

Time Present

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An Online Chronology of Eliot's Life

Michael Coyle

Though it was announced to the public just this fall, at the 2008 meeting of the Eliot Society, the T. S. Eliot Database Project is now, already, over 20 years in the making. Its founder is James Loucks, Professor Emeritus at Ohio State University—Newark. With an eye to chronicling Eliot's activities on a weekly, and in some periods, daily basis, Jim began collecting and organizing material from period memoirs, autobiographies, and correspondence, as well as from biographies of virtually anyone who might ever have crossed Eliot's path. Readers familiar with the TSE listserv in the 1990s may have encountered Jim's informed responses to queries and comments, as well as his frequent attempts to track down details about people mentioned in his sources. Today Jim's project constitutes something between 7,000 and 8,000 pages—far more than he could ever hope to publish. Indeed, he had interested one publisher, but that publisher could only promise him a few hundred pages. When he was just about to abandon hope, our old-school archivist found himself thrust into the digital era.

What happened was that, as I had over the years so often done before, I phoned Jim asking for information. And having got that, I asked him how his project was going. When he told me his situation, I realized that while no publisher could give Jim's work the space it required, the Worldwide Web opened up almost unlimited possibilities for such a project. At this point, I phoned an old friend, David Radcliffe. David is a literary historian teaching at Virginia Tech. He spent 15 years working on a database called *English Poetry 1579–1830* (<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu>), which project won him an appointment as Director of the Center for Applied Technology. In this capacity, David is now “publisher” for a variety of digital projects, including *The Thomas L. Gravelle Watermark Archive*, *The First-Line Index of Middle English Verse*, and *Lord Byron And His Times*. As I described Jim's project to David, and David explained to me how translating the text into XML (Extensible Markup Language) would enable dynamic new functionalities, we grew increasingly excited. After a couple of conference calls with Jim, the three of us had conceived a plan—a plan that would launch with a presentation to the Eliot Society.

After its initial construction, the online Chronology will move to the brand-new Center for Textual Studies at Loyola University Chicago, where Eliot Society VP David Chinitz is collaborating with digital-textual experts Peter Shillingsburg and Steven Jones. The new Center has massive server resources through Loyola's Emerging Technologies Laboratory, and the Chronology project should reside there happily for many years to come, under the auspices of the university and the Eliot Society.

At this time the project is looking for volunteers. We need help both long-term and short-term. Short term help, which at this point is crucial, involves contributing to the massive task of database entry—retyping Jim's text in a Web-usable format. (Prior technical expertise is *not* required for this task!) Long-term help will involve editing, fact checking, and even contributing new entries for what will eventually be a “wikified” (user-generated but editor-directed) format. Anyone interested in helping, or who might have a graduate assistant with the time and inclination to participate, should please contact Michael Coyle at mcoyle@mail.colgate.edu. All contributors in whatever form will be acknowledged in the published database.

Eliot at the ALA: Call for Papers

The T. S. Eliot Society will sponsor two sessions at the 2009 Annual Conference of the American Literature Association, May 21–24, at the Westin Copley Place Hotel in Boston. Please send proposals or abstracts (up to 250 words), along with a curriculum vitae, electronically to Professor Lee Oser (leeoser@holycross.edu). Submissions must be received no later than January 15, 2008.

For information on the ALA and the 2009 meeting, see <http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2>.



A Byte for Your Thoughts

The Eliot Society is interested in enhancing its website, both to raise the Society's profile on the Web and to make the site more useful. The function of the website as a public face for the Eliot Society will continue, and a new area, tentatively called "T. S. Eliot Online" will provide more substantive content.

If so inclined, please send Jayme Stayer (jayme.stayer@gmail.com) your responses to the following queries:

1) As a teacher or scholar of Eliot, what information, material, documents, links, etc., would you like to see collected or published on the Web or created specifically for our website? We are, of course, bound by copyright laws, so there will be limits to what can be uploaded. Depending on the interests of the Society's membership, we may be able to expand the site's capabilities for pedagogy—for example, providing a resource for high-school and college students looking for accessible and reliable information for their papers.

2) If you are a techno-inclined person, would you be willing to devote some time to the website's visual design and layout?



The Eliot Society on Television

On October 20, KETC Public Television in St. Louis broadcast a T. S. Eliot episode of its weekly program "Living St. Louis." According to the station, the program is "designed to highlight the diverse people, places and cultures that make metropolitan St. Louis an interesting and thriving area."

Figuring prominently in the show are Vincent Sherry, chair of the English Department at Washington University; Eliot Society member Michael Coyle, who talks about Eliot's engagement with the popular culture of his time; and former president Jewel Spears Brooker, who speaks of the influence of St. Louis on Eliot's imagery—a

central theme of the show. A substantial segment of the program was filmed at the Eliot Society's annual meeting, and specifically at the Friday evening reception in Tony and Melanie Fathman's backyard. Numerous members of the Society appear in cameo roles.

The video, which runs to about eight minutes and is well worth watching, is linked from the Eliot Society's website (<http://www.luc.edu/eliot>).



Eliot Summer School

The first annual T. S. Eliot International Summer School will be held in Bloomsbury, June 27–July 4, 2009. Founded and directed by Ronald Schuchard, the Summer School is modeled on the highly successful Yeats Summer School in Sligo, which is now in its fiftieth year. The Eliot Summer School is hosted by the University of London's Institute of English Studies. Its instructors include Jewel Spears Brooker, Robert Crawford, Tony Cuda, Denis Donoghue, Lyndall Gordon, Jason Harding, Sir Frank Kermode, and Christopher Ricks. The School will be officially opened by Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, and activities will include trips to Burnt Norton, Little Gidding, and, optionally, East Coker.

The fee for the T. S. Eliot International Summer School is £500, and inexpensive local accommodations are available. For further information, see the School's website at <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/TSE>.



Eliot Library at Little Gidding

The Friends of Little Gidding invite Society members to donate copies of their books and articles on Eliot to the T. S. Eliot Library at Ferrar House. Please send them to the Friends of Little Gidding at Ferrar House, Little Gidding, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE28 5RJ, United Kingdom.



Society People

For the second time, William Harmon has been given the Robert B. Heilman Award for excellence in book reviewing by the *Sewanee Review*.

