

... must remember that an individual writer is to be aware that his work is of the literature to which it belongs and not merely added externally to it. A literature must be thought of as essentially something more than an accumulation of separate works: it has an organic order and form, in relation to which the individual writer has his significance and his being.

Anyone who is seriously concerned with literature must conform to the broad ideas of Eliot. The ways in which it is at odds with Marxist theories of literature are obvious. It stresses, not economic and material determinants, but intellectual and spiritual. Thus it implies a different conception from the Marxist of the real relation between the present of society and the past, and a different conception of society. It assumes that, as material conditions count, there is a certain measure of spiritual autonomy in human affairs, and that human intelligence, choice and will do really and effectively operate, expressing an inherent human nature. There is a human

advertising and embarrassing in the wealth of possibilities  
it conveys. It has to be determined, first of all, on what  
grounds and in what ways the study of literature  
is seen as intimately relevant to <sup>what may be</sup> ~~the~~ proletariat  
presumed to be the major interest of the ~~proletariat~~.  
Marxist approach to literature seems to be unprofitable  
not because literature is a matter of isolated works  
of art belonging to a realm of pure literary values,  
works regarding the production of which it is enough  
to say that individuals of specific creative gifts  
were born and created them. No ~~one~~ <sup>x</sup> interested in  
literature, who began to read and think immedi-  
ately after the 1914 war, can fail to have taken  
stock of the Romantic critical tradition - the set of  
ideas and attitudes about literary creation coming  
down through the nineteenth century. That tradition  
laid all the stress on ~~the~~ inspiration and the indi-  
vidual genius. How do masterpieces arrive? Gifted  
individuals occur, inspiration sets in, creation  
results. Mr. Eliot ~~and~~ lays the stress on the other thing  
besides ~~the~~ individual talent and originative  
impulse from within.

not have to be taken into account of when we try to understand any significant achievement in art. of course it has no discovery that there are these things to be taken account of. criticism and literary history had for generations dealt in influences, environments and the extra-ordinary literary conditions of literary production. But we are apt to be under influence of ideas and attitudes of which we are not fully conscious. They prevail until they are rejected. The Romantic ideas may be said to have prevailed until Eliot's criticism co-operating with his poetry, made <sup>us</sup> consciousness impossible and rejection inevitable.

Something like the idea of tradition so incisively and provocatively formulated by him plays an essential part in the thinking of everyone today who is seriously interested in literature. If it is said that idea represents a new emphasis on the social nature of artistic achievement, it has to be remembered that the word "social" probably does not occur in the classical essay "Tradition and Individual Talent." The society implied in this "social" and the idea of tradition is not the Mark-

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## Literature and Society

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any discussion of the relationship <sup>of</sup> literature and society  
necessarily leads to the discussion of the duty of the  
writer in identifying himself with working class, the duty  
of the critic to evaluate works of literature in terms of  
departure from formal concerns  
which they seemed calculated to further  
the needs and pre-stated outcome of the class-struggle, and  
of literary historians to explain literary history  
as a reflection of changing economic and material  
conditions. The proponents of such a point of view have  
misrepresented even a writer like Lawrence - "he was  
not a man of and that to describe the outside forces that  
in Sturgis, ex. curvise  
of the bourgeois society into which  
he saw his way. ... saw those forces from a  
point of view, as destroyers to be combated. Con-  
sequently, he misrepresented reality." It has been  
said that what was wrong with Lawrence was that he  
lived the life of a social class which was passing  
away.  
"Literature and Society" might, in fact, seem to be