

disseminated so widely and for so long that something of the original French description of the clairvoyant songsters might conceivably have reached him, only to be further refined by his ear:

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.<sup>6</sup>

He might have been amused, at least, to find a naturalist's momentary lapse into hyperbole perpetuated by the song of his supernal bird. In any event, the enhanced legend of the Ratisbon nightingales surely has its part in the all-embracing vision of the bard who 'present, past, and future sees'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1958), 217. That the golden bird is a nightingale has been widely assumed, not only because of the musical eminence of the species. Keats refers in his famous Ode to the voice heard in 'ancient days by emperor and clown', and Hans Andersen's story, 'The Emperor's Nightingale', revolves around the reverse exchange of artefact for bird. For further information on these and other literary affiliations of the last stanza, see A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats* (London, 1984), 215–16.

<sup>7</sup> On the echo of the second line of Blake's 'Introduction' to the *Songs of Experience*, see Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: Yeats's Poetry in the Making* (Oxford, 1963), 99.

### 'BALLADE OF THE PERIODICAL': AN UNDOCUMENTED POEM BY CHARLES WILLIAMS

CHARLES WILLIAMS (1886–1945) is most often cited as a member of the Inklings, a group of scholars and writers that included J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, and others, who regularly met at The Eagle and Child pub in Oxford to discuss their latest projects. Williams was prolific, writing several novels, plays, critical works, and volumes of poetry. His thinking deeply influenced Lewis, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and many others.

Williams spent almost his entire career at Oxford University Press, which he joined on 9 June 1908 and where he worked until his death. Among Williams's many contributions to OUP was his assumption in 1941 of the editorship of *The Periodical* (1896–1979), the press's house journal.

At present, the most comprehensive bibliography in print of Williams's work is *Charles W.S. Williams: A Checklist* (1975), edited by Lois Glenn. It lists 'The Periodical', an original poem published in the July 1939 issue of *The Periodical* to commemorate the journal's 200th number. Glenn's checklist, however, omits an earlier original poem by Williams called 'Ballade of the Periodical', published in 1929, to commemorate the 150th number of the journal.<sup>1</sup> The 'Ballade' was published in *The Periodical's* 'Obiter Scripta' section (xiv.150: 104) but appears not to be documented in any scholarly works on Williams. The poem, which was not under copyright and was neither bought nor sold because the journal subscription was free, is presented below. It will be of interest to Williams (and perhaps Inklings and OUP) scholars, especially following the December 2015 publication of Grevel Lindop's *Charles Williams: The Third Inklings* (OUP), which is sure to increase interest in Williams:

#### BALLADE OF THE PERIODICAL [June, 1929]

WISE is the student who, wildly staring	1
on books which often themselves repeat	
(thus the indolent reader snaring),	
flings from his shelves, in a virtuous heat,	
all the volumes, from Sappho to Skeat,	5
that long the way of his thought encumber:	
wiser who treasures one file complete—	
this is the hundred and fiftieth number.	

<sup>1</sup> In his review of Glenn's *Checklist*, in fact, Stephen D. Matthews catalogues many omissions and errors in the book. He notes as a 'serious omission', for example, that 'Glenn lists only one item from *The Lantern*, the Oxford Press magazine, yet Williams contributed more than that to its pages. In addition, he was its General Advisor for several years after it began publication in 1928. As many unsigned portions of the magazine are Williams's work, its entire run should have been cited' (399). Much the same can be said of Williams's contributions to *The Periodical*, but Matthews does not mention the journal, much less the 'Ballade'. See Stephen D. Matthews, 'Book Review of Lois Glenn's *Charles W.S. Williams: A Checklist*', *The Papers Of The Bibliographic Society of America*, lxxi (1977), 398–401.

Seeks he a wisdom well worth the faring?