James Matthew Wilson has joined the Department of Humanities and Augustinian Traditions at Villanova University. Among the interdisciplinary courses he teaches is a seminar on T. S. Eliot, Jacques Maritain, and Christopher Dawson.

Conference Program

Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900 February 19–21, 2009

Sessions sponsored by the T. S. Eliot Society

Panel 1

Chair: Ben Lockerd, Grand Valley State University

1. "The Deed is Dead: Ethics in *The Waste Land*." Ben Bakhtiarynia, Queen's University
2. "Eliot and Pound vis-à-vis the Most Modern Generation." William Harmon, University of NC, Chapel Hill

Panel 2

Chair: William Harmon, University of NC, Chapel Hill

1. "Musical Form in Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Hughes's *Montage of a Dream Deferred*." Mark Cantrell, University of Miami
2. "T. S. Eliot, Henri Alain-Fournier, and Jean Verdenal." Nancy Hargrove, Mississippi State University

More on Eliot and Madison Cawein

Gary Dexter's *Why Not Catch-21? The Stories Behind the Titles* (2007) is, according to its publisher, "an expansion on Gary Dexter's long-running *Sunday Telegraph* column. Each of its fifty chapters focuses on the origins of one of the great titles of world literature, presenting a bite-sized piece of literary history, with fascinating details of the work's genesis and composition."

In his chapter on *The Waste Land*, Dexter first goes into the composition of the poem and the relation of its title to Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, which he amusingly calls "the *Da Vinci Code* of the 1920s." He next presents the thesis that Madison Cawein's "Waste Land" was the concealed source of Eliot's poem and its title—a claim that William Harmon has discussed in *Time Present* (Summer 2007) and that has had a certain amount of play on the Web. Wikipedia, for example, mentions it, and the Plagiarism website (<http://www.famousplagiarists.com/literature.htm>) convicts Eliot of "Plagiarism of content/language/ideas for *The Waste Land* from a less privileged American poet by the name of Madison Cawein."

After quoting Cawein's "Waste Land" in its entirety, Dexter notes that Eliot "could easily have read it" when it appeared in *Poetry* in 1913. Comparing the two poems, Dexter writes:

One sees immediately that Cawein's "Waste Land" is very different in style from Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

It reads like a work of late-Victorian origin, perhaps a minor work by Hardy.... But the correspondences with *The Waste Land* are startling. The critic Robert Ian Scott, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1995, noted at least thirteen similarities, including the title and basic theme (that of a cursed land), with images of crying crickets, notes of a bird, stony ground, dust, dead trees, a dog and a disappearing man.

Dexter then quotes Scott's conclusion that "Cawein seems to have provided the emotional geography on which Eliot's poem, its effect and much of its fame are based."

Dexter concludes, however, that *The Waste Land* is *not* in fact a plagiarized "Waste Land":

True, there are dogs in both poems, but there is not much resemblance between Cawein's "old blind hound" and Eliot's "O keep the dog far hence, that's friend to men".... There is "stony" ground in both poems, but there is no seemingly direct line of transmission between Cawein's "chipmunk's stony lair" and Eliot's evocation of the Passion—"the agony in stony places." The most that can be said, it seems, is that Cawein may have been one influence among many in the scraps and jottings Eliot presented to Pound as "He Do the Police in Different Voices."

Although it is "conceivable," Dexter writes, "that Eliot was remembering Cawein's poem in 1922 as he retitled his poem," this is not, he says, "the likeliest theory."

Neither does Cawein's "emotional geography" seem too close to Eliot's. The emotion of *The Waste Land* is Eliot's own, as he sat down in Margate and Lausanne in 1920, ill, depressed, and worried about his failing marriage.... The voice we hear when we read it is not Cawein's, just as it is not Weston's. Nor, for that matter, is it Pound's, Baudelaire's, Webster's, Pope's, Donne's, Shakespeare's, the Buddha's, Goldsmith's, Dante's, Isaiah's, Wagner's or Milton's. It is T. S. Eliot's voice, and it is one of the most distinctive in all literature.

Public Sightings

"I'm a lifelong Cubs fan, and I can't believe it's over. Paraphrasing T. S. Eliot: **This is the way the season ends**, not with a bang but a whimper." (Tony Benvenuti, of Melrose Park, IL. Letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, 7 Oct. 2008. Quoted here in full.)

"**April is the cruelest month**, mixing memory and desire. Or so T. S. Eliot opined. How did he know, not being a Cubs fan?

"Perhaps that poet and expatriate forsook baseball altogether, like optimism and all else American, when he

continued on p. 12

Lee Oser. *The Return of Christian Humanism: Chesterton, Eliot, Tolkien, and the Romance of History*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2007.

Reviewed by Dominic Manganiello
University of Ottawa

In the *annus mirabilis* of 1910, human character changed, Virginia Woolf famously claimed, and triggered a crisis in the philosophical concept of Man that in turn prompted modernists to refigure the human in an anti-realist mode. The dehumanizing impulse that Ortega y Gasset detected at work behind much modern art eventually led Michel Foucault to announce, in Nietzschean fashion, “the death of man.” But rumors of his demise, as the saying goes, seem to have been greatly exaggerated. Lee Oser’s fine new book, which charts the revival of Christian Humanism in the twentieth century, is therefore bound to ruffle not a few academic feathers in contemporary lecture halls intent on ushering in a “posthuman” era. Oser focuses on three recidivist humanists—Chesterton, Eliot, and Tolkien—and their incisive responses to the claims of “a dogmatically relativist modernism.” In this respect, his book can be read as a kind of counter-narrative to Paul Sheehan’s critique of an essentialized humanism in *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (2002).

Oser proposes a return
to the authentic Christian
sources of tolerance.

More importantly, *The Return of Christian Humanism*, along with Oser’s previous book, *The Ethics of Modernism* (2007), performs the valuable service of putting the question of what it means to be “human” in the fullest sense—an issue Erich Auerbach identified as being foundational for Western literature—in the foreground of serious critical discussion once again.

