

# Time Present

The Newsletter of the T.S. Eliot Society

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

### The 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society

St. Louis, September 28–30, 2012

The Society invites proposals for papers to be presented at the annual meeting in St. Louis. Clearly organized proposals of about 300 words, on any topic reasonably related to Eliot, along with biographical sketches, should be forwarded by June 15, 2012, to the President, David Chinitz, by email ([dchinit@luc.edu](mailto:dchinit@luc.edu)).

Papers given by graduate students and scholars receiving their doctoral degrees no more than two years before the date of the meeting will be considered for the Fathman Young Scholar Award. Those eligible for this award should mention the fact in their submission. The Fathman Award, which includes a monetary prize, will be announced at the final session of the meeting.

Eliot Society members who would like to chair a panel are invited to apprise the President of their interest, either with or independently of a paper proposal.

#### Peer Seminar: Sound in Eliot's Poetry

Participants in this year's seminar will share and discuss short papers on the aural/oral aspects of Eliot's writing. Any approach is welcome but possible topics might include Eliot's engagement with the soundscapes of the period; his recordings; speech, music, and noise as tropes; the interplay of voices in his verse drama; or the sonic features of his poetry, including rhythm, rhyme, and other appeals to the mind's ear. Some of the questions we will discuss, depending on the interests of the participants, might be: How do Eliot's textual voices and voiced texts compare to other contemporary soundings? What ideas about poetic genres come into play? How does his handling of poetry's aural elements evolve over time?

The seminar will be led by Lesley Wheeler, the Henry S. Fox Professor of English at Washington and Lee University. Professor Wheeler is the author of *Voicing American Poetry: Sound and Performance from the 1920s to the Present* (Cornell, 2008), among other books. Her most recent poetry collection is *Heterotopia*, winner of the Barrow Street Press Poetry Prize (2010). She has held fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other grantors, and won a 2012 Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia. Her current research topics include virtual and transnational poetic communities; the role of rhyme in contemporary writing; and lyric poetry as speculative fiction.

The seminar is open to the first 15 registrants; registration will close July 1st. Seminarists will submit 4–5 page position papers by e-mail, no later than September 1st. To sign up, or for answers to questions, please write Frances Dickey ([dickeyf@missouri.edu](mailto:dickeyf@missouri.edu)).

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Memorial Lecturer: Daniel Albright

Daniel Albright is the Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Literature at Harvard, and teaches in the Music Department as well as the English Department. He's particularly interested in the ways in which artistic media—poetry, music, painting—interact with one another; in 2000 his book *Untwisting the Serpent: Music, Literature, and the Visual Arts* won the Susanne M. Glasscock Humanities Book Prize for Interdisciplinary Scholarship. At Harvard he teaches a Core Curriculum course called Putting Modernism Together, which studies (for example) Impressionism through works

by Monet, Debussy, and Joseph Conrad, or Surrealism through works by Apollinaire, Stravinsky, and Magritte. He also teaches courses on opera, Shakespeare, Modernist poetry and fiction and drama, and the relation of physics to literature—most of these courses are related to books he's written, which include *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources*; *Beckett and Aesthetics*; *Berlioz's Semi-Operas*; *Quantum Poetics*; *W. B. Yeats: The Poems* (ed.); *Stravinsky: The Music-Box and the Nightingale*; *Tennyson: The Muses' Tug-of-War*; *Lyricality in English Literature*; *Representation and the Imagination: Beckett, Kafka, Nabokov, Schoenberg*; and *Personality and Impersonality: Lawrence, Woolf, Mann*.

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## Abstracts from the T. S. Eliot Society Paris, France, July 18–20, 2011

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### Luxurious Riot? Eliot and Whitman via Laforgue

“It is quite safe to compare Mr. Eliot's work with anything written in French, English or American since the death of Jules Laforgue,” Ezra Pound wrote in a 1917 review of Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations*. “You will hardly find such neatness save in France; such modern neatness, save in Laforgue.” It has been argued that T.S. Eliot, in drawing from Jules Laforgue, reaches back to the unruly poetic techniques of Walt Whitman. I take up this claim, contending that tracing Eliot's conversation with his American predecessor through the mediation of the French poet is a productive way to delve into the contentious issue of rhetoric and “neatness” in Modernist poetry. This paper thus explores the ways in which Whitman's versification has unexpected sway in a period reputed for its dedication to freeing poetry of “emotional slither,” as Pound wrote. In so doing, I examine the relation between the formal properties of Eliot's early apprentice poems, *Prufrock*, and the work of Laforgue, with special attention paid to *Derniers vers*. Even as Eliot echoes Verlaine's appeal to “prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son coup” in 1919 (calling for poets to “wring the neck of rhetoric”), he makes the crucial distinction between the term rhetoric as “a vague term of abuse for any style that is bad” and what he terms a productive search for “a rhetoric of substance.” This phrase, unlikely for a Modernist, serves as the touchstone for the present paper. I argue that the problematization of rhetoric in Eliot's poetry of this period, which is linked to the valorization of “neatness” as an aesthetic and political value in the elaboration of free verse and *vers libre* by Symbolists and Modernists alike, ultimately

draws on a surprisingly Whitmanian “rhetoric of substance” as understood through Laforgue's translations and poems.

