

Faust's eviction of the "indigenous" old couple from their property is a throwback to ancient and barbarous methods of acquisition. The expropriation is based on his haughty assessment of their need, not on their entitlement. His action is an indictment of policy, of imperialist and colonialist instincts anywhere anytime. Goethe's and Schiller's views were shaped by contemporary events and debates and offer a critique of colonialist practices of repression, expulsion, and extermination.

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T. S. Eliot

To the Editor:

David Chinitz's "T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide" (110 [1995]: 236–47) modifies the image of T. S. Eliot as an elitist who dismissed popular art forms; instead Chinitz presents a conflicted Eliot, torn between popular tastes and literary values. To construct this new image of the poet, Chinitz is obliged to take Eliot's more "populist" statements at face value. However, the populist tastes that Eliot confesses to in his critical essays are less important than the power relations his criticism assumes. In particular, Eliot's concern with how popular culture or "primitive" art can be "refined"—an important focus of Chinitz's readings—should set off our alarm bells. Chinitz treats Eliot's terminology as signifying that Eliot wishes to negotiate fairly with popular practices. Yet who does the "refining" of popular art forms that Eliot calls for in his review of Marianne Moore's poetry? Refinement for whom? Is it a surprise that the modernist poet is the sole apparent authority on how to improve popular culture?

Despite Eliot's opposition to aesthetic autonomy on religious grounds (a point Chinitz nicely elaborates), his concern for refinement demonstrates how readily his criticism invokes the traditional language of aesthetics. Many of Eliot's most famous critical statements assume a tacit agreement with high aesthetic discourse. "The work of art," Eliot declares in "Hamlet and His Problems," "cannot be interpreted. . . . [W]e can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison with other works of art." Eliot's norms for criticism presume a clear consensus about standards and canons.

Despite Eliot's praise for the music hall or jazz as bulwarks against perceived middle-class sterility, key words like "refinement" suggest that he encounters popular culture within guarded parameters. Eliot's defenses of the

English music hall can be particularly elitist: his fear that the demise of the halls ensures that "the lower classes will . . . drop into the same state of protoplasm as the bourgeoisie" ("Marie Lloyd") assumes that film can only numb its working-class audience. Whether discussing popular fiction such as *East Lynne* or music-hall performers such as Marie Lloyd, Eliot's critical essays take up a traditional and increasingly dubious function of the intellectual: the dictation of taste. Eliot certainly never chose simply to ignore popular culture; however, he largely used the popular as a test of his own power to legitimate, to declare which cultural forms were authentic and which were not. The need of modernist and cold-war intellectuals to preserve their prestige in the face of the popular will be familiar to readers of Andrew Ross's *No Respect*; not every intellectual who invokes the people should be taken for a reluctant populist.

BARRY FAULK
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To the Editor:

David Chinitz's article "T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide" makes many useful points about Eliot and his poetry but unfairly characterizes lines quoted from *The Rock* as "traipsing dactyls" (241). If they traipse, it's largely because they're anapests.

MARC REDFIELD
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Reply:

I am grateful to Barry Faulk for his balanced and discerning response to my article, and I believe he has rightly identified our basic point of disagreement. Faulk thinks that I take Eliot's "'populist' statements" at face value; I think, rather, that I give these statements the same degree of credence as anything else in Eliot's essays. Critical practice up to now has generally taken Eliot's elitism and aestheticism at face value while ignoring or discounting the aspect of his thought and practice I have tried to highlight. The prevailing image of Eliot has a long history and is deeply entrenched; its partial accuracy also gives it the ring of truth. The familiarity of this construction, like that of any other prejudice, tends to disarm all challenge; thus, anything Eliot might have said that seems incongruous with the elitism and aestheticism we expect from him is not to be taken at face value.

