



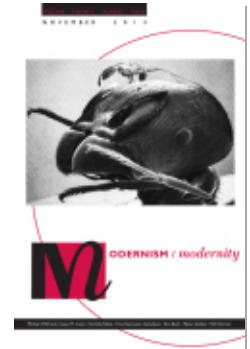
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T. S. Eliot and Cinema

David Trotter

On 24 April 1915, T. S. Eliot wrote to his cousin Eleanor Hinkley from Merton College, Oxford, where he was at that time a student. He reported that, as a diversion from his studies, he had been “to a few music-halls, and to the cinema with a most amusing French woman who is the only interesting acquaintance at my boarding house.”¹ The point of this latter expedition was presumably the amusing French woman, rather than the cinema. Of her, alas, we hear no more. But there is sufficient scattered reference to the cinema, in Eliot’s letters, essays, and poems, to suggest an enduring preoccupation, and one with definite consequences for his development as a writer.

The recent intensification of interest in literary modernism’s relation to cinema, on the one hand, and Eliot’s relation to popular culture, on the other, has created a curious blind spot. Enthusiasts for cinema’s formative effect on modernist writing have on the whole felt that there is little or nothing to be done with Eliot; while critics who place great emphasis on Eliot’s endorsement of popular forms such as music hall argue that it strengthened yet further his already powerful “aversion to cinema.”² On both sides, the tendency has been to quote his remarks about cinema at their most dismissive, and in isolation.³ Eliot has been cast as the mandarin high modernist who remained, in this one respect at least, a mandarin high modernist. I shall argue that, contrary to common belief, he does not fit the part.

Modernism and Cinema

In recent years, cinema has been proposed as a context for the work of an increasing number of writers who published in

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238 the period between the two World Wars, and whom we now regard as modernist.⁴ The great majority of the enquiries into literary modernism's relation to cinema undertaken during the past thirty years or so have been committed, implicitly or explicitly, to argument by analogy. The literary text, we are told, is *structured like a film*, in whole or in part: it has its "close-ups," its "tracks" and "pans," its "cuts" from one "shot" to another. Writers and film-makers were engaged, it would seem, in some kind of exchange of transferable narrative techniques. The transferable narrative technique which has featured most consistently in debates about literary modernism is montage. Michael Wood, indeed, argues that the "principle of montage," together with the "construction of imaginary space through the direction of the gaze," is "quintessentially modernist."⁵ It is a principle active, for example, according to an already voluminous scholarship, throughout the work of James Joyce.⁶ *The Waste Land* has recently been described as the "modern montage poem par excellence" (*CM*, 40).⁷

There has always been an advantage in thinking of the modernist text as though it were a film structured by the principle of montage. Louis MacNeice, for example, remembered encountering Eliot's poems for the first time in 1926, when he was in his final year in high school: "we had seen reviews proclaiming him a modern of the moderns and we too wanted to be 'modern.'" To someone his age, MacNeice recalled, *The Waste Land's* literary allusions and "anthropological symbolism" meant nothing. What did help was going to the movies. "The cinema technique of quick cutting, of surprise juxtapositions, of spotting the everyday detail and making it significant, this would naturally intrigue the novelty-mad adolescent and should, like even the most experimental films, soon become easy to grasp."⁸ MacNeice's recollection may be entirely faithful to his own experience of *The Waste Land*, and sound advice to boot, and yet not tell us anything at all about how the poem came to be written as it was written. For what the novelty-mad adolescent knew about film technique, in 1926, was already a world away from what the poem's author might or might not have known when he wrote it. Experimental cinema—a cinema of "surprise juxtapositions"—only arrived in Britain with the founding of the London Film Society in 1925.⁹

Historically, the term "montage" acquired in a short period of time a range of not always entirely compatible meanings.¹⁰ For the most part, it came to be understood as referring either to the combination of two shots in such a way as to generate an effect or meaning not discernible in either shot alone, or to the sort of conceptual or rhythmical cutting associated in particular with Sergei Eisenstein. P. Adams Sitney identifies reverse angle cutting as the "montage formula" which by the end of World War I had become the basis of narrative continuity in cinema. *Modernist* montage arose out of the reinvigoration of this formula through "playful hyperbole" and other means in films made from the mid-1920s onwards.¹¹ Michael North's meticulous survey of small magazines has made it clear that the intellectual prestige of the movies, and thus of montage as transferable narrative technique, peaked during the late 1920s, when Eugene Jolas's *transition* found room for various experiments in "logocinema."¹² Whatever its virtues, no account of modernist montage along these lines can tell us how and why works of literature conceived during the previous decade, works such as

Ulysses and *The Waste Land*, came to be written as they were written. Any account of the literary use to which a writer may or may not have put a cinematic device must be based on an understanding of the uses to which that device was put, at the time of writing, in cinema. To the best of my knowledge, that condition has not yet been met, where *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* are concerned.

In examining the relation between early cinema and Eliot's poems up to and including *The Waste Land*, I propose to substitute for the model of an exchange of transferable techniques (Sitney believes that the film-makers learned as much from the writers as the writers did from the film-makers) the model of parallelism. In my view, the literature of the period and the cinema of the period can best be understood as constituting and constituted by parallel histories.¹³ Some early film-makers shared with some writers of the period a feeling both that new forms and techniques had made it possible for the first time to represent *existence as such*, and that the superabundant generative power of those forms and techniques (their ever-imminent autonomy) put in doubt the very idea of existence as such. The ground of this common preoccupation, then, was technology, and the automatism of mind and matter technology might be thought to have enforced. "For the first time," André Bazin remarked of the photographic image, "between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent."¹⁴ When modernist writers thought of cinema, they thought, above all, of an image of the world formed automatically. Film, Marianne Moore observed in 1933, "like the lie detector of the criminal court, reveals agitation which the eye fails to see."¹⁵ By seeing as the human eye does not see, film became a meta-technology: a medium whose constant subject-matter was the limits of the human.

Modernism has generally been understood, in recent scholarship, as a peculiar openness to modernity at its most enabling (and most fearsome).¹⁶ Thus Hugh Kenner argues that the affinity Eliot and many of his contemporaries felt with technological change had profound consequences for their writing. "If Eliot is much else," Kenner notes, "he is undeniably his time's chief poet of the alarm clock, the furnished flat, the ubiquitous telephone, commuting crowds, the electric underground railway." There is even a hint at cinema. The "hooded hordes" which swarm over endless plains, in the final section of *The Waste Land*, stumbling in the cracked earth, "may," Kenner adds, "have been literal impressions of World War I newsreels."¹⁷ For Eliot was the poet not only of the new machines, but of the new mechanical behavior to which their dominance could be thought to have given rise.

So the hand of the child, automatic,
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay,
I could see nothing behind the child's eye.¹⁸

However, to be the poet of the alarm clock and the commuter meant writing poems which partook in some measure of the automatism which was their topic: poems which knew what it felt like to behave, and perhaps even to want to behave, as if automatized. "Portrait of a Lady" enlists the reader in just such an exercise: "You have the scene

240 arrange itself—as it will seem to do . . .” (*CPP*, 18). The scene’s seeming self-arrangement: that, perhaps, is where cinema came in.

Garrett Stewart has recently offered an admirably challenging description of modernist literature’s affinity with cinema which promises to move the whole debate decisively beyond argument by analogy, in the direction of the idea of parallel histories. Stewart brings a reading of literary experiment to bear on a reading of film in order to clarify the “special kind of newness” accruing to photographic imprint in its “deliberately unrecognizable form of motorized disappearance.” His emphasis is on the “shared modernist strain, in every sense, of literary and filmic textuality”: on the “photogrammatic track” as the “underlying stuff of the apparition”; and on writing as *écriture*, as text in production. The “filmic,” Stewart proposes, stands to the “cinematic” as *écriture* to “classic narrative”; one is modernist, the other merely modern. “Narrative cinema as film, literature as denaturalized language: these then are the modernist reductions that affiliate textualities beneath the contest of media.”¹⁹ Stewart’s insistence on textuality has reanimated the post-structuralist readings of Eliot, Pound, Joyce and others prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. To think in terms of photographic imprint or “photogrammatic” track is to think once again in terms of what Maud Ellmann has called a “poetics of impersonality.” “As poets,” Ellmann says of Eliot and Pound, “both efface themselves through masks, personae, and ventriloquy, and the polylogue within their texts impugns the self’s domain.”²⁰ To what extent, Stewart invites us to ask, did the modernist polylogue run on “motorized disappearance”?

Stewart draws productively on Frederic Jameson’s description of the “confluence,” in a passage from E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910), “of movie technology on the one hand, and of a certain type of modernist or protomodernist language on the other,” both of which seem to offer some space, some “third term,” between the subject and the object of perception.²¹ For Jameson, Stewart observes, that third term is in effect the (literary/photographic) apparatus, the “disembodiment of perception by technique”; automatism, in short. “Modernist writing is neither predominantly impressionist nor expressive (since both imply the intervening subjectivity of an author) but in some new way strictly technical, a prosthesis of observation in the mode of inscription.” What Stewart discerns in *Howards End*, and then in an enhanced form in *Heart of Darkness* and *Finnegans Wake*, is “an *automatism* of language beneath the intentionalities of inscription.” There was, he claims, a “cultural commonality” between “automated image projection” and “the depersonalized verbal techniques of a modernist stylistic ‘apparatus’” (*BFS*, 281, 283, 285).

Stewart’s broad “textualist theory” of the “adjacent inscriptive media of film and literature” strikes me as consistently illuminating. Since the argument turns on adjacency alone, rather than a conjuncture more often asserted than proven, he is able, as the proponents of montage as transferable narrative technique are not, to read each medium closely, and often to brilliant effect, in terms appropriate to its specific “textuality.” The argument may, however, require further refinement if it is to be brought to bear on Eliot’s poetics of impersonality.

In the first place, Stewart identifies modernist style exclusively with a certain “signifying over and above the signified”: that is, with verbal drift, or skid, with phonemic

“congealment” and “knotted lexicality” (the latter in regard to a poem by Emily Dickinson) (*BFS*, 266, 286, 284, 288). Modernist style, however, has various dimensions. Eliot’s poetry does not lack for polylogue, of course; but it may be that he found his enabling automatism in prosody, say, rather than in lexis. For Eliot, regular meter and rhyme were neither an encumbrance nor an expressive support, but precisely a frame, a “prosthesis of observation”; as they had been for Dickinson. The test I have proposed for myself is that an account of the consequences of a writer’s knowledge of cinema should illuminate the literary text *strictly as a literary text*. It should explain how and why a poem came to take, as a whole or in part, the shape it took. Such an explanation could not legitimately restrict itself to an aspect of literary language.

