

T. S. Eliot's *Ariel Poems* Making Sense of the Times

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Chapter 5

An Idea Incarnated in an Individual: German Philosophy and the First Marshal of Poland

Triumphal March, 1931

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5 An Idea Incarnated in an Individual

German Philosophy and the First Marshal of Poland

Triumphal March, 1931

1 The Winds of Time

1.1 *Singing with Ariel, Marching with Coriolan*

An individualist through and through, in one of his letters from winter 1927, John Middleton Murry confided in Eliot that he profoundly distrusted institutions. They were bound to decline unless “galvanized by individuals” (L3 417). In the same letter, informing his friend that he is recovering from pneumonia, Murry also tells him he has been pondering the connections between a single person and public organisations, openly declaring that his hope for humanity’s preservation and progress rests firmly, and quite romantically, on the appearance of a charismatic personality—that he is a self-proclaimed “hero-worshipper” (L3 417). He says that he feels apprehensive of the crowd, no matter whether it follows some lead or advances by its own impetus, suggesting that Eliot’s preferences might be similar (see L3 416). Indeed, a comparable apprehension of the “humanity in the mass” (L3 416)—and an interest in the individual rising above the crowd—is expressed in Eliot’s *Triumphal March*, which depicts a procession held by various clubs, associations, and societies to honour a revered military leader.

In Eliot’s poem, however, the hero worship remains considerably qualified. Ominously, *Triumphal March* was written in 1931, a transitional year in Hitler’s march to full power. Compared with the situation in 1930, the year the Nazi Party (NSDAP) won 107 seats in the *Reichstag*, by 1932 this number had more than doubled, with Adolf Hitler being appointed Chancellor of Germany at the beginning of 1933. For a short while, the Nazi Party attracted the interest of several intellectuals in Great Britain; Wyndham Lewis’s rapturous and misguided appreciation of the Führer, for instance, appeared on the book market in January of the same year in which Eliot’s poem was published. Stressing an immediacy in Eliot’s response to the current political and intellectual situation, Steven Matthews claims that *Triumphal March* constitutes a poetic “inquiry into the contemporarily compelling issue of political leadership

after the rise of Hitler” (45). It is unlikely, though, that Eliot was referring to Hitler himself in his poem. Characteristically, having reviewed several works on fascism in 1928, he confessed to the young historian A. L. Rowse that the deeper he went in reading about fascism, “the more uninteresting it seem[ed].” He wondered whether it contained “any political idea ... at all” (L4 196). Even if, in the late 1920s, Eliot critiqued fascism—and even though *Triumphal March* can be read as including echoes of this criticism—at the time of writing the poem, it should be noted, he was already preoccupied with a distinct set of ideas. Rather than being solely concerned with politics, his 1931 *Ariel* reveals his growing absorption in German philosophy. By openly citing Edmund Husserl, the poem recalls his interest in phenomenology (the aspect which has been discussed in criticism). But it also comprises a different intellectual fascination—the existentialism of the rising philosophical star of the 1930s, Martin Heidegger—which provides a context thus-far unexplored.

The intricate network of ideas translates into a complex, and problematic, network of voices. Consequently, it was the poem’s voice, or the lack of it—or, alternatively, the confusion of voices—which has come under criticism.¹ Gareth Reeves, however, regards this confusion as purposeful. Far from considering the obfuscation of the voices in *Triumphal March* a failure, he regards it as symbolically reflecting the difficulty of discriminating among various political options that were brewing at the outset of the 1930s, with Wyndham Lewis and, more seriously, Ezra Pound being attracted by the vicious allure of German and Italian fascisms (207–08), and with Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden taking an interest in Marxism. Amidst these conflicting ideologies espoused by literary coteries in the 1930s, Eliot mostly managed to keep his distance from the turmoil. Though supportive of Auden and Spender in their poetic careers, he was never sympathetic towards their explorations of Marxism. To Pound, he always remained loyal but, as noted by John Timberman Newcomb, the friendship did not confound his better judgment: Faber and Faber—and Eliot among its directors—characteristically, “drew the line at [Pound’s] *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (1935)” (404). Those mingled voices of pre-war ideologies and politics resurfaced in *Triumphal March*.

It must be said that Eliot’s contemporaries—untroubled by the indeterminate position of the speaking voice—responded to *Triumphal March* with admiration. When the poem appeared in print, I. A. Richards read it as the beginning of *Coriolan*. Viewing *Triumphal March* alongside “The Difficulties of a Statesman,” he considered both as very timely, and the first as extremely promising (see L5 732n2). The fourfold series, though, was never finished. As Eliot explained, two parts had been completed, the third remained “writable,” and the fourth, reflecting Eliot’s familiarity and fascination with the work of St. John of the Cross, was consigned to indeterminate future plans (L5 697). Nevertheless, writing to Murry, he refers to *Triumphal March* as the first movement in a

sequence which, had it been completed, might have matched *The Waste Land* for its scale and complexity.²

In fact, a pithy comparison of *The Waste Land* and *Coriolan* was drawn by Hugh Ross Williamson only a year after the *Ariel* was published. In Williamson's slim volume introducing Eliot's poetry (*Poetry of T. S. Eliot*), *The Waste Land*—depicting the confusion of the “post-War world”—is juxtaposed with *Triumphal March*, concerned with the forms of regulating “the ‘post-Peace world’” (qtd. in Ackroyd 190). The stylistic resemblance between these two works was noted in one of the earliest reviews of the *Ariel*, in 1932, by Morton Dauwen Zabel, counting Eliot among those poets “who returned to the style of their first flights” (154, 156)—a view also sustained in contemporary criticism. Timmerman, likewise, observes that, in contrast to the other *Ariels*, *Triumphal March* significantly relies on juxtapositions typical of *The Waste Land* (159),³ although such juxtapositions, it should be noted, are also prominent in *Marina*. Additionally, the affinity between the two works, as stressed by Grover Smith, consists in the density of their referential networks (160). The network of allusions of *Triumphal March* is indeed remarkable. It captures a range of references from political, through philosophical, mystical, literary, and musical, to journalistic. Among those which Eliot scholars have identified in the poem are extracts from Charles Maurras's *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence* and Edmund Husserl's *Ideas I*; allusions to St. John Perse's *Anabase* and to Aristophanes; a reference to Beethoven's *Coriolan* overture, connecting the poem to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, and a quotation from Ludendorff's *The Coming War*;⁴ and, as noted by Hugh Haughton, a reminiscence of “London parades at the end of the First World War” together with a hint at “an account in the *Daily Mail* of Benito Mussolini's march on Rome” (166). K. Narayana Chandran argues that there also exists a thematic parallel between the two *Coriolan* poems and Nathaniel Hawthorne's story “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” all of them being composed in times of political uncertainty: the first one, in the American colonies around 1730, and the other, some two hundred years later in troubled Europe.⁵

Yet, if in October 1931, Eliot did refer to the poem as a part of the planned *Coriolan*, then, a few months earlier, explaining to Lincoln Kirstein why he could offer no verse to be published in Kirstein's *Hound and Horn*, he had described *Triumphal March* as “a piece ... for the *Ariel* Poems.” He informs Kirstein that *Triumphal March* was meant to appear for the first time in the Christmas series, making it clear that giving *Triumphal March* to Faber and Faber for their *Ariel* sequence was not merely an afterthought, but his initial intention (L5 587). And, as with other *Ariels*, he often used it as a Christmas gift, having presented it to G. W. S. Curtis, who expressed his gratitude for the “joy” (L5 722n2) it had caused, and to John Hayward, who described it as “magnificent” (L5 737n2).

Consequently, from the very start, the poem—intended for both the *Coriolan* and the *Ariel* series—has had a doppelgänger-like identity. Illustrated by Edward McKnight Kauffer, rather uncannily with a kind of a doppelgänger drawing—an upright solitary figure holding a shield on the cover, and the very same figure, but represented as riven with cracks, on another page—the poem resists classifications. Its political and philosophical themes and its satirical note (manifest in the negative representation of the watching crowd)⁶ have created an understandable confusion about its placement as either the concluding poem of the first series of the *Ariels* or, on the other hand, the first part of *Coriolan*. This difficulty is, perhaps, best reflected by how G. Douglas Atkins (2014) and John Timmerman (1994) approach the poem in their book-length discussions of Eliot's *Ariels*. Atkins puts *Triumphal March* at the beginning of his interpretations of the sequence and states that the poem, with its focus on various modes of perception, is crucial to the series—that it asserts its own centrality by “opening a way to understand the meaning of Christmas” (18) as the celebration of the event which was both supernatural and historical. Timmerman, in contrast, places *Triumphal March* at the end of his discussion of Eliot's Christmas pamphlets, claiming that it was Eliot's “way out of” (155) the *Ariels*, even though Eliot was to return to the series with yet another *Ariel* poem in 1954.

1.2 *The Point of Satire*

The multiplicity of references, which puts *Triumphal March* on a par with *The Waste Land*, has led to numerous exegeses. Eliot's cheerfully nonchalant attitude to the exegetic efforts is, nevertheless, worth noting: it comes across in his response to Richard Eberhart's comment on the poem. At the time a promising young poet, Eberhart met and talked with Eliot at Harvard in February 1933, when the celebrated modernist came to America to give his Norton Lectures. Recalling how their conversation turned to the subject of *Triumphal March*, Eberhart admits that he had overlooked Husserl as well as the allusion to the sausage seller from Aristophanes' *Knights*.⁷ On the other hand, he indicated the allusion to Christ in the figure of Caesar, which Eliot disclaimed, though acquiescing that “one could have it if one liked” (qtd. in Roache 96).⁸ However, Eberhart's reading of “Christ into Caesar” (qtd. in Roache 96)—the allusion confirmed by later criticism—was discerning. It points the reader in the direction of one of the poem's major themes: the pernicious symbiosis of religion and politics.

The deployment of the religious symbols, rituals, and gestures for secular ends, whether commercial or partisan, irritated Eliot. It annoyed him at Christmastime, which he celebrated with his *Ariels*, and it worried him as a ploy used by politicians, one of the concerns in his unfinished

Coriolan. In the month in which *Triumphal March* was published, Eliot (answering Murry) noted that he had written a poem addressing the state of “paganism in this country” (*L5* 697). The reversion to “paganism” is signalled by the use of hierophanies in a military show. Indeed, at some points, the biblical symbolism remains transparent, as with the mention of “the palm tree” (*TM* 33) alluding to the New Testament story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (The invoked biblical image, from John 12:12–19, of the Man riding upon an ass, provides a vivid contrast to the picture of the one mounted on a horse.) But Eliot’s religious symbolism—depending on a private system of repeated images—is rarely so overt. This is, for instance, the case with the intuition of “the still point of the turning world” (*TM* 34),⁹ superseded by the parade’s showy glamour. The poem’s focus, in fact, is not on an obvious picture but on a faint glimpse—a half-realisation that the material can be permeated by the metaphysical, as it is noted by Ronald Bush when he describes *Triumphal March* as a poem “about what it means to affirm the world and burn within the breast” (153). The poem’s religious aspect, then, is not related to a spoken dogma, but to the unspoken religious sensibility. David Fuller observes that—even if the contemptuous Coriolanus is there in the foreground (overshadowing the biblical compassionate Christ)¹⁰—both the grand and the commonplace events in the poem still preserve their metaphysical resonance (668): the people are wishing for “a light,” and also for “Light / Light.” (*TM* 48–50). However, in the scene of the procession, what should remain reverentially veiled—the “hidden” (*TM* 32)—is, instead, paraded as a symbol of a particular faction as is frequently the case with the religious remaining in the service of political authoritarianism.