Oser introduces his argument with the practical observation that “humanism” itself has become a slippery, if not equivocal, term. He accordingly provides a helpful overview of various definitions of the concept—five to be exact—ranging from the narrow Arian belief in Christ’s mere humanity to the “wider pragmatism” of William James. To situate the outlook of the three creative writers under scrutiny, Oser makes an interesting move by linking Eliot’s use of the word “orthodoxy” with his definition of “humanism” in a 1928 essay on the subject as that which “makes for breadth, tolerance, equilibrium and sanity.” That orthodoxy and humanism serve as shorthand for “tolerance” in the poet’s usage is rather surprising, not least because the first synonym for the prevailing shibboleth that would spring to the popular mind would probably be “diversity.” Ironically, tolerance as practiced today tyrannically imposes uniformity, or what Oser calls “groupthink,” on different minorities, a travesty of the Christian ideal of a community or body composed of diverse members. While Oser readily acknowledges that the annals of history show that Christians themselves have at times also been guilty of intolerance, he nev-

ertheless sees contemporary diversity advocates posing a much greater threat to democracy when they fail to engage their opponents in a rational debate. He therefore proposes a return to the authentic Christian sources of tolerance. His central thesis is that Christian humanism allows for a fruitful exchange of divergent views to take place because it steers a middle course between the Scylla of secularism, which perverts state power, and the Charybdis of theocracy, which perverts religious power.

Not surprisingly, Chesterton and Eliot emerge as central figures in the intellectual battle against contemporary forces of anti-humanism. Chesterton’s appeal to common sense constituted an attempt to halt the “great march of mental destruction” that he saw devastating Western culture at the turn of the twentieth century. It is noteworthy that Eliot followed suit by tracing the crisis of what he called “the disintegration of the intellect in modern Europe” in his 1926 Clark Lectures. Chesterton prescribed a return to *recta ratio* (universal right reason) as the only way to minister to a cultural mind diseased. The scheme of orthodoxy and heresy he devised in his probing analysis, Oser plausibly suggests (41),

later resonates in Eliot’s *After Strange Gods*. This initial point of convergence between the two writers should not prevent the critic from identifying some essential differences between them.

“Chesterton is comical, democratic, and orthodox,” Oser notes, whereas Eliot is “ironic, aristocratic, and a priest of art” (39). These categories, though helpful, need perhaps to be nuanced a little. While it is true that Eliot began his career as an aesthetic humanist, I would suggest that “Tradition and the Individual Talent” also draws on Chesterton’s notion of the “democracy of the dead,” since Eliot insists in his seminal essay that the voices of dead authors resonate in avant-garde art and give the work of the contemporary writer its complete meaning. Although Eliot, like Matthew Arnold, linked humanism with civilization and culture, he was not an out-and-out hieratic aesthete. The conclusion of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, for example, foregrounds Jacques Maritain’s warning about the “deadly error” of thinking poetry can provide humanity with “supersubstantial” nourishment, for Eliot, too, was utterly convinced that man cannot live by the bread of art alone.

Oser is at his most incisive and hard-nosed when he defends the Christian poetics of Eliot in the face of the fierce attacks leveled against him recently by Helen Vendler and Harold Bloom. These prominent critics have censured the modern poet’s religious humanism because their own aesthetic convictions, Oser suspects, effectively turn literature into a kind of substitute religion. In a similar vein, Oser argues that the pragmatism of Richard Rorty, no less than the Gnosticism of Vendler and Bloom, lacks the premises of universal right reason on which its epistemology, ironically, depends. Oser quotes Chesterton’s prescient observation

about this cultural paradox: “the modern world, with its modern movements, is living on its Catholic capital. It is using, and using up, the truths that remain to it out of the old treasury of Christendom; including, of course, many truths known to pagan antiquity but crystallized in Christendom... It is not starting fresh things that it can really carry into the future” (99). This was a view that Eliot, I might add, came round to embracing in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Convinced as a “student of social biology” that the preservation of its Christian roots was the key to the survival of Western civilization, Eliot stated memorably, “If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes.” Oser makes an impassioned plea in the hope of averting the possible cultural collapse that Eliot predicted: “the limits of reason should not impoverish reason and... the history of reason should not impoverish history” (109). He accordingly proposes to revive Chesterton’s notion of a “romance” of history that contains both the ideal of a timeless Rome and “a story [not] of otherworldly monasticism, but of engagement of the world” (158), an ageless story that has nourished much of the Western literary imagination. Drawing on Christopher Dawson’s view that religion operates as the dynamic principle that sustains culture, Oser makes a compelling case for cultural renewal under the auspices of Christian humanism.

Limitations of space prevent me from doing full justice to these as well as other aspects of Oser’s wide-ranging and sophisticated argument. The excellent chapter on Tolkien, for instance, presents the author of *The Lord of the Rings* as being much closer in spirit to Chesterton’s optimism about human potential than Eliot was, and deserves to be delved into for its rich insights. In short, I have learned much from this impressive book and recommend it highly to readers.



A. David Moody. *Ezra Pound: Poet. A Portrait of the Man and His Work. Volume I: The Young Genius 1885–1920*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2007.

Reviewed by Leon Surette
University of Western Ontario (Emeritus)

Moody’s biography is the seventh full scale biography of Pound, and takes its place beside a half-dozen specialized biographical studies, among them Tim Redman’s excellent *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (1991) and my own, *Pound in Purgatory* (1999)—neither of which rate a mention in Moody’s highly selective list of “Writing by Others.” The first question a reviewer must ask is: does this study justify still another biography? Do we need a two-volume opus from the prestigious Clarendon Press, which, incidentally, has not produced a study focussing on Ezra Pound since my own 1979 study, *A Light from Eleusis*.

To some degree one must grant merit to Moody’s study since he has access to the multitude of specialized editions

of Pound’s letters that have appeared over the last decade or so, and makes copious use of them. Of achieved biographies only Ira Nadel’s *Ezra Pound: A Literary Life* (Palgrave 2004) has had that access. Those editions permit both authors to provide a closely detailed account of Pound’s literary life. However, in Moody’s case it is a mixed blessing. His narrative is fragmented by his practice of redacting details from Pound’s correspondence with a particular individual for ten pages or so, and then turning either to another edition, or to Pound’s poetry published during the period in question. For every volume of poetry Moody provides a detailed paraphrase and assessment of virtually every poem—almost always finding them masterful, and marking a new departure in the history of poetry in English. This practice makes for a very trying reading experience, and Moody’s wide-eyed amazement at Pound’s genius at every stage of his career becomes wearing.