Faulk, for example, valuably points out the dangers inherent in Eliot's concept of fine art as a "refinement" of the popular. But to interpret Eliot's phrase as a call for the modernist poet to "improve popular culture" (as Faulk recasts it) is to miss half the point. As I tried to show, Eliot emphasizes the need for a thorough rethinking of our concept of the "artist." Taken together, his essays propose a new model of the artist's relation to society, not merely a world in which poets would be authorized to improve public taste. In a sense, the ideal artist in Eliot's paradigm is not Marianne Moore but Marie Lloyd—someone who produces, as I put it, "a particularly artful rendering ('refinement') of popular forms" (238). Eliot does not hesitate to call Lloyd an artist, and I take seriously his statement that the poet "would like to be something of a popular entertainer." Ultimately, I think, Eliot would prefer to eradicate the distinction between poet and entertainer altogether; that is why he returns so persistently to the drama.

Here of course I am speaking of Eliot in his most progressive critical modes; at other times he falls back defensively into a traditional aesthetic posture. My goal was to emphasize this conflict—to complicate Eliot, not to vindicate him. Faulk rightly points out that "[m]any of Eliot's most famous critical statements assume a tacit agreement with high aesthetic discourse." But the fame or influence of these statements does not make them definitive. There are historical reasons why the "high aesthetic" Eliot is remembered while the populist Eliot needs to be unearthed. The recovery of the adversarial Eliot is important to any balanced understanding of Eliot and modernism generally.

Eliot does of course believe in "standards" by which some art can be judged better than other art, and it is worth asking, with Faulk, what his standards are and what purposes they serve. Faulk is also certainly right that for Eliot part of the critic's function is to make taste. However, I do not think that the desire for power or the need to preserve prestige entirely accounts for Eliot's theoretical relations with popular culture, much less his artistic engagement with the popular or his attendance of the music hall. My essay shows how the complex attitude sketched in Eliot's essays is borne out in his artistic practice and private activities. I am therefore wary of Faulk's conclusion that Eliot "largely used the popular as a test of his own power to legitimate"; Eliot seems to me to have valued the popular for many other reasons.

I thank Marc Redfield for his scrupulous attention to my scansion. Triple meter is often hard to pin down because initial and final unstressed syllables are freely added and dropped. In the passage in question only one line (the last) is absolutely regular, and if we accept its

authority, Redfield is right that the lines are best deemed anapestic. That the lines traipse I hope there is no doubt.

DAVID CHINITZ

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Gödel's Theorem

To the Editor:

It was good to see the essay by David Wayne Thomas on so important a topic as Gödel's theorem(s) ("Gödel's Theorem and Postmodern Theory," 110 [1995]: 248–61) and even better to find the essay not written in ignorance or disregard of elementary facts about logic or mathematics. For theorists—postmodern and otherwise—in the humanities who may be interested in such things, however, I want to make one correction and to offer one qualification regarding Thomas's good article.

The correction concerns the "capsule statement" of what Gödel demonstrated that Thomas quotes from George Steiner: "no axiomatic system can ever be proved to be fully coherent and consistent from within its own rules and postulates" (249). This generalization is not entirely correct. An axiomatic logical system can be proved complete (and I take it that *complete* is what Thomas understands by Steiner's characteristically vague use of "coherent") so long as it contains no expressions bearing conceptual content. Once introduce content-bearing expressions, though—even those bearing the minimal content sufficient to express truths of arithmetic—and incompleteness supervenes. Possibly this correction is pedantic, since Thomas presumably quotes Steiner only by way of offering a first approximation to a complicated set of ideas; but the facts about logic are so definite, on the one hand, and so unfamiliar to most theorists in the humanities, on the other, that some finickiness may be in order.

The qualification that I want to propose may cut deeper into the substance of Thomas's essay. In the later pages (e.g., from 256 on), I find that the essay comes close to suggesting that Gödel's proof concerning the incompleteness of (logically axiomatized) arithmetic is bound up with his philosophy of mathematics, specifically with his Platonism. In the philosophy of mathematics, Platonism consists in the view that what makes arithmetical statements true is their amounting to descriptions of a realm of abstract entities (such as numbers), taken to exist independently of human thought. The position opposed to this is constructivism (of which intuitionism, cited by Thomas, is the best-developed subtype),