Rachel Galvin  
Princeton University



### T. S. Eliot's Ambivalent Martyrology: Ida Rubenstein, St. Sebastian, Salome, Philomel, Oscar Wilde

In an earlier talk (MLA 2011), I offered a speculative reading of “The Love Song of St. Sebastian” in relation to Wilde's *Salome*. Among other things, I argued that the saint in “The Love Song” could just as well be John the Baptist. The title appears only in a letter to Aiken, not on the typescript of the poem, and the letter mentions John as well. In the proposed talk, I want to pursue an aspect of that speculative reading that I did not have space to develop previously. I would like to do that specifically with regard to the embodied influence of the Salome narrative on dance and spectacle in Paris (and Europe generally) from 1905 through about 1920, with particular attention to Ida Rubenstein (performed *Salome* in St. Petersburg in mime 1908; in Paris 1919) considered among Loie Fuller (who danced versions of *Salome* in 1895 and 1907), Maud Allan (Vienna 1906 and later), and Tamara Karsavina (1913). Rubenstein holds a special place in this group because she was famous for the roles of both *Salome* and *St. Sebastian*, playing the latter in d'Annunzio's *Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien* in 1911, at the end of Eliot's year in

Paris. Although it has been suggested that Eliot may have seen the spectacular performance, even if he did not he surely was aware of the strong presence of Salome in the dance world of Paris. I want to argue for connections involving crossdressing, crossovers in male and female rhetoric, and ambiguities of gendered voice in Wilde's *Salome*, Rubenstein's version of St. Sebastian, and Eliot's "The Love Song." The various crossings-over combine to provide contexts for reading "The Love Song" as an evocation of aesthetic creation as similar to violent perverse sexuality that sheds light on Eliot's vexed relation to Wilde. The evocation also points forward to later key moments in Eliot's poetry, including the appearance of Philomel and Tiresias in *The Waste Land*, the ascetic dimension of *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*, and the encounter with the compound ghost in *Little Gidding II* whose final words are an injunction to "move in measure, like a dancer."

John Paul Riquelme  
Boston University



## Eliot, Oakeshott, and the Paradox of the Past

Eliot's prose repeatedly imagines history as non-teleological, as a flat "panorama of futility and anarchy" or a simultaneous order of past, present, and future time. And yet in his poetry, rapid juxtaposition of historically specific phrases or prosodic forms seems to draw attention to the gulf between Agamemnon and Sweeney or Elizabethan and twentieth-century London.

This paper explores Eliot's historical thinking as part of his own political philosophy, within the specific context of postwar arguments against "Whig history," and within the longer intellectual tradition of "critical," anti-realist history from F. H. Bradley to Michael Oakeshott and R. G. Collingwood. I map Eliot's "historical sense," focused on "the present moment of the past," to Oakeshott's term "historical past" (distinguished from "the practical past") and show that it contains a similar paradox. As Oakeshott writes in *Experience and its Modes* (1933), "the historical past is always present, and yet historical experience is always in the form of the past."

In particular, I suggest a way of reformulating an old problem: as Terry Eagleton puts it, why did Eliot select "certain progressive experimental techniques" despite his political conservatism? In fact, Eliot's experimental techniques are surprising because they make no commitment at all to "progressiveness" or even to progression as a figure for relating past and present. Rejecting the meliorist idea that history is a slow march to the present, Eliot's poetry keeps

seeking for ways to acknowledge the paradox that history is *both* "a pattern of timeless moments" and "now and in England." I suggest the early poetry's allusiveness is a formal technique for displaying this paradox, inserting the past into present ("the present moment of the past") while also misprising it ("the pastness of the past").

Hannah Sullivan  
Oxford University



## You Can't Go Home Again: Ambivalence and Sacred Nostalgia in T.S. Eliot's Poetry

The lines "Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden," from "Burnt Norton" (1935), offer a rare instance of nostalgic recollection in an oeuvre that otherwise consistently avoids such sentimental longings for past time. In this early passage of "Burnt Norton," in a present-tense act of remembrance, Eliot's speaker experiences a spatialized echo of "Footfalls" down a "passage" that he and an Other (or Others) never actually took—an imagined *would-have-been* of a possible past that never materialized, but whose residue of regret remains. Eliot's meditation sets up the reminiscence as a subjunctive revisitation of a missed chance by articulating the movement of what might have been as an approach followed by a penetration ("Down . . . Towards . . . Into"), fantasizing about the active pathos of what circumstances once offered, but which the speaker was then unable to accept. The profound psychological charge of the reverberating sound effect of these "footfalls" whose echo will not cease extends Eliot's ongoing preoccupations with the vicissitudes, malleabilities, and phantasmatic natures of memory, disclosing a startlingly intense desire to belong to an unrealized past, as if that past still had possibilities to offer to the present.

