artist turns it in upon the medium of his own craft."¹¹ As art turns self-reflexive and withdraws from external particulars, the medium becomes the message. So we are told that literature, for example, delves into the materiality of the word, music into pure sound, and painting into shapes, lines, and masses of color. While this is quite true it is also somewhat confining. Greenberg restricts modernist media-awareness to the traditional materials (or media) of artistic expression. Yet there is another way in which modern artists turn to the media, and that is to the new media of mass communication: the telegraph, the radio, film, the telephone, the typewriter, and the gramophone.

With the exception of film, image-based and largely silent in its inception, all these media focused on language. They sought to amplify it, project it through space, dissect it into its basic components, or store it with the intention of playing it back. In all cases, language became unhinged from its print support, which was progressively denaturalized as *the* eminent linguistic medium. As it was newly encoded, channeled, inscribed, canned, and broadcast through a variety of media, language acquired new material embodiments as well as an unprecedented malleability. It could be manipulated in ways that had simply been impossible while it was borne by print or the spoken word.

The new media dissociated language from human corporeality. The typewriter, for example, interposed a mechanical contraption between hand and text and did away with the personal distinctiveness of handwriting. Other devices, in turn, detached oral language from the physical presence of the speakers and reattached it to inanimate objects. The voice was then disembodied and, therefore, dis-organ-ized. The gramophone in particular broke up the continuum of spoken communication into its component parts. It scattered, in time and space, the sender of the message; her or his portable, reproducible sound; and the message's addressee (the audience). The organic unity of a live musical performance or of an oral exchange was dissolved and subjected to the detours of mechanic ensembles and electronic circuits. As we have already seen, there is a value judgment attached to that in *The Waste*

Land. The typist's turning on the gramophone after mechanical sex denotes her immersion in an inauthentic world. Hers is an environment where communication does not entail intimate contact but the cold comfort of machine connections.

But machines are never simple, and Eliot's poem attests to that. The machine-driven world—"Trams and dusty trees. / Highbury bore me" (WL 292-93)—may be disenchanted and hollow. Deserted by the nymphs of a long gone era, the Thames "sweats / Oil and tar" (WL 266-67) and the people on its banks live in exile from meaning and transcendence. "On Margate Sands. / I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (WL 300-302). And yet this disenchanted modernity is also a stage for the return of the dead. Madame Sosostriis, "famous clairvoyante," summons them "with a wicked pack of cards" in an early part of the poem and the dead respond in mass (WL 43, 46). The crowd that flows over London Bridge is a crowd of ghosts: "I had not thought death had undone so many" (WL 63). At any turn one may run into one of the departed: "Stetson! / You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!" (WL 69-70). This eerie atmosphere contributes to making the poem into "a chamber of horrors—a gothic extravaganza" indebted at times to the atmosphere of Edgar Allan Poe's tales.¹² Following Eliot's own suggestions, critics have explained the poem's insistence on the return of the dead by reference to the fertility rites and myths analyzed in James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and in Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. Without wanting to reject such explanations *tout court*, it is worth pointing out that there are also more immediate (if more complicit and definitely less Eliotic) sources for the ghostly: the voice media themselves—especially voice-recording devices.

The earliest use of this new technology was to preserve traces of the absent. Edison, who gave the phonograph, immediate predecessor of the gramophone, its definite shape in 1878, building upon the work of earlier French pioneers such as Scott de Martinville and Charles Cros, conceived it at first as a means to record and repeat telephone conversations.¹³ This made the invention dwell on a double absence—of the speakers who send their spectral voices through a cable and, second, of the original exchange itself. The Bell laboratories in Washington, D.C., restyled Edison's mechanism into a dictaphone, which would relay a disembodied voice, and therefore bear witness to further absences. In addition, Edison further suggested other uses for voice-recording technologies: among them, the production of "tone pictures" of a person's entire life, personal mementos condensing in a few minutes a sound panorama spanning from baby prattle to "*the last words* of the dying member of the family" (PF 234).