In the second place, Stewart’s preference for “film” over “cinema” has the effect of sharpening yet further the distinction between “high” and “low” culture which recent scholarship has done so much to complicate. Like Sitney, Wood, and others, Stewart confines his analysis to films based on the “systematic multiplication of shots through editing”: that is, French and Russian experimental cinema of the 1920s, and the “modernist valedictions” of the 1960s and 1970s (*BFS*, 311, 282, 293). The analysis itself is highly informative. Eliot, however, was a good deal more interested in cinema, as Stewart defines it, than he was in film. The genres which most exercised his imagination—the Western; slapstick comedy—were all in the mainstream; indeed, they *were* the mainstream. The study of literary modernism in relation to early cinema has not always benefited from an exclusive emphasis on avant-garde film-making.²²

A third and final cause of disquiet, with regard to Stewart’s approach, is that the combination of high theory and techno-determinism which sustains it may have succeeded in obliterating agency altogether. In Forster, Conrad, and Joyce, Stewart argues, the “mechanisms of linguistic articulation” have been “brought forward” as the “suppressed material basis (phonemic even when not phonic or oral) of all lexical processing” (*BFS*, 286). But brought forward *how*? By whom? And why, at this particular moment in history? If we are to find terms for agency, in modernism’s encounter with technology, we need to conceive technological developments not as a matrix, or condition, but as always already subjectified, caught up in feeling.²³ It is with the “intentionality of film’s automatism,” Stanley Cavell has argued, that critical understanding should begin.²⁴

Eliot *chose*, in certain texts, or in certain episodes or scenes, the “disembodiment of perception by technique.” He did so, I shall argue, because he intended his poems to reveal what it felt like to (want to) behave automatically. The poems are at once an enactment and a critique of the will-to-automatism animating the pleasures and the psychopathologies of everyday modern life. Modernism was not the product of a machine age. It was (among many other things) a wilful enquiry into the age’s wilful absorption in the kinds of automatic behavior exemplified by machinery in general. “But, of course,” as Eliot himself observed in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), “only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.”²⁵

The aim of this essay is to establish that our understanding of Eliot’s “poetics of impersonality” will be enhanced by a definition of its informing will-to-automatism which takes full account, for the first time, of his commentary on cinema. The parallel

242 histories in play, here, are those of the development of Eliot's poetry up to and including *The Waste Land* (1922), and of the emergence during the same period of a fully narrative cinema (that is, of character-driven story films capable of absorbing a diverse mass audience into a self-sufficient world unified across space and time). In my view, the only way to establish the relation between those histories is through an examination of Eliot's evolving commentary, in poems, essays, and letters, on cinema. Eliot did not write cinematically. But there is a history to his changing view of the medium which can usefully be compared to the history of the ways in which the medium itself changed, during the silent era, as well as to the history of his own attempts to change literature.

The Early Poems

Cinema appears first in the poems, rather than in letters or essays; and it appears by way of a shared terminology of the screen, and of images that flicker on the screen. The view these poems propose is of consciousness as a space, or event, or drama, of projection. Thoughts or feelings can only be known as they hang in the distance between an internal source of illumination and a configured surface belonging to the world outside. They can only be known technologically.

Or so "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot's hall-mark early poem, completed in the summer of 1911, would have us believe. As the poem begins, a question arises, or might arise, during the course of an urban expedition the speaker means to undertake (has already undertaken?) with a nameless (probably male) companion. To pose the question directly would be to be overwhelmed by it.

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit. (*CPP*, 13)

Prufrock's prim rhyme nips curiosity in the bud. The visit, coming quick and tart upon the companion's (possible) question about a question, meets it, in sound if not in sense, before it has fully arisen; and so prevents, or postpones, the damage its arising might do. The visit, of a kind Eliot himself had made often enough as an undergraduate at Harvard, is (or would be) to a room where women come and go, where there is music, and tea, and cakes and ices.²⁶ Prufrock, it has often been said, behaves, or imagines himself behaving, as though he were in a story by Henry James: "Crapy Cornelia," whose protagonist strikingly fails, under comparable circumstances, to propose to the woman of his dreams.²⁷ The purpose of the visit is to relieve him, through ordeal by embarrassment, of any remaining thought of an overwhelming question. For the one person who cannot be admitted, who will never make his presence felt there, is the person Prufrock would have to be if he were to pose the question: a prophet, Lazarus come from the dead.

The space Prufrock at once anticipates and remembers entering is a space of pure specularly. "Prufrock," Ellmann notes, "sees himself *being seen*." He sees the bald spot

on his head as it might appear from the point of view of the women who have gathered at the top of the stair to observe an ungracious departure. He has been estranged, Ellmann adds, by the eyes which “fix” him in a “formulated phrase,” to the exteriorities of language and space (*PI*, 69). Does he even show up? “He is not there yet when we hear him speaking,” Hugh Kenner observes: “he will never be there, or will perpetually return there—it does not matter.” He will never be there as the person he would like to be, Lazarus come from the dead; but he will always be there, in his own absence, through memory and anticipation. He may consider defying whatever “automatism” propels him repeatedly, in memory or in anticipation, “through these streets, through that door, up those stairs.”²⁸ But he needs it more than it needs him.

The trouble is that the automatism does not work; or does not work as Prufrock would like it to work, for all the embarrassment it causes him, as a shield against overwhelming questions. For this visit undertaken automatically poses a question even more overwhelming, in its sheer immediacy, than anything that might have arisen on an expedition through argumentative streets. The question is sexual arousal, and the sense of self it generates, on the spot, at the time (*which* time no longer matters). Prufrock has been, or will be, or let us risk saying is, aroused by the arms of the women who come and go:

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
 (But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!) . . . (*CPP*, 15)

What finally puts him at the scene, in the picture, is his attention to bodily texture: the film of light brown hair on a white arm. In describing the body, Victorian writers had for the most part confined themselves to that which was most expressive about it: its overall shape; or its most characterful component, the face; or a particular feature (eyes, nose, mouth). Edwardian writers chose instead to describe the flesh between features. The focus of the new eroticism in literature was on the body as body, rather than as an expression of soul. The down on a woman’s body looms large as a provocation to and emblem of male desire in novels by Arnold Bennett, D. H. Lawrence, May Sinclair and others.²⁹ The story Prufrock now finds himself in is a story by Bennett or Lawrence, rather than by Henry James. Eliot had brought himself bang up to date.

The intensity of Prufrock’s arousal produces or is produced by an intensification in the verse. By comparison with its sparse and evenly paced predecessor (“and white and bare”), the line describing the hair on the women’s arms seems positively swollen: the echo of “lamplight” in “light brown hair” and the internal rhyme on “downed” and “brown” fill it from within with sameness of sound, with emphasis. In this moment of absolute fixation, the poem dwells on the inexpressive body, and also on that in its own formal procedures which foreshadows and outlasts expression: on technique, on poetic matter. It is characteristic of Eliot, however, that he should have embedded the moment of absolute fixation in a parenthesis. The ear hears the conjoining rhyme, the eye sees the disjoining brackets. So Prufrock’s arousal is at once overwhelming and ghostly. He must be reckoned most fully present only when absent. The automatism

244 propelling him, in memory or in anticipation, through that door, up those stairs, observes as he would not actually have observed, had he been there himself, in his own person, with an overwhelming question to hand. The couplet describing what the prosthesis or automatism has seen or will see in his place exemplifies the disembodiment of perception by technique.

The circle of illumination within which the light brown hair on a white arm appears in alluring close-up might make us think of the cinema. Such close-ups of the body's less expressive stretches played in an important part in some of the earliest narrative films. G. A. Smith's *As Seen through a Telescope* (1900) begins with a long shot of an elderly man brandishing a telescope, while a woman and a younger man wheeling a bicycle advance up the street towards him. As the telescope settles on the pair, Smith cuts to a medium close-up of the woman's foot resting on a pedal, isolated within a circular vignette. The young man has knelt down to tie her shoelace. She gradually raises her skirt, revealing an expanse of stockinged ankle and leg, which her companion proceeds to caress. As the long shot resumes, the elderly voyeur seats himself contentedly, at the peep-show's conclusion, only to receive a punitive cuff from the young man, who has caught him looking, as the couple pass. By severing foreground from background, the close-up induces a change of medium rather than scale, a metamorphosis. The expanse of ankle and leg on display is an object as much of touch as of sight. Like Prufrock, the elderly man has been made present (has been presented to desire, has shown up) in and through his absence, in and through a prosthesis. The erotic effect of Smith's film lies in what visual technologies see that the human eye cannot; that of Eliot's poem in what poetic technique renders that other forms of representation cannot.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is indeed a love song: the love song of a voyeur equipped with a telescope, or a movie camera, or a page or two in a modern novel. Once body-hair has posed its overwhelming question, there is no way back, for Prufrock. He cannot undo the knowledge his automatism has given him. What remains is to make sense of experience: whether the experience has been of sunsets, and sprinkled streets, or of novels, teacups, and trailing skirts. After all this, Prufrock laments, and so much more,

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen: . . . (CPP, 16)

There is technique, here, and technology. The odd swerve of "*But* as if . . ." at the beginning of the line gets the figure of the magic lantern going. A colon at its end keeps that figure oddly in suspension, at once the product of and contained by a shift or warp in the stanza's rhetorical development. A rhyme conjoining lines of unequal length into a couplet holds it all together, in some fashion: technique exposed as technique, as mechanism. Rhyme itself is the configured surface, the screen, on which a pattern appears which might or might not "say" just what one means.

Walter Benjamin was to seize eagerly on Baudelaire's description of the person routinely suffering the shocks and strains of modern urban experience as a "*kaleidoscope*

equipped with consciousness." Light pours into a kaleidoscope pressed up against the eye from outside, from the world beyond. Benjamin took from Baudelaire's figure its preoccupation with passivity. He imagines a pedestrian forever on the alert for traffic signals, for the cautionary light shone at him or her through pieces of colored glass. "Thus technology," he concludes, "has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training." Cinema, in which "perception in the form of shocks" has been established as a "formal principle," would complete the training.³⁰ One could say that Eliot's figure presents the modern man or woman as a magic lantern equipped with consciousness. His interest in technology does not, however, entail a comparable techno-determinism.