Pages here may his purpose greet 10  
with all men's cunning for all men's sharing  
Knowledge of what to believe or eat,  
of Pliny's villa or Pompey's fleet,  
why barnacles stick or elephants lumber, 15  
of centipedes' legs or poets' feet—  
this is the hundred and fiftieth number.

Never of newer news despairing  
to shape the paragraphs closed and neat,  
provocative both in giving and sparing, 20  
wisest is he who fills the sheet,  
he, the miller of finest wheat;  
never yielding, nor luring, to slumber,  
but holding us fixed, as he in his seat—  
this is the hundred and fiftieth number.

ENVOY. 25

Prince, what seekers, in palace and street,  
rajās and ryots, from Hoogli to Humber,  
taste the confection and find it sweet—  
this is the hundred and fiftieth number. 29  
C.W.

Some allusions in this poem are not mere ornament but memorialize OUP, authors, editors, and *The Periodical*. In line 5, for example, 'Skeat' refers to Walter William Skeat (1835–1912), professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge who produced a number of editions of Chaucer and Langland for OUP during *The Periodical's* run. And in the envoy, the lines 'Prince, what seekers, in palace and street, / rajās and ryots, from Hoogli to Humber' (ll. 26–7) allude to *The Periodical's* circulation. According to the journal's hundredth issue, subscribers included 'all classes', from 'Princes' to 'studious artisans and squatters' (vi.100 [April 1919]: 286). It circulated globally from the United Kingdom ('Humber' is its synecdochic estuary in these lines) to India (with its 'rajās and ryots'; 'Hoogli' is an Anglicization of a river variously known as the Hooghly, Bhāgirathi-Hooghly, or Ganga) and beyond to Australia, North America, Africa, and continental Europe, thus giving this Williams poem significant international exposure.

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## THE 'OXFORD DICTIONARY' IN T. S. ELIOT

T. S. ELIOT famously denies the possibility of arriving at a satisfactory definition of *poetry*;<sup>1</sup> and, less famously perhaps, of *concept*, *knowledge*, *experience*, *immediate experience*, *religious behaviour*, and *rhetoric*.<sup>2</sup> Frequently in his essays he quibbles with others' definitions—among them Matthew Arnold's (he who had 'little gift for consistency or for definition')<sup>3</sup> of *poetry* and *criticism*; W. B. Yeats's of *art*, Richard Aldington's of *prose poem*, A. G. Barnes's of *satire*, John Watson's of *personality*, and Bertrand Russell's of *definition*.<sup>4</sup> In 'Can "Education" be defined?' (1950), Eliot contemplates over several pages a number of kinds of definition—'lexical', 'stipulative', 'nominal', 'primary', 'secondary'—for his title word, commenting that 'people have been very far from agreeing upon a definition of the word "definition"'.<sup>5</sup>

Two years earlier he had published *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), in which he sought the advice of the lexicographer on this preallable matter, quoting a definition of *definition* on the title page:

DEFINITION: 1. The setting of bounds;  
limitation (rare)—1483  
—*Oxford English Dictionary*<sup>6</sup>

This is an error. The definition is not taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), but rather from the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (*SOED*)—a misattribution which caught the attention of Robert Burchfield, editor of the *OED's* second Supplement (1972–86). Burchfield thought it 'a trivial example of the way in which poets are often inattentive to, or unconcerned with, the exactness of pure scholarship as they excavate

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933) 16, 155.

<sup>2</sup> Respectively: T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose*, ed. R. Schuchard et al. (London, 2014), I, 264; *ibid.*, 353; *ibid.*, 32; *ibid.*, 171; *ibid.*, 115; *ibid.*, II, 89.

<sup>3</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, 1932), 393.

<sup>4</sup> Respectively: *Use of Poetry*, 111; *Prose*, II, 288; *ibid.*, 74; *ibid.*, 324; *ibid.*, 791; *ibid.*, 838; *ibid.*, I, 183.

<sup>5</sup> T. S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (New York, 1965), 120–2.

<sup>6</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London, 1948), title page.