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KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN "THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK"

BY DONALD J. CHILDS

But what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author; and indeed, in the course of time a poet may become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning—or without forgetting, merely changing.

—T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*

Although scholars and critics became aware of F. H. Bradley's influence upon T. S. Eliot at a relatively late point in the latter's career, the relationship between the two writers has now been extensively documented. The studies of Kristian Smidt and Hugh Kenner led to a number of books and articles on this subject in the early sixties.¹ This research culminated, largely through the efforts of Anne C. Bolgan, in the publication in 1964 of *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*—in effect, Eliot's 1916 dissertation on "Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley," supplemented by his articles on Bradley and Leibnitz in *The Monist* (1916).² Not surprisingly, the publication of Eliot's dissertation only increased enthusiasm for research into Bradley's influence upon his criticism and poetry. Indeed, so much has been published on the subject throughout the sixties, seventies, and eighties that a recent reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, perhaps intimidated by the sheer amount of such research, attempted to dismiss most of it as unimportant. Reviewing yet another book on Bradley and Eliot, he suggested that "The pioneer work on Eliot's philosophy and its pervasive presence in his poetry was done by Hugh Kenner in *The Invisible Poet* and there is not a very great deal of importance to be added." He did allow, however, that the book he was reviewing had advanced the subject beyond Kenner in providing "a much stronger sense than we had before of how profoundly imbued with philosophy is Eliot's imagination, both as critic and poet."³ This, in fact, has been the general achievement of the research that the reviewer so easily dismissed; one can no longer hope to comprehend Eliot's imagina-

tive achievements without also comprehending Bradley's pervasive influence upon them.

In the end, then, scholars and critics have been trying to prove what Eliot announced in the very beginning:

Few will ever take the pains to study the consummate art of Bradley's style, the finest philosophic style in our language, in which acute intellect and passionate feeling preserve a classic balance: only those who will surrender patient years to the understanding of his meaning. But upon these few, both living and unborn, his writings perform that mysterious and complete operation which transmutes not one department of thought only, but the whole intellectual and emotional tone of their being.⁴

Those who have taken Eliot's implied advice here and studied Bradley (and studied him with Eliot in mind) have concluded that virtually everything Eliot wrote after encountering Bradley's philosophy is colored by it. The metaphor here is Kenner's: "it is precisely as a stain, imparting color to all else that passes through, that Bradley is most discernible in Eliot's poetic sensibility."⁵ Eliot's first important poem, however, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," would seem to be uncolored by Bradley's thought, for the poem was completed between 1910 and 1911, and Eliot apparently did not begin his study of Bradley until 1913. As Kenner observes, "there is no evidence that Eliot paid [Bradley] any attention until after he had written 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady.' (He did not buy his own copy of *Appearance and Reality* until mid-1913)."⁶ In fact, Eliot may have been reading Bradley before 1913, but it is not likely that he was reading him before he composed "Prufrock."⁷ Granting all this, however, I would nonetheless like to argue that "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is a poem closely linked to Eliot's work on Bradley. It is a poem that influences Eliot's understanding of Bradley, and it is also a poem that Eliot comes to see in a Bradleyan light. In fact, the poem offers a reading of the dissertation and the dissertation a reading of the poem.

That "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was on Eliot's mind in 1915 and 1916, as he was completing his dissertation, seems certain. He sent the finished dissertation to Harvard in January or February of 1916. In January of 1915, in a letter to Harriet Monroe attempting to persuade her to publish "Prufrock," Ezra Pound explained that Eliot would not agree to the deletion of the "Hamlet" verse paragraph.⁸ Pound had been campaigning, and would con-

tinue to campaign for the next six months, to have Harriet Monroe publish the poem (which she did in June of 1915). As the letter of January 1915 suggests, Pound probably kept Eliot informed of his progress with Monroe while the campaign was under way. In August, Pound sent Monroe another batch of Eliot's poems. Finally, in June of 1916, Eliot himself wrote to Monroe, explaining that he thought "Prufrock" better than his other poems written between 1909 and 1911.⁹ By this point, furthermore, it would seem that Eliot was suffering from a period of poetic sterility so severe that he felt he might never again produce anything as good as "Prufrock." He wrote to his brother in September of 1916, in fact, to say that "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" might prove to be his "swan-song."¹⁰

