

Time Present

The Newsletter of the International T. S. Eliot Society

Number 101

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The Eliot - Hale Archive: First Readings II

Our readers will recall that in the Spring issue of Time Present (No. 100), we published a set of six first-response pieces to the letters T. S. Eliot wrote to Emily Hale from the 1930s to the 1950s. In this number of our newsletter, we follow that collection of responses with three more offerings from those readers fortunate enough to visit Princeton's Firestone Library before the coronavirus necessitated the closing of the library and the shutting of this newly opened archive. We are grateful to this issue's contributors—Jewel Spears Brooker, Anthony Cuda, and Gabrielle McIntire—for sharing their early responses. We look forward to the day when Firestone and its archives are open to us all; we trust that these responses will illuminate aspects of this important, extensive, extraordinarily complex correspondence.

Eliot's Ghost Story: Reflections on his Letters to Emily Hale

Jewel Spears Brooker
Eckerd College

*I feel like the ghost of youth
At the undertakers' ball.
"Opera," Nov. 1909*

In a memorial essay on Eliot, Stravinsky recalled that he first met the poet on a December afternoon in 1956 in London. Eliot's famed reticence, a barrier at first, dissolved when Stravinsky tapped into his "Wagner nostalgia." Eliot's comments led the composer to believe that "Tristan must have been one of the most passionate experiences of his life" (Stravinsky, "Memories of T. S. Eliot," *Esquire*, August 1, 1965, 92). Stravinsky's impression, newly illuminated by Eliot's letters to Emily Hale, points back nearly half a century, to October 1909, when Eliot, barely twenty-one years old and a senior at Harvard, attended a performance (or heard an orchestral arrangement) of *Tristan und Isolde* in Boston. In the following days, he commemorated the evening by inscribing a poem—"Opera"—into his notebook (*Poems* 1:1078). Paroxysms of passion in the violins are challenged by fatalism in the horns as desire tortures itself into "emotional experiences," no sooner achieved than derided as "no good at all" by a drained narrator: "I feel like the ghost of youth / At the undertakers' ball" (*Poems* 1:236).

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Fathman Gift to Society

By Jayme Stayer

Loyola University Chicago

In yet another remarkable act of generosity to the Society, Tony and Melanie Fathman have offered \$20,000 to the Society as part of the quiet phase of its fundraising campaign. Longtime patrons and dear friends of the Society, their generosity has stretched over decades. Both Melanie and Tony have served on the board (Melanie continues to do so), and both are recipients of the Society's Distinguished Service Award.

Perhaps more than any other members, Melanie and Tony are responsible for the atmosphere of warm hospitality that pervades our annual meetings. From its earliest years, the Fathmans have opened their home to the Society. As a consequence, relaxed conversation, dancing, singing, swimming, and drinking have been part of the after-hours merriment that keep so many Society members returning. The convivial nature of our Society is the glue that holds together our diverse membership of academics and fans, graduate students and established scholars, international attendees and St. Louis residents, university types and business people.

Because the Society has grown in size and ambition since its foundation—and because we increasingly meet in cities far from St. Louis—there is an earnest desire on the part of the board and the membership to maintain this sense of warmth and camaraderie wherever we meet. In this spirit, I approached the Fathmans about the capital campaign: one part of the plan will set aside \$100,000 to subsidize the cost of our away conferences. Such a fund will help to keep the cost of conference registration low and ensure that eating together and socializing are retained as central, rather than peripheral, elements in how we do business. It was to this fund that the Fathmans contributed.

I had planned to announce the Fathmans' generous gift at the kick-off to the public phase of our capital campaign. However, because of the volatility of the stock markets and economies caused by the coronavirus, it seems prudent to postpone active fundraising for the moment. Nevertheless, such gifts are welcome at any time, and you may wish to consider naming the Society in your estate planning. Tony Fathman remarks: "I hope our gift will influence and inspire others." We hope so too.

ARCHIVE RESPONSES

Unbuttoned & Unimportant: Tidbits from the Archive

Anthony Cuda

UNC Greensboro

It's true: Eliot's letters to Hale include the most intense revelations of his personal life that we've ever known. There are shocking disclosures, joyous intimacies, heartrending refusals. But because the popular accounts of the letters focus on these almost exclusively, we might think the entire archive is thus, "a lifetime burning in every moment." Au contraire mon frère, mon semblable: in these hundreds of missives, there is also ample evidence of the good humor and playfulness that we should expect from the author of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. And there are many instances of unexpected comic relief, effervescent trivia, and lighthearted surprises that we'd be sorry to overlook amid all of the teeth-gnashing, hand-wringing, and statement-issuing drama that accompanied the archive's opening. So in the hopes of

lightening the conversation—though not making light of it—here are a few choice tidbits, unbuttoned if not wholly unimportant.

The Right Way to Boil an Egg

In February 1933 Eliot recalls picking a faux-argument with Hale—maybe their first—about the correct method for boiling an egg. Alas, he doesn't record his preferred technique. But he does admit that he instigated the tussle solely for the pleasure of quarreling with her, of seeing her the slightest bit angry. How he'd like her to pick a fight with him! He concludes that boiling eggs with her (surely it's not a euphemism?) has, ultimately, taught him much about companionship.

The Skirts of Posterity

Late in 1939, Eliot encloses for Hale's perusal a short note to him from Virginia Woolf, who stakes a claim to his newly renowned sobriquet. Woolf had

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

International T. S. Eliot Society 41st Annual Meeting

October 1-3, 2020

Online via Zoom

All times are Eastern Standard Time

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

Peer Seminars

Participants listed at end of program.
No auditors, please.

2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Seminar 1

Twenty-First-Century Eliot: *The Waste Land*

Led by Nancy K. Gish,
U Southern Maine

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Seminar 2: Eliot and Racial Others

Led by Anita Patterson, Boston U

Seminar 3: Eliot and the Avant-Garde

Led by Vincent Sherry,
Washington U in St. Louis

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

9:30 - 11:30 a.m. Seminar 4

Eliot's Later Poetry

Led by Aakanksha Virkar Yates,
U Brighton

12:00 - 12:15 p.m.

President's Welcome

Jayne Stayer, Loyola U Chicago

12:15 - 1:15 p.m. Session 1

Chaired by John Morgenstern,
Clemson U

Kevin Rulo, Catholic U America
"A strange and pleasant literary sensation": Eliot and the Poetry of Alan Seeger

Annarose Steinke, U Nebraska Kearney
"I Like the Gin-Sodden Holy Reprobate": Eliot, Basil Bunting, and Questions of Influence

Yasna Bozhkova, Sorbonne Nouvelle U Paris
"Writing the Fragmented City": Eliot, Loy, and Mirrlees

1:15 - 1:30 p.m. Break

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Session 2:

Hale Letters Roundtable 1

Chaired by Megan Quigley,
Villanova U

Katerina Stergiopoulou, Princeton
Anthony Cuda, UNC Greensboro

John Whittier-Ferguson,
U Michigan

Frances Dickey, U Missouri

2:30 - 2:45 p.m. Break

2:45 - 3:45 p.m. Session 3:

Hale Letters Roundtable 2

Chaired by Julia Daniel, Baylor U

Jayne Stayer, Loyola U Chicago
David Chinitz, Loyola U Chicago
Jewel Spears Brooker, Eckerd C

Sara Fitzgerald, Independent Scholar

3:45 - 4:00 p.m. Break

4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Session 4:

Roundtable on Working with Archives: Fair Use and Copyright Law

A roundtable discussion focusing on current laws regarding the scholarly use of unpublished material, conducted by lawyers and scholars from the US and the UK. There will be time for questions from the audience.

Chaired by John Whittier-Ferguson, U Michigan

Robert Spoo, Professor of Law, U Tulsa

Peter Jaszi, Professor of Law Emeritus, American U

Lionel Bently, Professor of Law, Emmanuel C, Cambridge

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

9:00 - 9:45 a.m. Session 5

Chaired by Ria Banerjee, CUNY Guttman

Amanda Golden, New York Institute of Technology
Marginalia and the Eliot Archive

Tony Sharpe, Lancaster U
"Disconsolate Chimera"? Emily Hale and Eliot's revisions to "A Dedication to My Wife"

9:45 - 10:00 a.m. break

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

10:00 - 10:45 a.m. Session 6

Chaired by Anthony Cuda, UNC Greensboro

Dídac Llorens-Cubedo, U Nacional de Educación a Distancia
Francis Bacon's *The Eumenides*,
Indebted to Eliot's *The Family Reunion*

Jack Quin, Trinity College Dublin
Illustrating Eliot: "The Ariel Poems" and Edward McKnight Kauffer

10:45-11:00 a.m. *break*

11:00-11:45 a.m. Session 7

Chaired by Patrick Query, USMA

LeeAnn Derdeyn, S. Methodist U
Elyne Mitchell: Fangirl in the 40s: Australian Female Environmentalist, Author, Photographer, Original Scholar of the Green Eliot

Session 7, cont.

Rachel Murray, Loughborough U
"Things that Cling": Marine Attachments in Eliot

11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m. *break for lunch*

1:00-2:15 p.m. Session 8

Chaired by Jayme Stayer, Loyola U Chicago

41st Annual

T. S. Eliot Society

Memorial Lecture

Intellectual Eloquence: *East Coker*

Robert von Hallberg

Claremont McKenna College

2:15-2:30 p.m. *break*

2:30-3:15 p.m. Session 9

Chaired by Michael Coyle, Colgate

Deborah Leiter, U Wisconsin-Platteville
"The Old Lady Shows Her Medals": Eliot's Sherlockian Allusions

Alex Davis, U College Cork
"That corpse you planted last year in your garden": Eliot and Golden Age Detective Fiction

3:15-3:30 p.m. *break*

3:30-4:30 p.m. Session 10

Chaired by Christopher McVey, Boston U

Sørina Higgins, Baylor U
Religious Drama: Does It Work?