Clearly Moody believes that we need yet another biography so as to defend Pound from mildly negative assessments in such works as Redman’s and mine mentioned above. Indeed, he seems more distressed by judicious assessment of Pound’s oeuvre than by strident dismissals such as Castillo’s 1988 study, *The Genealogy of Demons*. Moody is a dyed-in-the-wool Poundolator, who will hear nothing negative about his hero. Accordingly he does not deign to confront head on negative assessments of Pound—which are legion. On the positive side, he makes copious use of precedent archival, bibliographical and biographical scholarship, occasionally correcting or amending it with his own research. So far as critical commentary on Pound’s poetry is concerned, Moody ignores it entirely. Even the large body of work by the late Hugh Kenner, the dean of Pound scholars, is ignored.

An aspect of Moody’s study that involves the present reviewer is Moody’s anxiety to debunk the notion that Pound shared “Yeats’ fascination with what is loosely called ‘the occult’, as some have argued.” The unnamed “some” are notably myself and Demetres Tryphonopoulos. Moody claims, quite correctly, that Pound was not interested in Yeats’ efforts to communicate with ghosts (242). However, talking to ghosts—Spiritualism—is a Nineteenth-Century innovation of the American Fox sisters and hardly counts as occultism at all. The latter, as Moody knows, is the claim to possess occult—that is, “hidden”—knowledge denied to less sensitive souls than artists and mystics. Moody frequently evinces the conviction that Pound, like all true poets, has such knowledge. Indeed, he claims it for Pound on the very next page: “He [Pound] very likely thought that his own powers of mental vision were superior to those of Yeats’ ‘fat old woman in Soho.’” Moody then compares Pound to Blake: “Pound, too cultivated those states of mind in which the universe came alive to him” (243).

Such devious defensiveness characterizes the book throughout. When Moody comes to the rocky reception of Pound’s 1919 poetry sequence, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, after two and a half pages of paraphrase, he turns to

allegations that Pound's grasp of Latin was shaky—as it certainly was—complaining, somewhat hyperbolically, that *Homage to Sextus Propertius*' "relation to modern life has been ignored while debate rages about its relation to Propertius' Latin" (352). He is also distressed by Pound's well-documented belief that the Albigenian heretics of twelfth century France possessed forgotten ancient wisdom, which they shared with the Provençal troubadours. Moody triumphantly points out on page 191 that Pound ignored Mont Ségur, when in 1912 he was in the vicinity of that "sacred" site of the heresy's final destruction. And when Pound *does* visit the site seven years later, Moody maintains the Pound's "mind now was not simply preoccupied with the religion and culture of the troubadours' Provence [as it had been?] but reaching for a larger conception of history in which their story would be just one of many such 'luminous details'" (359). Pound's alleged lack of interest in the heretics has now morphed for Moody—quite accurately, incidentally—into just one of many such interests. This kind of thing makes the book a seriously unreliable guide to Pound's career and opinions.

A disappointment for readers who know Moody as an Eliot scholar is the almost complete neglect of the early relationship between Pound and Eliot consequent on Eliot's arrival in London in the summer of 1914. Perhaps he is saving exploration of that relationship for the next volume, in which Pound's editing of *The Waste Land* will surely be discussed. This first volume takes us to 1920, which includes Pound's infatuation with Major Douglas' Social Credit monetary theories and prescriptions for the governance of nations. Despite the importance of Douglas and Social Credit to Pound's career, Moody gives it only five pages (372–76). Both Redman and I have argued that Pound's economic radicalism underpinned his enthusiasm for Mussolini, and ultimately led to his anti-Semitism. Moody, of course, begs to differ, but he gives no hint as to what Social Credit policies and theories were. He dismisses the economic arguments by (falsely) alleging that Pound "hardly bothers with the technical and strictly economic arguments." Although Moody maintains, with some justice, that Pound's interest in Social Credit was "on the basis of ethics or equity" (374), ethics and equity cannot be divorced from political and economic policy. Pound, after all, believed that his admiration for Mussolini and his anti-Semitism were grounded on ethics and equity. Moody delicately addresses Pound's anti-Semitism, mostly put off to the proposed second volume. After citing a few anti-Semitic remarks from Pound prior to 1920, Moody comments: "Those remarks do show him lapsing on a very few occasions into the endemic antisemitism [*sic*] of the time; and they do indicate a flaw that was to grow, in the 1930s and after, into a most grave failing." On the last point, I agree for once with Moody.

*Moody's wide-eyed amazement
at Pound's genius
becomes wearing.*

Jeroen Vanheste. *Guardians of the Humanist Legacy: The Classicism of T. S. Eliot's Criterion Network and its Relevance to our Postmodern World*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Reviewed by Anderson Araujo
University of Western Ontario

With a dizzying scope—from Plato to Proust, Bacon to Babbitt, Descartes to Dostoevsky, neo-Thomism to Toulmin—Jeroen Vanheste's two-part study first surveys the cultural and philosophical historiography of the pan-European network of intellectuals and periodicals to which T. S. Eliot informally belonged in the interbellum and then traces that network's classicist legacy in postwar humanism. In between, a nemesis emerges: postmodern anti-humanism. Vanheste has no truck with the truth-value relativism of post-Heideggerian thought. Nor is he fond of the "jargon-infested delirium" (416) of deconstructionist texts. Which is to say that "logocentrism" is not a dirty word for Vanheste. Far from it. It is a guiding principle. The study is based, for the most part, on primary sources, with verbatim quotations often providing unmediated access to the books and essays under examination.

555 pages hardly seem enough to contain the near-encyclopaedic span of this volume. A gaze as wide as Vanheste's could well miss the trees for the forest, to reverse the old saying. Yet the book's crisp, lucid prose and lean sections and subsections of eleven rigorously structured chapters keep the slew of subjects in sharp—if often all-too-brief—focus. The 1920s, Eliot, and the *Criterion* may be said to mark out the wide-ranging terrain. Indeed, the strongest chapters closely interrelate classicism and the Western humanistic tradition to the themes Vanheste set forth in the title of the thesis he completed in 2003 (cum laude) at the Open University of the Netherlands, "T. S. Eliot, the *Criterion*, and the Idea of Europe." This earlier study became the starting point for Vanheste's doctoral research, out of which *Guardians of the Humanist Legacy* emerged. The present book's brief history of the *Criterion* in the appendix is particularly illuminating. It includes, among other things, subject-specific tables that convey the journal's increasing shift from literary to political/economic and philosophical/theological topics. Elsewhere, a comprehensive table of contents, bibliography, and index signpost the text dependably, while photographs, illustrations, and portraits—including relief-block prints by contemporary American artist Stephen Alcorn—put lesser-known faces to well-known names. The précis in Dutch and English provides a cogent coda to the book (though why Vanheste's vita appears only in Dutch at the end is perplexing).