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table.¹¹

Critics have made these opening lines to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" the cornerstone of their readings of the poem. The central preoccupation has been with the notorious distinction between "you and I." According to George Williamson, the reference of the pronoun "you" is not at all clear: "The 'I' is the speaker, but who is the 'you' addressed? The title would suggest a lady, but the epigraph suggests a scene out of the world, on a submerged level." Grover Smith, however, explains the reference of the pronoun "you" and suggests that the distinction between "you and I" is the framework for the Prufrockian dialectic: "By a distinction between 'I' and 'you,' [Prufrock] differentiates between his thinking, sensitive character and his outward self. . . . He is addressing, as if looking into a mirror, his whole public personality. His motive seems to be to repudiate the inert self, which cannot act, and to assert his will." In her Jungian interpretation of the poem, Joyce Meeks Jones reaches a similar conclusion: Prufrock, she argues, is an extrovert "who is unable to resolve the conflict between the demands of his own individuality, and those of his persona, or social mask. In consequence, he struggles helplessly in an eternal hell of self-estrangement and moral indecision." Carol T. Christ finds that Prufrock's "fictions insulate and preserve him in a solipsistic dream world, a chamber of the sea." "Prufrock," she writes, "begins with a definite address and invitation . . . but . . . so deliberately avoids defining its events and audience that we question whether the

poem records any interchange with a world external to the speaker's consciousness." Hugh Kenner looks to the epigraph for a clue as to the function of "you and I"; he sees in the poem a liaison between Dante's journey through hell, led by Virgil, and Prufrock's journey through the city streets led by "you"—"a liaison between [Prufrock's] situation and Dante's which is all the smoother for the reflective, lingering rhythm of the opening phrase." Joseph Chiari develops a similar line: "you and I" are part of "an internal monologue which is not meant to be heard," just as Guido de Montefeltro's words are not to be taken back to the land of the living. "Obviously it is not only the evening which is etherized upon a table but also the speaker, who is in a kind of inferno-like situation."¹²

For F. O. Matthiessen, however, the question is academic. That is, the first three lines of "Prufrock" are too academic; they are "too studied." The conceits in the lines in question have the look of "coming into existence not because the poet's mind has actually felt keenly an unexpected similarity between unlikes but as though he too consciously set out to shock the reader." The problem for Matthiessen lies not so much in the distinction between "you and I" as in the comparison between the evening spread out against the sky and the patient etherized upon a table: "Even though the reader can perceive wherein the comparison holds, he may still have the sensation that it is too intellectually manipulated, not sufficiently felt."¹³

I would agree with Matthiessen that the opening metaphors are to some extent "intellectually manipulated." I would perhaps disagree with his charge that they are "not sufficiently felt." As Eliot himself pointed out in his dissertation, "There is no greater mistake than to think that feeling and thought are exclusive—that those beings which think most and best are not also those capable of the most feeling" (18). I would obviously agree with all of these scholars and critics that the "you and I," the "evening spread out against the sky," and the "patient etherised upon a table" are essential elements in any interpretation of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." But what concerns me here are the implications of the distinction between "you and I" for the poem and the dissertation as readings of each other.

That Eliot actually recalled the first three lines of the poem in the very act of writing the dissertation is suggested by his use of the image that begins "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—the image of a patient spread out upon a table. The physician-patient

metaphor, in which the subject or observer is the physician and the object or thing observed the patient, is one of Eliot's favorites. The Prufrockian patient appears in the dissertation:

Our only way of showing that we are attending to an object is to show that it and ourself are independent entities, and to do this we must have names. So that the point at which behaviour changes into mental life is essentially indefinite; it is a question of interpretation whether . . . expression which is repeated at the approach of the same object . . . is behaviour or language. In either case, I insist, it is continuous with the object; in the first case because we have no object (except from the point of view of the observer, which must not be confused with that of the patient under examination), and in the second case because it is language that gives us objects rather than mere 'passions'.