In general terms, then, the debate about the poem’s themes has become polarised between two positions, both of them soundly justified. On the one hand, the poem is interpreted as Eliot’s more immediate criticism of political issues: fascism and rampant liberalism (in the readings provided by F. O. Matthiessen, John Xiros Cooper, and Gareth Reeves). This view also comprises Eliot’s concern with the secularisation of religion. On the other hand, *Triumphal March* is read as symptomatic of his critical interest in ideas rather than in ideologies (as it is interpreted by Steven Matthews and Kenneth Asher). Stressing the poem’s openness, Matthews notes that, if regarded in specifically political terms, *Triumphal March* is irresolute, that it hovers between two historical perspectives: ancient Roman and contemporary. This doubling is also a persistent feature in the poem’s language: its phrases have a psychological resonance (the listing of arms is explained as compulsive numbering to fend off anxiety) as well as contextual echoes (the same listing is used as an allusion to the historical German Arms surrender and to *The Waste Land*). Its central figure, likewise, appears ambiguous: the leader seems Nietzschean in his separation from people, though simultaneously he

is connected with them (he looks at the crowd and the crowd gazes at him). The contradictions culminate in the equivocal image of a dove's wing: the turtle dove evokes Roman peace, but at the same time, in the reference to a turtle's breast, it brings to mind an association with a reptile. Even the march itself is ambivalent—while fashioned as a religious procession, it ends as a sheer parade (55–56). The reason for this ideological evasiveness may be, Kenneth Asher suggests, Eliot's growing disengagement from the realm of immediate, rough and ready political solutions. In Asher's mildly ironic words, in the 1930s, Eliot "appeared to be thinking in terms of millennia, showing scant interest in the ad hoc manoeuvrings of time's slaves" (86). Indeed, when Hitler's troops were moving across Poland in October 1939, he was publishing his *The Idea of a Christian Society*. In this work, Asher explains, Eliot reveals himself as "a Christian Platonist" rather than a pragmatic social and political critic (88).¹¹ But then, he always insisted on a firm distinction between politics and metaphysics. Characteristically, in 1914, in his address to the Harvard Philosophical Club ("The Relationship between Politics and Metaphysics"), he viewed the "confusion" of the two realms—represented in Georges Sorel's anarchism—as most dangerous (P1 97). Over a decade later, in a commentary for *The New Criterion*,¹² quoting the phenomenologist Max Scheler, he berated as infantile the overlapping of religion and politics in the Italian Fascist vitalist movement, which reduced the Roman Catholic Church to a national church of Italy (P2 778–79). Typically, "muddle" was the contemptuous word which Eliot used for an ideology dressed up as metaphysics¹³—a subjects of satire in his *Ariel* for the 1930s.

The poem's resolutely antifascist edge, on the other hand, was highlighted as early as 1935 by F. O. Matthiessen, who offered a view which, in the 1930s, was not universally shared (141–42).¹⁴ Having provided his interpretation two years after Hitler's ascent to power, and then reiterating his point in 1947, in the wake of WWII, Matthiessen stresses two interrelated aspects in *Triumphal March*. He claims that the Shakespearian fall-of-the-leader theme is deployed by Eliot to critique excessive individualism and assert a practical need for a king, who, Eliot believed, embodied the ideal of selflessness (142–43).¹⁵ The opposite stance, egotism—which Eliot equated with individualism advocated by liberalism—Matthiessen notes, was critiqued by him earlier in his prose. In 1929, Eliot would propose an economic-political comparison (hugely unfair) matching Henry Ford—a symbol of individualism leading to economic success—with Adolf Hitler, a symptom of individualism ending in political authoritarianism (143). By highlighting Eliot's disgust with crass egotism, which he believed was entailed in laissez-faire economics, and by connecting this attitude with his apprehension of fascism, Matthiessen anticipated those contemporary readings which see authoritarianism as an inevitable side effect of economic liberalism gone wild.

More recently, John Xiros Cooper observes that Eliot as a conservative saw the revolutionary terror, coiled and ready to spring, at the very bottom of “the black heart of liberalism” (289). The policy of economic liberalism—by turning a blind eye to the isolation and despair of those left behind, and by rupturing social bonds and neglecting public responsibilities—created, quite paradoxically and through a self-destructive impulse, the ideal conditions for totalitarian regimes. Thus, “Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia,” Cooper says, “are not wrong turnings or aberrations on the path to a benign liberal future, but the toxic outflows of [liberalism’s] own gastrointestinal nature” (294). Eliot’s concern about liberalism as carelessly creating conditions for all forms of populism is also stressed by Gareth Reeves, who reads the two Coriolan poems (as does Matthews) in the context of Eliot’s “The Literature of Fascism.” (Matthews observes that Eliot is preoccupied not only with the rise of dictatorship but also with the decline of democracy, which is an important point, and one that has been often bypassed by critics who customarily discuss Eliot as inflexibly elitist—a claim which is less and less tenable.¹⁶) Such contextual reading—Eliot’s poem beside his review of books on fascism—is revealing. In his review, Eliot openly warns against “a craving for a regime which will relieve us of thought and at the same time give us excitement and military success” (qtd. in Reeves 205).¹⁷ These words can possibly serve as a summation of the poem’s other satirical aim—a critique of populism.

2 The Leader

2.1 A Caesar or a Mussolini?

As construed in Eliot scholarship, the satirical picture of fascism in *Triumphal March* is, then, of an ideology that has arisen in the aftermath of the social cruelties of a liberalism that has forgotten itself, and of a movement that reinforces its authority with religious symbols (which, in the case of Italian and Spanish fascisms, was a historical fact). It feeds off of populism: the great man is elevated by the little people, a Caesar is put on a pedestal by a “young Cyril” (*TM* 44). Essential to the poem is the relationship of Cyril and Caesar as established through a mutual regard of the people and the leader: the leader is being apprehended within their field of vision, and the people are cheering under his “watchful” eyes (*TM* 31). But is it a Caesar?

In his reminiscences of Eliot, in 1966, G. Wilson Knight (whose mythic interpretations of Shakespeare’s plays Eliot found inspiring when he was writing *Triumphal March* and *Marina*¹⁸) mentions Nietzsche—along with Shakespeare and Beethoven—as one of the three influences on Eliot’s poem, and he claims that the central figure in *Triumphal March* bears the mark of the *Übermensch*.¹⁹ However, Eliot did not hold

Nietzsche in very high regard. Addressing the Harvard Philosophical Club in a lecture entitled “The Relationship Between Philosophy and Metaphysics,” in the spring of 1914, he described Nietzsche as “the most vicious intellectualist” of all (P1 95). A year later, after having reviewed Abraham Wolf’s *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (a book which, in a letter to his mother, he described as disappointing [L1 132]), he resolved to read more of Nietzsche’s work, nevertheless, arguing that Nietzsche’s import was literary rather than philosophical—that, divorced from its literary aspect, left on its (abstract) own, Nietzsche’s philosophy would not survive (P1 401). Thus, in the light of these negative remarks, the mounted figure in the poem hardly seems a reflection of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*.

Hugh Houghton, in turn, points in the direction of Mussolini (139). Admittedly, before writing *Triumphal March*, Eliot had read Sir Percival Phillips’s version of the history of fascism in Italy, which eulogises the movement and its leader. The tribute originally appeared in the form of fourteen dispatches in the *Daily Mail* (in 1922) and was subsequently published as a book titled *The “Red” Dragon and the Blackshirts: How Italy Found Her Soul; The True Story of the Fascisti Movement* (see P2 430–31n2; P3 548n2). However, even if Eliot, while writing his letter to the editor of the *Daily Mail* in January 1923, was very complimentary about Phillips’s series of articles (P2 430), he remained rather unconvinced by Phillips’s enthusiasm in the glorifying of the Blackshirts. Consequently, the motifs that appear in Phillips’s report from fascist Italy reappear, eight years later, in *Triumphal March*, but they are deployed in the bathetic picnicking context of Cyril’s family eating their sausages and remembering crumpets.

It is, however, worth looking at Phillips’s *The “Red” Dragon* to try to assess Eliot’s attitude to those dispatches. Phillips’s account of the fascist parade in Rome—which, indeed, is described by him as the “triumphal march” (57)—is rendered with allusions to ancient Roman and medieval traditions: on the one hand, the marching fascists are compared to “the legions of old” moving “in companies commanded by centurions” (14), on the other hand, they appear as driven by the “grim, relentless, savage spirit of the Middle Ages” (13), the valiant knights saving Italy from the Red Dragon of communism. Both Phillips’s grand historical comparisons and his description of the crowd and the flags are contained in Eliot’s Ariel. But Eliot must have been well aware that there was significantly less heroism and self-sacrifice in this march than Phillips strived to imply. For instance, in Phillips’s series, Eliot would have read that Mussolini, after his arrival in Rome, was escorted from the city’s northern railway station in Civitavecchia by a couple of “royal motor cars” (56). He arrived in Rome couched in a sleeper; and he was made Prime Minister constitutionally. After the march ended, his undaunted men were securely (and very efficiently) transported by train back home.

Thus, to use Denis Mack Smith's ironic description, the historic March on Rome "was a comfortable train ride followed by a petty demonstration, and all in response to an express invitation from the monarch" (100). Hardly heroic. Il Duce himself, even from Phillips's dispatches which Eliot read, emerges as a frightening, rather than valiant and gallant, figure. The following detail is significant: Phillips does not present Mussolini as a romantic horseman, but as a persona in a "racing car," or as "a solitary, almost a terrible figure" (59, 70; see also 72), a satrap passing through the corridors of the Grand Hotel, his footsteps muffled by the carpets. Perhaps in spite of himself, Phillips characterises Mussolini as a merciless reformer, personally involved in the uprooting of corruption (his "terrible eyes sweep[ing] the overburdened pay-rolls" [58]), and an autocrat meeting his faithful men for the "night conferences" at which "[m]omentous decisions [were] taken" (71)—a worshipped, but menacing, presence.

Although, in the early 1920s, Eliot greatly praised Phillips's accounts of Mussolini as a man of action (P2 430), it was not until 1927 that fascism started to occupy, and preoccupy, him seriously.²⁰ A full exploration of Eliot's critique of fascism is material for a separate discussion, thus, it cannot be included in a chapter which is concerned mainly with a poem; but a significant change in Eliot's approach must be noted. Indeed, in the early 1920s, fascism might have seemed to Eliot an interesting experiment in the practical application of Georges Sorel's doctrine of syndicalism, the political theory which eulogises the use of what Sorel terms the liberating "violence" of the proletariat against the "force" of the bourgeois domination (as in the fragment which Eliot highlighted in his own copy of Sorel [see P1 560n7]). But in his review of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*, Eliot sees Sorel as a modern intellectual sceptic disillusioned with bourgeois romanticism rather than as an active defender of the rights of the working class (P1 558–59). He also perceives Italian fascism to be a line of defence against communism (rather than a program whose objective is the empowerment of the proletariat), a force reuniting Italy, and finally, a movement relying on the romantic idea of the involvement in action as opposed to the languishing in musty aestheticist Romanticism.