Anna Budziak, U Wrocław
Eliot on Ersatz Education

Parker T. Gordon, U St. Andrews
Eliot's *The Rock*: No Longer "Reading Without Seeing"

PEER SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Seminar 1

Ruth Clemens, Utrecht U
Lizi Dzagnidze, Tbilisi State U
Suzannah V. Evans, Durham U
Jeff Grieneisen, State C of Florida-Bradenton
Simon Sungpyo Hong, Liberty U
Amanda Howard, California State U, Fullerton
Rebecca Baughman Kerns, U Missouri
John McIntyre, U Prince Edward Island
John Melillo, U Arizona
Zoë Miller, U Manchester
Nadira Wallace, Royal Holloway, U London
Yue Wang, Queen Mary U London

Seminar 2

Ann Marie Jakubowski, Washington U in St. Louis
Christopher McVey, Boston U
Steve Pinkerton, Case Western Reserve U
Junichi Saito, Kanagawa U, Japan
Michelle Alexis Taylor, Harvard U
Xiaofan Xu, Beijing Foreign Studies U

Seminar 3

Elysia Balavage, UNC Greensboro
Marianne Huntington, Independent Scholar
Emily King, U Chicago
Huiming Liu, U Edinburgh
Alexander Ruggeri, Tufts U
Annarose Steinke, U Nebraska Kearney
Cécile Varry, U de Paris

Fabio Vericat, U Complutense de Madrid
Josh Wagner, Stanford U

Seminar 4

Alexander Burdge, U Kansas
Mary Sue Daoud, New York U
Youngmin Kim, Dongguk U, South Korea
Ivona Laushevskij, Ss. Cyril and Methodius U, Skopje
Daniel Leonard, Boston U
Sue McBean, Ulster U
Shannon McClernon, Baylor U
Madeline Potter, U York
Michael Joshua Sutherland, U Tennessee Knoxville
Charika Swanepoel, North-West U, South Africa
Edward Upton, Valparaiso U

Faber & Faber: The Untold Story, by Toby Faber

Faber & Faber, 2019. xv + 426 pages.

Reviewed by David E. Chinitz
Loyola University Chicago

The jacket illustration for Toby Faber's *Faber & Faber: The Untold Story* shows Faber authors Samuel Beckett, William Golding, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Kazuo Ishiguro, P. D. James, and Sylvia Plath seated around a table in various states of activity. Standing behind them, Geoffrey Faber gazes on the scene with a satisfied expression. Next to him stands T. S. Eliot, looking over at his boss for a cue. In the foreground, Cat Morgan, the stray who attached himself to the firm and gained an invitation to its board meetings, paws at Heaney's sleeve.

The list of Faber authors who are absent from that cover illustration is no less illustrious. One might name Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, Djuna Barnes, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, Lawrence Durrell, David Jones, C. P. Snow, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Tom Stoppard, Harold Pinter, Paul Muldoon, Thom Gunn, Peter Carey, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Milan Kundera. One might also mention James Joyce: though the firm declined to bring out *Ulysses*, fearing prosecution, it dared to publish *Finnegans Wake*. And Philip Larkin, who is given no seat at the table, has the book's back cover all to himself. Though a number of these writers postdate Geoffrey Faber, the ghostly founder on the book jacket has every right to look pleased. And his grandson, Toby Faber, an author and sometime Faber executive in his own right, may be forgiven his own pride in the enterprise. "Faber & Faber has not just been any literary publisher," he writes in his introduction. "For most of the period since it was founded it has been THE literary publisher: midwife at the birth of modernism in the 1920s and 1930s, and reinventing itself at least twice in the period covered by this history. The story of Faber—of how it came to publish so many great writers—is part of the story of twentieth-century literature itself" (xii). Even if it's a Faber who says so, who can deny it?

Parts of the Faber story have been told before, but never in full detail, and surely never by an author with unrestricted access to the Faber archives. *Faber & Faber: The Untold Story* comprises mostly primary documents—letters to and from Geoffrey Faber and

his associates, memos, board minutes, diary entries, advertisements, blurbs, and other sources—with occasional interventions from Toby Faber, printed in italic type, serving as a kind of sinew. The result holds together very well, forming an intriguing narrative that feels the more authentic for its being authored mainly by its own characters.

The story begins, naturally, with the birth of the firm in 1924, when Maurice and Alsina Gwyer, who had inherited the Scientific Press from Alsina's father, hired Geoffrey Faber as Chairman and Managing Director "to lead a diversification away from medical publishing" (2). Late in that year, the journalist Charles Whibley, a mutual friend, introduced Faber to T. S. Eliot, and Faber succeeded in bringing Eliot (and the *Criterion*) into the firm by May 1925. Around the same time, the company was renamed Faber & Gwyer and took new offices at 24 Russell Square. By early 1929, following several years of increasing tensions with the Gwyers over the direction of the firm, Geoffrey managed to buy them out, and Faber & Faber was born. Throughout the tense negotiations over this deal, Eliot served as the mediator between the bickering parties. His successful diplomacy was a portent.

Since Eliot is a major player in the story of Faber & Faber, readers of *Time Present* will want to know how he comes across in this history. Perhaps, in the wake of recent disclosures from the Emily Hale correspondence, some anxiety will even tinge the question. Reader, relax: Eliot comes off here very well indeed. He appears throughout the first two-thirds of the text as a peacemaker, a mentor, and a shrewd adviser not only on literary but on business matters. The authors he brought to Faber in the 1930s largely established the publisher's reputation for excellence. His approach to young writers was typically cautious, as when he encouraged Auden, Spender, and MacNeice but held off until they'd accumulated a sufficient quantity of mature poems before he agreed to publish them. He could also be decisive, though, as when he later urged immediate acceptance of Ted Hughes's first book, overcoming a colleague's wariness (245–46). In all, the Eliot revealed in these pages is wise and generous.

Over the course of the volume, we glimpse him nurturing the Auden generation; courting Moore; defending Barnes; supporting David Jones; coping with Pound; and commissioning the *Faber Book of*

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Love's Errors and Effacements: T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale

Gabrielle McIntire
Queen's University

The first love letter that T. S. Eliot writes to Emily Hale, dated 3 October 1930, bears in its physicality some remarkable mis-steps of the pen that might help us understand, as symptom and trace, unintentional, extra-textual aspects of Eliot and Hale's unusual, protracted romantic relation that continued for roughly a quarter of a century. The letter is filled with errors, strikethroughs, slips of the pen, and other indicators of uncertainty and hesitation. It begins in a faint fountain pen script that changes to a darker black fountain pen after its first line, while Eliot runs certain words together (creating a new coinage, "alove," for example), and reaches beyond its margins to a superscript in which he attests that his love for Hale transcends earthly existence. We also find small, partial finger-print marks in ink on the front and verso of the last page—further traces of nervous mistake.

Part of what this archive reveals is that Eliot's love for Hale manifested as repeated corrections, revisions, and even effacements of itself. Eliot seems to have been aware, even from early in their correspondence, that they would be kept from ever living a full and loving life together. She is his Beatrice, but also his Isolde, while he compares his devotion to her to the Christian worship of the Virgin Mary. Hale, as the muse-like object of Eliot's Dantean, forbidden love is also subject to textual amendment: Eliot's letters create and revise what each of them means (or might mean) to each other with little in-person contact to balance out the epistolary crafting. In reading the letters, one is struck by how earnest and profound Eliot's love for Hale was; it was also tortured, and, in Eliot's view, not "normal," while he oscillates between emotional extremes of ecstasy and agony. Eliot compares himself to St. Sebastian on at least one occasion, in August 1935, and it is hard not to notice a significant measure of a sado-masochistic will to self-punishment (and, perhaps, inadvertent punishment of Hale). Eliot both longed for Hale and worried that if his desires were fulfilled his "torment" would increase: Hale was both the beloved and a path toward religious sanctity, and in choosing to keep her at a remove—to "renounce the blessed face" (*Ash-Wednesday*, *Poems* 1:87)—Eliot kept himself beguiled for many years inside the dilemma

he frames in *Ash-Wednesday* of the "torment / Of love unsatisfied / The greater torment / Of love satisfied" (*Poems* 1:90).

In Eliot's first letter to Hale, he also attempts to disavow the letter's very genre as a love letter. Immediately after having confessed, for the first time, to years of having loved Hale intensely from afar, he steps back metacritically to place the letter's form into doubt, insisting that "if" this is a love letter (he is uncertain) it will be the last one he will write. He thus proleptically promises (initiating another mistake) that he will terminate this epistolary non-love act after it has not even actually begun. The emotional economy and ostensible logic quickly become puzzling and dizzying.

Eliot's type-written and hand-written effacements, doublings-back, and self-corrections will mark many of these letters, including the very last one held in the archive, dated 10 February 1957. This letter, which Eliot apparently did not believe would be his last (and which may well not have been his last, though the collection stops here), tragically closes by misspelling and altering the word "love" once again—this time through a prolonged typo of the very word "love" that causes him to retrace his steps, attempt to hide his error, and then correct by re-arranging and inserting letters. The end result is a muddle, and his final attempt to write the word "love" appears almost unreadable. Even typographically Eliot is rendering the brokenness of the love between them as something that can no longer be written, much less lived.

On these momentous occasions which frame the collection, Eliot's love for Hale dared not fully write its name, while his feelings—and his expressions of them—had trouble in the translation from emotion to page, even as Eliot relied on and greatly enjoyed the freedoms that epistolarity offered him by allowing him to correct and re-script. In one of Frances Dickey's blog posts on the Eliot-Hale archive, she paraphrases Eliot from October 1935 when he explains to Hale that "writing is not the same as talking . . . when [one] forgets to write something, [one] can always add a postscript, while an omission in conversation can never be remedied" (*Reports*, 13 June 2020). The letter form offered Eliot a way out of the awkwardness of conversation which he found wanting throughout his life, and which finds Prufrock's lover saying, "That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all," and Prufrock lamenting, "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" (*Poems* 1:8).