(133)

The relation between subject as physician or "observer" and object as patient is central to understanding both the dissertation and the poem. In this passage, Eliot argues that subject and object are continuous except from the point of view of an observer (another subject that is a truly subjective self) who is able to regard the original subject as an object (an objective self)—in other words, as a "patient under examination." The consciousness that is the speaking voice in "Prufrock" is apparently just such an observer, articulating the discontinuity between "you and I." In the dissertation's terms, the Prufrockian observer is not the self as object or patient (the "I" observed), but the truly subjective self that is able to distinguish between object and objective self (that is, between "you and I"). That which is "spread out" and "etherised upon a table," in short, is not just the evening, but also the self as object. Prufrock, as object, is the patient. And yet it is his absolutely subjective self that is the observer or physician. Just as there is no patient without physician, so in the poem there is no "you" without "I," and so in the dissertation there is no language or object without observer. The metaphysical and epistemological implications of the Prufrockian metaphor, it seems, unfold in the dissertation.

Eliot develops the same medical metaphor in his early essay "The Function of Criticism" (1923): "Comparison and analysis need only the cadavers on the table," he writes, "but interpretation is always producing parts of the body from its pockets, and fixing them in place."¹⁴ Eliot's concern here is the same as that expressed in the epistemological context of his dissertation: he finds that

interpretation introduces an epistemologically necessary second point of view, but he also finds that such a point of view inevitably produces only a relative truth—a truth relative to the point of view introduced, the point of view of the critic or reader. By the terms of Eliot's metaphor, then, the critic or reader is inevitably a coroner (dealing with dead fact or dead language, not with life or language as lived and living), but the critic or reader *as interpreter* is worse, for he or she is a dishonest coroner who supplies the body of fact or the body of the text with its missing parts from the pockets of his or her interpretation. As elaborated in 1923, therefore, the medical metaphor is still part of the original quest in "Prufrock" and the dissertation to discover an objective point of view on the relation between the self and its objects—its objects being determined, according to the dissertation, by language. In the poem, the dissertation, and the essay, the body on the table is a linguistic object. The poet (Prufrock), the philosopher (Eliot), and the critic (Anonymous) are all physicians, and in each case the fate of the patient is in doubt. In 1923, then, Prufrock's overwhelming question remains unanswered: "What is the nature of the relation between subject and object?"

The same medical metaphor appears in *Four Quartets*:

The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That questions the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

(181)

In the Christian context of Eliot's writing in the 1940s, of course, the physician has become Christ. For Eliot at this time, poetry, philosophy, and criticism (or the act of reading in general) begin and end in a Christian point of view. But the patient remains the individual human self, the self as objectified in language (whether the language of *Four Quartets* or the language of the Christian liturgy). And just as in "Prufrock," the dissertation, and "The Function of Criticism," so in *Four Quartets* the relation between physician and patient is all important. Upon it—that is, upon the relation between self and other selves, subject and object, language and observer (or poem and reader)—depends the very nature of reality. As always, furthermore, the Eliotic inquiry into the nature of this relation produces not answers, but questions: questions about the

nature of the relation between distempered part and wounded surgeon, between cadaver and coroner, between patient and physician, between language and observer—in short, questions about the relationship between “you and I.” I would suggest, then, that the metaphor in “Prufrock” that introduces this fundamental metaphorical, metaphysical, and epistemological relation gathers much of its subsequent significance from the implications for the relation between subject and object suggested in Eliot’s dissertation on Bradley.

The Prufrockian echo of the word “patient” in *Knowledge and Experience* is admittedly not very loud, but the echo of the Prufrockian words “spread out” and “table” is: “We can never . . . wholly explain the practical world from a theoretical point of view,” Eliot suggests, “because this world is what it is by reason of the practical point of view and the world which we try to explain is a world spread out upon a table—simply *there!*” (136). Similarly, in his conclusion, he reminds his reader that “Theoretically, that which we know is merely spread out before us for pure contemplation, and the subject, the I, or the self, is no more consciously present than is the inter-cellular action” (154).