The magic lantern's light source is internal rather than external. A beam of light, shone through hand-painted or photographic glass slides, takes shape on the screen positioned in front of and at a certain distance from the projector. Two aspects of Eliot's development of the magic lantern as a figure for the way the mind works are worth noting. First, he stresses the force of projection: the image *thrown* onto or against the screen. There can be no doubting the power of the mind's internal light source. Eliot's magic lantern has been equipped with a rather more active consciousness than Baudelaire's kaleidoscope. Secondly, the nerves thrown violently onto the screen have at least been thrown onto it in a pattern. The shape the beam of light has taken is intelligible. The patterned image solicits interpretation. It might even amount to what Eliot was to call in his 1919 essay on *Hamlet* the "objective correlative" or "formula" for a particular emotion.³¹

In this respect, the history of the magic lantern, a mainstay of the Victorian entertainment industry, and one of cinema's most significant precursors, can help to explain Eliot's emphasis. Some features of lantern showmanship, such as musical accompaniment, and the commentary provided by a narrator or lecturer, carried over into early film presentation.³² It seems likely that, given the presence of a narrator or lecturer, the relationship the magic lantern spectator maintained with the images on the screen was, as Noël Burch puts it, "an *exploratory* one"; a relationship also characteristic of the first film shows.³³ The magic lantern co-existed with the moving pictures for a decade or more after 1895. So Eliot's reference to it, in 1911, was slightly archaic; and no doubt with intent. Prufrock finds himself in the predicament Eliot was to describe in "The Dry Salvages" (*CPP*, 186). He has had the experience (of sunsets and sprinkled streets, of novels, teacups, and trailing skirts), but missed the meaning. The magic lantern—the kind of technology, genteel and old-fashioned, with which Prufrock feels at home—intervenes. It cannot restore meaning to experience. But its automatism has created a pattern, there, on the screen, for exploration, which Prufrock alone would have been incapable of creating.

It is possible that Prufrock is rather too much at home with his old-fashioned technology. His vision of mermaids riding the waves, or lolling in sea-weed drapes in chambers beneath it, has something of the magic-lantern show about it. Perhaps Prufrock had been to see (Eliot himself could not possibly have done) the dances presented at the Palace Theater by a lady calling herself La Pia. The performance, we learn from a

246 report in the *Times*, is “considerably heightened by a shimmering background of glistening tinsel ribbons and the artful aid of many-coloured lights in combination with clever cinematograph and magic lantern illusions.” Two of La Pia’s dances apparently brought the “opposing elements” of fire and water into play with “quite extraordinary realism.” In the fire dance, drapery and streaming hair sucked by a “furious draught” coalescence into flame. In the water dance, a cinematograph turns the whole of the back of the stage into a tossing sea. The waves submerge La Pia, but each time she comes up again unharmed.³⁴

The third of the “Preludes,” dated July 1911, describes a woman who, dozing, watches the night reveal the sordid images of which her soul is constituted “flicker” against the ceiling (*CPP*, 23). When Prufrock wistfully remarks that he has seen the moment of his greatness “flicker” (*CPP*, 15), the flickering is that of a candle, or lamp. Here, by contrast, it is the images which flicker, not a light source; the flickering is mechanical. The *OED*’s first citation for “flicker” in its cinematic sense—a succession of changes in a picture occurring when the number of frames per second is too small to produce reliable persistence of vision—is from H. V. Hopwood’s *Living Pictures* (1899). “There is little doubt but that a continual rattle impinging on the ear,” Hopwood complained of early projection systems,

tends to intensify irritation caused to the eye by flicker on the screen, and it is towards the minimising or concealment of this same flicker that attention is at the present time most strenuously directed. This objectionable phenomenon is traceable to the fact that the picture is periodically cut-off from view, a state of affairs which, of course, does not obtain in natural vision. It must be remembered that though persistence of vision ensures the continuance of one image until such time as another is received, yet the impression does not continue in its full strength, and the general result is therefore a perpetual increase and decrease in the brilliancy of the picture as perceived by the eye. Furthermore, the decrease of light is progressive, but every fresh view is presented in full brilliancy.³⁵

The flicker, or perpetual increase and decrease in the brilliancy of the picture projected, is one mark of cinema’s automatism: a “state of affairs” which “does not obtain in natural vision.” It is unlikely that such an effect would allow for an “exploratory” relationship between viewer and projected picture. There does not seem to be a great deal of pattern, in Eliot’s poem, to the sordid images thrown violently onto or against the ceiling. In this case, projection offers little relief from, and indeed exacerbates, the woman’s irritability. One thinks of Leopold Bloom, in *Ulysses*, desperate, like the elderly man in *As Seen through a Telescope*, for a glimpse of a woman climbing into a carriage (“Watch! Watch! Silk flash rich stockings white. Watch!”), and thwarted when a tramcar slews between. Again, the perpetual increase and decrease in brilliancy engenders (and expresses) irritation. “Flicker, flicker: the laceflare of her hat in the sun: flicker, flick.”³⁶

References to visual technology, in the early poems, enabled Eliot to define the “exteriorities of language and space” (in Ellmann’s phrase) which constitute social subjectivity. Indeed, to imagine consciousness as an event or drama of projection was

to grasp the implication of one exteriority in the other: to find space in language. Spatial prepositions (across, against, along, among, behind, by, under, upon) play an important part in these poems. The most interesting spatial preposition of all is “across,” which Eliot uses to indicate both the distance between viewer and scene, and the distance from one side of the scene to the other. “Interlude in London” was based on a visit Eliot made to London, from Paris, in April 1911. In the hotel, he told Eleanor Hinkley, “one looked through the windows, and the waiter brought in eggs and coffee . . .” (*L*, 18). The speaker of the poem rather more complicatedly laments that he must live “across the window panes.”³⁷ He looks out through a window into the world beyond; but that world might also seem to have spread itself out, as it quite often does in Eliot’s early poems, from one side of the frame to the other. The panes are transparent; and they form a screen. So it is, too, after a fashion, in “Interlude: in a Bar,” of February 1911, which also concerns a space of projection. Across—on the other side of—the room, shifting smoke settles around “forms” which pass through or clog the brain. Yet that other side also functions as a flat surface, a kind of screen. The walls “fling back” the scattered streams of a life which appears “Visionary, and yet hard”: at once “immediate” and “far,” like a projected image (*IMH*, 51). How very few people there are, observes the speaker of the fourth and last poem in the “Mandarins” sequence of August 1910, who see their “outlines” on the “screen.” Christopher Ricks glosses “on the screen” by reference to the *OED*’s first cinematic citation, from a 1910 issue of *Moving Picture World*: “People . . . like to see on the screen what they read about” (*IMH*, 139).

Eliot’s enquiry into “across” continued in a fragment beginning “Oh little voices of the throats of men” which he enclosed, together with “The Love Song of St Sebastian,” in a letter of 25 July 1914 to Conrad Aiken. On 30 September 1914, he told Aiken that the stuff he had sent “is not good, is very forced in execution, though the idea was right” (*L*, 45–6, 58). As Ricks points out, there is throughout the fragment “some likeness to *The Waste Land*” (*IMH*, 256). An (elderly?) man describes how he has searched the world “through dialectic ways,” among the living and the dead, but found only appearance, “unreal, and yet true.” He then falls into a doze, like the woman in the third “Prelude,” while plumes of lilac sweep across the window panes, and shadows crawl across the floor. He, too, seems to have been taken up into, or construed as, a space of projection. Eliot sought not just to come to terms with, but to explore fully, to articulate in and as the poem itself, the power of images thrown technologically onto a screen: images visionary and yet hard, unreal and yet true, like those in an early film.

Eliot on Cinema

On 27 November 1914, five months before his visit to the cinema with the amusing French woman, Eliot described to Eleanor Hinkley an intervention in a recent debate at Merton College. The topic of the debate had been “the threatened Americanisation of Oxford.” Eliot’s contribution was to point out “frankly” to those present “how much they owed to Amurrican culcher in the drayma (including the movies) in music, in the cocktail, and in the dance” (*L*, 70). He seems to have regarded the Americanization of

248 Oxford as an opportunity rather than a threat. This brief manifesto has understandably gone down well with those who argue that throughout his career Eliot was, as David Chinitz puts it, “productively engaged” with a variety of forms of popular culture. It has gone down well, that is, except insofar as it expresses considerable enthusiasm for the movies. Chinitz, for example, uses it to substantiate his thesis that Eliot discovered the rhythms and cadences which shape some of his early poems in American popular music circa 1911. “It is ‘Amurrican culcher . . . in music, in the cocktail, and in the dance’ that gives Eliot’s poetry its distinctive resonance” (*TSECD*, 38). Critics have been in altogether too much of a hurry, as Chinitz has been in this instance, to drop “drayma (including the movies)” from the catalogue of forms of popular culture with which Eliot can be said to have engaged productively. He himself had a fair amount to say about the movies.

The letter of 27 November 1914 to Eleanor Hinkley goes on to describe in vivid fashion further developments in the ‘great ten-reel cinema drama, *EFFIE THE WAIF*,’ which Eliot had begun to sketch out for her two weeks previously, on 14 October 1914.

MEDICINE HAT, Wyoming, Christmas Eve. Spike Cassidy, the most notorious gambling house proprietor in the county, (ever since the early death of his wife, his only good influence), returns from the saloon, where he has won all the money and shot a man, to find a small bundle on his doorstep. He stops and stoops. A feeble cry from the bundle—it squirms, it is warm, it is alive! He takes it tenderly in his arms.

Reformed by the “sweet insidious influence of the child,” Spike becomes mayor of Medicine Hat, and the richest man in the county. But there is a “canker in the rose”: Spike’s ex-partner, Seedy Sam, now a ruined and desperate man, who reappears with his son Peter, a “comic simpleton.” Already it is clear that no melodramatic stone will be left unturned in this bold excursion into Amurrican drayma. The action of *Effie the Waif*, chronicled in a succession of letters, piles continent upon continent and protagonist upon protagonist: Effie’s mother, Gwendoline (or Guendolyne), Lady Chomleyumley; a Prussian spy making plans of the Medicine Hat gas-works; Early Bird, an “Indian Maiden”; Pegoon, an “Irish lass,” daughter of Mrs Flaherty who runs the hash house; and many, many more (*L*, 62–4, 71–2, 76–7).