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***Christian Modernism in an Age of Totalitarianism: T. S. Eliot, Karl Mannheim and the Moot*, by Jonas Kurlberg**

London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.
224 pages.

Reviewed by Elena Valli
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

In the fourth chapter of *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot explains his vision of society, as “not a society of saints, but of ordinary men, of men whose Christianity is communal before being individual.” Building a community based on a set of shared Christian values was the collective aim of several political and intellectual personalities of the British elite during the interwar period, among which, along with Eliot himself, stood the members of the Moot. The history, character, and legacy of this group, whose influence is relevant to Eliot’s socio-political engagement during the 1930s and 1940s, is thoroughly described by Jonas Kurlberg in *Christian Modernism in an Age of Totalitarianism*. His extensive archival research, integrated with theoretical frameworks to shed light on the socio-political dynamics of the time, investigates the nature of the Moot, the organization founded in 1938 by J. H. Oldham with the purpose of providing a bulwark against the imminent decay of society through the re-promotion of Christianity. Kurlberg moves from Roger Griffin’s theory of “Political Modernism,” which traces a parallel between the modernist artist’s admiration for order, hierarchy, and tradition and the pseudo-religious, myth-based organization of totalitarianism, and reads the Moot’s effort in light of Frank Kermode’s interpretation, in *The Sense of an Ending*, of their age caught within a historical pattern of decadence and renovation. Using these theoretical principles, he assesses the extent to which the Moot falls into Anthony Wallace’s definition of a “revitalization movement” and offers “a Christian variant of ‘Programmatic’ or ‘Political Modernism’” (1).

Extending an analysis previously associated with modernist aesthetics to the realm of politics might have resulted in excessive generalization, but Kurlberg manages to support his argument with relevant archival information, tracing a comprehensive

record of the ideologies of individual members, the main topics debated within the group, and the steps concretely taken to implement their ideas for a cultural revolution. His study evolves from the central premise that the socio-cultural responses and intellectual production of the members must be interpreted in relation to “the immediate social and cultural background” (17) as well as the historical circumstances they faced. He consequently argues for a reassessment of Christianity as an influential force in the 1930s and 40s, still bearing revolutionary potential among the British elites in a time predominantly associated with the rise of secularization.

Kurlberg portrays the Moot as a group of intellectuals who met in the apocalyptic atmosphere preceding the outbreak of World War II to confront the imminent crisis by offering a third solution, an intermediate state between the disintegrating drive of post-Enlightenment liberalism and the violent dictatorship of totalitarianism. The re-establishment of a society guided by Christian values would have allowed, in their view, for the preservation of core liberal values without the progressive dehumanization triggered by capitalism. It would have furthermore encouraged the substitution of the pseudo-religious myths of totalitarianisms with a Christian culture which appealed to all members of the society and filled the spiritual void that the Moot perceived had been caused by historical change. By detailing their religious arguments within the framework of political modernism, Kurlberg hints at the programmatic nature of the institution, showing that the Moot was not an ahistorical refuge in the realm of the spiritual but very much concerned with the present and future of European society.

Chapter two explores the ways in which the Moot imagined a balance between state and church through the creation of a “New Christendom,” taking inspiration from Jacques Maritain’s “New Scholasticism,” which employed the model of “union and perfection” of medieval Christian society to reconcile modernist social change with the “incarnations of Catholic tradition” (69). Following Maritain’s debate on natural and local freedom, Mannheim’s “Planning for Freedom” advanced the idea of a “planned society,” in which Christian values would be spread by an elite to the masses through the influences of propaganda and education.

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***Viral Modernism: The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature*, by Elizabeth Outka**

Columbia University Press, 2019.
xii + 26 pages.

Reviewed by Mena Mitrano
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

On 7 July 1918, T. S. Eliot writes to his mother describing certain changes in his daily life because of a “curious malady”: emptier offices, scarce food, and a waning appetite for life. A curtain of dryness hems Londoners in, both a sign of the season and the correlative abridgment of a shared condition extending well beyond the confines of the British city to “this generation”:

My dearest Mother,

We have been living on quietly and trying to escape the “Spanish influenza” so called. A good many men—and women—have been away from the office lately, with that curious malady, and as a result I have had more to do, helping out. The season has been very dry—whether that has anything to do with it I don’t know—and out here in the country everything is done to a crisp. The flowers seem to stand it better than the vegetables, and just now we are very grateful for fresh vegetables—peas and beans and salads. The weather has been very hot, and appropriate to the 4th July, which was celebrated in London. I say “celebrated” in quotation marks because it was taken so solemnly, more as a very serious act of international courtesy, something of gravity, than the hilarious 4th of boyhood. I think that the appetite for the noisier sort of fireworks should have died out for this generation. (*Letters* 1:270-1)

Two years later, in 1920, the memory of earlier aggressive attacks of virus H1N1 still lingers (*Letters* 1:436), and the motif of dryness is reprised in his “London Letter: July, 1921,” published in the August issue of *The Dial*: “A new form of influenza has been discovered, which leaves extreme dryness and a bitter taste in the mouth” (*Prose* 2:362). If, in the letters home, Eliot toned down his reports, Vivien was more explicit. On 15 December 1918, during the second wave of the “Spanish flu,” she informs Mrs. Eliot that

her son “has been worrying himself about his mind not acting as it used to do, and a feeling that his writing was falling off” (*Letters* 1:309). Altering public life, the epidemic required collective resistance. In his July 1918 letter to his mother, Eliot joins a plural and public “we” taking action: “living on quietly and trying to escape” the epidemic. Vivien, however, lets us in on the more personal effects of the epidemic: human experience disintegrates, and the distinct sense sets in that Eliot’s own capacity for thought might never be the same again. Ottoline Morrell admired Eliot’s intellectual creativity, his gift for connecting and fitting ideas together: “his mind is so accurate and dissecting and fits in every idea like a Chinese puzzle,” she wrote (*Letters* 1:436n1). Eliot had primed his mind as a painter primes his canvas, but during the flu pandemic that raged in Europe in 1918-1919, he feared that the support for his writing would disintegrate—a fear made evident in Vivien’s plan to protect her husband with a three-month intellectual lockdown: “So after a good deal of argument I have got him to sign a contract with me, saying that he will do no writing of any kind, except what is necessary for the one lecture a week which he has to give, and no reading, except poetry and novels and such reading as is necessary for the lectures, for three months from now” (*Letters* 1:309).

In her timely, revelatory book, *Viral Modernism*, Elizabeth Outka argues that the wide-ranging, frightening effects of the pandemic described in these vivid letters to Eliot’s mother also shaped *The Waste Land* in ways that have been neglected. Our consequential failures to measure the effects of the pandemic on the moderns has also marred our readings of other classics of high modernism, including the novels of Virginia Woolf, since, as Outka demonstrates, for modernist critics and modernist writers alike, “the war overshadowed, blocked, and incorporated the viral tragedy” (45). Through readings of interwar texts by Eliot, Woolf, Willa Cather, Katharine Ann Porter, Thomas Wolfe, and William Maxwell, as well as incisive analyses of popular cultural narratives (e.g., Arthur Conan Doyle), which convey the “difficulties of representing the pandemic’s particular costs amid the war’s more public presence” (43), Outka convincingly establishes a “literary pandemic paradigm” that helps uncover the “coded references” to the pandemic’s “absent presence” in a great many canonical and noncanonical texts of the period. In the final chapter of *Viral Modernism*, she extends her discussion of the pandemic to popular culture (particularly Doyle and H. P. Lovecraft). “Doyle

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Pandemic Edition

Compiled by David Chinitz

Waiting for the End (1). The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired many an allusion to Eliot, whose invocations of doom are always apt in a crisis. Riffs on *The Hollow Men* have been particularly plentiful, generally along these lines:

- “This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a run on the supermarkets.”
- “This is how the world ends, not with a bang but with a shortage of toilet paper.”
- “This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang, but with a virus.”

The last example is a lede from a Paul Krugman op-ed in the *New York Times*. This was not Krugman’s first dalliance with *The Hollow Men*. A 2013 lede: “This may be the way the world ends—not with a bang but with a temper tantrum.”

Waiting for the End (2). In the early weeks of the pandemic, several commentators used the same lines to criticize virus-deniers. “This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a twerk,” quipped a tweet slamming New Orleans partygoers for persisting despite social distancing orders. And a blogger seethed, “With apologies to T. S. Eliot: This is the way the word ends, not with a bang, but with a bro on spring break.” This line captioned a video showing college students in Florida making such statements as “If I get corona, I get corona. At the end of the day, I’m not going to let it stop me from partying.” As Eliot himself wrote late in life, “I should be glad to hear no more of a bang and a whimper.” (Preface to the 1964 ed. of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, *Prose* 4:575. Christopher Taylor [@suspiciousyouth], twitter.com, 15 Mar. 2020. Foster Kamer, futurism.com/neoscope, 18 Mar. 2020)

Waiting for the End (3). Other COVID commentators trotted out “April is the cruellest month” as early as St. Patrick’s Day. In a typical example, Dr. Craig Smith, Chair of the Department of Surgery at Columbia University Medical Center, ended one of his daily blog posts with a paragraph beginning “Writing on April 1, late in the day, I can’t possibly be the first person to shout

out the first four lines of *The Waste Land*”—which he then proceeded to quote. The good doctor went on to confess, “The rest of the poem is much too long, too grim and overwrought for my taste.” But he did pause to admire Eliot’s line breaks and, especially, the phrase “mixing memory and desire,” which he found particularly apropos in “an April that may be apocalyptically cruel.” (columbiasurgery.org)

Waiting for the End (4). Amid the numbing repetition of the same few lines from *The Hollow Men* and *The Waste Land*, the occasional reference to some less-quoted poem provides welcome relief—for example, Willem Lange’s opening a column in the (New Hampshire) *Valley News* with “Gerontion”: “Here I am, an old man in a muddy month, reading to a dog, waiting for the end of a plague.” That may be lame, but at least it’s different. (vnews.com, 19 Mar. 2020)