With this technology, Madame Sosostris's conjuring could have been done just as well by picking up the telephone (to have a ghost immediately inquire "Number, please?"), turning on the radio, or cranking up the gramophone. These media repopulate the world with "spirits"—from the Latin *spiritus*, breath—or, what is the same, with voices. Not in vain, the term "medium"—whose most recent meaning, according to *Webster's*, was "a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment"—had long been in use to designate an intermediary with "the beyond." For early users, there was something magical about the new media. Listening to the voices coming out of the telephone, the phonograph, or the radio felt at first like a séance of sorts¹⁴ and, naturally, those who trafficked in spirits took notice. A Reverend Horatio N. Powers, from Piermont, New York, wrote a "Phonograph Salutation" in 1877 in which this gadget describes itself and extols its virtues and capabilities. Not the least of these was "I am a resurrection, men may hear / the quick and dead converse, as I reply."¹⁵ Not for nothing was Edison widely known as "the wizard of Menlo Park." He was occasionally portrayed in the popular press in Merlin-like garb; and like Houdini, another contemporary sensation, he did not seem bound by the laws of nature. Even his collaborators agreed that something of the supernatural clung to the man and his milieu. Thus Francis Jehl, one of Edison's assistants, recalled that the inventor's laboratory "lighted up with a bewitching glimmer—like an alchemist's den."¹⁶ In a recent biography, Neil Baldwin reports that Edison flirted with theosophy and spiritualism, owned many volumes of such lore, and openly admired Madame Blavatsky. Blavatsky, in turn, was fascinated with the phonograph. She visited the inventor in his den; made him an honorary member of the Theosophical Society; and gave him a signed copy of her hulking best-seller, *Isis Unveiled* (1877). In the book she tries to bridge the gap between spiritualism and science—between the darkened parlors of the Society's headquarters and Menlo Park—by claiming that magic simply derives from an intimate knowledge of magnetism and electricity (*E* 92).¹⁷ In view of these connections, it is perhaps not surprising that the gramphonic *The Waste Land* took the form of an extended séance. There, the return of the dead may be attributed to the poem's mythic substratum but also to the nebulous embodiments and the equivocal forms of absence-presence allowed by modern media.¹⁸

In addition to being ghostly, language, cut loose from bodies and their intentions, and channeled through the media, appeared as an autonomous force, an energy without beginning, end, or direction. Radios, telephones, and gramophones multiplied exponentially the number of utterances floating through the air, contributing in this way

to the increased momentum of contemporary life. Their endless murmur was the sonic background of the second industrial revolution. One could try to shut off this murmur, or else tune in and ride the (herzian) waves. Most modernist writers and thinkers did the latter. What such diverse figures as Freud, Marinetti, Tzara, Proust, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, Breton, Joyce, Dos Passos, or Marcel Duchamp, to name a few, endlessly recorded in their writing is precisely language unbound—nonsense, word plays, unconscious rhymes and rhythms, strings of association, snatches of conversation caught on the run, glossolalia. Rather than create, they took dictation, their ears wide open to the world's unsuppressable cacophony (*DN* 225).¹⁹

By doing this they fashioned themselves after recording-receiving devices—after radios and telephones picking up the signal, after phonographs alternately recording and playing messages back. As a student at Harvard, Gertrude Stein had taken part in psychophysical experiments in automatic reading and writing conducted under Hugo Münsterberg's guidance. There is a direct line connecting the nonsensical, randomly generated language used in these experiments and the cadenced audacities of *Tender Buttons* or *The Making of Americans*. Ernest Hemingway's style of "hard objectivity" was also labeled a "camera eye" style. Joyce's *Ulysses* and, especially, *Finnegans Wake* are radiophonic "tone poems" (McLuhan's term) that transcribe the densely layered speech of the world and its multiplicity of accents, dialects, languages, and memories; and for Jacques Derrida, they are, besides, manic telephone exchanges hooked up to a soundbank ("a multiplicity of voices and answering machines") holding no less than "the entire archive of Western culture."²⁰ And here is how D. H. Lawrence described Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*: "If you set a blank record revolving to receive all the sounds, and a film-camera going to photograph all the motions of a scattered group of individuals, at the points where they meet and touch in New York, you would more or less get Mr. Dos Passos's method."²¹

That Eliot was familiar with such methods of direct transposition is attested to by his first famous poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "It is impossible to say just what I mean! / But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen" (*CPP* 6). The transcription of neural engrams would be the straightforward, unequivocal manner of portraying subjectivity. Failing that, one may make do with the approximate notations poetry provides. These claim to be near verbatim transcriptions of the verbal stream that flows through consciousness.

The Waste Land, which grew from the themes and techniques of "The Love Song," can also be seen as one such attempt to record the drift of

a speaker's mind. Its parallel with the earlier poem made American poet Conrad Aiken wonder, "Isn't it that Mr. Eliot, finding it 'impossible to say exactly what he means,'—to recapitulate, to enumerate all the events and discoveries and memories that make up a consciousness—has emulated the 'magic lantern' that 'throws the nerves in patterns on a screen'?" (CH 160). The poem, he concluded, portrays a consciousness emptying itself; the only underlying unity for its jumbled-up contents is "the dim unity of the personality"—which turns out to be no unity at all. The other source of unity, uncredited by Aiken, is the medium: the recording technology which traces the kaleidoscopic play of thought. In line with Aiken's comments, Elinor Wylie wrote: "Nothing could be more personal and direct than his [Eliot's] method of presenting his weariness and despair by means of a stream of memories and images the like of which . . . runs through the brain of any educated and imaginative man whose thoughts are sharpened by suffering" (CH 155). And Harriet Monroe, updating the reference to the magic lantern, described *The Waste Land* as a moving picture of the mental processes of the poem's speaking persona: "While stating nothing, it [the poem] suggests everything that is in his [the speaker's] rapidly moving mind, in a series of shifting scenes which fade in and out of each other like the cinema" (CH 169). Others, such as Edmund Wilson, Louis Untermeyer, or Helen McAffe explicitly posited that the flow of the unconscious was the raw material of Eliot's writing (CH 144, 153, 183).