As Susan McCabe points out, these letters demonstrate that Eliot was thoroughly familiar with the narrative conventions of popular cinema (*CM*, 39). It is significant that the narrative conventions he chose to burlesque should have been those of that quintessentially American genre, the Western. In the period immediately before World War I, the “fictitious Wild West of cowboy-and-Indian films” became the “American subject par excellence,” hugely successful both at home and abroad.³⁸ One mark of that success was the delight commentators such as Eliot took in the energy with which an American myth had been squeezed out of reckless narrative hybridity. According to an article in the *Times* of 28 January 1915, the war had by no means diminished the Western’s popular appeal. “‘Cowboys is off,’ we had been told by an experienced friend, but if the term cowboy includes anyone who wears a sombrero and jack-boots and goes

at full cinema gallop across the stage airily letting off his carbine with one hand, then he is not off." The writer goes on to describe, without naming, an "admirable drama" which "combines Wild West and Red Indians, soldiers and fighting, gambling in high life, spies, bribes, and plans with all the delicious and hilarious relief that belongs to a runaway carriage and a comic coachman."³⁹ There were many such.

Eliot's burlesque captures precisely the racial stereotyping which had underwritten the cowboy's emergence in fiction and film as the embodiment of white supremacy. Thus, there is to be a battle between Pegoon's thirty-one cowboy admirers and the thirty-one "Mexican 'greaser' admirers" of the dancer Paprika ("Huge eyes and a stiletto. Easily offended"). Like many Westerns, *Effie the Waif* includes "good" as well as "bad" Indians. For example, the heroine of Kay-Bee's *The Invaders* (1912), a Sioux chief's daughter named Sky Star, rejects a suitor already accepted by her father, and falls for a railway surveyor. When the Sioux decide to attack the surveyors, she rides off to alert the garrison of a nearby fort, and, despite suffering a serious fall, accomplishes her mission; she dies of her injuries. In *Effie the Waif*, Early Bird, the daughter of Oopaloompah, chief of the Boozaways, is engaged to Night Hawk, but throws him over on the appearance of Wilfred Desborough, scion of one of Harlem's oldest families, who has come west to make his fortune. "Later, she is killed while saving W.'s life" (*L*, 76–7). *Effie the Waif* was a *jeu d'esprit*, and a commentary on America.

These letters to Eleanor also make it clear that Eliot had an acute understanding not only of the narrative conventions of popular cinema, but also of the techniques it favored. He meant to visualize a series of scenes rather than merely to tell a story. Early on, as Wilfred Desborough proceeds westward up the Erie on a canal boat, "he turns and gazes at the Statue of Liberty disappearing on the horizon (not strictly accurate geography, but a fine scene)" (*L*, 63). The kind of reverse-angle cutting Eliot envisages here—a shot of Desborough, on the canal boat, turning, followed by a shot of the Statue of Liberty—proved hard to accomplish in the studio, and in fact found its first consistent use in Westerns such as *The Loafer* and *The Shotgun Ranchman*, which Arthur Mackley made for Essanay in 1912.⁴⁰ Its effect is to create a synthetic space: to superimpose the "fine scene" on "geography." "It became apparent," as Lev Kuleshov was to observe in *Art of the Cinema* (1929), "that through montage it was possible to create a new earthly terrain that did not exist anywhere." Kuleshov describes an experiment he undertook in the early 1920s, in Moscow, in which the two protagonists are seen greeting each other even though the streets they walk down were miles apart. "They clasp hands, with Gogol's monument as a background, and look—at the White House—for at this point, we cut in a segment from an American film, *The White House in Washington*. In the next shot they are again on the Boulevard Prechistensk."⁴¹ Kuleshov would have got the joke, in *Effie the Waif*. Eisenstein, whose disjunctive and polemical use of montage has most often been associated with modernism, might not have done.

There was experiment in cinema long before the emergence after the war of the avant-garde film-makers whose work has understandably attracted the attention of literary scholars. Westerns were often remarkably inventive. Richard Abel comments, as the trade press did at the time of the film's release, on the virtuosity of the battle-scenes in

250 *The Invaders*.⁴² Furthermore, the virtuosity had dramatic purpose. As the Sioux warriors plan their attack on the railwaymen, Sky Star sits in a wigwam. She leans to her right (screen left), listening intently. Outside, in a space which bears no direct relation to the wigwam, a warrior gestures extravagantly to his left (screen right), in what we assume to be the direction of the surveyors' camp. Cut to Sky Star, who recoils to her left (screen right), and then, in a gesture which mimics that of the warrior, but substitutes fear and tenderness for hostility, reaches out to her left (screen right) in the direction of the threatened white men, before glancing back horror-struck to her right (screen left). This sequence establishes Sky Star in a quasi-abstract space expressive less of the topography of the Sioux camp than of the painful split in her own allegiances. Westerns like *The Invaders* were certainly melodramatic, but it was possible to look at them, as Eliot evidently did, and even to admire them, from a technical point of view.

Eliot's eye had evidently been caught by other cinema-tricks as well. At one point in *Effie the Waif*, Lady Chomleyumley travels to India, the scene of Effie's abduction, where she interviews a *faquir*.

After a lot of hocus pocus, he produces a crystal sphere into which she gazes. The next reel of course shows what she saw in the sphere: the whole history of the foul abduction of her husband and her babe from their station in Kashmeer, with the aid of a monkey, a cobra, and a man-eating tiger. I shall elaborate this later; the point is that she is finally shown Effie in her present position in the act of spurning Peter (Effie is going to be awfully good at spurning before she gets through). (*L*, 71–2)

Lengthy flashbacks of the kind Eliot has in mind here came into fashion around 1910. By 1914, the device was capable of considerable complexity. In *The Family Record*, successive flashbacks reveal the histories of a man and woman long separated; in *The Man That Might Have Been*, flashbacks revealing the episodes from the hero's life contrast with reverie concerning what he "might have been" if his dead son were still alive. The fashion for lengthy flashbacks lasted until around 1917.⁴³ Such scenes quite often began with an insert shot of a letter referring to a past incident, followed, possibly after a cut back to the letter's meditative recipient, by a dissolve straight into shots of the incident referred to. Eliot's choice of the crystal sphere as transitional object was by no means implausible.

Of equal interest is his plan to cut from Gwendoline at the crystal sphere to "Effie in her present position in the act of spurning Peter." Cross-cutting between parallel events was a technique perfected by D. W. Griffith in the films he made for the Biograph Company between 1908 and 1913. In some of those films, as in the scenario for *Effie the Waif*, the cut is psychologically motivated, a product of one character's strong feeling for another; and the space thus created a "space of the imagination" where gestures meet in a "phantom embrace."⁴⁴ Eliot's emphasis on Effie's "position" in a particular "act" shows him thinking in precise terms about the way in which the cut from one strand of the narrative to another might be effected. His understanding of film technique was thoroughly up-to-date, and a good deal more sophisticated than that shown by cinephile writers such as Franz Kafka.⁴⁵ What interested him, above

all, it would seem, was the construction of a “new earthly terrain that did not exist anywhere:” a narrative space made in and by a machine.

Eliot’s cinematic ambitions soon evaporated, even in the letters to Eleanor Hinkley, which increasingly fell back on other kinds of *jeu d’esprit*, notably the theatrical skit, and on accounts of “cubist teas” and the like (*L*, 82–3 [27 January 1915] and 92 [21 March 1915]). By this time, cinema’s transformation into a mass-medium dedicated primarily to narrative fiction was more or less complete. In October 1917, A. R. Orage, editor of *The New Age*, writing as R. H. Congreve, reflected on the future of the cinema.

I have recently been to a cinema exhibition, and I was not a little surprised by the contrast it presented with the moving pictures I saw some ten or eleven years ago. Then, I remember, the exhibition was extremely crude but surprisingly interesting for the length, at any rate, of half an hour. One saw scenery photographed from a moving train, rivers from source to mouth, panoramas of cities and the like. It was a vivid geography lesson. In the cinema of to-day, to judge by my recent experience, one seldom sees any of these instructive things. The programme is designed to amuse, to thrill, to interest, but never to instruct.

While remaining certain that cinema would never “command the attention of the intelligent as a form of art,” Orage thought that it had its uses as a medium of mass-entertainment, and as a popular alternative to the drama and the novel.⁴⁶ Such were the terms in which Eliot began to think about the cinema again, in the years after World War I, when he sought to establish himself as a poet and critic by forging an alliance of “high” and “low” art against mass culture.

In the “London Letters” Eliot began to contribute to the *Dial* in 1921, cinema features on occasion as the epitome of mass culture.⁴⁷ The high-low alliance he hoped to forge against this menace, as a poet and critic, was primarily with music hall. The essay in memory of Marie Lloyd published as the last of the *Dial* “London Letters” in December 1922, and then in a shorter version in the *Criterion* in January 1923, an essay unremittingly hostile to cinema, was in effect a manifesto for the new alliance. The tone of these “London Letters,” and of the 1937 essay on “Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern,” so different from that of his intervention in the debate at Merton College, have understandably led to comparisons with the critique of mass culture mounted by Theodor Adorno, F. R. Leavis, and others.⁴⁸ However, the interest of Eliot’s view of cinema lies in the evolution of its responsive detail rather than in the broad thrust of a polemical stance taken once and for all.

In “The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism,” published in Wyndham Lewis’s journal *The Tyro*, in April 1921, Eliot worried about the expression of national life in myth; or, rather, about the lack of its expression as myth in contemporary theater. “The myth,” he explained, “is imagination and it is also criticism.” The figure of the “Romantic Englishman” fashioned in literature from Shakespeare to Chesterton had been larger than life, and by that token a mirror in which the (white male) English reader could observe a version of himself, warts and all. In Eliot’s view, the theater no longer offered “comic purgation” through myth. It was only in the music hall, he maintained, and “sometimes in the cinema,” that opportunities still arose for

252 the “partial realization” of a mythic figure. Music hall exhibited the “fragments” of a “possible English myth.” The strength and the weakness of the cinema both lay in the breadth of its appeal. “Charlie Chaplin is not English, or American, but a universal figure, feeding the idealism of hungry millions in Czecho-Slovakia and Peru” (AWL, 142–3).⁴⁹ Chaplin, a product of the English music hall, appears to be disqualified by his subsequent allegiance to Hollywood, rather than by a lack of mythic status.