Between 1927 and 1929, however, fascism appeared to him a different matter altogether; Eliot responded to fascism critically. In a commentary for *The Monthly Criterion* (November 1927), by giving a twist to Georges Clemenceau's quip about war being too important to be left to the generals, Eliot resolves that "[p]olitics has become too serious a matter to be left to politicians" (P3 287). In that period, Italian fascism became emblematic of rising European nationalisms and the disintegration of Europe.²¹ In the year 1926 alone, as many as four military coups—in Greece, Poland, Portugal, and Lithuania—led to the establishment of dictatorships in the south and east of Europe.²² To Eliot—always wary

of communism—eastern Europe, at that point, seemed hardly European. Writing for *The Monthly Criterion* in August 1927, he describes the western world—using Paul Valéry’s words—as “a small and isolated cape on the western side of the Asiatic Continent” (P3 156), a shrinking region of democracy, no longer a bastion against totalitarianism. Rather markedly, Eliot expressed this sentiment in a commentary published in the same year as his essay on Machiavelli, where Mussolini is mentioned next to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (see P3 111).

Eliot’s attitude to fascism was intellectual, its aim being not an immediate judgement but a thorough understanding—he was interested in the validity of the political and philosophical ideas underlying a particular policy. Thus, in his regular commentary feature for *The Criterion* of June 1928, he expressed a belief that autocratic ideologies were “worthy of dispassionate examination” (P3 417). And he approached them judiciously—by offering a crushing critique of their political stupidity, falsehood, and contradictions. One such incongruity was indicated by him in the February 1928 commentary for *The Monthly Criterion* as perpetuated by the fascists at home: when the British fascists expressed their intention to support the King and the constitution, at the same time, they failed to note that their vision of political participation would “hardly square with ‘the present Constitution’” (P3 333), which they had so eagerly vowed to serve. In the July 1929 issue of *The Criterion*, continuing the debate which he had begun the previous year with his review of the literature of fascism, and answering J. S. Barnes and A. L. Rowse—Barnes, an enthusiast of fascism and a friend of Mussolini, and Rowse, an intellectual supporter of communism—Eliot describes fascism and communism, this time bluntly, as “natural for the thoughtless person” (P3 658). Clearly, then, his interest was in ideas rather than in autocrats; and if it had happened to be in an autocrat, then it was only inasmuch as the autocrat incarnated a political idea in his actions.

It is significant that in *Triumphal March* the leader appears as a mysterious, rather than vicious, figure. His presence commands attention; towering above the crowd, he looks at the people with his “eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent” (TM 31). This description stands in stark contrast to H. G. Wells’s caricature of Mussolini, the “unscrupulous, magnificent Saviour” (26) who rose to dictatorship from extremist socialism. Il Duce’s “round, forcible-feeble face,” Wells sneers, glowers from “some pseudo-heroic costume, under a helmet for choice, with eyes devoid of thought or intelligence and an expression of vacuous challenge” (27). The difference between Wells’s and Eliot’s renderings is telling, confirming that Eliot’s business was not with terrifying people but rather with pernicious ideas. He was of the opinion that, in politics, as Dryden put it (the words Eliot recalled twice in his commentaries for *The Criterion* in 1929), there would always be “old consciences with new faces” (P3 377, 654). With fascism coming in so many guises in the

1920s and 1930s, he thought it wise to examine the one “conscience” underlying those movements. Rather than fight the costume, he looked at the body that moved it; rather than only present a particular dictator, his poem probes the combination of forces that secures dictators’ rise to power.

2.2 *The Military Man and the Milling People, a Dictator Opposite a King*

The leader in *Triumphal March* is there for the people, yet he offers nothing but the splendour of the march, the grandeur of the sacrifice in the temple, the flapping of flags and ringing of bells—the “eagles” and “trumpets” (*TM* 3)—providing an aesthetic expression of his people’s sense of self-importance.²³ There may be a suggestion of a meaningful reality outside the parade, beyond the “stools and ... sausages” (*TM* 11), separate from the pomp and the picnic—a reality alluded to by the “hidden” (*TM* 33, 35). But, to the watching crowd, the sacrifice is void; the ritual, having lost its regenerative function, dissolves itself into trivial occupations.²⁴ It is followed by the echo of the word “Dust” repeated five times and succeeded by the clamour of the mounted militaries and the memory of “young Cyril” mistaking the church bells announcing the ritual raising of bread and wine during the service for the bells rung by the street-seller of crumpets. The people are falling under the spell of numbers, the “many” being insistently repeated.²⁵ In Eliot’s poem, there is no “I”; instead, the insistent “we”—as in the phrase “We hardly knew ourselves that day ...” (*TM* 5)—exhilarated, excited, hypnotised by the military rhythm and the solemn sacrifice, appears in front of the mysterious “he” (*TM* 9, 24, 28), the leader who exudes the magnetism of force. He is a general, a Marshal, or a Caesar, but the poem is clear that he is not a king. He is imperial, perhaps, but he is not regal since a dictator focalises—only temporarily—the crowd’s fantasy of power, whereas a king, as Eliot states in his polemical “Mr. Barnes and Mr. Rowse” (and as was stressed by Matthiessen),²⁶ incarnates the idea of authority through continuity: the royal figure “incarnates the idea of the Nation” (*P3* 663). It is illuminating how Eliot juxtaposes monarchy with two totalitarianisms, declaring that, while a king represents an ideal to which the nation constantly aspires (*P3* 663), dictators merely express their people’s sense of vainglory. Thus, the Italian people witnessing the elevation of Mussolini “may feel a kind of self-flattery; and the Russian people deified itself in Lenin” (*P3* 663). The conceptual difference, here, is between the *incarnation* and the *expression*, or, between the incarnation of an idea and the expression of power and self-significance.

When, in March 1928, Eliot was defending Maurras and *Action Française* against Leo Ward,²⁷ he recommended the antidote of Maurrassian royalism against the growing interest in fascism in Britain,

or, for what he called “a sentimental Anglo-Fascism” (P3 370). The Maurrasian royal ideal is also related to a very Eliotean idea of the self. According to Eliot, dictatorial self-aggrandisement stands in contrast to royal self-effacement: while the anointed royals surrender their personal selves, the appointed dictators flaunt their dangerous personal charisma. The worth of the royal self is based neither on personal features nor on personal success, as it happens in the case of dictators; on the contrary, its power comes from the weight of inheritance and from the difficult surrender of one’s personality. Therefore, the personality of a king—as that of an ideal modernist poet—is immaterial; what matters is the permanence of tradition, be it national or literary. For Eliot, then, royalism becomes another facet of impersonality. In this respect, his preference for monarchy can be traced back not only to Maurras but also to the lesson which he derived from F. H. Bradley: that one should liberate oneself from the illusion that self-expression is the same thing as self-realisation. This last distinction—arising from Bradley’s idealism—has been pointedly elucidated by Lewis Freed. In Bradley, Freed explains, “the private self takes on meaning only by its relation to self-transcendent contexts—moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and religious,” which means that the human self exists within “a metaphysical universe. Apart from such a universe, there is self-expression but no self-realization” (90).

3 New Vistas: Husserl, Heidegger, and Piłsudski

3.1 *Experimenting with Pure Consciousness: Empty Ego Watching a Parade*

Triumphal March as a criticism of the populist delusion of self-importance—a contrast to the apparently royal ideal of self-effacement—seems to ensue from Eliot’s study of Bradley’s philosophy. In the 1920s, however, F. H. Bradley’s idealism only coloured Eliot’s political outlook, while his philosophical fascinations were taking a new turn: the poem also openly recalls his reading of Husserl’s philosophy, which he first perused in Germany, at the age of twenty-five. Writing to Aiken (not long before the outbreak of WWI, from Marburg), Eliot describes his bucolic stay with a German family, his enjoyment of German food and forest walks, and his study routine comprising Greek in the morning and, in the evening, Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen*.²⁸ This letter—in which Eliot still hopes that the threat of war might be averted—precedes by only three days the fateful assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which shattered all such hopes. With the outbreak of the Great War, Eliot moved to Oxford, continuing his studies of Greek and persevering with Husserl, of which he duly informed Professor J. H. Woods, a significant figure in his Harvard education and Chairman of the Harvard Philosophy Department (L1 65). He returned to Husserl in

1931—the year of *Triumphal March*—this time in his capacity as the editor of *The Criterion*, asking M. C. D'Arcy to write a review of *Ideas I*, which had just been translated into English.²⁹ In his own poem, in turn, he quoted from *Ideas*, using the passage concerning the perception by the Husserlian “empty ‘Ego.’” In this way, he provided a phenomenological context for the troubling question of the poem’s disembodied voice—that of the drifting, hovering, incorporeal speaker which, as mentioned above, proved so difficult to explain, which was criticised as flawed by Timmerman and Smith, and naturalised by Atkins ascribing it to a Roman citizen.³⁰

This disconcerting speaker is heard when the poem’s tone changes from chatty to lyrical. The tonal transformation is anticipated by a philosophical intrusion—Eliot quotes an excerpt which, in Marcus Brainard’s commentary on Husserl, focuses on two problems: that of a point of contact between human consciousness and the physical world, and that of the manner in which human consciousness makes sense of the world (84–85).³¹ Having assumed that consciousness and reality come into contact through sensory experience, Husserl cautions that, in a “naïve” human being, sensory perception is likely to be deceptive. In order to eliminate perceptual deceptions, he postulates the existence of “pure” consciousness; but his philosophical considerations, it must be noted, go beyond the psychological while firmly asserting the existence of the shared objective reality. Besides being physically real, the Husserlian world is also essentially a unity between the perceiving ego and the perceived universe. Husserl posits that the three constituents of an individual being—the individual consciousness, the organic body, and (what he calls) the essence—are all connected: “*consciousness and physicalness are a combined whole* combined into the single psychophysical unities which we call animalia and, at the highest level, combined into the *real unity of the whole world*” (*Ideas* 82). To this assertion of the world’s unity, he adds a question suggesting that this unity is not a mere assembly of particular parts, but rather the unity of spirit: “Can the unity of a whole exist otherwise than by virtue of its parts, and must the latter not have some sort of *community of essence ...?*” (*Ideas* 82). And, further, can it be perceived as such—as existing objectively and as unified—by an ideal pure consciousness? The philosophical problem leads to a question of literary technique: How can such ideal pure consciousness, and the type of perception which it has—the most comprehensive discernment—be represented sensuously, with sounds and images, as it is represented in poetry?