All of these views gesture, more or less advertently, to the structure of the psychoanalytic session and to the media analogies which allowed Freud to conceptualize it. A "consciousness" compulsively empties itself while another records it all to play it back in writing. Freud spoke of his gramophonic memory, which allowed him to store his patients' testimonies and to play them back for the record at the end of each day.²² He further compared psychoanalytic communication to a telephone conversation where what was heard was not the speech of two individuals—doctor and patient—but an anonymous discourse: in Jacques Lacan's notation, the discourse of the Other, sending and receiving its own messages through them. In clinical psychology, machines worked at times as more than mere analogies; photographs and recordings were often used for diagnostic purposes—for differentiating, in the latter case, says McLuhan, "the sob of hysteria from the sigh of melancholia" (UM 246). In the recording one might spot the truth; sound could be better assessed when detached from the distracting mannerisms of the person.²³ In the poem, however, unlike in analysis, the writer is at once patient and analyst: speaker, listener, and recording device. As has been noted, modernist literature coincided with psychoanalysis in its exploratory thrust and its interest in mental mechanisms. Psychoanalysis is a

product of the machine age and of the modern media, which are, in a way, its unconscious—"the unconscious of the unconscious" (*DN* 285). Just like the stylus of the phonograph or like the radio receiver, the analyst is characterized by her or his nondiscriminatory receptivity; we have just seen that writers emulate this quality in the contemporary discourse network. In literature, however, there is no diagnosis. It further departs from (or contests) psychoanalysis by operating outside normativity and treatment. It may be relevant to recall here that *The Waste Land* was indeed the product of "strained nerves," in Edmund Wilson's phrase (*CH* 144), and psychotherapy; it was composed during a particularly trying period of Eliot's life when he was undergoing psychological treatment and a rest cure in order to overcome a nervous breakdown.²⁴

While *The Waste Land* was devoted to transcribing brain engrams and mental movements, it aspired as well to the condition of a sound recorder. Take the following lines:

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.

Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night,
good night.

(*WL* 165–72)

Poetic discourse competes here with Edison's waxed cylinders and Emil Berliner's blank records. It aspires to total inclusiveness; it automatically picks up the main conversation in the foreground and the calls in the background. It does not purge colloquialisms or correct mistakes. At the same time, other messages leak in and, as with a shift of the dial or a change of record, the "goonight" of the speakers shades off into Ophelia's poignant goodbye. The present quickly melts into the past; colloquial discourse transmutes into literature; and Lil blends in with *Hamlet's* hapless character.

Such abrupt transitions are quite common in the poem. They are the feature that most disoriented early reviewers and, consequently, much has been written about their meaning and motivation. What interests me here, however, is not what they mean (enough has been said about that) but the technological substratum that makes them possible. We have already pointed out how the voice media fragment the organic whole-

ness of oral and written communication. We may add here that these media, and particularly the gramophone, worked as data banks. They were information storage devices—mechanical memories detached from self and psychology. They made all the speech and music of the world instantly retrievable. The gramophone made possible the existence of sound and music archives, like the Musée Glossophonographique, created in 1900 by the Anthropology Society of Paris, or like the phonographic collection of the Vienna Academy of Science, founded the same year.²⁵ Such aural memory banks were, in turn, the basis for the sound collages one may experience through the radio.

In the late 1920s, and following up on the success of his film *Berlin, Symphonie der Großstadt*, experimental German director Walter Ruttmann created several of these sound montages. He recorded them on the magnetic sound band of an unexposed film strip using the recently developed Tri-Ergon process, one of the most sophisticated at the time. The resulting pieces were *Wochenende*, a sound picture of leisure activities, and *Tönende Welle*, a simulation of radio zapping. Simultaneously, Soviet avant-garde filmmaker Dziga Vertov was experimenting with similar ideas for his “Radio-Pravda” montages. These were the radio equivalents of his own “Kino-Pravda” film newsreels: sounds and voices spliced together to depict, or to comment on, contemporary events.

It is not difficult to see a certain kinship between these experiments and *The Waste Land*. In fact, Eliot’s poem itself is based on zapping through a sort of prerecorded literary archive which seems to be kept on the air at different frequencies. As it runs through the length of the spectrum, the dial picks us some voices and frequencies while it skips others; the resulting collage is transcribed onto the page. Small wonder that the messages transcribed are fragmentary. Mechanized communication does not respect the organic boundaries of grammar and sense. One may tune in and out in midsentence; communication may be interrupted by leakage, power failure, or sudden malfunctioning. Or one may simply remove the record, turn the dial, or hang up the telephone whether the message has been completed or not.