The Use of Poetry. Eliot’s steady deployment in political analysis since 2016—often by conservative voices opposed to Donald Trump—meanwhile continues unabated. George Will recently fired this broadside: “In 2016, the Republican Party gave its principal nomination to a vulgarian and then toiled to elect him. And to stock Congress with invertebrates whose unswerving abjectness has enabled his institutional vandalism, who have voiced no serious objections to his Niagara of lies, and whom T. S. Eliot anticipated.” He then quotes lines 1 and 5–9 of *The Hollow Men*. (“Trump Must Be Removed. So Must His Congressional Enablers.” *Wall Street Journal* 1 June 2020)

Those hooded hordes. In the *New York Times*, Kevin Carey reports on the “job crisis in academia” (and particularly in the humanities). He concludes, “Until [the situation] changes, the academic labor market will most likely continue to feel like a wasteland.” Carey’s final word is a link to the *Poetry Foundation* webpage where Eliot’s poem is posted. (“The Bleak Job Landscape of Adjunctopia for Ph.D.s.” nytimes.com, 5 Mar. 2020)

Eliot's Ghost Story

continued from page 1

In his letters to Emily Hale, opened in January 2020, Eliot recalls that he saw *Tristan* again in late 1913, this time with her, and that his desire was intensified to the point of ecstasy by the performance (1/20/1931; 7/24/1931). Seven years on, his youth quenched by a loveless marriage and a devastating war, he retained, as tokens of his lost world, snippets of *Tristan* which surfaced to frame the most passionate section of *The Waste Land*, the scene in the hyacinth garden.

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
 "They called me the hyacinth girl."
 -Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth
 garden,
 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
 (Poems 1:56)

This scene, juxtaposing the lament of the hyacinth girl and the regret of her lover, is framed on one side by "*Frisch weht der Wind/Der Heimat zu./Mein Irisch Kind,/Wo weilest du?*" ("Fresh blows the wind to the homeland. My Irish girl, where are you lingering?") and on the other by "*Oed' und leer das Meer*" ("Waste and barren the sea."). In at least two letters to Hale, Eliot links her with the girl in the hyacinth garden (11/3/1930; 8/27/1935). In 1935, thirteen years after the publication of *The Waste Land*, he recalls a recent moment in which Hale laid her head on his shoulder and claims that this mundane gesture struck him with "tremulous awe" and left him "dazzled" and speechless. Using telltale quotation marks—"my eyes failed' again"—he ties this moment to the garden scene in *The Waste Land* (8/27/1935). Within two weeks, he and Hale would enter another garden, this time a rose garden on the grounds of an abandoned country house in Gloucestershire, later memorialized in one of his finest poems, *Burnt Norton*.

After leaving America in 1914, Eliot next encountered Emily Hale in post-war London in 1922 or 1923, and over the next two and a half decades, a pattern emerges in which occasional (a dozen?) bursts of passion are succeeded by extended periods of distress and guilt in which he casts a cold eye on what he has unleashed. Sometimes, the passion seems genuine; at other times, as in "Opera," an example of mimetic

desire. The distress, like that of the man in "Portrait of a Lady," is mildly apologetic (she knows), with a moral tinge. "Are these ideas right or wrong?" (*Poems* 1:12). The prototype for both the eruption of feeling and the quick recoil is his quest for ecstasy at *Tristan*, first in 1909 and then with Hale in 1913. In "Opera," the narrator struggles to achieve an emotional high; at the same time, he perceives a misfire, sensing the meaninglessness of these "emotional experiences," as "Life" slips away, departing with a smile "Into the indifferent" (*Poems* 1:236).

In a 1960 retrospective on his relationship with Hale, Eliot identifies the suitor of Emily Hale as the child of the twenty-five-year old, half-demented, would-be lover who feels that he is living a posthumous existence. His love for Emily, he rationalizes, was the "love of a ghost for a ghost" (*Prose* 8:595). The seventy-two-year-old poet's account of his secret, mid-life romance (he was forty-two in 1930) need not be taken at face value in order to be taken seriously. What did he mean by referring to his romance as the "love of a ghost for a ghost"? In part, as he suggests, he remembers the letter writer as the ghost of the youth at the 1913 performance of *Tristan* and Emily as the ghost of his companion. In part, he may be recalling the afternoon at Burnt Norton in 1935 when might-have-been lovers enter a garden and hear the laughter of spectral children.

There is, however, another sense in which Eliot's letters to Hale come across as chapters in a ghost story. The most passionate letters focus on a succession of objects and places that assume a talismanic role in his quest for ecstasy. The focal points vary, but they have one thing in common: their power is entirely dependent on absence. To be present in mind, the beloved has to be absent from the breakfast table. Her actual presence is associated with paralysis and silence; reminders of her presence with ecstasy. One of the talismans conveying presence-in-absence is literary—the Dantean figure of Beatrice (see Lyndall Gordon's discussion, in *Imperfect Life*, ch. 11, of Hale as a Dantean figure). In the initiatory letters, Hale is "My Lady"; like Beatrice, she is the adored absentee who unbeknownst to her influenced his conversion; she is the font of "supernatural ecstasy" (10/3/1930).

Another talisman is epistolary—the actual letters from Emily Hale. For the first year of their correspondence, Eliot obsesses on these "precious" letters. He confesses that he is "thrilled" by the appearance of her handwriting and that he treasures the letters less for their contents than for the physical

paper which has passed from her hand to his and which he fingers and conceals in a locked casket. Each letter, he feels, is a gift from above which supplies needed spiritual sustenance (11/3/1930; 12/8/1930). In 1931, the fervor cools, chilled by the news that Eliot would be spending the following academic year in Boston, where Hale was living between teaching positions. Explaining his fear of being overwhelmed by her presence, he suggests that they should make separate plans and meet only at the beginning and end of his year. To insure physical separation, he encourages her to take a job in California (11/6/1931; 11/20/1931). He did not, however, want their letters to be lost, and so before leaving for Boston, he urged her to agree that they would be preserved in the Bodleian and sealed for sixty (not fifty) years. These letters, he argues, will enable future readers of his poetry to understand the truth behind his work (2/19/32).

Another token of Eliot's generation of presence-in-absence is spatial—his rooms in London. In the spring and summer of 1935, Hale was in England for an extended period and often came to London. On these

occasions, Eliot usually contrived to be away—engaged or out of town—but asks that she consider his rooms as her rooms. He tells her that she need not feel obligated to see him merely because she would be staying in his rooms (7/1/1935). He leaves small gifts beside the alarm clock and assures her that his room is her bower and will be ready when she arrives (8/31/1935). After Emily leaves, he returns to interact with the ghost in his flat, whose presence is confirmed by her thank-you note and a slight odour of holiness (5/9/1935), by cut flowers and her “scent” (perfume), and by photographs, most taken with his Kodak. The flowers and photographs also have talismanic value.

The war between ecstasy and reason highlighted in Eliot's ghost story is a cruder version of the psychological and spiritual conflict in his poetry and prose. As I argued in *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination*, this complex tension between idealism and realism, presence and absence, is what makes Eliot Eliot. Without it, we would have been deprived of the century's most iconic poems, *The Waste Land*, *Ash-Wednesday*, and *Four Quartets*.

Unbuttoned and Unimportant

continued from page 2

written to him on October 7, after receiving her copy of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*: “Can I claim the immortality of having christened you Old Possum? Oh dear, don't do me out of that little clutch upon the skirts of posterity. Yes, I'm sure it was me.” She signs the letter inimitably, “your old Mangy farmyard Tabby, Virginia.”

One Less Habit

Eliot tells Hale in 1941 about visiting a medical specialist in London who used cocaine to numb his nasal passages during an examination. He bemoans the painful reaction he suffered because of his exceptionally sensitive nasal membranes. But ultimately, he says, it's a relief: at least that's one less habit he needs to worry about picking up.

Electric Scalp Treatments

While he was in the U. S., Eliot visited his sister Marian's hairdresser and masseuse in Wendell Street (probably the one in Cambridge) twice a week for special electric scalp treatments, which were advertised to stimulate hair growth. He tells Hale that the right

side of his head is almost completely bald, and that while he can hide it with a comb-over, the effort is simply unsustainable, and besides, it makes him look funny. He doesn't seem particularly sanguine about the treatments' success.

Whatever You Say, Say Something

In January 1931, Eliot tells Hale about having lunch in Cambridge with a Mr. Wu, most likely the poet and scholar Wu Mi, a friend of I. A. Richards. Afterwards, he conveys to her his abject terror when Wu Mi asked if Eliot would simply talk for as long as he could, about anything, without interruption, insisting that his reason for coming was simply to hear Eliot speak. Whether and how the poet complied is unrecorded.

Smoking in the Boys' Room

In February 1933, Eliot recounts his visit to Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts, during a blinding snowstorm. Already distraught about the prospect of being trapped by such poor conditions, he reports further his desperate alarm when, after being shown to the guest room in a dormitory, he spotted the “No Smoking” sign attached to the mirror. Eliot promptly sneaked into the bathroom, cracked the window, and

Unbuttoned and Unimportant,

continued

smoked there—and only there—for the remainder of his stay. NB: Mount Holyoke is a women’s college (and was in 1933), so technically the bathroom would have been a “girls’ room,” but there’s no catchy 80s song of that name.

Sooo...

Eliot frequently admits to his own “politic, cautious, and meticulous” sensibility, his renowned tendencies to qualify and limit his assertions. In March 1931, he relates a story to Hale (apocryphal, he claims, though he wishes it were true!), in which he was asked at a party whether he thought that a newly published novel by D. H. Lawrence was “so” interesting. Eliot then paused for what seemed an interminable time before responding, gravely: but what exactly do you mean by “so”?