The poetic answer comes in the form of the disembodied voice from *Triumphal March*. This voice is not part of the usual street banter; it is separate from the voices of the gapers whose perception takes the form of sharp glimpses which cannot be easily reconciled: the clatter of hooves, banal memories, and trivial occupations. The people in the

crowd see only shards: the picture of the leader comes in a series of disconnected pieces—the eyes, the hands, and his “horse’s neck” (*TM* 30). His calm, detachment, and vigilance can be only assumed, and the “hidden,” only intuited. This broken picture—as fissured as the silhouette drawn by McKnight Kauffer—suggests the very Husserlian concern with the “perceived being” as constituted by, and within, the intentional consciousness of the perceiving ego. The disembodied voice, however, transcends fragmentation. It cannot be ascribed to any figure, and it remains independent of any psychological determinants. But it can be overheard asking a rhetorical question, an *epilexis* following a specific inquiry about the number of people in the crowd—“what did it matter, on such a day?” (*TM* 7). It also appears in the inspired description of the central figure and in the lyrical invocation of the Eliotean *still point*. Finally, it is heard repeating the words “Dust” and “light,” which change their meanings with each repetition: the “Dust” denotes the ashes in the urn; then, it refers to the street dirt stirred up by the hooves; finally, it echoes a phrase from *The Waste Land*, a biblical reminder of death—“a handful of dust” (30). Likewise, the reference to “light” in the poem is ambiguous, indicating the light of either a cigarette lighter or illumination. The voice through which those evocative images are introduced stays free from both temporal limitations and the natural limitations of physical sight.

The ego which speaks with this voice remains unmarked, or empty, modelled on the Husserlian “empty ‘Ego’” as it is described by Husserl in this paragraph which immediately succeeds the one from which Eliot took the quotation: “The perceiving, when I consider it purely as a consciousness and disregard my body and bodily organs, appears like something which is, in itself, inessential: an empty looking at the Object itself on the part of an empty ‘Ego’ which comes into a remarkable contact with the Object” (*Ideas* 83). It is this notion that is being practically tested in *Triumphal March*, which recreates a Husserlian transcendental point of view. The sight of the march (if partly mediated by the gapers) comes from “an empty looking” at the parade, which connects all things and all points of view: that of the anonymous crowd, Cyril’s family, the unidentified speaker and, not inconceivably, the leader. It is also significant that the world in the poem, as the world in Husserl’s work, exists objectively. It is neither psychologised nor does it become a figment of the imagination. As noted by Graham Martin, reality in *Triumphal March*, unlike in “Prufrock,” cannot be dissolved within a reminiscence or a daydream, or reduced to a single subjective point of view (126–127).

It must be noted that Eliot’s phenomenological experiment in poetry did not come unannounced. His attempt to perform a philosophical exercise along the lines of Husserl’s thought was the fruition of a long-held interest. He briefly gestured at Husserl in 1927 while commenting on the disparity between the languages of poetry and philosophy,

or, poetry and metaphysics. In his “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,” he makes what seems to be a marginal, but is actually a rather revealing, remark. There is a difference, he says, between the language of religious convictions, which are always tinged by emotions and certainties dependent on a particular age, and the language of religious belief. The latter language is to be explored by philosophy, the former is the stuff of poetry. But poets, he declares, can express philosophical ideas in poetry as effectively as philosophers—such as Edmund Husserl and Alexius Meinong—can render them through abstract discourse, while also adding the quality of greater compactness, and a greater density of sense (*P3* 254). Was Eliot then already in 1927 hinting at his intention to take up the challenge of rendering the problems of Husserl’s philosophy in poetry? This is a matter of conjecture. But in *Triumphal March*, he does experiment with Husserl’s idea of pure consciousness.

3.2 *The Business of Piłsudski’s Memories*

3.2.1 *The Poet as Editor*

At the dawn of the 1930s, apart from indulging his intellectual interest in contemporary German philosophy, Eliot was also busy keeping Faber and Faber on an even financial keel. For the sake of the firm’s financial liquidity, he frequently had to edit the diaries of various individuals. Thus, he kept not only his finger on the pulse of philosophy but also his eye on the tastes of the reading public so that the company would remain in the black. This meant publishing books demanded by the public, which he acerbically complained about in his correspondence with J. S. Barnes, as in a letter written in October 1929, stating: “you are interested in poetry and you have to sit up planning the ‘lay-out’ of a book on cricket, or the memoirs of some eminent nincompoop” (*L4* 640). Not all the memoirs, though, caused such displeasure to the editor. In 1931, Faber and Faber published the memoirs of a Pole, a friend of Joseph Conrad, who, from 1926, was a virtual dictator of Poland: *The Memories of a Polish Revolutionary and Soldier* by Józef Piłsudski (spelt as “Joseph Pilsudski” in the Faber edition). The legal and financial aspects of the contract were reviewed by Eliot.

The terms were established indirectly: by General Julian Stachiewicz, representing Piłsudski, and Darsie Gillie, a friend of Eliot’s, and a translator working also as a Warsaw correspondent for the *Morning Post*.³² Eliot’s letter to Gillie demonstrates that he was intimately familiar with Piłsudski’s manuscript in translation. Indeed, it shows that Eliot had gone through this text with a fine-toothed comb to prevent any legal complaints. Writing to Gillie in February 1931, he expresses his concern with avoiding possible charges of libel from one German and two Austrian generals—“the Austrian general Legay, the Austrian general

Demue [sic], and the German general Kirchbach" (L5 476)—who were represented by Piłsudski unfavourably, and rather comically. Eliot did have some cause for concern. Piłsudski, in his memoirs, with visible relish, depicts a scene in which "general Legay" is caught wearing only his underwear (MPRS 224–25); General Kirchbach, for that matter, is described by him, in a footnote, as a "Chauvinist German" (MPRS 236). Further, in the main text of his *Memories*, Piłsudski, once again, vents his contempt for the top brass by recalling them as "the crooked legged dwarf Demue and the dry malicious Kirchbach" (MPRS 236). A pragmatic editor, Eliot surmised that the generals were most probably no longer alive so the charges of libel would be unlikely. (This assumption was not completely right; and the names "Legay" and "Demue" seem to be misspelt by both Eliot and Piłsudski.³³) Nevertheless, having attached the offending pages, he asked Gillie to make quite sure of it.

The English translation of Piłsudski's work was advertised, in 1930, in an unsigned note, most likely by Eliot. More than mildly appreciative, underlining the "directness" of *The Memories* (L5 103n2),³⁴ the publishers' note suggests the interests typical of its own author. In this account, *The Memories* appear largely composed on the hoof, metaphorically as well as literally, when Piłsudski was a soldier riding his semi-legendary horse Kasztanka. In those days, he had built up a private army of 10,000 men and led the Polish legion, fighting alongside Germans and Austro-Hungarians against the Russians to regain Poland's independence after more than 120 years of the state's political non-existence. As written in the Faber advertisement, the memories are of "a revolutionary, a warrior, and a governor of a great people" (L5 103n2). The publishers highlight the factual value of the memoirs and the accompanying documents but, at the same time, they emphasise the psychological importance of the collection. According to their advertisement, it shows how a leader rises, rather than how a leader is elected. He is seen as incarnating the spirit of the nation; thus, his book is recommended as "yielding insight into [his] mind" and, in this way, providing "insight also into the character of the Polish people" (L5 103n2). If the volume of *The Memories* is important, as the publishers assert, it is because it allows access to the leader's thoughts.

The note, thus, reveals a characteristically Eliotean concern with the prominent individual and history: it claims that by offering an insider's point of view, the book heightens "the dramatic quality" of the historical events, disclosing, at the same time, "what, in a man of action, have proved the mainsprings of action" (L5 103n2). The other interests highlighted in the advertisement are also characteristically Eliotean as they were pursued by him at the time of writing *Triumphal March*. They seem to be threefold: political, aesthetic, and philosophical. The political interest is in a leader with great power and in his relationship with the people, a theme that was central to the Ariel. The aesthetic focus is on the

problem of a dramatic contrast between the insider's and the outsider's points of view. Finally, the philosophical question concerns the issue of the altering perception—the collection of various documents published together as *Memories* were written at various stages in Piłsudski's life. And, returning to Husserl, Eliot could not fail to note the changing—indeed, temporally meandering—point of view in *The Memories*, which constitute a practical exercise in the shifting of the narrative perspective.

3.2.2 *The Changing Point of View*

The Memories is a very heterogeneous collection. The book includes memoirs, orders to troops, excerpts from speeches, a letter, and several articles. Those texts were written by Piłsudski at thirty-six, concerning his childhood and education; at forty-five, about his exile in Irkutsk, in eastern Siberia; at thirty-six, providing (for the second time) an account of the development of the Polish Socialist Party and of his own party activities 1893–1900; and at thirty-five, comprising a memory of his incarceration in 1900, in the Warsaw citadel. Additionally, there are the memories recorded at various other points in his life (at forty-one, forty-three, and sixty-two) included in Chapter Ten, which concerns his involvement in the organisation of the military forces from 1904 to 1908. And, finally, the longest section—written in his late forties and fifties—comprises an account of his life as a soldier in the military campaigns of 1914.

Among the speeches which the book contains is a public address written by Piłsudski in 1923 (at the age of 56), on the point of resigning from his position as the Chief of State. On this occasion, he remembers the function which he performed in 1918—when the Second Polish Republic was being formed—as that of a “Dictator” (*MPRS* 366–68). In his resignation speech, he proudly recalls the post-war days, when he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Forces and entrusted with the creation of the Polish government. He was assigned this position in the state of national emergency, when the term “dictator” had no negative connotations of imposed authoritarianism. Rather it was linked with the Roman idea of dictators appointed for a limited period of time; and, in fact, in Poland in 1918, it would have had heroic associations. The closest would be with the leaders of the January Uprising (1863–64), whose defeat badly affected Piłsudski's family. During the longest-lasting insurrection, the power of a dictator had been conferred by the insurgent government to Romuald Traugutt, a general, and a hero. His fight for independence and tragic defeat were still fresh in the memory passed down in Piłsudski's family home. Notably, when Piłsudski was called by his nation to become the dictator, he assumed the dictatorial position only provisionally, and he actually relinquished it to the *Sejm* (the lower house of the Polish parliament), as he promised, after 98 days.

In May 1926, however, when he returned to politics, he effectively enforced dictatorship. Only three years after his resignation speech, Piłsudski forced his way back onto the political scene, this time by actually seizing dictatorial power through a military coup. With this foreknowledge, it is quite important to note that in his valedictory statement, he nostalgically remembers how—in 1918—he “issued edicts universally obeyed” and “orders [that] were listened to passively; willingly or unwillingly they were executed” (MPRS 366). It is significant that—at the midpoint between two dictatorships (the one by invitation and the other one assumed by force), and in the concluding section of his book—Piłsudski couches the idea of dictatorship in overtly positive, almost redeeming, terms. A link between the leader and his people is stressed as well as the suggestion that there was no intrusion from the side of politics. The nation’s trust in him is presented as the outcome of his devotion to the fight for independence and of the romantic glamour of his military campaigns. Using the word “Dictator” emphatically, several times, he claims that this position came to him through “neither election nor violence” (MPRS 367), but by the will of the people that, finally, overcame their apathy.