Eliot's nostalgic longing for past time in "Burnt Norton" seems to contradict both his doctrine of "impersonality" and his more general avoidance of the sentimental mode through most of his verse. In this paper I want to consider the places in Eliot's poetry where his resistances to sentimental remembrance break down as I explore why nostalgia erupts in key places in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and in "Burnt Norton." What does this passionate grammar of longings for *nostos* (Greek: "home"), healing, and perhaps even sacred belonging tell us about Eliot's poetic project? What kinds of belongings do Eliot's nostalgias seek? My hunch is that Eliot slips into the nostalgic mode as a way to (partially) re-confront un-metabolized aspects of past desire,

and that such present desires for past time therefore does surprising work in recuperating forms of sacred experience for his present poetics.

Gabrielle McIntire  
Queen's University



## “Superficial Notions of Evolution”: Eliot’s Bergsonian Critique of Darwinian Historiography

While T. S. Eliot never made any comments critical of Charles Darwin or his theory of the evolution of species, he was quite critical of various popularized versions of Darwin’s theory that exaggerated its explanatory power and extrapolated from it into metaphysical, 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 extension of evolutionary theory into the sociological realm was central to Eliot’s renunciation of the scientific faith of his family. In Eliot’s early poetry we find him satirizing the world view advanced by Spencer and other militant mechanistic Darwinists, and in *Four Quartets* he explicitly challenges the progressivist view of human history (expressed most famously by H. G. Wells) that derives from that world view.

Three years before Eliot sat in on his lectures in Paris, Henri Bergson had published *Creative Evolution*, a work which argues against the mechanistic interpretation of evolutionary theory. Bergson especially takes Herbert Spencer to task, and his repeated attacks on Spencer in this book must have had particular interest to Eliot. For instance, Bergson says he avoids “the false evolutionism of Spencer.”

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot is still contemplating the “superficial notions of evolution” promulgated by Herbert Spencer and the uncritical progressivism that those notions have planted in the mind of the populace, leading them to see history as “a mere sequence.” Eliot is likely thinking here not only about Spencer but about a historian who, like Spencer, extrapolated ideas of mechanistic evolution into cultural interpretation: H. G. Wells. The primary motive of Wells’s *Outline of History* (1919) was to offer a scientific account of human history, beginning with the evolution of primitive organisms. For Eliot, history is not an evolutionary

movement away from the past but a return to the timeless moments that have made us who we are.

Benjamin Lockerd  
Grand Valley State University



## Eliot/Pound—Collaborators: Influence and Confluence in *The Waste Land*

While much has been written on Pound’s editorial interventions on the typescripts of *The Waste Land*, little has been said about it from the point of view of *critique génétique*. In this paper I want to re-assess the evidence of the poem’s composition history, including Pound’s annotations on the typescripts, in order to rethink the gestation process of the poem, and how it was composed and revised. Just how crucial was Pound for *The Waste Land*? Just how much is *The Waste Land* (still) Eliot’s creation? In particular, I will analyze (1) Eliot’s methods of composition in an attempt to recover an “original” aesthetic self in the typescripts that might differ from that in the published poem and (2) how Pound, through his annotations, tried to steer the poem in direction Eliot had not foreseen. (For both, the use of “pastiche” is key.) While my intention is to debunk certain myths (just how much did Pound cut?), I do accept that Pound turned *The Waste Land* into a better poem—or at least a different poem. Yet I also argue, crucially, that he did not do so to remake *The Waste Land* after his own image. I will approach these issues through notions of creative collaboration, influence and confluence, and co-authorship. A brief comparison with the collaboration between Pound and W.B. Yeats on *The Two Kings* will make apparent that Pound was not trying to turn *The Waste Land* into a poem after his own image, but that his interventions were specifically intended to bring out Eliot’s poetic self.

Wim Van Mierlo  
University of London



## “The Waste Land Was Made Out of Splinters”: Edwin Muir and his Relationship with T. S. Eliot

Orkney-born Edwin Muir and American T. S. Eliot both had considerable reputations among their peers as poets and critics in the early decades of the twentieth

century, Muir initially perhaps better known as critic than poet. Both were interested in the “mind of Europe,” Eliot via French poets such as Baudelaire and Laforgue and through the literature of the classical period; Muir drawn more to German literature such as the poetry of Hölderlin and the contemporaneous fiction of Kafka and Broch, of which, with his wife Willa, he made the first translations into English. In our own time, however, while Eliot is at the center of Anglophone modernism, Muir’s work is now little studied outwith its Scottish context—a context which is itself marginalized in British modernist studies.

This paper will focus on Muir’s relationship with Eliot as critic and poet: on his admiration for Eliot the critic and the influences he took from essays such as “Tradition and the Individual Talent” and “The Metaphysical Poets”; and his early suspicion of Eliot the poet (“Mr Eliot lacks seriousness”). Yet in many ways the philosophical “searches” in their poetry had much in common, even if their poetic methodologies were very different. The paper will explore how each dealt with what Eliot called “the vast panorama of violence and futility which is contemporary history” and how Eliot’s “splintered” *Waste Land* helped Muir to write his own final poems. It will suggest that it is time for Muir’s poetry and criticism to be brought back alongside Eliot’s into the transnational family of modern studies.