What were the first three lines of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” bringing back to mind? I suggest that by recalling them in 1915 Eliot was reevaluating the philosophy embodied in the poem. In these lines, that is, we find the philosophical attitude to the relationship between “you and I” that Eliot held in 1910 and 1911, an attitude that seems to have been informed by Bergsonism. Over thirty years after writing the poem, Eliot told an inquirer that he was a Bergsonian when he composed “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”¹⁵ Piers Gray, exploring the Bergsonian dimensions of the poem, notes that in the opening lines “the world, at least in so far as the evening may be synecdochic of it, is in a state of deep unconsciousness.”¹⁶ In the Bergsonian universe, he points out, such a state holds the greatest potential for real life, for it is not bound by the practical, goal-oriented consciousness. According to Bergson, consciousness restricts its use of memory to those memories which bear on the present goal: “that a recollection should reappear in consciousness, it is necessary that it should descend from the heights of pure memory down to the precise point where *action* is taking place.” “It is from the present,” Bergson continues, “that comes the appeal to which memory responds, and it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory bor-

rows the warmth which gives it life.”¹⁷ Only in an unconscious state, then, can pure memory—in which resides the total of one’s past—reappear. “To be etherized,” Gray therefore concludes, “is to be potentially open to the totality of one’s past life.”¹⁸ The first three lines of the poem, therefore, suggest the etherized abdication of goal-oriented consciousness, an abdication that allows the uncontrolled descent from “pure memory” of the particular memories and images that haunt Prufrock throughout the poem and thwart action at every turn. As J. S. Brooker observes, “Prufrock, not the evening, is etherized upon a table. Like everything else in the poem, the tired, sleepy evening is an aspect of Prufrock’s mind.”¹⁹

But the first three lines of the poem are even more closely related to Eliot’s study of Bergson than this brief analysis of certain Bergsonian concepts might suggest. One finds the metaphor of the world “spread out” in space in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson’s first book and the book Eliot quoted most frequently when writing on Bergson. “Our conception of number,” Bergson complains, “ends in spreading out in space everything which can be directly counted.” The problem with western philosophy, he suggests, is that we have imported the quantifiable aspects of that which is external and material into our notions of what is properly unquantifiable, that which is internal and immaterial: the unextended is thought of as though it were extended; in other words, it is spread out in space. In the end, the externality of material objects, he explains, “spreads into the depths of consciousness.” Consciousness, according to Bergson, is not a multiplicity of states, but a pure, undifferentiated duration; in fact, a plurality of conscious states is not observable, he argues, unless consciousness is “spread out” in space.²⁰

Eliot picked up the same metaphor when as a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard he wrote about Bergson: “Berkeleyan space, I believe, as adapted by Bergson becomes, on the one hand, extension; and Bergson’s space is the Berkeleyan *pure* space; for Berkeley non-existent; for Bergson the homogeneous medium spread out by our understanding as a substratum for extrinsic relations.” The image is as pervasive in Eliot’s understanding of Bergson as it is in Bergson’s writing: “The ‘travail utilaire’ of the ‘esprit,’” Eliot writes, “consists in a kind of *refraction of pure duration across space*.”²¹ There can be no doubt, then, that the opening lines of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” establish a Bergsonian context for the relation between “you and I,” sky and evening, patient

and physician, and object and subject. And of course the relation is false, the distinction artificial. In Bergson's world, reality is a timeless, distinctionless, pure duration. The falseness of Prufrock's world, therefore, stems in part from the falseness of the categorical distinctions (between "you and I") by which his consciousness proceeds.

What, then, did Eliot see in "Prufrock" four or five years after completing it? How did he himself read the opening lines of the poem in 1915 and 1916? What light does the dissertation throw upon Eliot's later interpretation of the distinction between "you and I"? In short, what was Bradley's influence upon Eliot's reading of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"?