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s’ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d’Aquitaine à la tour abolie
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo’s mad againe.
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
 Shantih shantih shantih

(WL 427–34)

The poet himself is the tuning dial here, or else a mad disc-jockey who delights in creating mosaics of sound and language like the preceding one. The idea appears elsewhere in Eliot's work. In his famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," written three years before *The Waste Land*, he repeatedly characterized the mature poet as an impersonal "medium" for the storage and transmission of information: "The mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature poet not precisely in any valuation of 'personality,' not by being necessarily more interesting or having 'more to say,' but rather by being *a more finely perfected medium* in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations." And he continues, "The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."²⁶ This kind of writing is no longer based on *inventio*, imagination, or the rephrasing of experience. In the discourse network of 1900, writing means something akin to receiving, channeling, or playing back existing files. It is fashioned after the automatic receptivity of the electronic media; at its origin one finds the babble (the Babel) of machines, not the intimate pourings of the soul—that "infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing."²⁷ This was clearly perceived by Eliot's reviewers, who often criticized his writing for its excessive bookishness and apparent lack of "lived experience." Clive Bell's words are symptomatic in this respect: "He cannot write in the great manner out of the heart of his subject . . . birdlike he must pile up wisps and straws of recollection round the tenuous twig of a central idea. And for these wisps and straws he must go generally to books" (*CH* 188). What Bell, and others like him, failed to point out, however, is that the book is no longer the ultimate receptacle of discourse; wisps and straws of language and refracted experience also circulate through a variety of technological devices. The modern poet is one of these.

But together with the voices of tradition, automatic receivers pick up noise as well: the communication channels often hiss with static; the sound may be garbled; or the gramophone needle may skip. And this random, nonsignifying noise is faithfully transcribed. As it does through the media, noise travels through modernist literature as well. In part, the solipsism of the moderns may be attributed to the presence in their writing of obstreperous matter that will not yield meaning. The abrupt, seemingly haphazard transitions of *The Waste Land* are a way to encode the noise in the circuits, as are the occasional forms of glossolalia that punctuate the text:

The barges wash
Drifting logs

Down Greenwich reach
 Past the Isle of Dogs
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala

(WL 273–78)

And further,

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
 O Lord thou pluckest me out
 O Lord thou pluckest

burning

(WL 306–11)

More examples are available throughout Eliot's oeuvre: the epigraph of "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," which starts "Tra-la-la-la-la-la-laire" to continue, rather more ponderously, "nil nisi divinum stabile est . . ." (CPP 23); the verses "J'erre toujours de-ci de-là / a divers coups de tra la la" in the frisky self-portrait "Mélange adultère de tout" (CPP 29); or the closing of "Fragment of an Agon," the second finished segment of *Sweeney Agonistes*, which ends up by disintegrating into pure sound:

Hoo ha ha
 Hoo ha ha
 Hoo
 Hoo
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
 KNOCK
 KNOCK
 KNOCK

(CPP 85)

At moments like these, literary discourse incorporates noise and momentarily sidesteps reason and understanding. It becomes a matter of pure externality, not a pathway to interiority, meaning, or a postulated "spirit." The media, in a way, displace all these and bring on the a-signifying pleasures of pure sound—the grain of the voice, the whirrs,

clicks, and grinds that always accompany communication relayed through circuits. At times, these “accidents” of signification took precedence over the message itself. In the 1910s, futurist Luigi Russolo called for an “art of noise” which would integrate all sorts of mechanical vibrations: backfiring engines, ringing phones, clanging bells, slamming doors, random footsteps. Dadaists in exile Hugo Ball, Richard Hülsenbeck, and Emil Janko “invented” (or transposed) the sound poem in one of their evenings at the Cabaret Voltaire—a composition in several voices where howling, growling, screaming, and all manner of inarticulate sounds alternated with crisply enunciated, perfectly meaningless syllables. Four decades earlier and in a more sedate mood, Edison, whose hearing, like Eliot’s father’s, was severely impaired, received his inspiration for the phonograph’s recording device by feeling the vibrations of a telephone receiver on his fingertips. Touch and noise, traditionally on the outside of meaning, are now its harbingers. Woven with them, meaning itself becomes an intermittence. Discourse is then at once message and massage—content *and* a tactile stimulus that seems to skip sense and logic and caresses the ear and the skin.

It might be objected that the noise signals in *The Waste Land* are unduly amplified in this essay; that the poem’s randomness *does* mean; and that even the least articulate, glossolalic moments respond to plan. However, the connections between fragments are so recondite and the meanings so far-fetched that, as *The Waste Land* first broke into print, it seemed to many to hover between attitudinizing and illegibility. Until the first efforts at explanation, led by Eliot’s footnotes, the poem was consumed in the dark, noise and all. But it must also be noted that the notes throw little light on the text and do little to filter out meaninglessness. Eliot himself dismissed them as “a monument of bogus scholarship”; they seem to have aesthetic rather than explanatory value. They prolong and amplify the moods and atmospheres of the poem by piling on further allusions and images, and by suggesting further poetic and narrative departures. Where Eliot was aesthetic, others tried to be didactic, yet after decades of hermeneutic exertions, scholarly glosses on sources and structure still fall short of explaining the work’s fascination. This stems to great extent from its most tactile qualities—not quite from its message but from its massage. Edmund Wilson, for one, pointed out that Eliot’s ear for rhythm and spoken language kept him readable even at his most abstruse. And Eliot himself once proposed that “It is a test (a positive test, I do not assert that it is always valid negatively) that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.”²⁸ And *The Waste Land* does communicate through its explosive (and, at times, still opaque) imagery, its energy, its moody atmospheres, and its dense allusiveness. While amenable to reasoned explanation, these qualities retain a power