Love’s Errors and Effacements

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Why would Eliot stutter so overtly and so often over the word “love”? This is a question that will undoubtedly occupy Eliot scholars for quite some time, but we can begin by remembering that Eliot felt his love for Hale was forbidden on multiple fronts, and that he believed that by loving her he was both blessed in experiencing a “saintly” realm of pure and holy love, while he was acutely anxious about his moral transgressions. Even though he and Vivienne Haigh-Wood separated in 1933, Eliot’s strict adherence to the letter of Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the time meant that he did not feel free to divorce her—or to remarry, unless she died. In 1947, after Haigh-Wood’s unexpected death at Northumberland House, Eliot recoiled at his ethical turpitude in having loved Hale, and underwent a mix of remorse, contrition, and “horror” at having failed Haigh-Wood, the Church, himself, and, to some extent, Hale. Hannah Sullivan observes in the *TLS* of 31 January 2020, that Haigh-Wood’s death precipitated an “embalming” of a major part of himself, including the full-range of Eliot’s feelings for Hale and his ability to consider marriage. The alteration in him is indeed dramatic, and, as Lyndall Gordon suggests, we must “question his sense of entitlement to downgrade their tie after

declaring its rarity for sixteen years” (*TP* 100:9). Still, it is important to recognize that Eliot’s love for Hale did not cease with Haigh-Wood’s passing. Her death gave him a major shock, and his feelings for Hale underwent a turbulent sea change, but he continued to love Hale—and to sign his letters with love—right up until his marriage to Valerie Eliot on January 10, 1957. Some of this makes for difficult, painful reading that unsettle our assessments and judgments of Eliot. John Whittier-Ferguson reminds us that even at the most fraught moments, we should “at least try to read charitably” (*TP* 100:5).

To me their relationship reads not unlike an epistolary marriage that ended badly: they shared periods of emotional and erotic intensity, waxing and waning feelings, and then underwent a decline. But just as Eliot only officially converted to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927, but had been exploring religious and spiritual questions for many years, the dividing line of 1947 was not the end of the affair. Eliot tended to move very slowly in matters of emotional significance. In October 1948, for example, Eliot writes to Hale that she is more in his mind than ever before, while in December 1948 he re-affirms his utterly singular devotion to only her. His use of the word “love” also persists—even under the sign of multiple errors—with a remarkable and somewhat touching tenacity through his last letters to her. Even as late as the Fall of 1956 he is still addressing her with endearments, a lover’s humor, and affirmations of his continued affection. This is where the end occurred, and it seems to have happened precipitously, and to have had at least something to do with Eliot’s pronounced agitation at Hale depositing his letters at Princeton without his full permission.

Theirs was a queer and uncertain kind of loving constructed upon a pact of apartness that both parties agreed to sustain for many years through a non-committed, non-conjugal love. Indeed, Eliot often uses the word “queer” to describe the extremes of pleasurable and painful emotions he feels about Hale. It is tempting to blame Eliot entirely for their distancing, but there is at least some evidence that Hale also participated. We recall that Eliot felt he had no chance with her before he left for Europe in 1914, while it took a full five years (from October 1930 to November 1935) for Hale to send what Eliot considered her first, truly reciprocal love letter to him. She remained aloof and physically inaccessible on various occasions, including during the early months of the momentous year of 1935. That summer they

ARCHIVE RESPONSES

would share the “rose-garden” moment at Burnt Norton, and in December she gave him a ring that he tells her has all the significance of a wedding ring and which he promises always to treasure and wear. The year, though, did not start off with such intimacies. In early January 1935, after visiting with Eliot in London, Hale leaves for Rome and only writes to Eliot sporadically from the continent. By 7 March, he is openly nervous about her infrequent replies and very impatient to see her, mildly chiding her for her imprecision about when she will come to Campden to meet up with him, worrying that if she persists in her present plans they will not be able to see each other until as late as May. He is longing for her “closer contact” (“Gerontion,” *Poems* 1:33). Sadly, because Eliot chose to have Hale’s letters destroyed—silencing her version of the story forever—our understanding of precisely why Hale kept herself at a remove from him at these times will remain limited, but we have glimpses of her own understandable reserve and hesitations.

For Eliot’s part, he held himself apart from Hale for multiple reasons. First, he suffered from a tragic mix of a fear of intimacy (from childhood, which was then exacerbated by his self-described “nightmare” marriage to Haigh-Wood), personal insecurity, and a recurring sense of being personally and spiritually “unworthy” of Hale’s love. In “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” the speaker anxiously muses, “Do I dare/Disturb the universe?” and “Do I dare to eat a peach?” (*Poems* 1:6, 9), and Eliot’s own fears about loving and being loved (and loveable) play out through the years with Hale. In his first letter to Hale he tells her that no one else will ever be able to grasp the meaning in *Ash-Wednesday*. There his speaker repeats the prayer, “Lord, I am not worthy/Lord, I am not worthy/but speak the word only” (*Poems* 1:91).

The very first poem that the young Eliot “ever wrote to be shown to other eyes” begins, “If Time and Space, as Sages say,/Are things which cannot be,” and the verse continues with a Donne-like meditation

on the paradox of eternity and ephemerality being ultimately indistinguishable (McIntire, *Modernism, Memory, and Desire* [Cambridge, 2008], 101). Eliot’s love for Emily Hale did involve a timeless relation that defied ordinary temporal unfolding and progression by creating a love for her that was radically private, coded into most of his major poems, disavowed by his claims for “impersonality” in his most important critical essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), and which finds a new and strange blossoming even now, over a half century beyond their deaths.

In the brief ten weeks that the Eliot-Hale archive was open before Covid-19 shuttered the library indefinitely, readers made their way to Princeton from around the world, justified in our curiosity and our sense that it is all right to read these private letters and to wrestle with our own ambivalence about and love for this great, tortured, complicated poet who left crucial keys to some of his most important work locked away in these mysterious letters for decades. As in Eliot’s second epigraph to *Burnt Norton*, taken from Heraclitus—“The way up and the way down are the same”—the love that Eliot created and sustained was simultaneously saving and damning, realized and unrealized. Akin to the paradoxes of Eliot’s poems, so many of which are animated by the thrilling multiplicity of potential readings, he made of his love life a riddled poem (see Dickey on riddles and *Burnt Norton, Reports*, 3 August 2020). Virginia Woolf once described Eliot in her diary as having a Cheshire-like grin, filled with secrets. The story of Eliot’s love for Hale has been with us all along, hidden in plain sight in his poems like a purloined letter of his heart. What else could we have expected from these letters that we have waited so long to read but astonishing intensity, surprising and sometimes disturbing revelations, a troubling moral confusion, and a powerful love story? The material here will arouse our own emotions for a long time to come.

ELECTION OUTCOME

Two candidates received sufficient nominations this winter for the two open positions on the Eliot Society board. Since the election was uncontested, no vote was held. Patrick Query and Vincent Sherry

rejoined the board for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2020. The Society is grateful for their continued service.

Julia Daniel and **Margaret Konkol**'s co-edited collection, *Modernism in the Green: Public Greens in Modern Literature and Culture*, was recently published with Routledge (May 2020). Julia adds that "it has, among other things, pictures."

Joshua Richards announces his recent appointment as Assistant Professor of English at Oklahoma Panhandle State University. For this issue of *Time Present*, Josh has produced his second annual T. S. Eliot bibliography. Thanks to Josh for the bibliography, and many cheers for his good news on the job front.

Sarah Coogan completed her PhD in English at the University of Notre Dame in June 2020. Her dissertation is entitled "Chosen Homelands: Nostalgia and National Identity in British and Irish Modernist Epic," and it includes a chapter devoted to "Place, Transcendence, and Equivocal Nostalgia in Lynette Roberts' 'Gods with Stainless Ears' and T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*."

The International T. S. Eliot Society will be holding a panel on T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale, organized and chaired by **Gabrielle McIntire**, Queens University, at the **MLA Annual Meeting** in Toronto, January 7-10, 2021 that will offer a range of approaches to address the extraordinary richness and complexities of the Princeton University archive of approximately 1,131 letters from Eliot to Hale written between 1930 and 1957. Panelists will be **Frances Dickey**, University of Missouri, "Datta: Emily Hale and the Gift of Poetry"; **Megan Quigley**, Villanova University, "Emily Hale' vs. Emily Hale"; **John Whittier-Ferguson**, University of Michigan, "'Skeleton Keys': Useful Failure and the Limits of the Archive"; **Tony Cuda**, UNC Greensboro, "Everything but *Burnt Norton*."

Also at the MLA, the Conference on Christianity and Literature has invited **Jewel Spears Brooker** to give a talk on the relevance of the letters (and other new material) to TSE's religious sensibility. Her talk will be titled: "Eliot In Ecstasy: Reason, Mysticism, Faith" and will include responses by **Tony Domestico** and **Craig Woelfel**.

Send news of Eliot-related events and professional milestones to tseliotsociety@gmail.com

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's **Midwest Modern Language Association Conference**, scheduled for November 5-8, 2020 in Milwaukee, has unfortunately been pushed back a year to November 4-7, 2021. Please join us, therefore, in Milwaukee, 2021, for the Eliot Society's annual MMLA panel, sure to be distinguished for its wit, wisdom, and erudition. All are welcome. For more information, see: <https://www.luc.edu/mmla/convention/>. You may also contact Edward Upton at edward.upton@valpo.edu.

Craig Woelfel writes to inform us that this year's SAMLA conference—scheduled for November 13-15—will be conducted online. While he is saddened by the fact that there will be no in-person meeting, he wants to remind us that it will be easier for us to participate in the conference virtually. Craig is chairing a panel at SAMLA titled "T. S. Eliot: Provocation, Creation, and . . . Scandal?" More on the conference and its organizing theme can be found at <https://samla.memberclicks.net/>.