In noting in his dissertation that the epistemologist's world is "a world spread out upon a table—simply *there*," Eliot distinguishes between the epistemologically theoretical and practical points of view. Reality, he suggests, is "an approximate construction, a construction essentially practical in its nature" (136). In other words, reality is a function of preconscious self-interest. The attempt to step beyond this point of view, that is, the attempt at objectivity, merely results in confusion, for one must then comprehend the internal from the point of view of the external. In the end, "We forget that what has grown up from a purely practical attitude cannot be explained by a purely theoretical [attitude]" (136). In short, "this world is what it is by reason of the practical point of view," whereas the world one tries to explain by epistemological theory is placed before the mind as "a world spread out upon a table—simply *there*" (136). The epistemologist, in other words, is inevitably a dishonest coroner, producing parts of the body from his or her pockets and fixing them in place to suit his or her culturally and historically relative interpretation.

In rereading "Prufrock" during the writing of his dissertation, therefore, Eliot discovered that Prufrock's dilemma is the epistemologist's dilemma: how does one reconcile practice and theory, action and contemplation? On the one hand, Prufrock responds, or wishes to respond, to the exhortation to action ("Let us go then"), while, on the other, he contemplates—contemplates himself, that is, as though he were spread out upon an examination table. The disjunction is between the world as it exists according to Prufrock's practical point of view and the world as it exists beyond his immediate, practical interest—the world of theory, "spread out upon a

table—simply *there*.” The disjunction, in other words, is between the practical point of view interested in women “Talking of Michelangelo” (13) and “Arms that are braceleted and white and bare / (But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)” (15), and the theoretical or absolute point of view of “Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all” (16)—presumably to tell of the absolute beyond the practical world.

Eliot also seems to have noted, while writing his dissertation, that the desire to contemplate the world spread out upon a table produces in both Bradley’s and Prufrock’s worlds a distinction between “you and I.” In theory, Eliot notes (using the Prufrockian metaphor), “that which we know is merely spread out before us for pure contemplation, and the subject, the I, or the self, is no more consciously present than is the inter-cellular action” (154). In practice, however, this preoccupation with a theoretical world spread out upon a table requires a relation between the world, as object, and the self, as object—“a relation which is theoretical and not merely actual, in the sense that the self as a term capable of relation with other terms is a construction” (155). That is, the self that does not immediately live or feel its experience is an object; the self as object (the “patient under examination”) is related to experience as object within the whole that is the self as subject. But “this self which is objectified and related is continuous and felt to be continuous with the self which is subject and not an element in that which is known” (155).

Two selves, therefore, are necessary to any attempt to know the world that is simply there, spread out upon a table. And yet one must know more than one’s objective and subjective selves before one can determine the nature of that world; one must also know other selves. On the one hand, granted, the self “seems to depend upon a world which in turn depends upon it” (146). This is the substance of the quotation from Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* that Eliot includes in the infamous notes to *The Waste Land*: “My external sensations are no less private to my self than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. . . . In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.”²² On the other hand, however, Eliot affirms that “the self depends as well upon other selves; it is not given as a direct expe-

rience, but is an interpretation of experience by interaction with other selves" (146). We thus "come to interpret our own experience as the attention to a world of objects, as we feel obscurely an identity between the experiences of other centres [or selves] and our own" (143). It is this felt identity, Eliot suggests, "which gradually shapes itself into the external world" (143).

It is presumably the defective relation of selves in "Prufrock," the defective relation between "you and I," that brought the poem to mind as Eliot wrote his dissertation. Prufrock's first distinction, between "you and I," is necessary and inevitable, according to both Bradley and Eliot. Ultimately, however, Prufrock's self, both "you and I," must interact with other selves—this is the "overwhelming question"—in order to begin to forge the identity of experience that will "gradually shape itself into the external world." In adapting the Prufrockian metaphor to the Bradleyan context of his dissertation, Eliot seems to realize that both the Prufrockian and Bradleyan universes depend upon the relation of selves within them. Ironically, then, Prufrock's "overwhelming question" is just as important as he thinks it is. The nature of the universe actually does depend on whether or not he disturbs it.