Vanheste subscribes to the "human-oriented" approach of the Cambridge School of historical interpretation, situating texts and authors within interconnecting webs of dis-

courses, intentions, and milieux (11). What this means in practice is that the main players come alive in a way that reductionist readings of authors as “text-machines” simply cannot convey. Vanheste peeks at the fascinating goings-on behind the scenes, too. Whether it be Pound’s unlikely “Bel Esprit” scheme to free Eliot from his job at the bank in the early 1920s or Eliot’s slamming Freudian psychoanalysis in a BBC broadcast of 1932, the episodes chart—with telegraphic abbreviation—the literary and extraliterary nodes in the classicist network.

The main protagonists in Part I are Eliot, José Ortega y Gasset, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, E. R. Curtius and Julien Benda, while Part II posits a continuity between these “classicists” and later humanists, including George Steiner, Allan Bloom, Roger Scruton, Jacques Barzun, Luc Ferry, and Alain Finkielkraut (“a new Benda”). Postwar humanists in no way make up a common network or group, as Vanheste points out. And yet, together with Eliot and his formidable coterie, these are the titular “guardians” of the humanistic ideals of classicism. It is to Eliot, too, that Vanheste turns to unpack the various strands of meaning (aesthetic, theological, political) coded in classicism. In a lecture the young poet gave on modern French literature in the fall of 1916 at Ilkley, Yorkshire, he heralded the return of classicist ideals, roughly specifying these as “*form and restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government*” (53). Austere though it may seem, classicism would also embed for Eliot a cosmopolitan humanism rooted in the Western cultural tradition, though not especially associated with antiquity. After his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927, the transcendent element of religion would shore up his neo-Thomist “Christian classicism” (192). It would also drive a wedge between the poet and other classicists. Pound, with the Possum in mind, mock-lamented “the psychosis / Of all those who abandon the Muses for Moses” (152). The joke falls flat in this study, however. Vanheste is keen to show that religion remained for Eliot an essential nexus, but one among many. Here, as elsewhere, Vanheste owes a debt to Jason Harding’s oft-cited 2002 study of the *Criterion* and its network of periodicals and intellectuals. Quoting Harding, he, too, sees this motley crew as moving away “from the profound cultural pessimism of post-war ‘disintegration and chaos’ towards an attempt to establish a pan-European ideal of Latinate ‘classicism’” (100).

Eliot’s heterogeneous, anti-romanticist conception of classicism underpins Vanheste’s study. Classicism, like humanism, entails a synthesis or *via media* between extremes. As Vanheste ably shows, it conjoins the Aristotelian conceptions of reason as *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and of literature and art as *mimesis*, “the representation of human experience” (58, 3). He argues that this capacious classicism represents the common “group code” (2) that interwar periodicals and little magazines variously shared with the *Criterion*.

Vanheste contends that many recent studies of Eliot and his fellow classicists have been “too one-sidedly political or ideological in their approach” (7). This is to say that he

scraps at the outset the rather too tidy grafting of alleged crypto-fascist, anti-Semitic, and antidemocratic tendencies upon Eliot’s thought by the likes of Christopher Ricks, Anthony Julius, Kenneth Asher, Lyndall Gordon, et al. I have no quarrel with this. To flag polemically freighted readings of Eliot is almost de rigueur, however tiresome. I am, however, puzzled by Vanheste’s peevish grumble, several hundred pages later, that “We would like to see the *Criterion* and Eliot condemn fascism and national-socialism in fierce terms, but alas, they don’t” (509). Granted, “we” here seems designed to ventriloquize the anxieties of his implied readers. But I, for one, tend to balk at being herded in this way. Vanheste’s penchant for generalization goes further. His Allan Bloom-derived assumption that “the individual in our postmodern world seems to show little interest in the humanist ideal of self-fulfillment” (370) strikes this reader as needlessly facile. Who is this archetypal “individual?” If humanism is rooted in the Platonic concept of *paideia* (“education”)—as Vanheste, in a nod to Werner Jaeger, aptly says it is (58)—could not the almost universal increase in postsecondary enrollments suggest, if nothing else, that humanistic self-actualization may not be quite on the wane after all? It is ironically misguided, I think, to treat the classicist-humanists as full-fledged, discrete agents while lumping “us” together as crude stereotypes.

While straw men may emerge in broad sweeps, brevity can also pack too hefty a punch. To wit, the middle chapter on “Anti-Humanism After WW2” crams in far more than the brief space allows, hop-scotching from Heidegger to Derrida en route to contemporary humanists. To be fair, the book follows the Brill series’ mission statement to present “original works *broadly concerned* with philosophical treatments of the ideas of culture and history” (my emphasis; <http://www.brill.nl/phc>). Even so, sections such as Vanheste’s four-page discussion of *The Waste Land* as a poetic instantiation of “Eliot’s classicist paradigms of impersonality and ‘tradition and renewal’” (323) could place a heavy onus on the lay reader. Vanheste’s synoptic approach is purposive, to be sure. It enables the study to introduce non-specialists to little-known or nearly forgotten works, such as Hofmannsthal’s poetic drama in prose form, *Der Turm* (1923–25), which, in turn, elicits critically couched allusions to Pedro Calderón’s play *La Vida es Sueño* (1635), Franz Grillparzer’s dream-play *Der Traum, ein Leben* (1834), and Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* (1881). Perhaps this indexical manoeuvring is what Vanheste means when he states that his “study is about nurturing and extending a cultural heritage: the humanist legacy” (15). That is, he cherry-picks, Arnold-like, the luminous bits of the European heritage in a bold bid to show, as the title puts it, “its relevance to our postmodern world.” This is a work that thrives in gists and piths, to borrow Pound’s phrase.

Guardians of the Humanist Legacy joins a wide critical conversation about humanism, as evinced by recently published works such as William Calin’s *The Twentieth-Century Humanist Critics: From Spitzer to Frye* (2007), Lee Oser’s

The Return of Christian Humanism (2007), and Leon Surette's *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, and Humanism* (2008), to name a few. As a spirited shuttling to and fro between humanism and anti-humanism, the book will be of interest to anyone seeking an entryway into some of the most contested cultural and philosophical debates of our time.

aspect of the *Quartets'* historical and ideological background.