Margery Palmer McCulloch  
University of Glasgow



## Eliot in the Asian Wing

Early in his career, T. S. Eliot composed a number of picture poems ringing changes on a genre favored by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his circle, including “On a Portrait,” “Circe’s Palace,” “La Figlia Che Piange,” and “Mandarins.” These poems reveal much about Eliot’s approach to the visual image and Aestheticism in the years of his historic self-modernization, 1909-1911. My paper will focus on the little-noted “Mandarins,” a group of four ekphrastic poems in the *March Hare* notebook that reflect the Oriental craze of the later nineteenth century. I discuss the possible sources of Eliot’s chinoiserie, from paintings by James McNeill Whistler and Edouard Manet to contemporary acquisitions of Chinese art by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, including numerous painted screens. While the “cranes that fly across a screen” in “Mandarins 3” have been interpreted as a cinematic reference, I unpack the visual and symbolic meaning of the Chinese and Japanese screens that became popular decorations in late-nineteenth century homes on both sides of the Atlantic and appear in paintings of the period. In Eliot’s ekphrastic sequence, which

thematizes spectatorship, the screen epitomizes subjective flatness (lack of interiority) and a stylized conventionality that pervades human interaction in the poems. “Mandarins” rehearses contemporary clichés about Asia (as discussed, for example, in Elizabeth Chang’s recent book *Britain’s Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*); yet Eliot was at the same time introducing these ideas in poems that seem to have little to do with Asian art, such as “Portrait of a Lady” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” “Mandarins” contributes a piece to our understanding of how Eliot reconfigured the traits of Aestheticism—sometimes by just a slight adjustment—to create a poetry that seemed, and still seems, fresh and original.

Frances Dickey  
University of Missouri



## Catalyzing Prufrock

Scant critical attention has hitherto been paid to T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” in relation to the excised “Prufrock’s Pervigilium” section preserved in his “March Hare” Notebook. Specifically, my paper will ask why Eliot might have deleted the “Pervigilium.” Reading the “Pervigilium” back into “Prufrock,” I want to argue that “Prufrock” sings of its own making and that of its poet’s consciousness in the “Pervigilium” section of the poem. In this section we witness not only the division of Prufrock’s consciousness but the birth of Eliot’s depersonalization (or catalysis) theory of poetic creation expounded in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” This essay not only formalizes the poetics of “Prufrock” but also, and in order to validate its theory, prescribes the deletion of the “Pervigilium.” Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, F.H. Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*—the subject of Eliot’s doctoral dissertation—and Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean*, meanwhile, emerge as important influences on Eliot’s depersonalization theory of “Tradition,” the dissociated poetic consciousness of “Prufrock,” and the rhetoric of the poem. As a result of the influence of Wilde and Pater, I see my paper contributing to the ongoing examination of Eliot’s indebtedness to the writers in Decadent England. In sum, in my reading of the act of deletion, Eliot erases the failure of poetic representation, the personal trauma of dissociation arising from a particularly intense emotional experience, and the historical trauma of literary influence, in which he discovers how to forge such an experience into art (and an essay) designed to bury its literary significance.

Nicholas B. Mayer  
University of California – Berkeley



## “That is not what I meant at all”: Impossible Madness and Idealism in “Prufrock’s Pervigilium” and “Hamlet and His Problems”

Before publishing “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” T. S. Eliot excised a thirty-eight line section titled “Prufrock’s Pervigilium,” a section first added in 1912. That Eliot chose to remove these lines by the time he published the poem in 1915 implies that the author ultimately disapproved of the “Pervigilium.” It is my argument that we may understand this disapproval by reading the poem alongside Eliot’s theory of the “objective correlative.” Introduced in the essay “Hamlet and His Problems,” the objective correlative accounts for the author’s increasingly strict attention to the formulaic contextualization of affect in his poetry and criticism. Though Eliot did not publish the essay until 1920, the objective correlative can be traced back to Eliot’s doctoral work on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley, an interest sparked in 1913. Upon establishing this link

between Bradley and “Hamlet and His Problems,” I explain the decision not to publish the “Pervigilium” in terms of the author’s burgeoning conviction that affect is not the product of individual, subjective interiors but the product of a subject’s interaction with an external object.

In “Hamlet and His Problems,” Eliot asserts that *Hamlet* is a failure, precisely because Hamlet’s soliloquy does not match the proper subject-object interaction with the affect intended, this being “madness.” It is my argument that Eliot regarded the “Pervigilium” as a failure for this very reason. Clear links between “Prufrock” and “Hamlet and His Problems” bolster this claim. Not only does the poem famously allude to Hamlet’s soliloquy; “Prufrock’s Pervigilium” focuses on the very affect Eliot critiques Shakespeare for misrepresenting: “Madness.” Indeed, the essay and the “Pervigilium” point to what is, perhaps, the most difficult obstacle the theory of the objective correlative must overcome: emotion’s propensity for excess, its readiness to swell beyond boundaries delineating appropriateness.