In *The Matrix of Modernism*, Sanford Schwartz suggests a similar approach to the poem. He finds that the self-conscious personae of Eliot's early poems "constantly agonize over their encounters with other persons." He explains the significance of the personae's confrontations with others in terms derived from Eliot's dissertation: "They are suspended between their external apprehension of others, whom they know directly through observable behaviour alone, and their internal apprehension of others as active centers of consciousness. These personae also experience a subject/object split within themselves. They are at once detached observers and conventional agents, spectators of their own participation in the social world." "Prufrock," Schwartz suggests, follows this pattern very closely. He warns, however, that "We should avoid the misconception that Eliot first formulated the 'half-object' [the Prufrockian object observed from both an internal and an external point of view] and then dramatized it in his poetry." "Long before he wrote his dissertation," Schwartz notes, "Eliot had composed 'Prufrock,' 'Portrait of a Lady,' and several other poems that exhibit the [dissertation's] internal-external point of view of the half-object."²³

But as Schwartz himself implies, that "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" preceded *Knowledge and Experience* does not mean that

there is no connection between the poem and the dissertation. In fact Eliot's recourse in his dissertation to certain Prufrockian metaphors suggests that he himself was aware of the connection. If in the usual chronology of cause and effect it would seem that Bradley did not influence the composition of "Prufrock," the poem certainly influenced Eliot's articulation of his philosophical point of view in *Knowledge and Experience*. The Prufrockian metaphors repeated in the dissertation signal not just a coincidence of phrasing but also a coincidence of thought and feeling. The Bergsonian exploration in 1910 and 1911 of the way the subject distinguishes itself from the object (and so creates reality) by means of contaminated categories of time and space is taken up again in 1915 and 1916 in order to sort out the overwhelming question once more, this time from a Bradleyan point of view. Eliot began "Prufrock" from the Bergsonian presupposition that the relationship between sky and evening, object and subject, and "you and I" is false if that which is nonspatial is defined in terms of that which is spatial. The conclusion Eliot reached was that the Prufrockian self was indeed a false self, a self estranged from itself by its displacement in a fractured social space. When he came to Bradley several years later, Eliot recognized a point of view compatible with that in "Prufrock," for Bradley's philosophic exploration of the relation between self and other selves articulated dialectically what Prufrock had articulated dramatically—that is, that self depends upon other selves, subject upon object, and "I" upon "you." According to Bradley, "man is a social being; he is real only because he is social, and can realize himself only because it is as social that he realizes himself. The mere individual is a delusion of theory; and the attempt to realize it in practice is the starvation and mutilation of human nature, with total sterility or the production of monstrosities."²⁴ Prufrock, Eliot discovered in 1915 and 1916, is a monster accounted for by Bradley.

In the end, then, Eliot provides by means of his dissertation on Bradley a thoroughly modern map for reading "Prufrock." The resurrection of the Prufrockian metaphor of a patient spread out upon a table points the way to the passages in *Knowledge and Experience* most directly relevant to this reading. After five years, a poem born presumably of an almost inarticulable experience of self-estrangement became for Eliot an allegory of the epistemological dependence of reality upon a construction of self and selves—an allegory, that is, of the conclusions he was reaching in his disser-

tation. Insofar, then, as Eliot's work on Bradley in his dissertation seems to have prompted him to reread or reinterpret the poem from a Bradleyan point of view, Bradley does indeed seem to have influenced "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In effect, Eliot has taken his own advice and reinterpreted the lived experience he captured in "Prufrock" in the way he suggested, in his dissertation, that all such necessarily "partial and fragmentary truths" should be reinterpreted: "the finest tact after all can give us only interpretation [of lived truths], and every interpretation, along perhaps with some utterly contradictory interpretation, has to be taken up and reinterpreted by every thinking mind and by every civilization" (164). *Knowledge and Experience*, I suggest, is in part a reinterpretation or rereading of "Prufrock." In the course of time, Eliot has "become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning—or without forgetting, merely changing."²⁵ At the same time, "Prufrock" suggests a reading for the dissertation; indeed, it writes part of the dissertation insofar as its metaphors surface at important moments in the epistemological inquiry. If we attend carefully to the reinterpretation of the "world spread out upon a table" in Eliot's dissertation, in other words, we will perhaps find Eliot's final draft of the poem. At the very least, we will find that there is something of *Knowledge and Experience* in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

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NOTES

Work on this article was begun during my tenure as a postdoctoral fellow in The Calgary Institute for the Humanities at the University of Calgary and was completed during my tenure as a Webster Fellow at Queen's University.