Christopher McVey
University of Virginia



Abstracts

Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900

Louisville, KY, Feb. 21–23, 2008

T. S. Eliot, J. W. N. Sullivan, and Beethoven: Pointing Beyond Poetry in Eliot's Unpublished New Haven Lecture

This study analyzes Eliot's important, yet seldom investigated, unpublished 1933 New Haven lecture, and argues that the lecture sets an important precedent for approaching Eliot's philosophical aesthetic in *Four Quartets*.

Several studies have suggested that *Four Quartets* has a specific musical correspondence to one of Beethoven's later works, yet as Eliot writes in "The Music of Poetry" (1942), there is no one-to-one correspondence between the two mediums. As a consequence, these studies remain detailed observations of parallel structures, but fail to address fully the relationship between music and Eliot's motives in the *Quartets*.

I contend that *Four Quartets* was not written to a specific musical piece, but rather takes as its starting point Beethoven's philosophical vision as articulated by J. W. N. Sullivan's *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development*. In the unpublished 1933 New Haven lecture, Eliot comments:

[I wish to write poetry] with nothing poetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones... poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem *points at*, and not the poetry [itself]; this seems to me the thing to try for. To get *beyond poetry*, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get *beyond music*. (qtd. in Matthiessen 90)

Only six years earlier, Sullivan had published *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development*, which was reviewed by J. B. Trend in the *Criterion* (March 1928). Eliot appears to have read Sullivan's work, and even specific phrasing in Sullivan's text arises in the structural and philosophical thematics of both Eliot's lecture and *Four Quartets* itself.

My paper triangulates the unpublished lecture, Sullivan's book, and Trend's review, then gestures toward specific instances in *Four Quartets* that invite new reading or new avenues of analysis when considered alongside this

Images of Mechanistic Darwinism in Eliot's Poetry

While Eliot never made any comments critical of Charles Darwin or his theory of the evolution of species, he was quite critical of Darwinism, various popularized versions of the theory that extrapolated from it into moral, historical, and socio-political spheres where, in his view, it had no authority. Eliot once remarked that "Herbert Spencer's generalized theory of evolution was in my childhood environment regarded as the key to the mystery of the universe," and a critique of Spencer's Darwinism was central to his renunciation of his rationalistic Unitarian background. In this paper, I explore this facet of Eliot's thought.

I examine some of the comments made on the subject in the *Criterion*. For instance, K. E. Barlow argued that in Thomas Huxley's hands, "what had been a useful hypothesis within the limits of a science, overflowed and became a plan for the re-interpretation of the universe." Similarly, William Harrison accused Spencer of having "moralized beyond the master's intentions," encouraging "Machtpolitik on the Continent" and "militarist and imperialist statesmen." I suggest that Eliot was highly sympathetic to these views and employed writers with better scientific credentials than his own to put them forward in his journal.

I then show how this critique of illegitimate Darwinism is expressed in Eliot's poetry. The mechanistic images of human beings in much of his early poetry—such as the "automatic" hand of the child in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night"—represent not so much his own view of humanity as a satiric evocation of Huxley's mechanistic doctrine. Late in his poetic career, in "The Dry Salvages," Eliot refers overtly to the negative effects of Darwinism on our understanding of human history: "development," he writes, is "a partial fallacy, / Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, / Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past." He makes it clear, here and throughout his career, that his quarrel is not with Darwin's scientific theory but with "superficial" explanations of it that affect the common interpretation of history in support of unreflective progressive notions.

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Grand Valley State University

29th Annual Meeting of
The T. S. Eliot Society
St. Louis, MO, Sept. 26–28, 2008

Eliot, Hybridity, and the Emergence of New World
Modernism

Eliot's debt to Symbolist poets in France and America has been rigorously studied, but there is still much to learn about the configuration and consequences of these formative encounters. Tracing a line of development from Whitman to Jules Laforgue (who was born in Uruguay), to Eliot and the Guadeloupean Creole poet St.-John Perse, my paper will discuss how these cross-currents of influence shaped Eliot's self-conception as a New World poet and nourished the germination of modernist forms in Caribbean poetry.

I begin by examining neglected but essential sources of hybridity in Whitman's poetry that explain why Whitman proved, in the end, to be a crucial American antecedent to Eliot's poetics: first, the colonial settlement of the New World by the French, Spanish, and British; and second, Amerindian place names that recall the practice of regeneration through violence as a constitutive feature of the frontier. In early lyrics such as "Mélange Adultère de Tout" and his suppressed "Ode on Independence Day, July 4th, 1918," Eliot crosses the influences of Whitman and Laforgue, who, in turn, had been deeply influenced by Whitman's tacit acknowledgement of the hybrid cultural legacy of the American prairies.

Furthermore, by closely examining Eliot's translation of Perse's *Anabase*—another poem about hybridity and conquest that was indebted to Whitman—we see how Eliot's growing familiarity with Perse's lyric practice helped him, in "Cape Ann," "The Dry Salvages," and other works—to overcome his earlier ambivalence towards Whitman. Exploring Eliot's treatment of U.S. landscapes in light of these New World influences clarifies Eliot's contribution to the emergence of colonial and post-colonial literatures and, at the same time, addresses the concerns of Americanist critics by situating Whitman's frontier and Eliot's hybrid poetics within the hemispheric, comparative contexts of empire-building and migration.

Anita Patterson
Boston University



"Or It Might Be You": Audiences In and Of *Sweeney
Agonistes*

Alternately lauded and criticized by reviewers of both its written and stage versions, praised and dismissed by the author himself, *Sweeney Agonistes* came to be regarded as something more or less than a play at various points in its

publication and performance history. Yet nowhere in the history of this varied reception has a critic fully addressed what I propose is a fundamental characteristic of the play: its metatheatricity. *Sweeney Agonistes* is, in part, a drama about drama, and specifically about the ritual roots that Eliot understood to be the essential yet obscured structure of theatre itself. In his ambitious attempt to both reveal and revivify drama's ritual nature, Eliot composed a play that not only embodied this dramatic theory but that also sought to teach his contemporary audience how to engage with this new-yet-ancient form. As I argue, the characters Doris and, to a lesser extent, Dusty are both figures *in* the drama and an audience *of* it. Their responses to Sweeney's self-conscious play-acting and scene-setting, along with the musical performances of the party-goers, are those of a reluctant audience challenged by the direct address of this ritual form that demands communal participation. The possibility of Doris's redemption, and of our own, lies in the ability to engage correctly with the drama rather than resist it.