Don James McLaughlin  
University of Pennsylvania

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## Modern Language Association Seattle, WA, Jan. 7, 2012

### “Eros, Empathy, and Sacrifice in T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf”

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#### Empathy and Elegy in Eliot and Woolf

This paper considers what is at stake in modernist empathy, where the ability to shift perspectives and “stand in someone else’s shoes” is ethically laudable even while such efforts to empathize with alterity also draw attention to the fragmentary and alienating nature of the coherence of one’s own subjectivity. Both Eliot and Woolf comment in their writing on the difficulty of adequately knowing otherness: in an early essay on F. H. Bradley and Leibniz, Eliot claims that “it is hopeless to attempt to arrive at a conception of other souls.” Similarly, Virginia Woolf notes in *Jacob’s Room* that we can only “follow hints” if we want to grasp the meaning of our companions. Building on my article “Masochistic Modernisms: A Reading of Eliot and Woolf” (2005), this paper focuses on two of the works that mark 1922 as a “watershed” year in modernist literature—Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. It

considers both texts as forms of modernist elegies that render a delicate tension between the desire to enact empathy and the need to guard against further losses to the economy of self provoked by such an *out-reaching* to otherness, mapping the uneasy balance between a social (and socially sanctioned) profession of grief and an (often) personally felt experience of loss.

Eve Sorum  
University of Massachusetts – Boston



#### How Pleasant to Kiss Mr. Eliot: Aesthetics, Erotics, and the Eliot- Woolf Connection

This paper suggests that Woolf not only borrows extensively from Eliot’s poetry in her 1931 experimental

novel, *The Waves*, but that Woolf uses Eliot as a direct biographical model for the character of Louis. It argues that Woolf's homage to Eliot in *The Waves* is alternately admiring and mocking and is replete with tonal ambiguity, with Woolf's fictional "Louis" (named for Eliot's birthplace of St. Louis) standing as an anxious expatriate figure eager to combat his sense of displacement by emphasizing his rootedness in Western Civilization: "the long, long history that began in Egypt, in the time of the Pharaohs, when women carried red pitchers to the Nile." Eliot, of course, had similarly insisted in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "the historical sense . . . involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence." Woolf's efforts to enfold Eliot, his traditions, and fragments of his poetry into *The Waves* suggests a complicated skein of relations, affinities and suspicions through which Virginia Woolf, among other modernists, interacted with, influenced, and was influenced by T. S. Eliot.

Molly Hite  
Cornell University

## "Other Echoes": Sacrificial Narratives and the Problems of Reading Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot

Focusing on the narrative, rhetorical, and sociopolitical power of "sacrifice" in four texts—Woolf's *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*, and Eliot's *Four Quartets* and *The Family Reunion*—I argue that both Eliot and Woolf render representations of sacrificial death as almost blindingly powerful to their witnesses, and that to convey the intensities of such sacrifices demands that each writer negotiate the intractable problem of how we both read and write about our most charged experiences. Woolf's novels teach us to read behind, beside, or against the overwhelming ideological and rhetorical emotional charge that political or personal "sacrifice" summons whenever it is invoked. In contrast, Eliot's post-conversion (post-1927) verse would have us understand sacrifice in terms suitable to theological representations of Christ's crucifixion as a metonym for all human deaths that follow.

John Whittier-Ferguson  
University of Michigan

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## Midwest Modern Language Association St. Louis, MO, Nov. 5, 2011 T.S. Eliot: Gender, Politics, Form

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### Cultural Contexts for T. S. Eliot's Understanding of Gender in the Early Twentieth Century

In "T. S. Eliot and the Performativity of Gender in *The Waste Land*" (2005) I argued that Eliot came to define gender as constructed in behavior rather than essential, and that this fluidity at the heart of identity is the source of much of the profound anxiety and instability that inhabits modernist texts in the first part of the century. I now wish to examine the contemporaneous writings about gender which offer analogies to some of the ways in which gendered characters are presented in such Eliot poems as "Portrait of a Lady," "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and some other early work up to and including *The Waste Land*. Post-structuralist critic Judith Butler has described "the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself" through acts that are seen as coerced into production as "a repetition and a ritual,

which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body...." (*Gender Trouble* [1999], rev. ed., xiv-xv). Such diverse writers as Magnus Hirschfeld, a European leader of the movement to abolish the criminalization of homosexuality, whose summary of his life's work appears in *Sexual Anomalies*; Iwan Bloch (*The Sexual Life of Our Time*); Richard von Krafft-Ebing, (*Psychopathia Sexualis* [1886]); Havelock Ellis (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex* [1915]); and Edward Carpenter (*The Intermediate Sex* [1908]) have all offered portraits of gender which show some striking similarities to Butler's description of performativity. I argue that this crucial concept in any description of modernism may be seen clearly within the context of an impassioned discussion of gender in the early twentieth century and not simply as an anticipation of poststructuralist analysis to come.

Cyrena Pondrom  
University of Wisconsin – Madison

## Eliot's Rhythmic Grumblings: Creating the Forms for a New Society

Eliot famously described himself as a “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion,” defining himself in traditional terms. In doing so he set himself apart from the radical politics of many of other modernist writers. And yet, his self-description must be read as a radical statement after all, for to be a classicist, royalist, and Anglo-catholic in 1928 is to stand for substantial change in current modes of literature, politics, and religion. Eliot's bland declaration of his allegiances belies the difficulty of his project: to succeed as a traditionalist in 1928 requires building a tradition, and yet to build a tradition, even one built out of the shards of older traditions, will require individual choices that undercut the systems that he champions. Michael Tratner's *Modernism and Mass Politics* and Paul Morrison's *The Poetics of Fascism* both make a compelling case for Eliot's interest in and concern about the politics of the masses. In this paper I will take a closer look at the ways in which these politics are found in his poetics, focusing on “Gerontion” and *The Waste Land*. I will show that Eliot's poetry attempts to create forms suitable for this new kind of radically traditional society.

