tude": his view of man is pessimistic, he sees the necessity for austere discipline in the natural struggle of good and evil, and he does not let illusive ideas of progress, of humanitarian "social evolution," blind his critical vision. As in More and Leacock, Eliot finds in Webb another classicist of the "humane" tradition in lonely battle with the romantic humanitarians, and Eliot emphasizes the importance of Webb's defense of religion against the "novelties of science." This "important struggle," as Eliot describes it, is between a belief in the need for the present regeneration and salvation of the individual soul through religious discipline and a belief in the future betterment of humanity through scientific progress. The opposition of Eliot's religious and Catholic sensibility to nineteenth-century humanitarianism and the belief in progress is clearly revealed in these and other reviews of the period.

In quantitative or statistical terms there is an esthetic emphasis in Eliot's early criticism, but his recurring preoccupation with the moral sensibility and orientation of the artist is a central concern within the esthetic criticism. I wholly disagree with Austin's shopworn assertion that after 1927 there is a shift from esthetic to moral criticism and that Eliot earlier maintained that poetry should be judged solely by literary qualities. Elsewhere I have written at length about the development of Eliot's moral criticism (*ELH*, forthcoming), but one need only look through some of Eliot's lesser-known writings to see his pervasive moral interest during the early period, as in "The Lesson of Baudelaire" (*Tyro*, 1, 1921, p. 4), where Eliot rediscovers in Baudelaire a lesson he had already learned: "All first-rate poetry is occupied with morality. This is the lesson of Baudelaire. More than any poet of his time Baudelaire was aware of what most mattered: the problem of good and evil." Further significant progress in understanding Eliot's complex critical and spiritual development is partially dependent upon the future availability of presently restricted letters, notebooks, and other unpublished materials written between 1909 and 1926. But the failure to see the consistent relationship and development of Eliot's esthetic and moral criticism from 1916 is but one of the critical consequences of habitually basing too many conclusive judgments on the collected surface of Eliot's writings in neglect of the unplumbed mass below.

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King Lear

To the Editor:

Although I agree with Johannes Allgaier's overall view that *King Lear* is an antiauthoritarian play (*PMLA*, 88, 1973, 1033–39), an important point in his argument seems to me to need modification.

Allgaier maintains that Cordelia's defiance of her father in the opening scene is an instance of the Christian *ethos* of "disobedience and rebellion" (p. 1034) outweighing the Christian *doctrine* of obedience to parents, as expressed in the Fifth Commandment. However, this interpretation overlooks another potent Christian doctrine of Shakespeare's day, namely (in the words of the old marriage ceremony), that a woman's duty to her husband is to "obey him and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, in sickness and in health."[1] It is true, of course, that Cordelia is not yet married, but France and Burgundy have been wooing her, and Lear has announced, in effect, that one of them is to be chosen as her husband on this occasion (I.i.44–47). Her relationship to a husband is therefore very much on her mind.

What Shakespeare has done here is to confront his pre-Christian heroine with the problem of reconciling two forms of obedience prescribed by the Christian tenets of his audience. She meets the test by first declaring her love for her father, "according to my bond," and by then reserving "half my love . . . half my care and duty" for her husband-to-be. Significantly, she tries to conciliate Lear by speaking to him in the language of the marriage pledge (with an echo of the Fifth Commandment in the final verb): "I . . . obey you, love you, and most honour you." But her fidelity to moral law forbids her to go further and "love my father all."

There is no conflict in this scene between ethos and doctrine. On the contrary, Cordelia's conduct rests solidly on the doctrinal obligations of daughter and wife, reinforced—not contradicted—by the concept, from the ethos, that it is right to resist unjust authority.

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[1] *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1559* (London: Griffith Farran, n.d., preface dated Jan. 1890), p. 123. I have modernized the spelling.

Tirez à blanc, monsieur Braun!

To the Editor:

Thanking Theodore E. D. Braun for his courtesy in considering some aspects of my essay "a significant contribution indeed," I regret, however, to have to disagree with most of his comments (*PMLA*, 89, 1974, 353–54) on my article "La Voix de Rimbaud: Nouveau point de vue sur les 'naissances latentes' des 'Voyelles' " (*PMLA*, 88, 1973, 472–83).

Like Braun, I myself had a strange sensation, not of déjà vu, but of irrelevance, upon reading his letter.

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Did he actually read my article in its entirety? If so, he does not seem to be aware of its basic point of view, which considers poetic language in its *visceral* connection with LIFE, its emotions, actions, and mysterious elaborations. I never purported to approach my subject in a scientific way.