Directors of the play have addressed its unsettling ambiguity in various ways. In particular, Rupert Doone's 1934 production with the Group Theatre of London dramatized the threat presented to Doris by actually staging an attack while simultaneously shifting the metatheatrical function of Doris onto the chorus, casting the party of Wauchope, Horsfall, Klipstein, Krumpacker, Swartz and Snow as the iconic audience. As I will demonstrate, by equating the audience with the chorus through various staging elements, rather than with Doris, Doone preserved *Sweeney* as metatheatre while also protecting the audience from the dramatic violence with which it is threatened in Eliot's script. The very fact that Doone recognized and manipulated metatheatrical possibilities in the uncompleted *Sweeney* is a testament to Eliot's success in composing a drama about drama.

Julia E. Daniel
Loyola University Chicago
Winner of the Fathman Young Scholar Award for 2008



Precedents of Prufrock's Personal Pronouns: Eliot's First
Rhetorical Problem

This paper, coming out of my book on voice and audience in Eliot's early poetry, seeks to expand traditional accounts of Eliot's development as a poet. Helen Vendler, John T. Mayer—and countless others who trace the influence of Laforgue on Eliot—have emphasized how Eliot constructed a speaking identity in his encounter with the French poet. My account, in its emphasis on the rhetoric of the poems, seeks to expand this long-accepted view of his coming-to-voice by adding to it Eliot's coming-to-audience. In other words, the process of discovering a voice occurs at the same time as discovering an audience to whom one speaks.

Rather than point to the biographical elements that suggest Eliot was shaped by a restrictive cultural and familial environment (as both Vendler and Mayer do), I want to locate that anxiety and control in the rhetorical maneuvering of the poems themselves. For such a short conference paper, I will focus on one rhetorical element: the use of first- and second-person personal pronouns. How a speaker is conceived and how an audience is addressed in a poem is much more complex than the explicit deployment of “I,” “you,” or “we.” But such details are an obvious entryway into questions of a speaker’s and an audience’s identity.

As evidence, the paper will consider Eliot’s first poem, “A Fable for Feasters,” contrasting the smooth progress of the ghost story to the anxiety of the rhetorical jockeying that occurs when the author tries to wrestle to the ground the identity of the speaking “I” and the hearing “you.” Part of my larger argument about the pre-Laforgue poems is that—aside from “Lyric” and its revision—all the other juvenilia betray vague, forced, or frantic constructions of speaker and audience.

I end the paper by considering how the weight of this rhetorical problem looms heavily over the first five Laforguean inventions (“Nocturne” through “Humouresque”), and by considering how Prufrock—especially its first line, with its “us,” “you,” and “I”—reaches such a satisfying solution to this problem of speaker and audience identity.

Jayne Stayer
John Carroll University



The Gomez Effect: John Peter, Herbert Howarth,
and T. S. Eliot

The hostility of T. S. Eliot and his estate to biographical studies is well known and routinely deplored by Eliot scholars. This paper will help us understand Eliot’s hostility. In addition to the aversion to modern biography that he shared with many authors, he had a particular motive for distrust because of his personal encounters with two biographical critics, John Peter and Herbert Howarth. Many feel that Eliot overreacted to John Peter’s “A New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*” in *Essays in Criticism* (1952). Eliot not only threatened Peter with a lawsuit if he did not retract the article but also forced the journal to eliminate it from unsold copies. When *Essays in Criticism* reprinted the essay in 1969, Peter implied that Eliot’s attempt to suppress the article validated its thesis that Eliot’s poem sprang from the author’s guilty sexuality.

Although it is generally agreed that Eliot overreacted, no critic (including the editor of *Essays in Criticism*) seems to have noticed that Peter’s reprinted essay of 1969 was not identical with the original 1952 version. In order to judge Eliot’s response, one must of course know the full contents

of the earlier essay. Peter claims in the 1969 postscript to the essay that has been printed “almost verbatim,” although “a few phrases that might have been misinterpreted have been modified.” The claim is highly misleading because in fact the changes obscure the reasons that Eliot found the article offensive. For example, Peter frequently replaced the word “guilt” in the 1952 essay with “grief” in the 1969 reprint. There are many other emendations that will allow us to judge Peter’s integrity as a critic.

The paper will briefly review Herbert Howarth’s difficulties with Eliot over publishing Howarth’s *Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot* (presented at this conference in 2007). Howarth also thought that Eliot overreacted to his biographical speculations about his St. Louis family. In both cases, however, we will argue that Eliot had good cause to be disturbed by the recklessness of their speculations.

In a curious mix of apology and self-congratulation, Peter in his 1969 postscript associated himself with Federico Gomez in *The Elder Statesman*, who confronts Lord Claverton with a guilty secret from his past. Eliot seems to have felt a similar distaste for Peter and Howarth as Claverton did for Gomez. The nature of these critics’ inquiries into Eliot’s past may well have strengthened his hostility toward the biographical critic.

Timothy Materer and Greg Foster
University of Missouri, Columbia



T. S. Eliot’s “Moeurs Contemporaines”

Ezra Pound, not T. S. Eliot, wrote the 1918 poetic sequence “Moeurs Contemporaines”; however, it is “Eliot’s” in the sense that it reflects the collaborative relationship between the two poets, who began working together closely in 1917 on a variety of publication projects. In its more experimental style and open dissatisfaction with the institution of marriage, this sequence reflects Eliot’s example as well as his friendship with Pound. Pound had used the expression “moeurs contemporaines” in the epigraph of his review of *Prufrock and Other Observations*, in which he praised the contemporaneity of Eliot’s speakers, and thus using the expression again for his title suggests a continuation of this discussion with and about Eliot.

For his part, Eliot addressed Pound directly in the “Eeldrop and Appleplex” dialogues of May and September, 1917. In these dialogues he satirizes Pound’s habit of studying types rather than “the human soul in its concrete individuality.” Eliot makes the case to Pound that only a person’s speech, rather than a report of his characteristics, can accurately reflect or give insight into his “unique being.” This speech does not occur in a vacuum but in conversation with other speakers, so that in a sense there is no “unique being” outside the conversational or interlocutory context.