However, when Faber and Faber published *The Memories* in 1931, the Marshal had already been five years into the real, rather than romantically recalled dictatorship. It is interesting that Gillie, in the translator’s note concluding the volume, paid a glowing political tribute to Piłsudski after the coup: “He has succeeded,” Gillie says, “in forming the first strong national Polish government since the days of Casimir the Great in the fourteenth century” (MPRS 372). However, the author of the note advertising the book, most probably Eliot, shows a different interest: not in the political fact and its consequences (as Gillie does), but in the meaning, origin, and the perception of the events—that is, in the idea and the point of view as incarnated by the political and military leader. He stresses the insider’s point of view, not because each memoir and each recorded speech is naturally a first-person narration but, more importantly, because Piłsudski, aware of both his unique position and his audience, strives to outline the process of decision making. He explains his reasons for taking action and shares his feelings of responsibility and fear for his legionnaires, the anguish he experiences learning that his cavalry is in extreme danger at Radziostow (MPRS 329–34). He speaks of his hopes and lightens the mood with wit.

He also reveals his awareness that there always looms a gap between the commander’s emotions and the appearances which must be preserved, between his private self and the public perception of him. In one of the war episodes, he recounts ordering a village boy to guide his soldiers to the next station and, in his memoir, admits being deeply moved by the despair of the boy’s mother, who offered to go instead of her son. He confesses that he was hardly able to stand the scenes of pain

befalling civilians (MPRS 254). Nevertheless, even if in his diary he is open about having his heart wrung with civilians' suffering, he resolves to appear unmoved on the surface. The metaphors of depth and surface are at play. He is exposed through his function, but hidden because of the obligation to perform it in the most impersonal way. He feels limited in his own decisions by military discipline (the Austrian and German orders), yet he has to enforce this discipline on his soldiers. He reveals his softer side to the reader of *The Memories*, but as the commander, in *Lebenswelt*, he must remain a mystery to his people—as detached as the leader glimpsed in Eliot's *Triumphal March*.

3.2.3 *The Self-Exploring Man of Action*

The Piłsudski of *The Memories* remains hidden, sceptical, and beset by uncertainties. The impression is of a man with a very critical and exploring mind. Though involved in the immediate military action, he is also continuously weighing priorities: the obedience to orders, the prospects of his own ventures, the safety of his soldiers. Within the space of just one wrenching paragraph (one of many describing the withdrawal of his troops to Krzywopłoty, a march fraught with danger), confessing that he feels the temptation to disobey the orders issued by his superiors, he admits that doubts arise in his mind recurrently.³⁵ Elsewhere, he remembers how, marching under Austrian orders, he made his own decision to embark on a circuitous route to Cracow, still tormented by an “inferno of doubts” which appeared as soon as he began to consider his position (MPRS 247). In these excerpts, he is an almost Eliotean, magus-like figure. And, perhaps, he is also a figure appealing to the poet whose early Prufrock persona was famously burdened with many qualms—but if so, then, with a critical difference: in the figure emerging from Piłsudski's *Memories*, Eliot found an individual who also was a man of action.

That a man who freely admitted his proclivity to doubt was also capable of great practical accomplishments was of the utmost significance to Eliot. He highlighted this character trait, preparing his Harvard lectures on contemporary English literature for the spring of 1933 (“English Literature from 1890 to the Present Day”), including in his notes for the lecture on two exiles—Joseph Conrad and Henry James—an unexpected reference to Piłsudski. Commenting on these authors, Eliot concerns himself with emotion, explaining that Conrad and James create emotion in their art by placing emphasis on tension, things in progress, and the drama evoked by the juxtapositions of various viewpoints. In Conrad, specifically, Eliot notes high emotional intensity and states that, in this writer's work, there is no division between thought and action. Thoughts are actions; actions, in turn, involve a thought and a resolve. Alongside the observation on Conrad appears a cryptic note referring to his friend, Piłsudski, in which Eliot makes a generalisation about the

Polish national character, having also jotted down page numbers next to this remark. The note reads: “In the Pole, perhaps the man of action and the man of reflection not different people. Pilsudski [sic], p. 264, 355–56” (P4 769). The page numbers refer to *The Memories of a Polish Revolutionary and Soldier*.

The referenced passages include Piłsudski’s reminiscence of his stint, admittedly comfortable, in a German prison in Magdeburg (MPRS 354). Incarcerated rather luxuriously, Piłsudski lives under the impression that his self has virtually been reduced to his mind. He feels disembodied—a man of action forced to inactivity, reconsidering his former deeds. But he hardly complains, noting that—being a reflective thinker—he is well prepared for his internment (MPRS 355). To cope with loneliness and isolation, he approaches his memories in a critical vein, re-examining them as a strategist would “so that [his] eyes should cease to see, [his] ears to hear, and [his] heart to beat faster at the memories that surged up in [him]” (MPRS 356). He explains that he “tried to resolve these almost sensual impressions into analytic thought” (MPRS 356). Should this order of concepts be reversed—with analytic thought being turned into sensuous impressions—no intention could be more Eliotean. In *The Memories*, it seems, Eliot would have come upon the uncanny reverse of his own preoccupations: the poet concerned with the transformation of an idea into a sensation—recommending that, in poetry, an idea should be apprehended “as the odour of a rose” (P2 380)³⁶—while editing a memoir, encounters a national leader struggling to transform a sensation into a thought. Whichever direction, for both the modernist poet and the political leader, it is the connection of thought, sensation, and action that matters—a capacity of an intellectual to become practically involved in the world.³⁷

3.2.4 *Sons of Literary-Minded Mothers*

The figure of Piłsudski which emerges from *The Memories*—a man avoiding public display of feelings, insisting on the unity of sensations and thoughts, sceptical and exploring—suggests a sensibility that corresponds with the poet’s. There appears, however, one more aspect to this memoir which can account for the special meaning it had for Eliot: Piłsudski, similar to him, was a devoted son of a literary-minded mother. Eliot’s mother, as noted by his biographers, was the first admirer of his poetic talent and his first guide into the literary world. Their relationship, as Ackroyd observes, almost mirrored that between sons and mothers in D. H. Lawrence, with Charlotte Stearns Eliot exerting a tremendous intellectual and spiritual influence on her son (20). Eliot movingly remembers this literary debt in a long personal letter written to Henry Ware a few weeks after her death, one in which he asks for the books she wished him to have, reveals his intention to publish her

poems, remembers her praising a juvenile piece of his (she copied it and gave to others to read, stating that it was superior to any of her own compositions) and admits a sense of acute loss at not being able to send her, as was his habit, the first copies of his new work (*L5* 651).

Such strong filial affection is also reflected in *The Memories of a Polish Revolutionary and Soldier*. Piłsudski pays tribute to his mother in the opening pages of his memoir, presenting her as a Polish matron who taught him patriotism, instilled in him the virtues of independence, courage, integrity, and disinterestedness, and stimulated his early intellectual development with her challenging and witty conversations (*MPRS* 11–12). He mentions his father as an affectionate parent, though appearing downcast after the disaster of the January Uprising. It was his mother, Maria, who managed to overcome the severe disillusionment caused by the failure of 1863–64 and by the ensuing Russian repressions. Piłsudski cherishes the memory of her fetching small volumes which defied the Tsarist censorship and had to be stored in a secret place, her reading those books to the children and encouraging them to memorise the passages she recited. “These were the works of our great poets” (*MPRS* 37), he explains, underlining his love of Polish poetry, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński—authors who were banned from the school curriculum and whose works were made illegal to possess after the insurrection (*MPRS* 11). These memories of family warmth mixed with the aura of conspiracy stayed with him. For Piłsudski, as for his mother, after the state’s political disintegration, a sense of national identity was preserved through literature. Thus, in Piłsudski’s memoirs and speeches, Eliot encountered not only a man with a reflective mind and the capacity for action, a military commander and dictator, but also a man who, like himself, was a dedicated son of a strong woman who had introduced him to literature.

3.3 *The Heideggerian Man of Will*

3.3.1 *The Existentialist Paradigm*

In the year 1931, besides Eliot’s professional interest in Piłsudski, yet another significant correlation established itself, with his philosophical interests gradually shifting from German phenomenology to German existentialism—from Husserl to Martin Heidegger. In fact, Eliot approached Heidegger through Husserl, expecting to find the “disciple” as interesting as his mentor (*L5* 228). He stated his wish to read Heidegger when writing to Erich Alport, to whom he would often turn for advice on choosing books to have translated into English. In the summer of 1930, he approached Alport, asking him to indicate a bookshop in Germany where he could leave a cash deposit enabling him to place orders and thus keep up-to-date with developments in German literature

and philosophy (L5 228). (Eliot read both Husserl and Heidegger in German.³⁸) The following year he recommended Heidegger to Stephen Spender, though he warned Spender of the philosopher's difficult and abstruse style (see L5 529). Over the years that followed, Heidegger proved very significant to Eliot,³⁹ who regretted, in his commentary written for *The Criterion* in October 1932, that British readers were so little acquainted with the new German philosophy which Heidegger represented, gaining prominence in Europe along with Max Scheler and around the same time as the literary scholars such as Friedrich Gundolf and Ernst Robert Curtius. Rather inauspiciously, Eliot's commentary was published only some three months before Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor of Germany, and merely six months before Heidegger became officially, and infamously, established as the rector of the University of Freiburg. Indeed, six months after his *Being and Time* had been published, Heidegger could hardly be considered a representative of the stoically "dispassionate thought" of "politics-ridden Germany" (P4 498), as Eliot believed him to be. But in October 1932, when Eliot was writing his commentary, he could scarcely have envisaged what course, exactly, Heidegger's career was about to take. Neither could he have predicted Heidegger's disloyalty towards Husserl—to whom *Being and Time* had originally been dedicated—and Heidegger's subsequent estrangement from his mentor on account of Husserl's Jewish descent.

In the context of *Triumphal March*, Heidegger provides a novel perspective. If the provenance of the poem's voice can be related to Husserl's theory of consciousness, then, the figure of the leader should be viewed as related to Heidegger's existentialism. Notably, for Eliot in 1931, *The Memories* were sitting, literally, next to *Being and Time*. Could, then, Piłsudski's memoir dovetail with Eliot's reading of the philosophical treatise? And might the imagery from the Marshal's volume have been recollected in *Triumphal March*?

With Eliot's attention focused on Heidegger rather than on Nietzsche, also his depiction of the leader in the first Coriolan poem is more suggestive of the Heideggerian influence (the concept of *Dasein*) than of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*. The mounted figure—alone, but not obviously aloof—is introduced as the enigmatic "he," announced by two brief questions and one excited shout coming from the crowd. But the actual description of him—a glimpse of his eyes and of his hand—comes from a significantly calmer, deliberating speaker who reverses the usual order of the noun and the adjective. The image is followed by a lyrical evocation of the unseen, provided by yet another interfering voice. It is not clear whether the words come as a formal apostrophe—spoken in front of the reverentially "hidden"—or whether they come as just a sigh, "O hidden" (TM 34). The final reference to "him"—"He's artful" (TM 47)—is ambivalent: it is uncertain whether the compliment is for a Caesar or for Cyril, for a shrewd politician or for a crafty boy.

His mode of being, likewise, appears indeterminate: being there with others and, more importantly, *for* others, “he” remains unknown to them. Apparently, he does not exist without them looking, and yet he does exist through watching them, established through the paradigm of exchanged looks and aloneness—the old legacy of Edmund Husserl and the new inspiration from Heidegger.