to move and to suggest that short-circuits detached understanding; they promote the kind of total involvement typical of other forms of abstraction (Eliot was often called a cubist) and of the complex, multilayered textures of popular culture.²⁹

The kinship between *The Waste Land* and forms of popular culture was, again, duly noticed by Eliot's contemporaries but later disappeared from discussion as the more respectable elements of the work claimed center stage.³⁰ At the time it was published, however, there was no doubt. We have already seen that for Harriet Monroe, the poem's transitions resembled cinematic fades (CH 169). Louis Untermeyer ruefully pointed out "the jumble of narratives, nursery-rhymes, criticism, jazz-rhythms, 'Dictionary of Favourite Phrases' and a few lyrical moments," and further, "the mingling of willful obscurity and weak vaudeville" (CH 152). This eclectic mix seemingly reproduced the varied strains of sound served up by blaring radios and gramophones. Rather than order or reduce such chaos—"an artist is, by the very nature of creation, pledged to give form to formlessness" (CH 152)—the poem writes it down. The result? A "documentary," or, once more, a direct transcription of the confusion of a media-ridden world. And even a critic as inimical to the popular as Lionel Trilling couldn't help but notice the poem's popular orientation: "anyone who has heard a record of Mr. Eliot reading *The Waste Land* will be struck by how much that poem is publicly intended . . . by how much the full dialect rendition of the cockney passages suggests that it was even shaped for the music hall, by how explicit the poet's use of his voice makes the music we are so likely to think of as internal and secretive."³¹

Trilling was referring here to a series of recordings made in 1947 which are worth discussing at some length. They present us with a curious loop: *The Waste Land*, once structured by gramophony, was later on disseminated by it. (To be exact, rather than of gramophones, we should speak here of magnetic tape, a spin-off of war-inspired telecommunications engineering that made this particular late-1940s recording possible and that was a mutation of earlier gramophone technology.) This is gramophony squared; Eliot doing "Eliot" in different voices. It was in a way a gesture of abdication: to be heard in the age of the media, poetry must be electrically amplified. Is this why Eliot's voice sounds so mechanical? He grinds out the lines with a certain deliberateness, as if trying to stay in beat with an internal metronome.³² His proverbially flat delivery may be, in this case, a way of mechanizing himself to confirm the machine origins of modern poetry. At the same time, there is something liturgical about his insistently regular cadence, perhaps inspired by a nostalgic attempt, so central in his late work, to endow his poetry with the binding power of collective ritual and imagery. But

attempting this through a recording is already admitting defeat—acknowledging, in fact, an estranged audience, a fractured polity no longer reachable by the protocols of traditional religion. Like poetry, in order to get a hearing in the media era, religion has to become televangelism and showbiz, and this awareness may contribute further to the nostalgia audible between the lines.

From a different perspective, reading always stirred Eliot's subtle histrionic talents and the recording is witness to that. As he dramatizes different dialects, languages, and intonations, he lends his own voice to the disintegration of poetic diction we have already glossed at some length. This is particularly perceptible in his rendering of the women's speeches in "A Game of Chess," the most theatrical of the poem's sections. Quite memorable is his alternation between Lil's friends' chat, in a fairly credible cockney, and the background voices in the pub. Changes in volume and pitch evoke spatial distances; Lil's friends sound close and intimate, as if huddling around the microphone, while the bartender seems to bellow his calls from the back of a crowded room. In part the histrionism in these fragments stems from Eliot's self-conscious reproduction of "alien" words, "phonographed" by him and captioned as his but exceeding the limits of his discourse. But even when Eliot is not in character and simply recites, in what is a sort of zero-degree voice in the recording, he still seems to be playing back accents and rhythms not quite his own. Not entirely British but no longer American, Eliot's is an obviously learned accent whose unnaturalness leads us back into the technological continuum and into electrical-aural loops. As contemporary DJs do with a mixture of analogical and digital means, Eliot's voice sampled the tones and rhythms of the metropolis, of traditional poetic diction, and of the (cultural, social) Establishment, to play them back . . . with a difference. Now we call this sampling; at the time when *The Waste Land* was written, such defamiliarizing make-over of existing sounds often took the form of ragtime or jazz. This is the popular beat Trilling detected in Eliot's rather ponderous drone. The frequently invoked kinship between the poem and these forms of popular music was clinched, as we will see, by the dependence of both on the new communications media.