Aileen Waters  
Washington University, St. Louis

## Conversation and Caricature: Experimental Drama in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*

As examined in the recent work of Gabrielle McIntire, Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot maintained a close professional and personal relationship for twenty years until Woolf's death in 1941. In the 1920s, they shared a mutual interest in incorporating aspects of drama into their work: Eliot began writing verse plays, while Woolf became interested in expanding the novel's means of characterization through dramatic speaking. Referring to her new novel *The Waves* as “prose yet poetry; a novel & a play,” “an abstract mystical eyeless book: a playpoem,” an “[a]utobiography,” “a gigantic conversation,” and, finally, “a series of dramatic soliloquies,” Woolf indicated her intention to combine elements of poetry and drama with those of narrative. Woolf's diaries also record her conversations with Eliot about his own experiments with drama, which he referred to as “caricature.” In September 1920 she noted that they discussed his desire “to write a verse play in which the 4 characters of Sweeny [sic] act the parts.” This verse play eventually developed into *Sweeney Agonistes*, a production of which Eliot and Woolf attended together fourteen years later. By examining the relationship between Woolf and Eliot and their mutual interest in the possibilities of dramatic speech when combined with the narrative and lyric modes, I reveal the important role that their interactions had in the innovations of Eliot in poetry and drama and Woolf in fiction.

Alison Rutledge  
Univ. of Missouri, Columbia

## ELIOT NEWS

### Melanie Fathman Becomes Treasurer

As announced in the preceding issue of *Time Present*, the Eliot Society's long-time treasurer, John Karel, has stepped down. In November, Melanie Fathman generously agreed to stand for treasurer, and the board elected her to the position by acclamation. Melanie, who assumed the office January 1, will be assisted by Yvette Clemons, administrative assistant at the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis (founded in 1834 by William Greenleaf Eliot, T. S. Eliot's grandfather). The Society's mailing address has changed accordingly, as shown on the first and last pages of this newsletter.



### Eliot Society Election

Three seats on the Eliot Society's Board of Directors are up for election this year. All members in good standing— i.e., those whose dues are current, as well as honorary members— are eligible to vote. Ballots must be submitted by May 21 at the latest.

This year's election will again be conducted using an online ballot rather than paper ballots. To vote, please follow these instructions:

1. Click the “Eliot Society Election” link on our website ([www.luc.edu/eliot](http://www.luc.edu/eliot))
2. In the login box that pops up, enter the user name eliot and the password TSE1888.



3. On the ballot screen, enter your first and last names and your email address. Then click on the boxes next to the names of up to four candidates. Clicking once will put a check in the box; clicking again on the same box will remove the check.
4. When you are ready, click the "Submit Your Vote" button.

Please note that the identifying information (name and email address) is required only for purposes of validation or in case of a problem with your ballot. Votes will be seen only by the Supervisor of Elections and the President, and, as with our quondam paper ballots, they will be held in strict confidence.

If you lack internet access or are otherwise unable to use the online ballot, please contact either the Supervisor of Elections or the President, who will be happy to enter your vote manually.

Three persons have been nominated for the board: Nancy Gish, Gabrielle McIntire, and Cyrena Pondrom. Terms will be three years for the two candidates who receive the most votes, and two years for the other candidate, since that person will be completing the unexpired term of Melanie Fathman, who recently left her board position to become treasurer (see above).

For further information, please see the Society's by-laws, available on our website (<http://www.luc.edu/eliot/who.htm>).



## Remembering Elizabeth Konnyu

The Eliot Society mourns the passing of Elizabeth Anyu Konnyu (née Gelencser), on December 7, 2011, just short of her 99th birthday. The wife of our late founder, Leslie Konnyu, Elizabeth was an instrumental participant in the early days of the Society. Other activities included her work with the American Hungarian Review, the Samuel Cupples House & Gallery at St. Louis University, the St. Louis Writers Guild, and the St. Louis Poetry Society. She

was the mother of three children, grandmother of nine, and great grandmother of thirteen. Her obituary describes her as "devoted to her family, faith, [and] Hungarian culture," adding that she "loved to garden."