Paul Keers, chair of the T. S. Eliot Society in the UK, writes to inform us that the UK Eliot Society has recently published the 2020 issue of their annual peer-reviewed *Journal*. Its essays present aesthetic,

The Journal
of the
T.S. Eliot Society

biographical, or post-secular views of T. S. Eliot. The opening editorial for this issue connects Eliot's insight that "History is a pattern" to the present pandemic. Then **Robert Gillespie** discusses the French symbolists, in particular Jean Moréas, and argues that his manifesto, *Le Symbolisme*, published in 1886, "reads uncannily like a 'blueprint' for *The Waste Land*." **Sara Fitzgerald** provides a fascinating insight into the life and character of Emily Hale, the recipient of Eliot's recently unsealed letters. And the poet and literary scholar **Charika Swanepoel** articulates a post-secular view of Eliot's poetic imagination. There is also a review of **Jeremy Diaper**'s recent book, *T. S. Eliot and Organicism*.

Vinni Marie D'Ambrosio, poet and former President of our Society, announces the publication of *An Italian Morning: Poems*, which includes a poem in tribute to Eliot and Ghandi, both of whom have September birthdays.

Review of *Faber & Faber*

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Modern Verse. We hear him amusingly praised by Robert Graves for having the wisdom to publish *The White Goddess*, and we see him react to being disparaged by George Steiner (“I had rather be damned in the company of Yeats, Hofmannsthal, Claudel and Cocteau than praised by this extraordinary American who cannot write decent English and whose style is one of vulgar vehemence” [262]). His relationship with Valerie Fletcher unfolds half-hidden. And in a long-running thread, we watch him compose the *Cats* poems for his godchildren, including Tom Faber—Geoffrey’s son and Toby’s father.

We also witness the firm’s famous hijinks, in which Eliot was an enthusiastic participant. The 1935 prank in which Eliot, Frank Morley, and Morley Kennerley set off fireworks between Geoffrey Faber’s feet during a board meeting is of course documented. There is a teasing fake letter sent by Eliot (posing as “the Rev. John McHaigh LL.D., B.Sc.”) to Faber in 1950, offering to make him an object lesson in a temperance crusade. Best of all, though, is the 1936 letter from Charles Stewart, on behalf of the Directors, pretending to scold Eliot for moonlighting as the proprietor of Eliot’s Club—a dance venue in Charing Cross Road that was advertising in the *Times*—and Eliot’s lengthy, insulted and insulting reply, which Toby Faber calls “a comic masterpiece” (112). Both sides in this exchange played their parts with such straight faces that “After Geoffrey’s death, successive Chairmen of Faber & Faber kept this correspondence locked away, believing it to be evidence of a serious rift” (118). Readers who have not already seen it in vol. 8 of Eliot’s *Letters* will enjoy discovering it here.

The World War II period finds Geoffrey Faber doing battle with the Ministry of Supply’s Paper Control Office and joining Eliot on fire-watching duty. It also finds Eliot rejecting *Animal Farm* on the grounds that 1944 was not the right time to be satirizing the Soviets. Eliot told Orwell that he particularly regretted this decision because “whoever publishes this, will naturally have the opportunity of publishing your future work.” In this he proved prophetic, as Toby Faber observes: “in turning down *Animal Farm* . . . Eliot was also turning down the unwritten *1984*” (175). And yet, while the author dispassionately assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the Faber leadership over the decades throughout the book, his judgment of Eliot never wavers. Of a difficult 1952 exchange in

which Eliot wrote rather critically and pessimistically to Geoffrey Faber of the company’s present business conduct and future prospects, Toby Faber remarks, “Every time I read that correspondence, I am more impressed by T. S. Eliot” (213).

Eliot showed wisdom even in his exit from the firm. In 1953 he trusted his own instinct in recommending a young man named Charles Monteith to join the Faber partners, overruling a confidential letter from the Warden of All Souls College, Oxford, that cast doubt on Monteith’s taste and character. To make room on the board for Monteith, Eliot—displaying a “selflessness” Toby Faber pauses to admire (201)—entered into a formal process of phased retirement. Eliot coached Monteith through his early years at Faber, and Monteith more than vindicated his faith. Almost the first thing he did was to pull *Lord of the Flies* off the slush pile—the unsolicited manuscript had already been rejected by several other firms—and publish it. Monteith became a mainstay of the firm into the early 1980s, eventually chairing the company.

The last chapters of the volume, which take the history of the firm up to 1990, show Faber & Faber struggling to endure as an independent publisher in a rapidly consolidating industry. For its author, the overarching tale spun by *Faber & Faber: The Untold Story* is one of the firm’s survival, sometimes despite economic challenges beyond its control and sometimes despite the mistakes of its leaders. Financial missteps—and, as Toby Faber makes clear, a certain reluctance to change old ways—made the company’s existence precarious by the 1970s, and Eliot had to return from the grave in 1981, with assistance from Andrew Lloyd Webber, to bail them out. *Cats* preserved Faber’s independence long enough for its directors to right the ship.

At the moment Eliot entered into his retirement agreement, Geoffrey Faber wrote him a movingly reticent letter of gratitude:

We are both of us men of reserve. Neither of us finds it easy to down defences and speak our inmost feelings. So let me say, Tom, simply that, poetry and publishing and plays put aside,—and that is to put aside something!—nothing better has ever happened to me, short of my wonderful good fortune in marriage, than the meeting with you which Charles Whibley planned twenty-five years ago, or thereabouts. (223)

To which Eliot replied, “I can only say that your letter has given me very great pride and pleasure—more than you could believe even if I endeavoured to find expression

Review of *Faber & Faber*, *continued*

for it. . . . I little thought that the man I had gone to interview with such misgivings and trepidation would become one of my very few trusted—and, in our way, intimate—friends” (224). The story of Faber & Faber continued after the deaths of these comrades, and it continued to be remarkable, although I suspect that most Eliot Society members will find their attention waning over the last hundred pages, with the early protagonists out of the picture. Still, the book offers a valuable peek into the private Faber archives, and Toby Faber’s deft selection and unobtrusive narration make it a pleasant read.



Hydraulic Press brick

Review of *Christian Modernism in an Age of Totalitarianism*

continued from page 7

Kurlberg offers a balanced analysis of the output of different members, comparing their tendencies to some of the traits associated with totalitarian regimes (the processes of myth-making and propagandistic influence in particular) and carefully evaluates their meaning and purpose in relation to the historical and social context. A more in-depth assessment of the members’ political views is offered in chapter four. In spite of their heterogeneous political beliefs, the author remarks that “[t]he Moot was not anti-rationalistic nor did it suggest anything that is comparable to the horrors of the Holocaust, and yet it reflected . . . ambivalence towards modernity” (90). Their fascination with some of the apparently successful actions of totalitarian regimes, which in the early 1930s might have seemed somewhat less terrible and were associated more generically with industrialization and social change, places Christian Modernism “vis-à-vis other political ‘isms” (91). In Kurlberg’s view, the Moot Society’s doubts about liberal democracy do not entail a rejection of the core values of liberalism itself and are an expression

of their dissatisfaction with the political milieu of 1930s Britain. The Moot instead prioritised the Christian ideals of freedom of expression and mutual help, although within the boundaries of a religious community, always rejecting the violent expressions of totalitarianisms.

The concrete steps taken by the movement to bring social change are explored in the final chapters of the book, describing several attempts to constitute an Order coordinated by religious institutions like The Council of Christian Faith and Common Life, which often actualized and diffused the ideas developed in the group’s discussions and which managed to reach the attention of some members of Parliament and, indirectly, of Churchill himself. Given the Moot’s constant inability to reach a definite consensus on many points of their agenda, their greatest achievement is found, according to the author, in their lively engagement with concrete social issues, turning it into a reformist rather than a “revitalizing” movement: most significantly, their ideas strongly influenced the reforms promoted by the 1944 Education Act. It is through such discussions on education and on the definition of culture, spread through media such as the BBC’s broadcasts and published in the *Christian News-Letter* that Kurlberg outlines Eliot’s relation of mutual influence and inspiration with different members of the group. Presented as one of the most guarded among the members, his influential position within the movement is recognized by Kurlberg, who offers strong arguments to show how Eliot’s writings such as *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* were consistently developed in conversation with members of the Moot. In particular, the case studies comparing Eliot’s and Mannheim’s definitions of culture and the processes of determination and transmission of knowledge delve into the socio-political implications of some of Eliot’s fundamental beliefs.

Overall, although the sphere of literary modernism is only hinted at in relation to the political ideas outlined in the book, *Christian Modernism in an Age of Totalitarianism* offers an in-depth and objective image of the Moot, and its data-oriented approach proves to be a valuable and complete resource for any Eliot scholar who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of one of the important Christian influences over the middle years of Eliot’s career and of the practical outcomes of his religious thought.

Review of *Viral Modernism*

continued from p. 8

had long been interested in spiritualism,” she notes, “but became its most enthusiastic public promoter in the aftermath of 1918” (200). She calls our attention to Doyle’s “fascinating 1926 novel *The Land of Mist*, a work that highlights the unique pressures the pandemic losses could produce” (206). Outka’s study fills a gap in critical accounts that associate modernism with a climate of apprehension and a diseased atmosphere (Paul Saint-Amour) or stress its transnational dimension (Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz).

In her fifth chapter, “A Waste Land of Influence: T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*,” Outka shows Eliot’s masterpiece to be a literary representation of the pandemic’s “miasmatic” atmosphere, “paradoxically captured in gaps, silences, atmospheres, fragments, and hidden bodies” (2). Iconic features of the poem, like the “sense of enervation, fragmentation, and vulnerable bodies” (143), take on new meaning as Outka traces the writer’s attempt, in the aftermath of the viral outbreak, at “channeling a set of experiences and fragments that were haunting the culture but were difficult to represent” (144). Outka’s pandemic perspective illuminates frequently quoted but still enigmatic moments like, for example, the fragment at the close of “The Burial of the Dead,” where the speaker addresses an acquaintance named Stetson, asking him about the burial of a corpse in his garden. For Outka, this is a reference to the post-pandemic moment, after the first wave, when, “[w]ith coffins scarce and gravediggers overwhelmed, bodies were in fact buried in backyards” (156). More broadly, the bodies of the poem evoke the pandemic, with people not knowing where to inter their dead (153). To give another example, the author reads the references to “the drowned Phoenician Sailor” in Madame Sosostri’s tarot cards, as well as in “Death by Water,” as a depiction, “amid hallucinatory thirst,” of “an opposite state that paradoxically accompanied the dryness and dehydration of the pandemic” (149). Beyond such moments, the salient contribution of the book is to show how the pandemic perspective can alter our idea of modernist form. *The Waste Land*’s well-known fragmentation, its polyphonic texture, and its erratic lines “embody the experiential reality of a delirium brought on by a high fever, a bodily experience that would have been painfully familiar to contemporary readers” (146).