According to an anonymous reviewer (J.M.), *The Waste Land* was "the agonized outcry of a sensitive romanticist drowning in a sea of jazz" (*CH* 170). "Drowning" gives the phrase an ambiguous turn; it makes "the sea of jazz" antagonistic to the lyric but also underscores—or does it mourn?—the extent to which the poem is steeped in jazz culture. A few years earlier, after the publication of *Ara Vos Prec* (1920), Clive Bell had pronounced Eliot an eminent "product of the Jazz movement": his "agonizing labors seem to have been eased somewhat by the comfortable

ministrations of a black and grinning muse," he wrote, seemingly unable to withhold the facile racial slur. The poet, he continued, "plays the devil with the instrument of Shakespeare and Milton;" his language is "of an exquisite purity as far as material goes, but twisted and ragged out of easy recognition."³³

Twisting and ragging were exactly what jazz was about. Its fractured melodies, audacious harmonies, and complex, driving rhythm twisted classical musical languages out of shape. "Ragging," in turn, meant modifying a melody to bring it closer to ragtime, an early jazz form. "Ragtime" was a heavily syncopated form of popular music whose roots were mainly in the African-American tradition. Originally cultivated by black entertainers such as pianist Scott Joplin (his bestselling "Maple Leaf Rag" dates from 1899), it was later adopted and further popularized by composers such as Irving Berlin, whose "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (1911) relaunched the turn-of-the-century ragtime rage. "Ragging" a tune was then bringing it in line with the black musical idiom; it was an exercise in parody, defamiliarization, and racial masquerade dear to audiences in the 1910s and 1920s. Performer-composers of the time, such as Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin, specialized in "ragging" or jazzing up classics and standards to wide acclaim. Clive Bell aligns Eliot's mischievous revamping of tradition with the work of these popular musicians.

Although jazz (like ragtime, its predecessor) was primarily a live musical form, its boom coincided with that of the gramophone. It was dependent on it for its diffusion and full impact. Jazzing and ragging, like all parody, depend for their effect on knowledge of the original being transformed. They presupposed a stock of musical references shared by listener and performer, just like Eliot's poem presupposed the accessibility of the literary archive—played back as a melange of broken sound bites. In addition, jazz's strategies of defamiliarization and parody were favored by the distance that recordings created between the music itself, performers, and audiences. As music streams from metal tubes, horns, and pulsating membranes, it loses its aura—its uniqueness and unrepeatability—and loosens its ties to the personality, the genius, the body and the nerves of the performer or composer. It becomes more controllable by the listener than live music could ever be. Moreover, canned music is forced to commingle, indeed to compete, with the din of street life—"the sound of horns and motors." The performance is no longer bracketed off from daily routine; it may now happen any time—as when the typist in *The Waste Land* freshens up after "stooping to folly." Once all types of music are intimately woven with the ordinary, they appear ripe for parody and appropriation.

Like music, literature in the electronic age is subjected to a similar fall

into the ordinary. And this not only because, at least since romanticism, literary mimesis has been making the quotidian its main focus of interest. Literature loses some of its sacredness and solemnity when writing notes down the automatic speech of the world and thus imitates electronic receivers and transmitters. According to McLuhan, the electronic media have a leveling effect (*UM* 247). Once the channels are open, they carry any and all sounds, those of time-tested tradition as well as—mixed in with—the most ephemeral and mundane. A reporter present at the first demonstrations of Edison’s phonograph at the offices of *Scientific American*, put it as follows: “With charming impartiality it [the phonograph] will express itself in the divine strains of a lyric goddess, or use the startling vernacular of a street Arab.”³⁴ The gramophone’s nondiscriminating ear then explodes the queen’s English and places it in open competition with all other dialects and inflections, and with sheer noise (*DN* 233). Hence in *The Waste Land* gramphonics blows up stylistic uniformity, and with it, extant cultural hierarchies. That is why Shakespeare and pub talk share the same frequencies; or why the *Upanishads*, Pope, and Dante blend in with jazz rhythms or the drone of city crowds; or why Ophelia and Lil, the cockney working-class woman, touch hands.

As do Eliot and the typist. She is, after all, the poem’s originator; the one who gives Eliot his gramophone—electronic memory, language transmitter, verse generator—and his desire. She is ultimately the stand-in for authorship in the machine age—she, the medium who takes dictation; the conduit of voices, discourses, and noise which travel through her as through information channels; the one in whom language is detached from “the spirit” and its acrobatics and entangled in technological networks. One could say that in his attempt to modernize the idiom of modern poetry, Eliot grafted onto an old medium the “minor,” marginal vernaculars of modernity: the language of women, of machines, of popular culture. The language of those with no *proper* language.