## Eliot Society Panels at ALA

The Society is sponsoring two panels at the conference of the American Literature Association, May 24-27, 2012, in San Francisco. The sessions, organized by Nancy Gish, are as follows:

### T. S. Eliot: Modernity and Classicism

**Saturday, May 26, 2012**

12:40 - 2:00 pm

Chair: Jayme Stayer, Boston College

1. "What Modernist Women Serve for Supper: Philomela's Revenge and Lil's Hot Gammon." Bonnie Roos, West Texas A&M Univ.
2. "Classicism as Radiotherapy: T. S. Eliot and Seneca's Non-Theatrical Drama." Fabio Vericat, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
3. "Eliot and Virgil in Love and War." Nancy K. Gish, Univ. of Southern Maine

### T. S. Eliot: Texts and New Contexts

**Saturday, May 26, 2012**

3:30 - 4:50 pm

Chair: Fabio Vericat, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

1. "T. S. Eliot's Adolescence: Discoveries from the Archives." Jayme Stayer, Boston Coll.
2. "An Economic Waste Land: T. S. Eliot and John Maynard Keynes." Michael Tratner, Bryn Mawr Coll.
3. "Space in T. S. Eliot's Poetry: The Waste Land." Joong-Eun Ahn, Andong National Univ.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Leon Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics*.  
McGill-Queen University Press, 2011.**

Reviewed by Benjamin G. Lockerd  
Grand Valley State University

Some years ago I chaired a panel at a conference (not an Eliot Society conference), and one of the speakers mentioned in passing that Eliot had "flirted with fascism." This comment had nothing to do with the purpose of his paper and was not supported by any evidence—nor could he provide any when I asked him about it later. This is simply something one hears in the hallowed halls of the academy, and the charge is vague enough that it does not commit the speaker to provide evidence. Whenever we hear anyone say that Eliot "flirted with fascism," we may be sure the speaker

does not know anything about it. Two books clarified Eliot's social and political ideas some four decades ago: *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, by Roger Kojecky and Russell Kirk's *Eliot and His Age*. Neither found that Eliot had flirted with fascism. After reading carefully all of Eliot's *Criterion* essays and commentaries, and after corresponding with Eliot on political topics—as well as discussing them with him on several occasions in person—Kirk concluded that “From the first, he was a consistent and intelligent opponent of both Fascist and Communist ideologies: and somewhat to his own surprise, perhaps, on occasions he found himself defending the constitutional democracies of Britain and the United States.” More recently, in his excellent 2002 book on the *Criterion*, Jason Harding points out that Eliot attempted to address political ideas in the journal without taking sides in the immediate political issues of the day, and that this policy meant including essays by pro-fascist and pro-communist writers. It is this attempt at disinterested discussion, Harding suggests, that opened Eliot to irresponsible charges of proto-fascism. After analyzing Eliot's 1928 article “The Literature of Fascism,” Harding concludes that “the article amounted to an indictment of totalitarian government.” We also have Michael North's 1991 book on *The Political Aesthetics of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound*, in which he states that “Eliot and Yeats were in some ways too conservative to become fascists.”

In spite of the fact that the scholars who have studied the topic seriously have all come to similar conclusions, the question of Eliot's thoughts about totalitarian ideologies continues to fascinate and to invite misrepresentation by those who think his avowed conservatism must have been aligned with fascism. What seems to be needed is a book that addresses the question directly and comprehensively. Leon Surette's new book does just that—and does it very well indeed. The beauty of Surette's approach is that he provides a rich context by describing and documenting the central trends in political thought in England, from before the Great War to the Cold War era. While tracing the history of ideas in this stretch of time, Surette compares Eliot's political stances with those of his friends Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. The three met each other at the outset of the Great War; though Lewis and Pound later fell out, Eliot maintained life-long friendships with both of them, in spite of Lewis's crankiness and Pound's mad allegiance to Mussolini. By examining the broader milieu of political ideas at that time, Surette is able to explain somewhat sympathetically how Pound and Lewis were drawn to totalitarian ideologies and Eliot was drawn to monarchy. Surette shows that even before World War I there was a broad consensus holding that democratic capitalism had failed and would soon be replaced. The war and the depression of the 1930s seemed to confirm this widely held notion, so that the pressing political issue of the moment was what kind of regimented system should replace this dying capitalist form. The earnest

debates taking place in England—and sometimes in the pages of the *Criterion*—were predicated on this assumption. By setting the discussion in this context, Surette gives us a much better understanding of how so many educated people could have gone so far wrong.

Surette's approach, then, will garner some understanding for Lewis and Pound, who not only flirted with communism or Nazism or fascism but embraced one or the other (Lewis for a time, and Pound for the rest of his life). The book will help its readers comprehend how well-intentioned and intelligent people were attracted to these totalitarian movements, which later proved to be evil horrors. At the same time, Surette's method has a disadvantage for Eliot studies in that it tends to leave the casual reader with the impression that Eliot's views were quite similar to those of his friends. To include Eliot in a book entitled *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia* is inevitably to lead many who never go far beyond the title to suppose that Surette thinks Eliot had such dreams, when in fact he did not even dream of a Christian utopia. Rather, as he writes at the end of *The Idea of a Christian Society*, “. . . we must remember that whatever reform or revolution we carry out, the result will always be a sordid travesty of what human society should be—though the world is never left wholly without glory.” Eliot was not tempted by utopian visions, as his two friends (and many others) were, and certainly not by totalitarian utopian visions.