Mrs. *Dalloway* provides another example of the mutual relation between the pandemic and modernist form. Some of the techniques in that novel—for example

“tracing how the body’s sensations slide into words and perceptions, how emotions shift the body’s responses”—are recognizable features of modernist prose and create “the aesthetic superstructure the moment demanded, one capable of registering the subterranean interplay of illness and the body and of capturing a historical event so pervasive that it disappeared even as it continued to shape perception, alter time, and change the very terrain of the city” (124). Outka also turns our attention to Katharine Ann Porter’s novella, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, published in 1939 but set in November 1918. Porter renders the effects of the pandemic on the protagonist, Miranda, a pandemic survivor who suffers from survivor-guilt, by means of “linguistic destruction”: “by carefully detailing the unmaking of language that Miranda’s pain produces—a pain experienced by millions of others—Porter creates a way to remake the language, transferring the pain into the physical form of the novella” (67).

Outka’s research encourages new readings of other important texts of that period. An example is “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Although she focuses on *The Waste Land* rather than this famous essay in her Eliot chapter, the poet’s awareness of what his wife called “a terrible illness” (*Letters* 1:336) might explain the mysterious opening simile: “criticism is as inevitable as breathing.” The word “breathing” is a muted evocation of the pneumonic complications and breathing difficulties that were the manifest symptoms of the virus infection. In the winter of 1919, on 27 February, Eliot wrote to his brother Henry about the persistence of “a great deal of pneumonic influenza about” and the need to be hospitalized if one caught it (*Letters* 1:323; Outka 143). In the spring of the same year, the poet and his wife had intimate experience with such complications when their domestic help, Ellen Kellond, fell ill. In a letter to Charlotte Eliot, dated 7 April 1919, Vivien reports having had to nurse her in their apartment, where she lay on the sofa for five days: “it was in the midst of the influenza epidemic, and even the doctor didn’t come in regularly” (*Letters* 1:336). At last, she was taken to the hospital in an ambulance: “I disinfected the whole flat, and the marvel is that neither of us caught it” (*Letters* 1:336; Outka 142). The image framing “Tradition and the Individual Talent” manifests and conceals all the anxieties about the life of the mind, with “criticism” naming the newly endangered activity of thinking.

During our own months of lockdown, breathing has been at the center of our hopes and fears, much as it was for Eliot. Like him, we fear that we may not be able to think and theorize with the same instruments. As we register the “bodily sensations” and “affective shifts”

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and the “literally microscopic” threat of the virus, these threats well up in words that we do not yet have, and we continue not to have as we keep daily company with the images of Bergamo, New York, São Paulo and so on: the rows of the fallen, the unclaimed corpses, the mass graves (2). Like Eliot and his contemporaries, we remain mired in what Outka describes as a web of illness, pain, suffering, fear, and denial. For us, as for them, the pandemic is structured by silence because it abandons us before the gate of the question: How to grieve? The question looms larger because, as Outka argues in her new work on the *M/m* Print Plus

digital platform, “Grievability, COVID-19, and the Modernists’ Pandemic,” the pandemic has made more visible than ever old inequalities, old indifferences, old blind-spots (21 May 2020).

Modernism meets the scholar in lockdown as a powerful repository of transgenerational silence. Eliot expresses the fears that underlie his time—fears that we have found in our own lives, our hearts, and minds these days too. When we read Eliot now, we discover the fruits of his intellectual and aesthetic resilience, and we can wonder what our harvest is going to be.

ABSTRACTS

40th Annual Meeting of the International T. S. Eliot Society

St. Louis, September 2019

Responses to the opening of the Emily Hale / TSE archive at Princeton, as well as the extensive interview with Hale’s friend Sally Foss, took precedence (and a good many column inches) in the spring 2020 issue of Time Present. We return, in this summer issue, to a selection of abstracts from the annual meeting last September in St. Louis.

Taking the Air: Eliot and the Smoke of St. Louis

The St. Louis of Eliot’s youth was a notoriously smoky place. Starting in 1893, repeated smoke abatement campaigns attempted to pass and enforce laws that would reduce the air pollution from the city’s coal-burning industries. Activists protested that smoke was injurious to the health of St. Louisians, made personal and household cleanliness nearly impossible, darkened the streets at midday, and killed the city’s trees. The battle against smoke began in the 19th century, went all the way to the Supreme Court, and has been described as a series of “futile gestures” that accomplished nothing until the middle of the 20th century. Members of the Wednesday Club, of which Charlotte Eliot was a founder, mobilized the women of St. Louis to battle against the smoke menace that threatened their families and burdened their lives as housekeepers. Despite Charlotte’s investment in the smoke abatement movement through her club, the Eliot family’s relationship to “the smoke evil” was ambiguous, for brick kilns were one of the city’s main polluters. The Hydraulic Press Brick Company’s yards lay near the Central West End, contributing to the

clouds of soot that blighted the expensive homes of city leaders, including Henry Ware and Charlotte Eliot themselves after 1905, in what had promised to be a clean, healthy suburb far from the center of industry. Eliot’s family profited indirectly from the smoke evil while also suffering from and actively working against it. This historical context (drawn from the archives of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Wednesday Club, and Houghton Library) reveals conflicting personal investments and loyalties underlying the poet’s representation of smoky afternoons and “evenings yellow and rose” colored by the sulfurous fumes of St. Louis smokestacks. Smoke contributes an important element of obscurity to the atmosphere of Eliot’s early verse. My presentation explores what the smoke abatement movement and the moral complexity of smoke for the Eliots reveal about his smoke-darkened cityscapes. Once a symbol of progress and prosperity but increasingly viewed at the turn of the century as wasteful and harmful—an “evil”—smoke is aestheticized in his early verse, yet it also adds to the sense of separation and degradation that his speakers experience. In a reversal of the usual reading that sees setting as an “objective correlative” of psychic drama, I suggest that the moral ambiguity of the smoke-filled scenes in “Prufrock,” “Portrait of a Lady,” “Preludes,” and other early poems reflects the historical reality of smoke itself.

Frances Dickey
U Missouri

Bad Weather Ahead: Reading *The Waste Land* through Climate Change

Long regarded as a relentless exposition of the debased state of Western social, cultural, and even physical landscapes in the wake of the First World War, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* makes some of its most devastating critiques through appealing to weather-related events. Across its five sections, a range of climate-related disasters reinforce the implicit premise of the poem’s laconic title—that the eponymous “Waste Land” is an environment where something has gone badly, and perhaps irrevocably, wrong. Dominated by life-threatening hurricanes, unremitting and unseasonal heat waves, and killer droughts, the poem’s natural landscapes stand as explicit reflections of a socio-cultural landscape which Eliot regarded as similarly out of kilter. This paper explores the ways in which Eliot’s poem bears witness to modernism’s early and sustained engagement with the anthropocene as one of modernity’s primary constitutive elements. Following Paul Crutzen’s formulation of the anthropocene as an emergent epoch during which “human activities have grown to become significant geological forces,” my paper explores how *The Waste Land* not only plots climatic changes but also thinks about the ways in which human behavior is implicated in those changes. Grounding his depiction of a sterile post-war society and denuded environmental landscape in the legend of the Fisher King, whose kingdom has been rendered barren by virtue of his own transgressive actions, Eliot attends to the links between human activity and environmental degradation. Read in this way, Eliot’s poem becomes a harbinger of how economic overdevelopment and rapaciousness lead to a barren present and future. That this barrenness is symbolized best by a climate seriously out of whack where seasons are reversed, forests are aflame, and coastlines are inundated seems to make the case again for *The Waste Land*’s relevance to one of the prevailing stories of our time.

John McIntyre
U Prince Edward Island

Eliot and the Spatial Humanities

Insofar as place and setting have long been regarded as vital concerns in Eliot’s poetry, this paper aligns new critical histories of Eliot’s place-based writing with recent theoretical interests in what some have termed “the spatial humanities.” Uncovering the architectural and design protocols that underpin both social

formations and urban layouts, the spatial humanities seek to explore how literary encounters with space—particularly urban space—have informed contemporary understandings of the dynamic relationship between nature and culture. Recent work addressing these questions includes Julia E. Daniel’s *Building Natures* (2017) and Shannon Mattern’s *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt* (2017), rereading the litanies of location found in *Four Quartets* as quintessential engagements with how memory and time mold literary renderings of space and place. *Burnt Norton*, for instance, lists several familiar sites—“the gloomy hills of London, / Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney, / Highgate, Primrose, and Ludgate”—only to conclude with the elusive declaration, “Not here / Not here in the darkness, in this twittering world.” For Eliot, these places straddle the boundary between metaphor and materiality; they are neither wholly symbolic nor altogether literal—and are, in fact, “Caught in the form of limitation / Between un-being and being” (*Poems* 1:182, 184). Eliot’s spatial thinking might, therefore, interrupt some of the more static definitions proposed by work in the “spatial humanities,” opening up a new “poetics of space” that takes the often misused word “poetics” more seriously than do Lefebvre, Bachelard, or their contemporaries. This paper examines *Four Quartets* in an effort to restore, or at least underscore, poetry’s central role in defining what we mean by the “spatial humanities.”