A year later, in the first issue of his new journal, *The Criterion*, Eliot returned briefly to Chaplin. Chaplin’s “egregious” merit, he now thought, was to have “escaped in his own way from the realism of the cinema,” and thus “invented a *rhythm*.”⁵⁰ Rhythm more appropriately describes a feature of ritual performance than a feature of narrated myth. In ritual performance, rhythm produces catharsis. Eliot continued to think of rhythm as what set Chaplin’s performances apart from the “realism” of cinema and theater alike. In 1933, he was still berating contemporary drama for its failure to satisfy the need for ritual. It was the rhythm so utterly absent from modern drama, he explained, which made Massine and Charlie Chaplin the “great actors” they were, and the juggling of Rastelli more “cathartic” than any performance of *A Doll’s House*.⁵¹ During this period, Eliot did not dismiss cinema out of hand. He wanted to find something in it which might yet transform it from within.

So, it is worth noting, did Ezra Pound. Between 1917 and 1919, Pound supplemented his meager income by reviewing art exhibitions for *The New Age*. The set of “Art Notes” for 26 September 1918 took as its topic two films recently released by the Hepworth Company, *The Refugee* and *Tares*. Cinema, Pound declared, is no more and no less than photography, and therefore not an art. Like photography, it does not permit that process of “selection and emphasis” which constitutes art as art. It is therefore a matter for the drama critic, and only of interest insofar as it sets itself apart from the realism of photography and theater alike. This does happen, Pound went on, even in a sensational melodrama like *The Refugee*, in the odd moment of “admirably acted pantomime.”⁵² Pantomime was for Pound what rhythm was for Eliot: a fragment of myth or ritual which held the personal and the impersonal in productive (and possibly even cathartic) tension.

What made that tension more productive in music hall than it would ever be in cinema, in Eliot’s view, was the co-presence of performer and audience. Since both parties to the collaboration were palpably there in the flesh in the same place at the same time, there could be no knowledge of a role (as artist, as spectator) which was not also knowledge of a person. Marie Lloyd’s “moral superiority” as a performer was based on “her understanding of the people and sympathy with them, and the people’s recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life.”⁵³ In the music hall at its best, the mutual recognition constitutive of local community could not be distinguished from a mutual acknowledgement of role or status (as artist, as spectator). The result was a myth expressive of national life. In the cinema, on the other hand, unlike the music hall or the theater, performer and audience never coincide: for one party to be present, the other must be absent. This failure to coincide was an important theme in Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in

the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” first published in 1936, and of a radio address Eliot gave to sixth-form students in the same year. The cinema, Eliot explained, “gives an illusion not of the stage but of life itself.”

When we see a great music-hall comedian on the stage . . . we feel that he is conscious of his audience, that a great deal of the effect depends upon a sympathy set up between actor and audience, and we like to feel that some of his gags are spontaneous and were not thought of the night before. But when we see Laurel and Hardy, it is not Laurel and Hardy acting for *us*, it is Laurel and Hardy in another mess.⁵⁴

Cinema’s gags have all been thought of the night before (or more likely several nights before). Laurel and Hardy’s latest mess has been mechanically reproduced; they act not for us, but for any audience anywhere at any time. No prospect, then, of a performance expressive of national life.

In assembling Eliot’s remarks about cinema in poems, letters, and essays, I have sought to demonstrate the fascination he felt for its automatism. He regarded that automatism as disabling, in so far as the machine came between performer and audience, denying them co-presence; and as enabling, in so far as the machine made it possible to see what the human eye alone could not have seen: the pattern thrown on a screen, a “new earthly terrain,” a rhythm in excess of mimicry. His own art was not a mechanical art. But it may be that he continued to interest himself in the automatisms one machine in particular had so profoundly clarified. The work he had embarked on, in the years immediately after World War I, when he evidently thought long and hard about cinema, was a difficult long poem. Before examining *The Waste Land*, I need briefly to take account of a further possible reason for such curiosity, a reason bound up with difficulty itself.

No definition of literary modernism would be complete without some reference to Eliot’s remark, in an essay of 1921 on “The Metaphysical Poets,” that the modern poet had no choice but to be difficult.

Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (A brilliant and extreme statement of this view, with which it is not requisite to associate oneself, is that of M. Jean Epstein, *La Poésie d’aujourd’hui*.)⁵⁵

Jean Epstein was a leading avant-garde film-maker and film theorist. On 8 September 1921, Eliot wrote to Richard Aldington thanking him for “the Epstein book,” which he had found “most interesting”: “I disagree with some important conclusions, but it is a formidable work to attack, and therefore very tonic.” Epstein had made his chosen writers (Aragon, Cendrars, Apollinaire) a “more serious affair, to be tackled in earnest” (*L*, 468–9).

According to Epstein, the primary characteristic of the work of the most significant contemporary poets was that it required as much effort in the reading as in the writing.⁵⁶

254 In (or by) that effortfulness, it did justice to a world whose complexity would otherwise elude description. The most startling claim Epstein made in *La Poésie d'aujourd'hui* was that poetry and film had much to learn from each other's example. Theater was dead, because no actor could compete with a screen-image which rendered the slightest tremor visible, and dramatic. In cinema, simply to be, to walk, run, stop in one's tracks, turn round, was to be devoured by an audience greedy for spectacle. Epstein concluded that for mutual support cinema and the new poetry should align (*superposer*) their aesthetic strategies. The basis for that alignment lay in certain qualities of the cinematic image: qualities produced by the difference between the way a machine sees and the way a human being sees.

Cinema had become through its systematic use of close-ups a "theatre of the skin": a look into the world, that is, rather than at it. That shift from one plane to another (Eliot had wondered at "how life goes on different planes" in the third poem of his "Mandarins" sequence) unsettles the spectator's equilibrium as no event in theater had ever done, or ever could do. Equally unsettling, Epstein thought, was the image's suggestiveness. "On the screen, the essential quality of the gesture is not to complete itself." Such incompleteness seemed more appropriate to poetry than to theater. Then there was of course the rapidity with which one image succeeded another. "Details jostle one another to make a poem, and in a film images cut together form a mixture, a dense entanglement." Epstein even hoped that such jostlings might provide an education in speed of response. "After a few Douglas Fairbanks, I'm knackered, but I don't feel boredom" (*LP*, 170–5, my translation). In these and other respects, Epstein felt, cinema and the new poetry had a great deal to learn from each other. Eliot, it would appear, did not agree. But there can be little doubt that Epstein made him think again, in September 1921, after he had drafted the first three sections of *The Waste Land*, about what it took to be modern.

The Waste Land

Cinema, as Stanley Cavell put it in *The World Viewed*, is characterized twice over by automatism. In the first place, it removes the "human agent" from the "task of reproduction"; in the second, it mechanically defeats our presence as spectators to the reality reproduced. "I am present not at something happening, which I must confirm, but at something that has happened, which I absorb (like a memory)." *The World Viewed* was originally published in 1971, amid developments in cinema worldwide whose common obsession with technique, with the medium's ample capacities, has since come to be regarded as in some sense "modernist." Modernism, understood as an art or literature which breaks decisively with the past, or thinks that it has broken with the past, was on Cavell's mind. He argued that the automatism in any medium is that in it which leads us to believe that the work of art to which it gives rise is "happening of itself." In a tradition, the successful writer is the one who knows how to activate the medium's automatisms. In a "modernist situation," there is no such help. Only after the event will the muse arrive to bless your work, or not. "The modernist artist has to

explore the fact of automatism itself, as if investigating what it is at any time that has provided a given work of art with the power of its art as such.⁵⁷

My argument has been that Eliot's understanding of the automatisms in literature developed in parallel with his understanding of cinema as a medium automatic through and through. When he wrote the poem which became *The Waste Land*, he was every bit as uncertain of the worth of the project as Cavell supposes the modernist should be. The drafts reveal the extent and vigor of his efforts to "activate" the poetic automatisms of regular meter and rhyme. For example, the original opening of "The Fire Sermon" consisted of a lengthy passage describing the morning routine of Fresca, a wealthy socialite, written in imitation of Alexander Pope.⁵⁸ Pound cut this, on the grounds that there was no place for such imitations in a modern poem. But Eliot continued to believe that the poem might still, on occasion, happen, or appear to happen, by itself. He continued to explore the fact of automatism. Monumental though the commentary on *The Waste Land* now is, relatively little account has been taken of the persistence in it of regular meter and rhyme. My aim in this final section is to examine the coincidence of the poem's appeal to literary tradition, made apparent to ear and eye by regularity of meter and rhyme, with what Eliot took to be most mechanical (most denatured) in a newly homogeneous mass society.

Cinema does appear in *The Waste Land*; in the manuscript, at any rate, if not in the final version. We are introduced to the "close" or "sweating" rabble which "sees on the screen" (that is, can "identify," "know," or "recognise") a "goddess or a star"; and in "silent rapture" worships from afar.⁵⁹ This is cinema as Eliot had presented it in the essay on Marie Lloyd: a homogenizing mass-medium, a machine for the manufacture of passivity. However, his reference to it in the draft of an ambitious long poem is by no means casual. The reference occurs during the imitation of Pope. It would have been inserted into the account of Fresca's brilliant career as a celebrity which arises out of, or rises above, the meticulous, unsparing description of her morning routine (breakfast, toilet, bath). Those who witnessed her emergence onto the "varied scene" of fashionable society (the stage, the turf, boxing peers), we are told, were as comprehensively struck by her "supernatural grace" as Aeneas had been by that of his mother, when the goddess made herself known without warning, or as the sweating rabble is by that of the film-star whose image saturates the screen.