These dialogues also contrast the companionship of Eeldrop and Appleplex—thinly disguised versions of Eliot and Pound—with conventional marriage, which is represented as a kind of crime against oneself. Eliot thus privileges collaboration as a special kind of social relationship that allows the individual to develop through shared investigation and conversation.

“Moeurs Contemporaines” responds to “Eeldrop and Appleplex” by tracing Pound’s own development as a poet during the period of his friendship with Eliot, with each lyric keyed to an event in Pound’s life from 1914 (his marriage to Dorothy) to 1917 (the death of Henry James). The sequence progresses from one-sided satires (such as those published in *Lustra*, 1915) to the collage-like “I Vecchii” and “Ritratto,” influenced by Eliot’s exact imitation of speech. “I Vecchii” and “Ritratto” mark a turning point: while their subject matter actually points backward in time to a vanished nineteenth-century literary culture, their experimental form points forward to Pound’s incorporation of recorded speech and his use of intersection and juxtaposition as compositional strategies in the *Cantos*. At the same time, Pound responds to Eliot’s pessimistic representation of marriage as a crime by offering examples of couples who have rejected the marital union, substituting some other form of community in its place, typically a literary relationship. Thus both “Eeldrop and Appleplex” and “Moeurs Contemporaines” critique marriage while proposing conversation—especially between collaborators—as an alternative.

Frances Dickey
University of Missouri—Columbia



“Sin is behovely”: Theodicy in Julian and Eliot

When Eliot, in the dark days of World War II, attempted to reconcile the bombing of London (and other horrors) with the presence of God in history, he drew on the understanding of the problem of evil as presented by the 14th-century English mystic, Julian of Norwich. Assured by the Lord that “Everything will be all right,” she spent decades thinking about the meaning of her vision before coming to a satisfactory resolution, explained in her exposition of the Lord and his Servant.

In this lecture, I discuss Julian’s vision and comment on the relation between Eliot’s early work in philosophy and his post-conversion poetry, especially “Little Gidding.” I maintain that Julian’s visions confirmed his own spiritual intuitions and enabled him to formulate his own theodicy, culminating in the image of the fire and the rose.

Jewel Spears Brooker
Eckerd College

Eliot’s Baudelairean Sense of Humor

In his short essay “The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism,” from Wyndham Lewis’s magazine the *Tyro*, Eliot discusses the comic as a mode of representation that creates a myth while never dissolving into the type of work “confected of abstract qualities.” Such abstraction is, according to Eliot, the primary defect of the serious stage. Though this article is quite short and is more interesting for what it implies than for what it demonstrates, it shows that Eliot was dealing with issues of the comic around 1921, when the journal appeared. Even earlier, Eliot had been toying with comedy in his own work. The bawdy verses now collected in *Inventions of the March Hare* testify to the presence of humor in his work from its formative stages.

My paper focuses on the way in which Eliot utilized pointedly Baudelairean notions of the comic not just as a jumping-off point in his criticism, but as a rubric for his own mature poetry. Eliot’s preoccupation with Baudelaire’s essay “De l’essence du rire” is evidenced by the fact that, along with the previously mentioned essay in the *Tyro*, there appeared another short piece by Eliot entitled “The Lesson of Baudelaire.” In it, he declares that, more than any other poet of his time, Baudelaire was concerned with the problem of good and evil, an idea he would expand upon in his more famous later essay on the poet. This becomes key to the comic, which, Baudelaire wrote, derives from original sin. Eliot saw Baudelaire’s poetic representations of the dandy and the coquette, of the rogue and the dejected poet, as artistic modes of presenting allegory, of depicting the problems of morality while never degenerating into abstraction—a lesson Eliot originally learned from Dante, whose objective imagination would be Eliot’s poetic model throughout his career.

My presentation focuses on the pre-conversion poetry and asks how it can be seen as functioning within the parameters of Eliot’s own stated poetic ideals. The tragic-comic figures of Baudelaire (whom Eliot calls “a deformed Dante”) exemplify the way in which allegory could be modernized from its medieval form to produce characters such as Prufrock, who are objectively correlated to a modern reality. I argue that Eliot was working through his own poetics of modernity by utilizing a type of transgressive humor that crosses over from comedy to tragedy while never crossing over into self-importance, that most dreaded of artistic trap-pings.

James Nikopolous
CUNY Graduate Center

[This paper was presented as part of the Eliot Society’s first “Scholars’ Seminar” for graduate students and recent PhDs, led by former president Shyamal Bagchee.]

Public Sightings

(continued from p. 3)

settled in London and became more English than the English. What a pity. With his talent for the elegiac, Thomas Stearns Eliot would have made a fine baseball writer instead of only a pretentious poet.” (Paul Greenberg, “The Rites of Spring.” *Jewish World Review*, 12 Apr. 2007.)

“Langdon Hammer’s claim (Aug. 31) that **the ‘hybrid role’ of poet-critic ‘was created by T. S. Eliot’** is refuted by Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Matthew Arnold, to name just a few of his English predecessors.” (Steven G. Kellman, “How Should I Presume?” Letter to the *New York Times Book Review*, 14 Sept. 2008: 6. Quoted here in full.)

“You suspect that a big change is coming when sensitive young people project (and, because they’re young, enjoy) feelings of being old. This has often signaled a backward crouch preceding a forward leap. I think of Picasso’s

world-weary blue period, **T. S. Eliot’s ‘Gerontion’ and ‘Prufrock,’** and the budding Abstract Expressionists’ wallows in Jungian mythology. The syndrome announces the exhaustion of a received cultural situation, whose traditions are slack and whose future is opaque. It typically entails nostalgia for real or fancied past ages that dealt—successfully, in retrospect—with similar crises.” (Peter Schjeldahl, “Feeling Blue.” Review of the international exhibit “After Nature” at the New Museum. *New Yorker* 4 Aug. 2008: 75.)

In a review of *So I Have Thought of You: The Letters of Penelope Fitzgerald*, Ruth Scurr quotes a letter from Fitzgerald to Richard Garnett with the information that T. S. Eliot “told me that the Poetry Bookshop staircase made **an appearance in Ash Wednesday**”:

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below....

(*TLS* 20 Aug. 2008)

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