¹ Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Norway, 1949; reprint, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Oblensky, 1959). For a bibliography of books and articles up to 1971, see Anne C. Bolgan, appendix 2, in *What the Thunder Really Said* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1973), 169–84.

² T. S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964); citations are given parenthetically.

³ John Casey, "The Comprehensive Ideal," review of *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development 1909–1922*, by Piers Gray, *Times Literary Supplement*, September 10, 1982, 975.

⁴ T. S. Eliot, "A Commentary," *The Criterion* 3 (1924–25): 2.

⁵ Kenner (note 1), 45.

⁶ Kenner, 55.

⁷ In an early essay on Bergson, Eliot refers to Bradley with some familiarity ("A Paper on Bergson," Eliot Collection, The Houghton Library, Harvard University).

The essay is undated; the catalogue entry of the Houghton Library suggests that it may have been written in 1910 or 1911. It is very unlikely, however, that Eliot wrote the essay until after his return from France in the summer of 1911—some months, that is, after the completion of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” The essay in question *may* suggest that Eliot was reading Bradley before 1913, but it does not prove that he was reading him before or during the composition of “Prufrock.”

⁸ Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe, January 31, 1915, cited in Caroline Behr, *T. S. Eliot: A Chronology of his Life and Works* (London: Macmillan Reference Books, 1983), 9.

⁹ T. S. Eliot to Harriet Monroe, June 7, 1916, Eliot Collection, The Houghton Library, Harvard University, cited in Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meanings* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1956), 15.

¹⁰ T. S. Eliot to Henry Ware Eliot, September 6, 1916, cited in *The Waste Land: A Facsimile & Transcript*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), xi.

¹¹ T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 13. All references to Eliot's poems are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

James E. Miller, Jr., suggests that the “you” in the poem may be Jean Verdenal, Eliot's friend from his Paris days of 1910 and 1911 (*T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons* [University Park and London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1977], 52–53). If so, Verdenal's death in the Dardenelles in May of 1915 might be another reason Eliot was thinking about the poem at this time.

¹² George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot: A Poem-by-Poem Analysis*, 2nd ed. (1953; reprint, New York: The Noonday Press, 1966), 59; Grover Smith (note 9), 16; Joyce Meeks Jones, *Jungian Psychology in Literary Analysis: A Demonstration Using T. S. Eliot's Poetry* (Washington, D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1979), 10–11; Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 48; Kenner, 10; Joseph Chiari, *T. S. Eliot: Poet and Dramatist* (London: Vision Press, 1972), 37–38.

¹³ F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry*, 3rd ed., with a chapter on Eliot's later work by C. L. Barber (1935; reprint, New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), 30.

¹⁴ T. S. Eliot, “The Function of Criticism,” in *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed., revised and enlarged (1932; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 33.

¹⁵ T. S. Eliot to Eudo Mason, April 19, 1945, Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, cited in Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (1984; reprint, London: Abacus, 1985), 41.

¹⁶ Piers Gray, *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development 1909–1922* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 56.

¹⁷ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), 197.

¹⁸ Gray, 56.

¹⁹ Jewel Spears Brooker, “Substitutes for Christianity in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot,” *The Southern Review* 21 (1985): 908.

²⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson, 4th ed. (1889; reprint, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), 91, 126, 163.

²¹ T. S. Eliot, “A Paper on Bergson,” 7, 17. “A Paper on Bergson” is copyrighted to Mrs. T. S. Eliot and cannot be reproduced or consulted without her permission. I quote from this manuscript by permission of Mrs. Eliot and by permission of the Houghton Library.

²² Francis Herbert Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, 2nd ed., 9th impression corrected (1893; reprint, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), 306;

cited in *The Waste Land*, 80. Hugh Kenner remarks that the passage is “a vivid paragraph from Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* that might have been composed by a disciplined Prufrock” (Kenner, 44).

²³ Sanford Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985), 184, 187.

²⁴ Francis Herbert Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 2nd ed. revised (1876; reprint, Glasgow: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927), 174.

²⁵ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 130.