The double simile affords Fresca a double apotheosis: first, mock-heroically, as Venus; then, by mere extrapolation, since a celebrity is already a star on a smaller scale, as Norma Shearer or Constance Talmadge. Eliot's purpose is not to cut Fresca down to size, any more than Pope's purpose in *The Rape of the Lock* had been to cut Belinda down to size. It is, rather, to understand the basis of her appeal. Hence his hesitation in defining what an audience does—identify, recognize, know—when it sees a star on the screen. Aeneas's response to his mother clearly combines recognition of her as a person with acknowledgement of her divine status. The cinema audience acknowledges a star's divine status, as the medium's creation, but also recognizes, or would like to recognize, a certain individuality: the individuality of a being which must be assumed to undergo elsewhere (off-screen) a routine involving breakfast, bath, and toilet. Eliot's interest

256 in *Fresca* is an extension of his interest in Chaplin's ability to transcend realism, and thus create myth. That transcendence was in his view merely automatic: a product of the photographic machine's capacity to isolate and endlessly reproduce the "rhythm" of a particular performance. But he did not dismiss it out of hand. In fact, he wanted some of it for his poem. For *Fresca's* apotheosis does indeed rise above, as well as arising out of, the banal insistence on beverages. Both, however, have been produced by the same literary automatism.

My suggestion is that in such selective usage regularity of meter and rhyme acts (on ear and eye alike) as a kind of frame. In cinema, as in still photography, the frame both enables and disables. On the one hand, it serves, as James Lastra has noted, as an index of the act of witnessing, because it supposes a viewer who is part of the same world as the activities represented.⁶⁰ On the other, it permits us to see only as a machine sees; not as we ourselves would have seen had we in fact been there, a part of that world. Literature, of course, is not indexical. But the heroic couplet, as Pope used it, as Eliot uses it, does powerfully indicate, by its segmentation of event, by parcelling narrative out into glimpse or sound-bite, the presence of an observer. But which observer? Or *what* observer, we should perhaps ask, since the morning routine does not seem to have been witnessed in person. Eliot sees *Fresca* as literary tradition had already seen her, as Pope saw *Belinda*. The frame both enables and disables. The scene it presents is, as Eliot said of the image on the screen, visionary, and yet hard; unreal, and yet true.

Eliot evidently agreed with Pound that the *Fresca* passage added up to rather too much automatism. But the poem as a whole methodically departs from and returns to regularity of meter and rhyme. Indeed, the process evident in the *Fresca* passage—whereby the very exactness (and exactingness) of the measure taken of the mechanical modern bourgeois or petty-bourgeois life provokes a wild rhetorical flourish, an antic gesture—creates a pattern within it. The pattern first becomes evident in the *Unreal City* passage which concludes "The Burial of the Dead" (*CPP*, 62–3). As Eliot's notes make clear, the unreality of the crowd of commuters flowing across London Bridge is an effect already there in Dante (mediated, perhaps, by James Thompson), and in Baudelaire.⁶¹ The opening lines of the passage at once acknowledge the power of that effect and outdo it by their virtuosity, as Christopher Ricks has shown.⁶² Eliot makes his own uncanniness, or makes uncanniness his own. The lines which follow seem by comparison rather *too* canny in their mimesis of the routines of the commuting life.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (*CPP*, 62)

The sighs are from Dante. But they rapidly give way to a dull pedestrian beat which is that both of office-workers heading for the office and of the verse itself, which has eased obediently back into iambic pentameter. An iambic up-and-down captures the office-workers' steady progress up the hill and down King William Street. A rhyme bolts

two syntactically separate units of description together. Such cast-iron regularity could scarcely fail to produce, as though automatically, its own tribute to mimesis. "With a dead sound": the double iambic foot (two stressed syllables after two unstressed) creates, by varying a pattern forcefully established, a dead sound of its own. The author of these lines is an automatism of technique engendered, or so it would appear, by the automatism of (some kinds of) modern experience. Iambic pentameter functions here, and to more precise effect than in the Fresca passage, as the frame which both enables and disables.

The exercise of technique has dulled the poem's engagement with literary tradition down to a description which merely documents: to "footage" of the kind which constitutes many an early film of London bridges and streets. The crowd thus captured was often thought to consist of automata, or ghosts. "Their smiles are lifeless," Maxim Gorky had said of the people in the very first Lumière films, "although their movements are full of living energy and are so swift as to be almost imperceptible. Their laughter is silent, although you see the muscles contracting in their grey faces."⁶³ Visionary, and yet hard; unreal, and yet true. The makers of these documentary or "actuality" films had sought to provoke in the urban crowd they filmed gestures of recognition or acknowledgement (of another person, of the camera itself) which would override the lifelessness. Eliot does something similar, in burlesque. As the automatized description of Fresca's morning routine produces by reaction a simile comparing her celebrity to that of a goddess or film-star, so the automatized description of a commuter's morning routine produces by reaction the hearty welcome the speaker affords a well-known face which is also that of a mythic personage. "There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!'" The line balloons beyond pentameter, beyond that which might be thought to happen of itself. It expands into antic improvisation. The speaker reminds Stetson that they fought together at Mylae, during the first Punic War, and slyly enquires whether the corpse he planted last year in his garden has sprouted yet (*CPP*, 63). "Some poetic devilry is at work in the closing lines of 'The Burial of the Dead,'" Grover Smith remarks, "an instance of the 'skits' to which Eliot confessed."⁶⁴

So who was Stetson? The Stetson was a hat with a broad brim and high crown customarily worn by cowboys. The *OED* cites various contemporary catalogue entries promoting the J. B. Stetson "Boss of the Plains" sombrero hat. On 15 March 1921, the *Times* announced that the John B. Stetson Company had just opened new showrooms in New Bond Street.⁶⁵ Stetson might be regarded as the last gasp of the energies which had gone into *Effie the Waif*. If Venus returns as a screen-goddess, the soldier from Mylae returns as a cowboy: he is at once a person met on the street, and a figure from classical legend, and that figure's reincarnation on the screen. In this case, however, the figure is male rather than female. Because his automatism is so aggressively larger-than-life, in its way with corpses, Stetson provokes a certain devilry, as Fresca would never have done. Eliot finds in him and his imputed deeds a rhythm or pantomime exceeding realism. His appearance on the screen has provoked an overwhelming question, a question to which there is no answer.

The poem's most extensive and most savage commentary on the homogenization of modern urban middle-class or lower-middle-class experience takes the form of a scene

258 in “The Fire Sermon” set during the “violet hour” at the end of the working day, when a house agent’s clerk seduces a typist in her apartment. As Lawrence Rainey points out, it was an innovation, on Eliot’s part, to put a typist into a “serious” work of literature; hitherto typists had featured only in light verse, and in genre and realist fiction (AWL, 108–9). In a story first published as “The Common Round” in the *New Age*, in 1917, and then in revised form as “The Pictures,” in *Art and Letters*, in 1919, and as “Pictures” in *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), Katherine Mansfield drew together typing, cinema, and one or two other preoccupations which were to surface in *The Waste Land*. Miss Ada Moss, a resting actress, wakes up cold and hungry in a “Bloomsbury top-floor back,” as a “pageant” of “Good Hot Dinners” of the kind favored by Eliot’s Lil and Albert passes fantasmatically “across the ceiling.” Ada aims to fortify herself at once against her landlady’s violent demands for rent and against the “common round” she will have to make of the theatrical agencies with a cup of tea at an ABC, where the waitress boasts that her man is just back from the army, as brown as mahogany; he has brought her a brooch from Dieppe. The common round, with its perpetual prospect of uncommonness in the shape of a part in a play or a film, is all that stands between Ada and these cockney tormentors. At the North-East Film Company, a “beautiful typist” (the “Cinema Typist,” in the original version) appears at the top of the stairs on which the applicants wait to dismiss them all brusquely. At the Bitter Orange Company, there is a form to be filled in: “‘Can you aviate—high-dive—drive a car—buck-jump—shoot?’ read Miss Moss.” Looking good in a Stetson would no doubt have been a plus. At the end of the ordeal, Ada’s only feeling is of relief. “‘Well, that’s over,’ she sighed.” She allows herself to be picked up and taken home by a “stout gentleman.”⁶⁶

Mansfield sets lower-middle-class aspiration, and the moral laxness it induces, against a robust proletarian acceptance of life as it is and always has been; as Eliot was to do in *The Waste Land*. Eliot reinforced the contrast by framing Lil’s tale in free verse barely distinguishable from prose, and the clerk’s seduction of the typist in stately quatrains. Technique’s automatism, listlessly sort-of-rhyming “at once” with “response,” “defence” with “indifference,” superbly renders her capitulation (CPP, 68). In this case, mythic apotheosis does not emerge from within the scene, provoked by automatism, but surrounds it from the outset in the shape of Tiresias, its perpetual witness. Tiresias, Eliot said, is a “mere spectator,” and yet the most important “personage” in the poem. What he *sees*, in fact, is its “substance” (CPP, 78).

Victorian poetry had prepared Tiresias for Eliot as the figure of the blind seer “outside of death and birth,” to whom knowledge always comes “before” the event, or “afterward,” in Algernon Swinburne’s version, but never during it; never at the time, never in the moment. The knowledge, when it came, was of misconduct. “I, Tiresias the prophet, seeing in Thebes / Much evil . . .”⁶⁷ Eliot’s Tiresias, however, has been up-dated by association with the violet hour at the end of the working day, when the “human engine” awaits release like a taxi throbbing in readiness. “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives . . .” (CPP, 68). There may even be an echo here of Epstein’s defence of difficulty in modern literature. Among the thoughts stirred in him by a line from Blaise Cendrars’s *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*—“J’ai des pom-

mettes électriques au bout de mes nerfs” (“I have electric cheek-bones at my nerves’ ends”)—are “que rien ne donne mieux l’impression de nervosité qu’un moteur trépidant” (*trépider* is to throb, quiver, or vibrate, with anxiety, with ardor) (*LP*, 58–9). The throb in the “moteur trépidant” of the clerks and typists waiting for work to end is a throb in Tiresias, too; and, I would say, in the engine of technique, of the quatrains which renders what he will see and has already seen.