The Heideggerian influence suggests itself through the figure’s power and extreme detachment. But this loneliness can also reflect Piłsudski’s solitary struggle about which Eliot read in the memoirs. Is, then, the mounted man in the poem created as the likeness of a figure arising from *The Memories*? For the poet sensitive to the winds of time, philosophy would supply an abstract pattern organising the lived experience. On the other hand, the life of a historical persona could provide him with an embodiment of philosophical ideas—including the Heideggerian concepts of care, fear, authenticity, and escape—fleshing out this philosophy with a real life. It is worth noting that, in the pages to which Eliot refers in the notes for his Turnbull Lectures (1933), Piłsudski speaks of the war campaigns as a time of constant uncertainty, risk and anguish, and also the period of a day-to-day determination shown in the “transformation of oneself into a perpetually renewed implement of struggle” (MPRS 355). To Gillie, the commander and his legionnaires were the men who “*incarnated* the principle that Poles must ask for nothing less than independence” (MPRS 353; emphasis added). But Eliot broadened the context of this incarnation: he took the idea of “incarnation” from the moral level to the philosophical. He could have perceived the figure arising from Piłsudski’s memoirs as an illumination of the concepts of Heideggerian existentialism—an incarnation of a philosophy—with Piłsudski’s emphasis on the joining of thought and action, the combination of will and tactics, the acts of courage and compassion performed in an ever unpredictable environment.

Eliot would find in Piłsudski’s memoir an existential reflection of the idea of Being-as-care (*Sorge*) and of the Heideggerian triad of “facticity (thrownness), existence (project) and falling prey” (BT 262). In philosophical shorthand (such as the predominantly literary focus of this chapter permits), Heidegger speaks of a contingent, haphazard, yet binding actuality. Human existence, however, is shaped not only by random reality but also, Heidegger stresses, by the exertion of individual will. Nevertheless, while wilfully moulding his or her life and straining against the surrounding reality, a human is curbed, on the one hand, by the desire to escape (*Verfallen*) and, on the other, by the fear of death and nothingness (*Angst*). From the resolutely atheist position—which, next to the Christian stance, would provide, as Eliot claimed, some guarantee of “clear thinking” (P3 536)—this fear would arise, as in Heidegger’s pithy phrase, with the dreadful realisation of “the nothingness of the possible impossibility of ... [the self’s] existence” (BT 245),

or, the possibility of non-existence, or death. The prospect of nothingness, however, also has a sobering effect: it shocks a human being into authenticity. To Heidegger, the self becomes authentic, that is, liberated from its illusions, in its confrontation with the idea of death which is inexplicable, “the ownmost nonrelational” (BT 238). Using a poetic emphasis, Heidegger speaks of the authentic self as the one which is “free for its death and shattering itself on it” (BT 352). There is no easy assurance that death, rather than only an end, will be a fulfilment, or even that its meaning will be grasped as such. “Even ‘unfulfilled’ Da-sein ends” (BT 22). The idea of death as a meaningless end, rather than a significant finale, is alarming. Thus, humans strive to alleviate the fear arising from the awful prospect of senselessness through escapist behaviour: by indulging in public life or in daydreams. Heidegger sees this manner of being as subjecting oneself to an illusory therapy, which he describes as “falling prey” to “[t]emptation, tranquilization, estrangement” (BT 235)—as *Verfallen*.

3.3.2 *Into War He Is Thrown, Expecting Death and Falling Prey: Geworfenheit, Echtheit, Verfallen*

It is worthwhile looking at *The Memories* as Eliot might have read it at the time—through Heidegger’s conceptual framework. Although Piłsudski never refers to Heidegger, his *Memories* provides a literary-factual illustration of Heidegger’s philosophy. The persona depicted in his recollections is of a soldier constantly aware of a looming and unpredictable death and of a commander responsible for the lives of his people. A good strategist, he endeavours to make his own decisions while “thrown” into, and functioning within, a broader theatre of war that is both his own and not quite his, being also the war fought by Germans and Austrians against Russians. The complexity of his situation, due to the historical partitioning of Poland, is best illustrated by the confusion between the Fatherland and a *Feindesland* (a foreign territory). Summoned by the Austrians to defend their Fatherland (his and the Austrians’), Piłsudski soon realises that this notion, in fact, excludes the territories inhabited by his own compatriots, the Polish population of the Russian partition where, as he recalls, “we had felt so much at home” (MPRS 205). His sense of an irritating dependency on somebody else’s orders is strong and the effort to assert his own will within (and sometimes beyond) the dictates of military discipline, is equally evident. Leading the Polish legionnaires in the German campaign and, therefore, limited in his own decisions by the military duty to obey his foreign supporters and superiors, Piłsudski, nevertheless, strives to make his own choice, often with little or no external guidance.

He leads a life marked by a constant tension between *possibility* and *facticity*, between a sense of *thrownness* and the will to realise his

own plan. Involved in a continuous struggle, physical and intellectual, he is interpreting, planning, reconsidering, taking decisions. A significant bulk of *The Memories* is devoted to outlining his train of thought. He never stops anticipating the results of the possible manoeuvres in the field. This, surely, is a strategist's task. But it is also an illustration of Heidegger's insistence that the self should remain involved with the world by thinking forward, because anticipating does not mean taking flight from the disturbingly real but rather being ready to confront it. In his words, "Expecting is not only an occasional looking away from *the* possible to its possible actualization, but essentially a *waiting for that actualization*. Even in expecting, one leaps away from the possible and gets a footing in the real" (BT 242). To that, invoking Nietzsche, Heidegger adds: "In anticipation, Da-sein guards itself against falling back behind itself, ... against 'becoming too old for its victories'" (BT 244). Anticipating is the antidote to reminiscing.

This part of *The Memories* which deals with the Polish fight for independence during World War I also reveals the commander's care for his men. In the narrative of his war memories, the calculating mind of the tactician is, repeatedly, juxtaposed with the feeling heart of a man concerned about his soldiers' well-being: sufficient sleep, proper food, and warm shelters. Piłsudski frequently reproaches himself for what he regards as his poor decisions.⁴⁰ His sense of care (his *Sorge*) incarnates, to a reader of Heidegger, the understanding of responsibility as the responsibility "to others" which ultimately manifests itself in "having the responsibility for the other's becoming jeopardised in his existence, led astray, or even destroyed" (BT 260). He embodies the Heideggerian "Da-sein in and with its 'generation'" (BT 352), having pledged his loyalty to his soldiers: first to the Riflemen's Association (Strzelcy), then to the Legion, and finally to the Polish army.

If the prospect of his soldiers dying is piercing to him, the thought of his own death is so keen that it makes Piłsudski lapse into mythologising. In one of the memoirs, he meticulously outlines his circuitous march towards Cracow: first, in the direction of Wolbrom, Lgota Wolbromska, and Krzywoploty, then, southwards, towards Ulina and Skala—a curiously winding line on the map. He admits that his idea to use the corridor between the two fighting armies—the passage through which he wanted to lead his people—turned out to be a miscalculation. (The corridor had narrowed which put his Ułans in a very dangerous position.) He has to make another decision. While resenting the thought of a retreat under the Austrian command and, at the same time, fearing a hecatomb might be inevitable, he nevertheless resolves to march in the direction of Cracow, thus risking death. Poignantly, in 1914, when the outcome of war was unknown, his and his soldiers' sacrifice could seem to him pointless. So, Piłsudski comforts himself by creating a poetic parallel—by aestheticising his imagined death. He recalls the death of a Polish hero—also

a French Marshal serving Napoleon, Prince Józef Poniatowski—who died heroically in 1813, wounded and drowned in the river Elster while defending the French army’s retreat from Leipzig. (In fact, Poniatowski was killed mistakenly by the allies whom he defended—accidentally shot by a French soldier. But Piłsudski may not have been aware of this irony of history.) Thus, having resolved that Cracow would be the final destination, Piłsudski declares that, should they die in a battle, he wants this envisaged bloodshed on the bank of the Vistula to be remembered as parallel to the heavy losses which Poniatowski’s corps suffered trying to cross the Weisse Elster (*MPRS* 237). He draws a rather perverse consolation from this comparison, which however, renders his and his soldiers’ sacrifice less absurd, less of a mistake: he imaginatively rescues himself and his soldiers—his “knights” (*MPRS* 246)—from oblivion by envisaging their death as part of national mythology.

In Heideggerian terms, though—when the burden of the meaningless killing, death as nothingness, or the *Angst* become unbearable—Piłsudski falls into the trap of imagination. It is his personal mode of *Verfallen*, falling prey—a delusion against which Heidegger warns. “Authentic being-toward-death cannot *evade* its ownmost nonrelational possibility or *cover* it *over* in this flight and *reinterpret* it for the common sense of the they” (*BT* 240)—one’s death cannot be reinterpreted and, thus, shared. It remains inexplicable. But, cautioning against evading this disquieting realisation, Heidegger also recognises that an attempt to escape it is inevitable and pervasively human. It must, however, be said that Piłsudski rarely resorts to mythologising; such fancies appear only when the arduous march makes him feel utterly exhausted. In *The Memories*, he rather comes across as a very practical man, with a great sense of humour, often sarcastic, and occasionally caustic.

3.4 *The Triumphal March through Cracow*

In Eliot’s lecture notes for the course which he taught at Harvard in spring 1933, the number (“264”) which he jotted down with reference to Piłsudski indicates a page included in this chapter of *The Memories of a Polish Revolutionary and Soldier* in which the Marshal describes his arduous march, ending with a triumphal entry into Cracow. The procession through the town—presented from Piłsudski’s point of view—is evocatively depicted as the passage of the victorious commander, saluted and cheered by the people, but himself remaining unmoved, detached, fatigued beyond endurance, his vision blurred. He remembers seeing his surroundings as “drowned in a mist” (*MPRS* 287); and he recalls “[a]s in a mist ... the flowers which Cracow girls pressed upon [him], and a box of cakes which was pushed into [his] hands” (*MPRS* 287). The word “mist” is repeated five times within one paragraph, as the word “dust” is repeated in Eliot’s poem. Piłsudski, a victor, like the Eliotean leader from

Triumphal March, passes the streets on his famous chestnut-coloured mare Kasztanka, being half-aware of the cheering people. The image markedly corresponds with the vision from the poem; and, perhaps, it is because of this parallel that in Eliot's satiric Ariel, the leader is not satirised. The description of the military commander in *Triumphal March* is almost lyrical, echoing the weary lyricism of Piłsudski's reminiscence of the Cracow march. Eliot's horse-mounted figure, while appearing in the middle of the noisy procession, remains likewise disconnected from the setting. Surrounded by military emblems and religious symbols, he continues the march towards the still, the quiet, the hidden. Importantly, it is the crowd in the poem, rather than a Caesar, who bear the brunt of the satire; likewise, in Piłsudski's *Memories*, it is the people who are exposed for their ambivalent attitude, described as supportive, but then, also as passive or opportunistic.