As one pursues Eliot’s “master” text through the discourse network of 1900, it becomes clear how much the poem resists many of the traits routinely attributed to high modernism—imperviousness to mass culture and to everyday practice, and a psychologizing turn. And if this pillar of the modernist canon is, after all, not quite the ticket, one wonders what might be. In fact, *The Waste Land*’s refusal to behave might point to a deficiency in our inherited ways of understanding its aesthetics. It could be that much thinking and writing about twentieth-century experimental culture have tended to detach texts from contexts; aesthetics from history; modernism from modernity. A close look at the historical archive actually yields a very different picture from the one

purveyed by the official histories of the modern; one that should force us to question the received ideas about modernism and, particularly, about its relations with contemporary material culture. It may very well be that when postmodern intellectuals started to learn from Las Vegas in the 1960s, they were simply following the clues of the moderns, who absorbed much from Coney Island, cabarets and music halls, neighborhood cinemas, and from jazz played on the gramophone.

The gramophone, in turn, should prompt us to listen more closely to the soundtrack of modernity. So far, cultural critics have widely agreed that the electronic media inaugurated an eminently visual era—what American poet and film theorist Vachel Lindsay called in 1915, in one of the first books on film, a “hieroglyphic civilization.” This meant “new times in which the eye is invading the province of the ear and in which pictures are crowding all literature to the wall.”³⁵ The main harbingers of the new times were photography and film. Their influence and the fascination they exerted may help explain the prevalence of visually-oriented concepts such as *flanerie*, panoramic perception, the spectacle, or the simulacrum in attempts to define and assess the experience of modernity. But this dominance of the eye has tended to downplay modernity’s sonic dimension. This might be due to the very nature of the image, more manageable and easier to bring into focus than sound. Sound, for its part, remains an (ordinarily) invisible, if pervasive, radiation, a centerless pulsing not amenable to perspective or freezing. And yet, it is time to pick up the strange frequencies of modernity, frequencies that have scrambled the literature switchboard (T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* attests to that) and disrupted its signals, powerfully reshaping conceptions of writing, subjectivity, discourse, and cultural hierarchy. Otology is another modern heterology.³⁶

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NOTES

1 Andy Warhol, “What is Pop Art?” interview by G. R. Swanson, *Artnews*, 62 (1963). Warhol’s actual words are “The reason I’m painting this way is because I want to be a machine. Whatever I do, and I do machine-like, is because it is what I want to do.”

2 John Crowe Ransom, “Waste Lands,” in *T. S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 1, ed. Michael Grant (London, 1982), p. 176; hereafter cited in text as *CH*.

3 Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, tr. Michael Metteier, with Chris Cullens (Stanford, 1990), p. 369; hereafter cited in text as *DN*.

4 This piece is indebted to Kittler’s enormously suggestive work, especially to *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900* (Berlin, 1985) and *Grammophon Film Typewriter* (Berlin, 1986). For English versions of Kittler’s writing, in addition to the previously cited *Discourse Networks* (Stanford, 1990), see the books *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays*, ed.

John Johnston (Amsterdam, 1997) and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, tr. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, 1999). See also articles such as "A Discourse on Discourse," *Stanford Literature Review*, 3 (1986), 157–66; "Benn's Poetry—'A Hit in the Charts': Song Under Conditions of Media Technologies," *Sub-Stance*, 61 (1990), 5–21; "Nietzsche, the Mechanized Philosopher," in *Looking After Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence Rickels (Albany, 1990); and "The City is a Medium," *New Literary History*, 27 (1996), 717–29. This last piece is preceded by an introduction to Kittler's thought: Matthew Griffin, "Literary Studies +/- Literature: Friedrich A. Kittler's Media Histories," *New Literary History*, 27 (1996), 709–16. Other useful introductions are David E. Wellbery's "Foreword" to *Discourse Networks*; John Johnston's "Friedrich Kittler: Media Theory After Poststructuralism," in *Literature, Media, Information Systems*; and G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, "Translators' Introduction. Friedrich Kittler and Media Discourse Analysis," in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*.

5 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, lines 231–34; hereafter cited in text as *WL* by line number, in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (New York, 1971), pp. 37–55; hereafter cited in text as *CPP*.

6 It seems to me the reader is invited to cringe at the invitation ("in demotic *French*"! no less), whose placement reveals that, for Eliot, this kind of homoerotic possibility sounds the depths of contemporary decadence. For another example of Eliot's homophobic anxieties, see Peter Akroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (London, 1984), pp. 309–10.

7 T. S. Eliot, "Eeldrop and Appleplex. II," *The Little Review* (September 1917), 16. Part one had appeared in the May 1917 issue.

8 T. S. Eliot, "Mary Lloyd," in his *Selected Essays* (New York, 1960), p. 408.

9 Eliot, "Portrait of a Lady," lines 6, 14–18, in *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 8; hereafter cited in text by line number.

10 This inverts somewhat Marshall McLuhan's idea that the content of a new medium is always an older one: the content of radio is the written word; of cinema, the theater; of television, both the cinema and the radio, and so on. See his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, 1964); hereafter cited in text as *UM*.

11 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Pollock and After*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York, 1985), p. 23.