In fact, I specifically mention in my article that I am deliberately avoiding any reference to phonetics or phonology. Speaking of Rimbaud's *voyelle-cri*, I warn my reader: "En ce qui concerne l'aspect purement phonique du cri, il ne sera pas fait appel ici aux règles 'scientifiques' de la phonétique" (p. 475). Braun's criticism in that respect shows his own "serious oversight." His reference to the vowel triangle, indeed "familiar to French teachers," is also totally irrelevant to my approach in dealing with Rimbaud's poetry. I doubt very much anyway that the seventeen-year-old poet, who was not a language teacher, knew it as well as Braun, if at all.

Another interesting example of our fundamental differences in viewpoint—which might delight sociolinguists, psycholinguists, and (why not?) ethnolinguists—regards the concept of "white" in the French language. Scientifically, white—or rather light—is a combination of all the colors of the spectrum. As the Petit Robert French dictionary states: "La synthèse des sept couleurs du spectre donne la lumière blanche." But here again my concern with the language is not "scientific." I study it as it is lived and felt. Now, how is "white" felt in French?

The term *blanc*, whether an adjective or substantive, has other connotations in French than just qualities of brilliance and purity. It designates another essential notion: that of *absence*, of emptiness or negation as illustrated in ordinary language by many French idiomatic expressions: *une voix blanche* (*une voix* sans *timbre*), *une page blanche* (*une page* vide: whether the page is yellow, red, or blue, we still say in that case, *une page* blanche), *une nuit blanche* (*une nuit* sans *sommeil*), *des vers blancs* (*des vers* sans *rime*), *mariage blanc* (*mariage* non *consommé*), *tirer à blanc* (*tirer* sans *balles*), etc.

This characteristic of "blanc" is also felt intensely in poetic language. Who better than Mallarmé, the poet of purity, of cold and absence, exemplifies that fact? White is unquestionably his dominant color, and white objects (swans, snow, etc.) his favorites. Shall I mention, among many other instances, Mallarmé's "le blanc souci de notre toile," "le vide papier que la blancheur défend," or "crépuscules blancs"? (*Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1945, pp. 27, 34, 38).

It is not surprising that Rimbaud, his contemporary, fascinated by all aspects of language, be it popular, traditional, etymological, or esoteric, should use *blanc* with that acceptation in les "Voyelles" too. Roland Barthes, in his *Degré zéro de l'écriture*, insists on this semantic richness of the new poetic word since Rimbaud: "Chaque mot poétique est ainsi un objet inattendu, une boîte de Pandore d'où s'envolent toutes les virtualités du langage" (Paris: Seuil, 1953, p. 71).

The mere fact that English had to borrow the French vocable *blanc* specifically to form the word "blank," with the meaning of "void" that "white" does not have, should make my point most convincing and bring it to a happy conclusion.

But what I find most objectionable in Braun's letter is his implication of plagiarism contained in the first paragraph. I have never met Jacqueline de La Harpe nor any of her Berkeley seminar students referred to by Braun, nor have I discussed this particular poem with anybody except three of my professors at Harvard University before 1969, when I wrote my essay on Rimbaud. While I necessarily deal in the course of my article with aspects of his sonnet that are of common knowledge, what I consider my most important, personal, and *new* contribution to the understanding of the "Vowels" is left unmentioned by Braun or summarily dismissed in the vaguest of terms as: "Insistence on the sounds . . . , the various levels of interpretation which Hunting brings out . . . all this was discussed in the seminar, and more."

I believe I do much more than simply insist on the sounds. Through an analysis of the destruction of language in Rimbaud's sonnet, its reduction to the primary elements of the *voyelle-cri*, the vibration of the poet's voice and the shape of his lips when he utters each vowel sound, I hope, maybe naïvely, to bring some light into the mystery of Rimbaud's poetic elaboration in the sonnet, his creation not only of a new language but of the new magic world it generates:

> Chaque voyelle peut, à son tour, devenir constellation en une transmutation alchimique où le *son* se transforme en *lumière*. . . . Le Voyant crée, par la seule magie de son verbe poétique, un monde de l'au-delà. Le poète, *un vrai Dieu*, devient créateur de SONS-OBJETS. (See my article, p. 481; also pp. 475, 482.)

I doubt very much that this central point of my article was ever discussed in the Berkeley seminar. But if such an analysis was made, why wasn't it published then?

May I suggest, Professor Braun, that your spiral of colors, so cramped in your letter to the editor, be aired? Its new, elegant, magnified proportions should grace the pages of a prestigious review as a study in its own right—a significant contribution, indeed.

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