Characteristically, the complimentary reference to "the great people" (included in the book advertisement) is less apparent in the translator's note, which highlights the contrast between a small group of Polish activists and the general population. Already in the first decade of the twentieth century, as Gillie observes, Piłsudski was aware that the young men who followed him represented "only a small fraction of the Polish nation" (*MPRS*, Translator's Note E 181). Indeed, in his "Order to the Legion" given on 6 August 1915, he stresses his and his soldiers' isolation: "The nation did not follow us; it had not the courage to look tremendous events in the eyes and waited in passive 'neutrality' for somebody's 'guarantee'" (*MPRS* 346). He deeply respects his Ułans, but takes a critical view of the people for whom they are fighting. *The Memories* are interspersed with his criticism of the nation's spirit as broken by the years of the country's partition and bondage. In the Translator's Note, Gillie adduces the words of one of Piłsudski's legionnaires, Waclaw Sieroszewski, a writer and a Siberian exile, who recalls the commander being irritated by the Polish nationals' inertia (which contradicts Heidegger's eulogy of individual will)⁴¹ and stating that his compatriots "cannot even achieve an act of will! We want only to chatter and lament'" (qtd. in *MPRS* 182). On a different occasion—in his bitter 1923 resignation speech—chastising Poles for "the melancholy reputation which we had in the past," Piłsudski, full of indignation, suggests that the "sympathy" the Poles received in Europe is a poor substitute for the "respect" they should have strived to earn for themselves (*MPRS* 368).

Realistic about the nation, he is a little less forthright about the dictatorial role which he forcefully assumed in 1926. By recalling only a provisional and expedient dictatorship of 1918, Piłsudski effectively romanticises the notion of the "Dictator." The English translation of his *Memories* reveals the man—a soldier and an intellectual—who created, single-handedly, a government after over a century of the state's

non-existence. This is also how Piłsudski saw it in 1923. However, three years later, he attempted a coup which introduced an altogether different kind of dictatorship. But, although autocratic, his government—at least, while Piłsudski was alive—did not eliminate the political opposition. (The detention camp at Bereza Kartuska was set up by the order of the Polish president Ignacy Mościcki in June 1934, when Piłsudski was very ill, not long before his death in 1935.) Besides, in the mid-war period, “Grandpa” (“Dziadek,” as he was affectionately called by his own soldiers) was one of some ten European autocrats, governing the countries stretching east to west, from Latvia to Spain, and north to south, from Lithuania to Greece. The meaning of the word “Dictator,” then, as used by the Marshal must be judged in context. When the English translation of *The Memories* was published, its publication overseen by Eliot, the post-World War II meanings of tyranny and sheer evil had not yet accrued to the term. Thus, while reading Piłsudski, Eliot confronted a text shedding a critical light on the nation’s lethargy rather than on the state of dictatorship. The question remains of whether the depiction of the nation’s inaction translated itself into the passivity of the watching crowd in *Triumphal March*. Does the fact that Eliot was well-disposed towards the Polish dictator (Conrad’s friend and one of Faber authors) account for the poem’s lyricism in the representation of the saluted figure? The answers (whether yes or no) can be only hypothetical, for Eliot provides no direct indications; but the echoes from *The Memories* strongly reverberate in the poem.

4 Satire’s Edge Blunted

4.1 *Satire with a Note of Lyricism*

If Piłsudski’s *Memories* tempered the negative view of the dictator, it might have sharpened the satiric edge as turned against the watching crowd in the poem written at the height of Eliot’s engagement with satirical verse. A prolific reviewer, Eliot was familiar with the developments in the field, having discussed Hugh Walker’s *English Satire and Satirists* in 1925, and in the following year, having written an expert commendation of A. G. Barnes’s anthology of satire, *A Book of English Verse Satire*, stressing Barnes’s point about the prevalence of lightness and comical playfulness over gravity in contemporary satirical works (P2 792). Around that time, Eliot also published on Ben Jonson and John Dryden, and he paid tribute to Dryden in one of his radio talks in April 1931 by describing him (in the paragraph which was deleted on publication) as the man who bequeathed to the English the idiom on which they must rely for expressing their thoughts and emotions (P4 273n1). His own satire—in *Triumphal March*—was carefully balanced: it had some tone of bitterness (with crumpets in lieu of the Holy Communion, with

a parade turning into a picnic, and with the Caesar figure superseded by little Cyril), but no note of cruelty.

In later years, Eliot found the satiric aspect overemphasised in the poem's interpretations. Agreeing with an observation made in a student's essay in 1957, he admitted that it was primarily a compassionate poem.⁴² He stressed a similar note—of empathetic understanding and acceptance—in the year the poem was published. In a chattily rambling letter to Spender, recommending to him Heidegger, “though far from lucid” (L5 529), Eliot also responds to Spender's joke about Wyndham Lewis's book on Hitler, which was described a month later in the mildest of critiques in the *Spectator* (in the review titled “Mr. Lewis Amongst the Nazis”) as “slapdash and often confused” (642), the work of a credulous man who took at face value the Hitlerites' opinions of Hitler. (It is only with the benefit—or the curse—of hindsight that one can see how Eliot and Spender made light of the terrible ominousness of Lewis's enthusiasm for the Führer.) Rather significantly, in the same letter, Eliot confides to Spender a desire to include in his own poetry a note of cheerfulness. Such a note of joy, Eliot says, he has found listening to Beethoven's A-minor quartet on his gramophone. He tells Spender that this note of quiet acceptance which he finds in Beethoven's music comes “as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering” (L5 529). To recapture it, one should remember, was the wish of the poet who had lost his mother not long before he wrote these words and who, in a poem written in the same year, combined the satiric vein with the mystical quiet of “the still point,” planning, at the same time, to reintroduce into *Coriolan* the filial motif from *Marina*. The note of quiet reconciliation, then, might be no less significant in *Triumphal March* than that of satire, the personal theme, no less important than the political.

Eliot had pondered on the filial motif for some time. In autumn 1930, writing to G. Wilson Knight (who rightly noted the significance of Beethoven, but probably overstated the importance of Nietzsche)—and remarking on *Marina*'s theme of Pericles reunited with his daughter—he adds an observation concerning the plot of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. He indicates that, to him, the play is driven by “the mother-son relation” (L5 368), based on which he intends to build his own future poem. Written the following year, Eliot's *Triumphal March*, or, his metaphorical “new ship”—a new poem representing the new idiom—leaving the quiet marina of Eliot's *Marina* sailed into the waters of dictatorship; but it retained links with the previous Ariel, even if the theme of a mother-son relationship became explicit only with the second movement of the unfinished *Coriolan*.

4.2 Lyricism Tinged with a Self-Satirical Tone

At the end of *Triumphal March*, the poem's personal note reappears, but its tone is transformed: it reverts from the lyrical to the satiric. This aspect

is highlighted by Ronald Bush, who, in his searching analysis, shows that the weapon of mockery is double-edged. Political satire changes into satirical self-critique, with Eliot concluding *Triumphal March* in the same way in which he had ended *The Waste Land*: with an image of an ineffective poet. Bush stresses that the materials which the poem explores include Eliot's "own memories of the rallies of the *camelots du roi* and of a book written by the *chef du cadre*, Charles Maurras" (153). On the page of Maurras's *L'avenir de l'intelligence* from which the quotation is derived, the monarchist Maurras recounts how baffled he was by the fact that a writer had been paid respect by militaries, honoured with soldiers' salute. Thus puzzled, he seeks a confirmation: "And you actually mean the soldiers stood at attention, for him? For that poetic charlatan? 'Et les soldats faisaient la haie?'" (qtd. in Bush 155).⁴³ In this light—with Maurras taking a jab at a minor author—Eliot's parody of the spectators' materialism (their sausages and stools) becomes supplemented by his disgust at literary pomposity, which effectively, turns his satire into self-derision: a Coriolanus, or a Caesar, becomes the saluted poet. This reading is reaffirmed by Martin Scofield, who also claims that, in 1931, Eliot—the unquestioned authority, the leader in the English literary world—may have introduced these mocking lines by way of self-mockery (184),⁴⁴ alluding, through a military victor, to a man of letters. However, it is not without significance that a similar overlap of the leaders and the literati—if reversed—can be found in Piłsudski's *Memories*, where the man of action is also a man of thought, the military leader is a writer.

In *Triumphal March*, therefore, the spectrum of the superimposed figures including a Caesar, a Coriolanus, and a poet can be extended to include that of the first Marshal of Poland. They all are fused into one image.⁴⁵ The scenes, too, seem telescoped, with one sliding into another: in the scene of the military parade, Mussolini's march through Rome—as represented in Phillips's tribute—partly overlaps with Piłsudski's entry to Cracow as described in the Marshal's memoir. With each turn of the critical lens, *Triumphal March* becomes a different poem, transforming itself into satirical, lyrical, and self-satiric verse. While involving, by Eliot's own admission, the theme of a modern reversion to idolatry and invoking, as scholars note, Husserl's notion of pure consciousness, it also reflects Eliot's interest in Heidegger and in Piłsudski, with the Marshal's multiple narratorial identities—a soldier, a commander, a devoted son, a man of reflective temperament, a leader, the "Dictator" and a writer—suggesting various parallels with the poem's equivocal image of the general worshipped by the street. But, for Eliot, the attraction of this manifold persona possibly went far beyond this figure's multiplicity. In Gillie's rendering, which Eliot endorsed, Piłsudski "incarnated" a people's aspiration for liberty. Additionally, in his wartime writings, he outlined a personality through which a poet could contemplate a

philosophical thought. His memoirs supplied Eliot with an image of a historical character that intuitively enacted the tenets of a new philosophy, or, to use a word from Murry's letter, with an individual capable of galvanising an idea, incarnating and enlivening it.