There is a throb in the scene’s spatiality, a spatiality projected by and for Tiresias, a spatiality built into the very terms of that projection. Tiresias maintains that he has foresuffered all “Enacted on this same divan or bed.” In English, the determiners (or specifying agents) “this” and “that” are ranged along a scale of proximity. The former refers to things which are close (in time or space) to the speaker, things which bear some relation to him or her; the latter refers to things which are distant from and bear no relation to the speaker. (I talk about “this” table if I happen to be leaning on it at the time, “that” table if it stands at the far end of the room.) “This” carries associations of intimacy, “that” of strangeness, of the unknown. When the prophet in the desert is beckoned in under the shadow of “*this* red rock,” in “The Burial of the Dead,” we feel, for a moment, that we might conceivably be in the vicinity of or the approaches to a source of redeeming knowledge; rather less so, perhaps, when Madame Sosostriis hesitates over “*this* card.” In “A Game of Chess,” by contrast, we find ourselves in an enclosed room, listening to “that noise,” which might or might not be the wind under the door, but which is in any case radically unfamiliar. In the poem’s first section, we edge towards a tantalizing but ultimately sterile knowledge; in the second, we edge away from a threat to the very possibility of knowledge.⁶⁸

Tiresias throbs between an intimate foreknowledge of what has been enacted on *this* same divan or bed, and the typist’s separation of herself from its enactment: “Well now that’s done . . .” She absents herself from a sense of occasion, smoothing her hair “with automatic hand,” putting a record on the gramophone.⁶⁹ Tiresias, by contrast, wants intimacy, the intimacy of arousal. He may not share Prufrock’s fondness for body-hair, but he does unmistakably linger over the undergarments piled on the divan (*CPP*, 68–9). For a moment, vision closes in on touch. Like Prufrock, Tiresias has put himself in the picture, gendered male, in and through a description of arousal.⁷⁰ Ellmann quite rightly calls him a Peeping Tom (*PI*, 97). But the divan has as little to offer by way of redeeming knowledge as the red rock or Madame Sosostriis’s blank card. Tiresias, like Prufrock, is a visitor before and after the event, automatically. He throbs, within the automatisms of language itself, between his own urgent *this* and the typist’s listless *that*; between the desire for presence and the desire for absence. To that extent, we might speak of him as a magic lantern or even a camera-projector equipped with consciousness.⁷¹ For cinematic experience is uniquely both of *this* (the lived moment, utterly absorptive) and of *that* (an event which took place somewhere else some time ago). In cinema, this is always already “that,” and that “this.” *The Waste Land* struggles subsequently to disarm the throbbing automatisms of perception and behavior compulsively repeated in “The Fire Sermon.” In its final movement, it attempts to separate out decisively “that” sound high in the air from “this, and this only”: from a knowledge which redeems.

260 **Ezra Pound and John Rodker**

In 1928, Ezra Pound provided for the final issue of *The Exile* a set of editorial notes, or "Data." One of these notes had to do with cinema. "The machine film, the 'abstract' or Gestalt film now exists," Pound declared. The machine film was the product of twelve years of "research" conducted independently of literature and the visual arts, he went on, though with some overlap (for example, Jean Epstein's collaboration with Blaise Cendrars). In March 1923, in *The Dial*, Pound had praised the montage sequences of machinery in motion in Abel Gance's film of that year, *La Roue*, though he gave most of the credit to literature, and to contemporary abstract art. "Thanks, we presume, to Blaise Cendrars, there are interesting moments, and effects which belong, perhaps, only to the cinema. At least for the sake of argument we can admit that they are essentially cinematographic." In 1928, he felt able to look back charitably on a 'noble effort' ruined by a 'punk sentimental plot.'⁷²

Even in retrospect, Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920), abjectly imitative of contemporary art, seemed to Pound a complete failure. However, he went on to argue that German culture had subsequently absorbed the "real art movement since 1900," thus producing a properly abstract cinema. In Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: City Symphony* (1927), he maintained, "we have at last a film that will take serious aesthetic criticism." It would be sheer snobbery not to acknowledge that such a film was "on parity with the printed page." European cinema, at any rate, had finally earned his approval. America, by contrast, ignoring the real art movement since 1900, had fallen behind. "The American film," Pound had regretfully to report, "is *The Thief of Bagdad*, a bed-time story told for a child of the desert" ("D," 115).

It was Pound who introduced the young American cameraman Dudley Murphy to Fernand Léger, thus helping to bring about one of the most properly abstract films of the decade, *Ballet mécanique* (1923).⁷³ Indeed, Léger was eager to credit Pound and Murphy with a "technical novelty" of which he had made considerable use: an optical prism held over the lens in such a way as to shatter the image into overlapping and interpenetrating forms.⁷⁴ The novelty was the outcome of experiments Pound had undertaken with Alvin Langdon Coburn in the production of multiple-image photographic portraits by means of an instrument known as a "vortoscope." Some of these were exhibited at the London Camera Club in 1917.⁷⁵ Pound, too, more or less knew what he was talking about when it came to abstract cinema. Even so, it is hard to disagree with Michael North's conclusion that by 1923 his own work was "far too advanced" to receive any "significant impetus" from his relatively brief association with cinema.⁷⁶ Though there does seem to be something vortoscopic about his celebrated description of the "radiant world" known to medieval philosophers, where "one thought cuts through another with clean edge": "magnetisms that take form, that are seen, or that border the visible, the matter of Dante's *paradiso*, the glass under water, the form that seems a form seen in a mirror, these realities perceptible to the sense."⁷⁷

The most striking claim Pound made in his *Exile* essay was that the success of films like *Berlin: City Symphony* "should flatten out the opposition (to Joyce, to me, to Rodker's Adolphe) with steam-rolling ease and commodity, not of course that the authors intended

it" ("D," 114). This new abstract cinema might yet create an audience for the new (or newish) abstract literature. John Rodker's *Adolphe 1920* had been appearing in *The Exile*, and was published in book form in 1930. It is a text preoccupied with cinema. At one point, the protagonist treats himself to a session with some kind of mechanical peep-show, most likely a mutoscope. The mutoscope was a motion picture device consisting of a series of photographs mounted on a cylinder. Mutoscopes showed a wide range of "films," but the most popular tended to involve young women in various states of undress. "Mutoscope pictures in Capel Street: for men only," Leopold Bloom recalls in the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses*. "Peeping Tom. Willy's hat and what the girls did with it. Do they snapshot those girls or is it all a fake? *Lingerie* does it."⁷⁸ Rodker's protagonist, lacking Bloom's interest in the way things work, rapidly becomes absorbed in the "prospects of some approaching revelation." He slips a coin into the machine.

It began to mutter. Where its heart was, a woman rose from a chair, smiled, patted her elaborate hair, unhooked a shoulder-of-mutton blouse, a petticoat or two, stood self-consciously for a minute in lace-edged drawers, laced boots and black stockings, smiling a timid 1890 smile. Wondering, fearful of losing it, he thought he could not bear her smile to fade, yet suddenly the eyes were dark, and he was with his thoughts. She too in that darkness, from which for a moment he had called her. A coin brought her back: as though gratefully she shyly reappeared, went through all her senseless gestures, smiled and smiled. And darkness again, heavy, inevitable. That room, that sofa, filled his brain with warm shapes and comforting light, and the woman moved amicably through it.⁷⁹

Ulysses was in a number of respects *Adolphe 1920*'s most significant point of departure. It would be possible, none the less, to see in this passage an elaboration not only of Bloom's curiosity about Willy's hat and what the girls did with it, but of the scene revealed to another modernist Peeping Tom. Tiresias, too, pores over lingerie. He, too, brings back over and over again out of the darkness an event in a room, on a sofa. If Prufrock is a magic lantern equipped with consciousness, then perhaps Tiresias is a mutoscope (rather than a camera-projector) equipped with consciousness. Both make their visits with the aid of technology's throbbing engine. Those visits articulate Eliot's will-to-automatism.

My argument here has been that Eliot's affinity with cinema went a great deal deeper than any belated discovery of montage technique in his poems would suggest. Eliot got to grips with cinema in a way that Pound, for all his vortoscopic enthusiasms, never did. It is worth noting that Rodker was a part of Eliot's circle in the years leading up to *The Waste Land*. His Ovid Press published *Ara Vos Prec* in 1920. The closest parallel (in fact, the only parallel) I can think of to Stetson's appearance in "The Burial of the Dead" is Rodker's "Wild West Remittance Man," a poem which peppers the boredom of English offices and drawing-rooms with baroque gun-slinger fantasy; it was published in *The Little Review* in July 1919, and then in *Hymns* (1920).⁸⁰ Furthermore, on 10 July 1922, Eliot wrote to Rodker, asking him to contribute a three-thousand-word article on the cinema to *The Criterion* (*L*, 540). Had it been written, that article might have altered literary modernism's relation to cinema fundamentally. Even in its absence, we should acknowledge the inventiveness of the uses Eliot made in his work of movie-going. We still owe a debt to the amusing French woman.

262 **Notes**

1. T. S. Eliot, *Letters*, vol. 1, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 97. Henceforth abbreviated *L*.

2. David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 210. Henceforth abbreviated *TSECD*. See Ronald Schuchard, "In the Music Halls," in *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102–18; Sebastian D. G. Knowles, "'Then You Wink the Other Eye': T. S. Eliot and the Music Hall," *American Notes & Queries* 11.4 (1998), 20–32; Barry Jameson Faulk, "Modernism and the Popular: Eliot's Music Halls," *Modernism/Modernity* 8.4 (2001), 603–21; *TSECD*, ch. 3.

3. For example, Marjorie Perloff, *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 40.

4. For example, Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Henceforth abbreviated *CM*. McCabe explores the "impact" of "new cinematic modes of representation" on the poetry of Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, H. D., and Marianne Moore. Recent studies of cinema's impact on particular modernist writers include: Rebecca Egger, "Deaf Ears and Dark Continents: Dorothy Richardson's Cinematic Epistemology," *Camera Obscura* 30 (1992), 5–33; and Leslie Kathleen Hankins, "'Across the Screen of My Brain': Virginia Woolf's 'The Cinema' and Film Forums of the Twenties," in Diane F. Gillespie, ed., *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 148–79.

5. Michael Wood, "Modernism and Film," in Michael Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 217–32; 222–3.

6. As Thomas L. Burkaldal makes plain in his useful summary of the scholarship on Joyce and film: *Joycean Frames: Film and the Fiction of James Joyce* (London: Routledge, 2001), 8–17.

7. On p. 14, it is the "quintessential montage poem."

8. Louis MacNeice, "Eliot and the Adolescent," in Tambimuttu and Richard March, eds., *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium* (London: Frank Cass, 1948), 146–51; 146, 150.