Clint Wilson
Rice U

Eliot’s “Psychological” Problem

In the middle of the *Clark Lectures*, Eliot offers a sweeping theory of history that redefines the dissociation of sensibility as a shift from the “ontological to psychological.” The reference to the “psychological” is fascinating—it’s unclear exactly what Eliot means by it (besides a condition of self-consciousness), and it’s even less clear what it has to do with psychology as a discipline or a mode of thought. It turns out that references to psychology pop up as a kind of bogeyman in Eliot’s writing repeatedly in the early to mid-1920s—the period in which he is, among other things, contemplating his religious turn and cementing his critical position in the context of the classicist / romanticist debates. For example, in a 1923 response to Middleton Murry about Classicism’s insistent appeal to the “outside,” he admits that he “is aware that no psychologist would tolerate a discussion which shuffled on such base coinage [as

inside / outside]. . . [Nevertheless,] if you find that you have to imagine it as outside, then it is outside.” The implication is that psychology as a mode of inquiry would cause the Romanticism / Classicism debate to collapse like a house of cards. Why? What else does Eliot have to say about psychology in the mid-20s? Why does he think, if it is so powerful, that he can (or must) sidestep it here?

My recent book has tracked the dissociation of sensibility in the context of religious experience and secularization, but Eliot’s conception of psychology and what it means to his broader thought was a rock I had to leave largely unturned. The searchable *Prose* allows me to return to it in a way never possible before. I want to tell the story of Eliot’s thought and writing about psychology as it develops over the 1920s, culminating in its figural role in his theory of history in the Clarks.

Craig Woelfel
Flagler C

The “Distraction Fit[s]” of Eliot’s Prose

As the early twentieth century brought unprecedented opportunities for distracting entertainments and distracted states of mind, distraction itself became a popular topic among writers and thinkers. If and when Eliot is mentioned in accounts of modern distraction theory, it is often only to quip “Distracted from distraction by distraction” as exemplifying the hand-wringing of his age. While some scholarship does examine “distraction” in *Four Quartets* and other poems, such work tends to read these references as incidental. *The Complete Prose*, however, suggests that we could do more to consider how Eliot’s numerous remarks on distraction frequently and critically shape his discussions of religion, literature, and politics.

I emphasize distraction in modernity as a central concern across Eliot’s prose from his literary criticism of the 1910s and 20s through his political commentaries of the 1930s and 40s. Reading selections of more familiar texts such as *After Strange Gods* alongside “Le roman anglais contemporain” and other pieces newly available, I argue that Eliot sustains a vibrant and nuanced discourse on distraction throughout his lifetime. While he understands individual moments of distraction as crucial for enhancing literary technique and for fostering greater spiritual apprehension, he also repeatedly blames widespread societal “distraction” for perceived failures to address political and economic crises sufficiently in the years leading up to World War II. Eliot’s rigorous considerations of distraction

as both generative and harmful to modernity not only parallel and complicate his poetic renderings of distraction, but respond to the ideas of such prominent distraction theorists as Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel. Moreover, Eliot emerges as a distraction theorist in his own right: one who does not merely echo his era’s anxieties, but transforms them into valuable questions about what it means to live in a world where an “unattended moment” might yield both the best and worst aspects of humanity.

Annarose F. Steinke
U Nebraska-Kearney

The Complexity of Religious Identity in *The Cocktail Party*

Cleo McNelly Kearns’s *T. S. Eliot and Indic Traditions*, which carefully traced the Indian texts and traditions to which the poet had access, should have led to a realignment of Eliot studies, examining Eliot’s sustained negotiations of religious difference, even later in his career. Nevertheless, it has of late become overlooked in favor of a renewed interest in Eliot’s Anglo-Catholicism. Hence, we see the efforts of scholars such as Barry Spurr to downplay the influence of Indian materials on Eliot’s work, centering his approach instead on unfolding the ritual texture of the Anglo-Catholic communities of which Eliot would eventually become a part. On the other hand, the study of colonialism and its aftermath has opened up new ways of thinking about complex literary negotiations of religious difference. Jahan Ramazani has suggested that Eliot’s poetry is best understood as hybrid, attempting to negotiate the various religious and cultural fragments in which he is situated. Ramazani’s approach could usefully reengage Kearns’ work, while complicating our understanding of Eliot’s Anglo-Catholicism. Accepting Ramazani’s invitation to explore Eliot’s hybridity, this paper suggests through a close reading of *The Cocktail Party* that Eliot’s engagement with and study of Indian materials eventually leads him to a more conservative view of Christianity. Eliot’s religious conservatism is part of a larger cultural dialogism that includes an encounter with Indian traditions. *The Cocktail Party* demonstrates that our exploration of religion in Eliot’s works does not require an unproblematic, univocal understanding of the term. Conceiving of Eliot as a hybrid literary figure can help us understand Eliot’s creative religious comparisons and alert readers to the problematic colonialist elements that nevertheless remain.

Edward Upton
Valparaiso U

**“Philosophical obscenity rather like Laforgue”:
Eliot’s *Poems* (1920)**

Eliot’s *Poems* (1920) were derided by early critics. The poems were seen as troublesome in multiple ways: as “plagiaristic, pseudo-scholarly and preparatory” (Rick de Villiers, *New Cambridge Companion to TSE*, 55), as “fatally impoverished of subject matter” (cited in Brooker, *Contemporary Reviews*, 21), and, more contemporarily, as invitations to prejudice (Ricks, 1988). Eliot himself anticipated a negative reaction to his work, writing to his brother that while the poems were, in his mind, “intensely serious,” he imagined that “in America I suppose I shall be thought merely disgusting.” This paper unravels the impetuses and influences behind what Aldous Huxley called the “obscenity” of Eliot’s poems, probing Ezra Pound’s 1932 *Criterion* contention that he and Eliot were united in prescribing Théophile Gautier’s 1852 collection *Emaux et Camées* as a “Remedy” to an influx of free verse. To what extent did Gautier actually inform the form and content of Eliot’s poems? Did Eliot, as Edward J. H. Greene and others have suggested, so easily abandon the earlier influence of Jules Laforgue? How might Tristan Corbière appear in these poems? This paper will argue that the narrative of Eliot’s turn to Gautier, as constructed by Pound, is overly simplistic, and that Eliot’s continued borrowings from Laforgue must also be taken into account.

Suzannah V. Evans
Durham U

**They Have the Cathedral in Common: T. S.
Eliot and Charles Williams as Canterbury
Playwrights**

Eliot wrote in 1948 that his “play *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced at the Canterbury Festival in 1935; [Charles] Williams’s *Cranmer* was the play for the following year, and I went down with a party of mutual friends to see the first performance”; after this encounter, Williams and Eliot became good friends (Introduction to Williams’s *All Hallows’ Eve*). Their lives, careers, and beliefs shared some noteworthy similarities, which has resulted in scholarship about their friendship, meetings, and correspondence; their interests in the occult; their Arthurian themes; and their novels, poetry, and late plays. However, no one has yet written a detailed comparison of *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*. The facts of these authors’ close encounters at the Canterbury

Festival and their composition of sequent plays provide the basis for a rich study of the two texts and their larger cultural context.

This paper will briefly survey the circumstances surrounding the commissioning of these two Canterbury plays and the authors’ meetings in the mid-1930s. Then it will proceed to a detailed examination of the two dramas in terms of style, structure, rhetoric, liturgical elements, and doctrinal content. *Murder* and *Cranmer* both capitalize upon their historical spaces, reenacting acts of violence in an historical ecclesiastical locus. When their martyr-heroes call for belief and charity in troubled times, they both perform the original story and speak to the present-day audience’s needs. By putting these two plays into dialogue in this way, my study throws their dramatic and literary strengths into relief and contributes to a better understanding of the central features of the English liturgical verse drama revival in the inter-war period.

Sorina Higgins
Baylor U

**On Not Being at Home: Eliot’s Conflicted
Cosmopolite**

Eliot spent a good deal of his life feeling out of place. In Harvard, he was the boy from St Louis; in London, the American expatriate. For Eliot, the condition of the exile was associated with a mixture of pride and anxiety. In a letter to his brother Henry dated 2nd July 1919, he both mocks the “childish” behavior of other Americans and confesses that coping with the English is itself “damned hard work.” Living in London was as a constant strain on his emotions and pride, and “differences of feeling” made him feel “humiliated and lonely” (*Letters* 1:370).

According to Henry James, Eliot’s great predecessor as an exiled American, “[to] be a cosmopolite is not... an ideal.... Being a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it” (James, *Collected Travel Writings*, 720). Eliot’s way of “making the best of it,” I would argue, was to turn the circumstances of his own emotional uprooting into an aesthetic and moral imperative not to be provincial, not to feel at home.

I explore the emotional complexity of Eliot’s anti-provincial stance, first by looking at “The Three Provincialities” (1922) and “Tradition and the Practice of Poetry” (1936). I argue that Eliot’s cosmopolite is emotionally conflicted: on the one hand, he is proud to set himself apart, and observe things from

a distance, immune to parochial attachments; on the other hand, he is deeply, irremediably ill at ease in the world. I then focus on two works that stress the importance of not feeling at home, while highlighting the emotional ambiguities of such an attitude. First, “Mélange Adultère de Tout” (1917), a playful French interlude that stages the poet’s cosmopolitan flight across countries. Second, *The Family Reunion* (1939), which looks at what happens when a conflicted cosmopolite makes an attempt at coming home.

Cécile Varry
U Paris



Thanks to Cécile Varry

T. S. Eliot Bibliography 2019

By Josh Richards

Oklahoma Panhandle State University

If you are aware of any 2019 citations that do not appear here, please contact Josh Richards (josh.c.richards@gmail.com). Omissions will be rectified in the 2020 listing.

Procedural Note: reviews of the *Cats* movie have not been included in this bibliography for 2019. Time Present offered its own review, by Stephen Cullinane, in our Spring issue.

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