Notes

1. John H. Timmerman—claiming that the poem marks the start of Eliot's use of dramatic forms and his turn to political issues (155)—regards *Triumphal March* as defective (152). According to him, the poem's personae are deprived of speech (164), while the dominant voice remains incorporeal. Martin Scofield, who also considers the disembodied voice as troubling, observes that it keeps shifting from an ordinary member of the public to a mere gaper, to a speaker who has a deeper awareness, and who echoes Husserl (184). To Grover Smith, the speaking voice seems adrift, either that of "little people" or that of a spectator with a broader vision—a rhetorical weakness which, he says, might have been redressed "by the judicious insertion of quotation marks" (160). G. Douglas Atkins rationalises the hovering effect of the leading voice, proposing that the Husserl quotation in the poem is uttered by "the Roman speaker, a thoroughgoing empiricist, observing a parade," and suggesting that the scene, while taking place in ancient Rome, refers to more than just one epoch (18).
2. F. O. Matthiessen links *Triumphal March* and *The Waste Land* through their themes of solitary confinement, having assumed that the main figure is Coriolanus (138); Mervyn W. Williamson claims that the poems are connected by the motif of post-war disillusionment (112); Ronald Bush notes that they both include the elements of self-satire (153–55).
3. Smith attributes the critical effect of the poem to its ironic discrepancies (160–62). The juxtapositions on which it relies are also indicated by Matthews (55–56).
4. The earliest indications of these allusions are by Smith (160–62). The reference to Maurras is discussed by Brombert (7). The listing of the arms surrendered by Germans, as Eliot admits, was taken from a book by General Erich von Ludendorff. See Eliot's "Talking Freely" (43). The most recent and exhaustive list of annotations is provided in *PTSE1* (819–29).
5. K. Narayana Chandran lists the shared concerns, including the problems of perception and liminality, the behaviour of people in a crowd, leadership, and the coincidence of the real and the illusory (58–70).
6. Smith observes that the people watching the parade resemble "the capricious pliant Demos" from Aristophanes' *The Knights* (161), suggesting that Eliot's satire is directed "(a little unfairly) at the blind ignorance of the goggling rabble and (with rather more justice) at the pomposity of government as a substitute for this [metaphysical] center" (159). Mervyn W. Williamson, less compassionate towards the crowd, claims that the satire's target is "the apathetic and uncomprehending mob" (113). Scofield highlights the bathetic effect of the reference to sacrifice as expressed through a mention of a sausage (the Aristophanic reference)—a different order of sustenance (184).
7. See above, note 6.
8. See also the observations on this point by James F. Loucks (23).
9. Zabel uses Eliot's phrase for the title ("The Still Point") of his 1932 review of the two Coriolan poems, convinced that *Coriolan* is about faith experienced as calm confidence (158), rather than about formalised

- religion. Matthiessen points out that the image returns in “Burnt Norton,” ii (184). Colón (85) and Martz (134) refer to its reappearance in *Murder in the Cathedral*, where it symbolises a moment of quiet joyfulness.
10. The juxtaposition of the figures is discussed by Smith (160) and Timmerman (162–63).
 11. For a discussion of Eliot’s *Idea of a Christian Society*, see Asher (87–97).
 12. During the time of its publication, 1927–39, *The Criterion: A Literary Review* changed its title twice: to *The New Criterion* (January 1926—January 1927) and to *The Monthly Criterion: A Literary Review* (May 1927—March 1928).
 13. The word is used in this sense in Eliot’s omnibus review “The Literature of Fascism,” 1928 (*P3* 542). Eliot, it should be noted, also used it when referring to religious modernism, which he viewed as the watering down of dogma rather than critically engaging with its content (see Budziak, “Modernism and Muddle”).
 14. Muriel Bradbrook, in her 1942 review, states that the political emphasis in *Triumphal March* “perhaps seemed exaggerated when it was written but is now generally accepted” (444).
 15. Matthiessen observes that, anticipating the leader from *Triumphal March*, the figure of Coriolanus appears in *The Waste Land* in the section reflecting on the admonition of the thunder—the call to surrender one’s egoistic self (138).
 16. Chandran in his reading of *The Difficulties of a Statesman* observes that he has “not seen anyone conceding the nobility of democratic thought to T. S. Eliot” (65). Matthews, however, claims that, speaking for the elimination “of hieratic religious thought from the political arena Eliot mounts in the final pages of ‘The Literature of Fascism,’ a strong defence of democracy” (58). For Eliot’s support of democratic ideals—albeit understood as the equality of educational opportunity—see Budziak, “T. S. Eliot’s Anti-Elitist View of Education.”
 17. The representation of an alternative to such a regime—an option envisaged in the form of a Christian democracy—as Reeves suggests, might have been planned by Eliot as the never-written parts three and four of *Coriolan* (205). Eliot, eventually, outlined this political vision in “The Idea of a Christian Society,” which, Michael Levenson and Denis Donoghue agree, was not an entirely thought-out project. Levenson provides a broad overview of the development of Eliot’s social and political views, from the early flirtations with liberalism to increasingly authoritative pronouncements in the mid-1920s to Eliot’s predictions of the fall of liberal democracy to the militant Christian orthodoxy and—as of 1939—to an idea of the organic society, summing it up, tongue-in-cheek, as combining “an authoritative Church; and unconsciously Christian public; a spiritual elect; a State of any kind that suits” (381).
 18. Eliot read Knight’s *Myth and Miracle: An Essay on the Mystic Symbolism of Shakespeare* (1929) and *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (1930). His return to Shakespeare’s “Roman” plays—after a period of interest in his romances—is discussed by Matthews (44–60).
 19. For G. Wilson Knight’s identification of the figure in the poem with Nietzsche’s Superhuman, see his “T. S. Eliot: Some Literary Impressions.” Smith, however, interpreting the protagonists’ apparent assuredness as “indifference, exclusion of sympathy” (162), views the rider from *Triumphal*

March as more akin to the figures of “The Hollow Men,” thus, as the reverse of the Superman. Likewise, Timmerman dismisses the association of Coriolanus with Nietzsche’s protagonist of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He also disagrees with Robert Crawford’s noting in the poem the images from Captain Reid’s *The Boy Hunters* (163). This latter influence was indicated by Crawford examining the books Eliot read in his childhood (22).

20. An overview of Eliot’s anti-fascist position is provided in David Bradshaw’s “Politics,” which takes into consideration Eliot’s personal relationships with Wyndham Lewis, Oswald Mosley, Strachey Barnes, and Harold Nicholson. His anti-fascist stance is discussed with reference to his qualified royalism. Bradshaw stresses Eliot’s wariness of populism and his insistence on self-discipline and external authority, the two latter concepts as derived from T. E. Hulme’s dogma of original sin.
21. Despite his disapproval of nationalism, Eliot loyally defended Maurras, standing up for him against the harsh criticism delivered by Leo Ward of *The Church Times* and challenging Ward to demonstrate “that the Nationalism of Marshal von Hindenburg or the Nationalism of Mussolini is less ‘wild’ and ‘pernicious’ than that of Maurras” (P3 352).
22. David G. Williamson, for instance, provides a brief account of the four coups juxtaposed with one another (134–35).
23. It is worth recalling Paul Morrison’s observation that fascism, because of its aesthetic aspect, is directly opposed to communism: “Communism collectivizes the means of production and the fruits of labor; fascism provides the illusion of collective experience through aesthetic means” (6–7). In his assessment of fascism—as providing the means of expression in lieu of the means of production—Morrison follows Walter Benjamin’s observation that, in contrast to communism “politicizing art,” fascism aestheticises politics (Benjamin 242; see also Benjamin 241). Aside from referring to Benjamin, Morrison also adduces Slavoj Žižek’s observations on fascism as a way to ignore the need for economic transformation (Morrison 7, 9).
24. Patrick Query’s *Ritual and the Idea of Europe in Interwar Writing*—wherein “the true aims of ritual” are specified as “the preservation of the past, the renewal of the present, [and] the ordering of relations between the spiritual and materials worlds” (43)—while focusing on works other than Eliot’s *Triumphal March*, can provide an alternative, ritualistic, perspective for the reading of the poem.
25. The word “many” recurs in several lines of the poem; see *TM* (3, 4, 6, 7, 17, 42).
26. See above, note 15. For Matthiessen recalling Eliot’s words, see his *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (142–43).
27. For Eliot’s defense of Maurras, see Asher (56–58). See also above, note 21.
28. Eliot makes a note of reading Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* in his letter to Conrad Aiken of 25 July 1914 (*L1* 48–49); he invokes this memory sixteen years later, writing to Erich Alport on 23 June 1930 (*L5* 228).
29. In his letter to M. C. D’Arcy of 19 June 1931, Eliot refers to the translation by W. R. Boyce Gibson (*L5* 644). As indicated by Smith, the quotation in the poem comes from W. R. Boyce Gibson’s translation of *Ideas I*, pt. 2, ch. 2, par. 39/71 (Smith 162). It should be noted that, after the Oxford years, Husserl remained for Eliot a presence that resurfaced *en passant* in his reviews and essays, such as the unsigned omnibus review entitled “New Philosophers” (1918), where Eliot compliments J. S. Mackenzie on his familiarity with contemporary philosophical tendencies, including his

knowledge of Husserl's phenomenology (P1 730). In 1926, in the fourth of his Clarke Lectures, he briefly mentions Husserl's philosophical style as that of a discourse markedly different from ordinary speech and, indeed, more challenging than the languages of Berkeley, Leibniz, and Kant (P2 676).

30. See above, note 1.
31. For Brainard's discussion of Husserl's concepts of the deception of the senses and of pure consciousness, see the subchapter titled "Consciousness and the Natural World" in his *Belief and Its Neutralization* (83–89).
32. Eliot's letter of February 18, 1930, refers to the contract "signed by Piłsudski" [sic] (L5 103); it is concerned with the legal and financial aspects of the deal with Piłsudski and Gillie, and with the role of "Stachiewicz"—brigadier general Julian Stachiewicz, Piłsudski's soldier and a historian of the inter-war period.
33. Most possibly, Piłsudski is referring to Karl Graf von Kirchbach auf Lauterbach (1856–1939), the Commander-in Chief of the 1st Cracow Corps; to Kirchbach's chief of staff, Major General Ferdinand Demus-Moran (1868–1946); and, in all probability, to Major General Albert Le Gay von Lierfels (1859–1926).
34. The references are to the publisher's advertisement as quoted in Eliot's *Letters*, vol. 5.
35. On pages 241–42 in *The Memories*, the word "doubt" appears almost intermittently.
36. In "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot describes the transmutation of thoughts into feelings as accomplished in Chapman and Donne (P2 379).
37. Piłsudski insists on action and on its principled earnestness (MPRS 12).
38. Eliot refers to Husserl's works by their German titles (*Logische Untersuchungen, Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*). See Eliot's letter to M. C. D'Arcy of 19 Aug. 1931 (L5 644).
39. Thus far, Heidegger's influence on Eliot's poetry has been discussed—by Dominic Griffiths—as reflected in *Four Quartets* and confined to Heidegger's concept of the event (*Ereignis*).
40. See, for instance, MPRS 258. Later in the memoir, recalling the strategic decision which could cost lives, he twice reproves himself with a quote from Molière: "Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin" (MPRS 261), the obvious you-asked-for-this self-reproach.
41. In Heidegger, "will" means the individual will as effort: the will to act, to remain involved with the world. As such, it stands in opposition to the idea of will in Schopenhauer, which is understood as a supra-individual force. The latter Eliot rejects. His criticism of Schopenhauer's reduction of will to an abstract force—as manifested through "bodily wants and cravings" and as pre-existing the individuals—is expressed in his review of "Schopenhauer and Individuality" by Bertram M. Laing. See P1 (607).
42. In their annotations, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden bring to attention an essay sent to Eliot by Mary C. Petrella, Rhode Island. See L5 (707n2).
43. Bush follows the explanation provided by Matthiessen, who remembers Eliot recommending *L'Avenir de L'Intelligence* to him. See Matthiessen (81–82). Elizabeth Drew, looking at the typographic shape of the lines which Eliot extrapolated from Maurras, observes that the letters in the final line suddenly, and sharply, begin to stand out, all capitalised. She argues that, in a poem about a military parade, this is to introduce an association with the spikiness of the "bayonets" with which the soldiers—filed in two rows—guard the general's passage (137).

44. Matthiessen, likewise, observes that, while transferring Maurras's note of mockery into the poem, Eliot made it serve his own purpose (92).
45. In Eliot's *Marina*, similarly, the references to literary figures and the real life personages (Hercules, Pericles, and the poet; Marina and Thaisa; the daughter, the mother, and the wife) are superimposed.

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