9. Jen Sansom, "The Film Society, 1925–1939," in Charles Barr, ed., *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986), 306–13.

10. For a start, the term meant different things in different languages. In German, as James Pettifer pointed out thirty years ago, it can refer to simultaneous as well as successive assemblage: Pettifer, "Against the Stream: *Kuhle Wampe*," *Screen* 15.2 (Summer 1974), 49–64; 64.

11. P. Adams Sitney, *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 17–19, 38.

12. Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), ch. 2.

13. For a comparable approach to the relation between cinema and psychoanalysis, see the essays collected in Janet Bergstrom, ed., *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

14. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (1945), in *What Is Cinema?*, ed. and transl. Hugh Gray, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–1971), 1, 9–16; 13.

15. Marianne Moore, "Fiction or Nature?," in *Complete Prose*, ed. Patricia C. Willis (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 303–8; 308.

16. Tim Armstrong, for example, has vividly described a modernist emphasis on the body "as requiring an intervention through which it might be made the ground of a new form of production": *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

17. Hugh Kenner, *The Mechanic Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 25, 34.

18. T. S. Eliot, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," in *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 25. Henceforth abbreviated *CPP*.

19. Garrett Stewart, *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photo Synthesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 266. Henceforth abbreviated *BFS*.

20. Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 3. Henceforth abbreviated *PI*. Ellmann's argument, like Stewart's,

derives in part from Jacques Derrida's reflections on (or between) Plato and Stéphane Mallarmé: "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, transl. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 189–316. See *PI*, 83–4; *BFS*, 273. Derrida's essay is also an important point of departure for Christophe Wall-Romana's argument that Mallarmé, a keen observer of technological development, either wrote or made plans for various "cinematic sublations of the page and the book," including *Un coup de dés* (1897), "one long strip of visually montaged text," and in the project around *Le Livre* (1895–), a performance involving the projection of images, as well as dance and pantomime: Wall-Romana, "Mallarmé's Cinemopoetics: The Poem Uncoiled by the Cinématographe, 1893–98," *PMLA* 120, 2005, 128–47; 141–2. The lack of detailed analysis of *Un coup de dés*, or of films Mallarmé might conceivably have seen, makes it hard to know what "montage" might mean in this context.

21. Frederic Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism," in Terry Eagleton, ed., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 43–66; 53.

22. Miriam Hansen's emphasis on classical (Hollywood) cinema as a vernacular modernism has proved salutary in this respect: see "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 6.2 (1999), 59–77.

23. For some informative propositions to this effect, see R. L. Rutsky, "The Spirit of Utopia and the Birth of the Cinematic Machine," in *High Techne: Art and Technology from the Machine Aesthetic to the Posthuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 23–47.

24. Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 187. The contrary belief, that transformations in the mode of knowledge derive more often than not from technological breakthrough, and therefore take the form of rupture, has bred a new historiographical genre, by Walter Benjamin out of Michel Foucault: Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, transl. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, transl. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, transl. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989).

25. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 37–44; 43.

26. Conrad Aiken, "King Bolo and Others," in Tambimuttu and March, eds., *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium*, 20–3; 21–2.

27. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 47.

28. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (London: Methuen, 1959), 21.

29. David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895–1920* (London: Routledge, 1993), 201–2.

30. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, transl. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 157–202; 177. Benjamin's essay, first published in 1939, begins where the first section of *The Waste Land* ends, with Baudelaire's salutation of the "hypocrite lecteur."

31. T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," in *Selected Prose*, 45–9; 48.

32. Ian Christie, *The Last Machine: Early Cinema and the Birth of the Modern World* (London: BBC Educational Developments, 1994), 90. See also Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, transl. Richard Crangle (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), ch. 11.

33. Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, transl. Ben Brewster (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 87.

34. "Variety Entertainments," *Times*, 15 February 1910, 11.

35. H. V. Hopwood, *Living Pictures: Their History, Photo-Production, and Practical Working* (London: Optician and Photographic Trades Review, 1899), 208.

36. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71.

37. T. S. Eliot, *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909–1917*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 16. Henceforth abbreviated *IMH*.

38. Richard Abel, "The 'Imagined Community' of the Western, 1910–1913," in Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp, eds., *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 131–70; 143. See also Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), ch. 6.

39. "War in the Picture Drama," *Times*, 28 January 1915, 11.

40. Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, second edition (London: Starword, 1992), 94–5.
41. Lev Kuleshov, *Art of the Cinema*, in *Kuleshov on Film*, transl. and ed. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 41–123; 52.
42. Abel, “Imagined Community,” 147–8.
43. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 139–40.
44. Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), ch. 4, especially 110–4.
45. See Hanns Zischler, *Kafka Goes to the Movies*, transl. Susan H. Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
46. “R. H. Congreve” (A. R. Orage), “Readers and Writers,” *New Age* 21.23 (4 October 1917), 488–9.
47. These essays have usefully been reprinted in *The Annotated Waste Land*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). Henceforth abbreviated AWL. See the “London Letters” for May 1921 and July 1921.
48. T. S. Eliot, “Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern,” *University of Edinburgh Journal* 9.1 (Autumn 1937), 8–17. For an astute consideration of these issues, see *TSECD*, 80–4.
49. Eliot offers an immediate qualification. We ought not to be affected by myth, he argues, “as the newspapers say little boys are by nature cinema desperados. The myth is degraded by the child who points a loaded revolver at another, or ties his sister to a post, or rifles a sweet-shop” (AWL, 143). The previous autumn, the British Board of Film Censors had voiced concern about the susceptibility of the public imagination to “crime” films. “Stories dealing with ‘costume’ crime, however, such as cowboy films and Mexican robberies, are placed in a different category and regarded simply as dramatic and thrilling adventures with no connexion whatever with the lives or possible experiences of young people:” “Love and Crime on the Film,” *Times*, 18 October 1920, 9. Some commentators could not see the difference. “Why murder in Mexico should be shown on the film, while murder in Mile-end is anathema, it is difficult to see:” “Film Censorship,” *Times*, 27 October 1920, 15.
50. T. S. Eliot, “Dramatis Personae,” *Criterion* 1.3 (April 1923), 303–6; 306.
51. T. S. Eliot, “The Beating of a Drum,” *Nation and Athenaeum*, 6 October 1933, 11–12; 12.
52. Ezra Pound, “Art Notes,” *New Age*, 23.22 (26 September 1918), reprinted in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, ed. Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980), 78–81.
53. T. S. Eliot, “Marie Lloyd,” *Selected Prose*, 172–4. Kermode prints the *Criterion* version of the essay.
54. T. S. Eliot, “The Need for Poetic Drama,” *Listener* 16.411 (25 November 1936), 994–5. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, 219–53.
55. T. S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets,” *Selected Prose*, 59–67; 65.
56. Jean Epstein, *La Poésie d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Éditions de la sirène, 1921), 57–8. Henceforth abbreviated *LP*.
57. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 23, 25–6, 107.
58. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcription*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 23–7.
59. Eliot, *Waste Land Facsimile*, 29.
60. James Lastra, “From the Captured Moment to the Cinematic Image: A Transformation in Pictorial Order,” in Andrew Dudley, ed., *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 263–91; 268–9.
61. It was Thompson, Robert Crawford has argued, who “let Eliot see Dante as a poet of modern London”: *The Savage and the City in the Works of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 45–7.
62. Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 136–41.
63. Maxim Gorky, “The Lumière Cinematograph,” in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema, 1896–1939*, transl. Richard Taylor, ed. Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), 25–6; 25.
64. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 97–8.

65. *The Times*, 15 March 1921, 9.
66. Katherine Mansfield, "Pictures," *Selected Stories*, ed. Angela Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 193–200. Eliot saw Mansfield occasionally at this time (*L*, 382, 389).
67. Algernon Swinburne, "Tiresias," *Selected Poems*, ed. L. M. Findlay (Manchester: Carcanet, 1982), 118–28; 119.
68. For a more detailed version of this argument, see my *The Making of the Reader: Language and Subjectivity in Modern American, English and Irish Poetry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), ch. 3.
69. Her actions might be added to the examples of non-human or "dehumanised" movement Grover Smith notes in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." Smith adds that to depict someone in this way, as an automaton, captures for the art of poetry "a flatness of conception discovered not by philosophers but by film-makers" (Smith, *The Waste Land* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1983], 7).
70. McCabe argues, on the contrary, that Tiresias's "close observation" of the typist's intimate personal life "hinges not upon desire for her but upon identification with her": *CM*, 43–5.
71. The Russian theorist Mikhail Iampolski has even understood Tiresias as a figure for cinema itself, as a cultural form which requires that the spectator assemble fragments and make sense of them retrospectively: *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film*, transl. Harsha Ram (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). See also Mary Ann Doane's illuminating discussion of C. S. Peirce's interest in determiners as a form of indexicality: *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 91–103.
72. Ezra Pound, "Data," *The Exile* (London: Johnson Reprint Company, 1967), 104–17; 114, henceforth abbreviated "D"; "Paris Letter," reprinted in Zinnes, ed., *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, 175–7; 175.
73. For the most authoritative account of Pound's role as a go-between, which draws on unpublished correspondence, see Judi Freeman, "Bridging Purism and Surrealism: The Origins and Production of Fernand Léger's *Ballet mécanique*," in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *Dada and Surrealist Film* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1987), 28–45; 31–3.
74. Standish D. Lawder, *The Cubist Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 137.
75. Richard Humphreys, "Demon Pantechnicon Driver: Pound in the London Vortex, 1908–1920," in *Pound's Artists: Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris, and Italy* (London: Tate Gallery, 1985), 33–80; 69–72.
76. North, *Camera Works*, 27.
77. Pound, "Cavalcanti," in *Literary Essays*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 149–200; 154. John Alexander comes close to making a claim for a correspondence, at least, between Léger's ideas and the arrangement of Pound's cantos across as well as down the page. He points out that Pound, like Eliot, thought Cendrars worthy of attention. "Parenthetical Paris, 1920–1925: Pound, Picabia, Brancusi and Léger," in *Pound's Artists*, 81–120; 107.
78. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 351–2. See Katherine Mullin, *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5.
79. John Rodker, *Adolphe 1920*, in *Poems & Adolphe 1920*, ed. Andrew Crozier (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), 133–74; 137.
80. Rodker, *Poems & Adolphe 1920*, 86–7.