12 Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism. English Literary Doctrine, 1908–1922* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 172. The debt to Poe is more obvious in earlier pieces such as "Sweeney Erect."

13 Thomas A. Edison, "The Phonograph and Its Future," in *Democratic Vistas, 1860–1880*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New York, 1970), pp. 234–35; hereafter cited in text as *PF*. First published in *North American Review*, CXXVI (1878), 527–36. For other uses of early voice-recording devices, see also McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, pp. 241–48, and Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph 1877–1977: From Edison to Stereo* (New York, 1977).

14 Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, p. 12. See also Avital Ronell *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium* (Lincoln, Neb., 1994), 239–40.

15 Reported in T. Lindsay Buick, *The Romance of the Telephone* (Wellington, New Zealand, 1927), p. 52.

16 Francis Jehl's testimony is cited in Neil Baldwin, *Edison: Inventing the Century* (New York, 1995), p. 89; hereafter cited in text as *E*.

17 For further contextualization of Edison's work within the development of electronic technologies and their cultural reception, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1988); Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society* (Baltimore, 1983); and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *A Social History of American Technology* (New York, 1977), p. 149ff.

- 18 Apparently Eliot was introduced to the Tarot pack in 1920 and later that year he and his wife Vivienne attended several séances organized by Lady Rothermere, who would later fund *The Criterion*; see Akroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, p. 113. By that time, the Eliots were reportedly avid, if solemn, dancers quite familiar with the hits of the day blaring out of gramophones.
- 19 Duchamp's whimsical writings are collected in *Duchamp du signe*, ed. Michel Sanouillet (Paris, 1975).
- 20 Jacques Derrida, "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York, 1992), pp. 273, 275.
- 21 D. H. Lawrence, untitled review, in *Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Barry Maine (New York, 1988), p. 75.
- 22 Sigmund Freud, "Recommendations for Physicians on the Psychoanalytic Method of Treatment," in *Therapy and Technique* (New York, 1963), pp. 121–22.
- 23 On the use of recorded sound, film, and photography in psychiatric practice, see, for example, Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, pp. 85–95, 140–49; Felicia McCarren, "The 'Symptomatic Act' Circa 1900: Hysteria, Hypnosis, Electricity, Dance," *Critical Inquiry*, 21 (1995), 748–74; Sander Gilman, "The Image of the Hysteric," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander Gilman (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 345–52; and Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and the Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1989).
- 24 Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (New York, 1977), pp. 102–05; Akroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, pp. 115–18.
- 25 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 38.
- 26 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1972), p. 55.
- 27 Eliot, "Preludes," line 51 in *Collected Poems and Plays*, p. 13.
- 28 T. S. Eliot, "Dante," in *Selected Essays*, p. 200.
- 29 For Charles Sanders the poem "invites active collaboration and continuing performance. And if we perform it, the ritual will communicate feelings before we can understand or explicate the words" ("*The Waste Land: The Last Minstrel Show?*," *The Journal of Modern Literature*, 8 [1980], 38).
- 30 We seem to be in the middle of a paradigm shift in Eliot studies, as traces of the popular in his writing are again receiving considerable attention. In addition to the cited essay by Michael North, "The Dialect in/of Modernism," see, for example, Charles Sanders, "*The Waste Land: The Last Minstrel Show?*"; David Chinitz, "T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide," *PMLA*, 110 (1995), 236–47; Gregory S. Jay, "Postmodernism in *The Waste Land: Women, Mass Culture, and Others*," in *Rereading the New: A Backward Glance at Modernism*, ed. Kevin Dettmar (Ann Arbor, 1992), pp. 221–46; and Manju Jaidka, *T. S. Eliot's Use of Popular Sources* (Lewiston, 1997). While greatly attentive to Eliot's popular textual sources, these works do not point out to what extent the popular (and modern) elements in his work take shape dialogically against the media and technological environment of the time.
- 31 Lionel Trilling, "Kipling," in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York, 1975), pp. 117–18.
- 32 My thanks to my colleague and friend Laurence Erussard for lending me a copy of the recordings and to A. Robert Lee for his enlightening comments on Eliot's accent and delivery. On Eliot's accent see also Christopher Ricks, "An English Accent," in his *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 154–203; and Michael North, "The Dialect in/of Modernism: Pound and Eliot's Racial Masquerade," *American Literary History*, 4 (1992), 71–72.
- 33 Clive Bell, "Plus de jazz," *The New Republic*, 21 September 1921, 94.

34 Anonymous, "Mr. Edison's New Wonder," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 March 1878, 31; cited in Martin W. Laforse and James A. Drake, *Popular Culture and American Life* (Chicago, 1981), p. 3.

35 Vachel Lindsay, *The Progress and Poetry of the Movies*, ed. Myron Lounsbury (Lanham, Md., 1995), p. 182.

36 Some episodes in the history and theory of a sonic modernity have already been written by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Friedrich Kittler, Avital Ronell, Michel Chion, Jacques Attali, Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dólar, Douglas Kahn, and Kodwo Eshun, among others.