Surette demonstrates that these three thinkers, along with many others, joined in a critique of the poor distribution of wealth by the capitalist system. They also shared a distrust of mass culture and felt that it discouraged real artists. They expected that democracy would lead to the election of demagogues or to the creation of secret oligarchies. Eliot thought a monarch preferable; Lewis and Pound thought a dictator would be better. Surette states sympathetically that “their motivation should not be regarded as malign, nor their analysis as completely wrong-headed. The interwar period was one in which it was very difficult to see one's way clearly.” He shows that “fascism was not perceived in the 1920s as the face of evil—either by the man in the street, by the media, or by the leaders of democratic nations” and adds that the great fear was Bolshevism. At the same time, of course, he does not aim to completely exonerate these writers, whose naïve understanding of politics led them (at least in the case of Lewis and Pound) to support ideologies that proved to be extremely destructive.

Surette demonstrates that Eliot had distanced himself from Lewis's political views as early as 1927. He notes that in the 1928 essay on “The Literature of Fascism,” Eliot renounces both communism and fascism as political systems that attempt to substitute themselves for religious belief. In the same essay, as Surette points out, Eliot even gives one or two cheers for democracy (or at least for limited democracy), saying he cannot “share enthusiastically in this vigorous

repudiation of ‘democracy’” that he has heard voiced on all sides. Surette states that eventually “Eliot muted his anti-democratic views, though he never entirely abandoned them, and he avoided endorsing any of the regimes on offer.” Unlike Lewis, we are told, Eliot not only had a negative critique but a positive set of beliefs—in conservatism, Anglicanism, and royalism—which “protected Eliot from the sorts of political blunders into which Lewis and Pound fell.” After giving an extensive and rich description of Eliot’s political views, Surette concludes that “Eliot never flirted with fascism or nazism.” With a bit of luck, this will settle the matter once and for all.

Probably, however, it will not, for many commentators consider Eliot’s conservatism to be vaguely allied with fascism, regardless of the evidence to the contrary. And unfortunately Surette himself (perhaps because his book does lump Eliot with the other two) sometimes undercuts his own conclusion. For instance, at one point he writes, “Intellectuals who had abandoned liberal capitalism and rejected both socialism and communism, like Eliot, Lewis, and Pound, were ineluctably drawn toward fascism as the only remaining political alternative on offer.” This is quite true of Lewis and Pound but not, as Surette shows elsewhere, of Eliot. At times it seems that Surette is at pains to find Eliot soft on fascism. For instance, he comments on Eliot’s review of a book by Joseph Wood Krutch, in which Krutch offers a critique of both communism and fascism from a liberal viewpoint. Surette notes that Eliot concentrates on communism in the review and states ominously that “his silence on Krutch’s critique of fascism is striking.” Yet Eliot does say at the beginning of the review (in a passage Surette does not quote) that Krutch “objects, in the name of reason and liberalism, to both fascism and communism. His objections are the substance of his book; and anyone who also objects to fascism and communism is prepared to read the book in a sympathetic state of mind. But the more I read of it, the more I became convinced that Mr. Krutch was an ally to be regarded with the gravest suspicion by anybody with any positive beliefs.” Thus Eliot makes clear his agenda for his review: he agrees unequivocally with Krutch that both fascism and communism are deplorable, but he will spend the review arguing that Krutch’s liberalism does not offer an adequate alternative to these collectivist ideologies because it does not contain “positive beliefs.” It is true that Eliot never again mentions fascism in the short piece, but his emphasis is on Krutch’s anti-Christian evaluation of European history, and he has stated his opposition to fascism quite unambiguously in the opening paragraph. There are, unfortunately, other passages like this one, in which Surette seems to imply that Eliot was somehow allied with the fascists or was even defending them.

Nevertheless, this book presents abundant evidence for its primary conclusion regarding Eliot, namely, that he

was never a supporter of fascism. The detailed information presented by Surette is fascinating, and the book gives an extremely valuable narrative of the various political ideas at work from before World War I through the Cold War period. The wisdom of Eliot’s position on the subject of totalitarian ideologies is seen as all the more remarkable in the context of the positively pro-fascist beliefs of his two friends.



**Stephen Sicari, *Modernist Humanism and the Men of 1914: Joyce, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot*. University of South Carolina Press, 2011.**

Reviewed by Natalie Kalich  
Loyola University Chicago

Stephen Sicari’s text argues that Joyce, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot should be considered “modernist humanists” and begins, “Must something called ‘humanism’ in the twenty-first century appear conservative or retrograde or tied to hegemonic power? . . . That is the underlying question of this study, and my answer is ‘No’” (ix). For theological literary scholars, Sicari’s work may present interesting interpretations of these modernists’ texts through his focus on the Christian ideals of love and hope. However, Sicari’s insistence on treating hope and love in an exclusively Christian context results in reductive readings that ultimately flatten much of the nuance in the pieces he analyses. *Modernist Humanism and the Men of 1914* has little to offer scholars not seeking a specifically Christian “answer” or “message” in texts such as *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*.

Sicari acknowledges that these modernists were skeptical of ideologies handed down from previous generations but insists that they were still able to find something “permanent” and “universal” in the theological virtue of love and the Incarnation. Contrary to his assumption that an analysis of love will be met with scholarly scoffing, his project is weakened by not taking love seriously enough and by limiting his scope to viewing love in these texts as “agape.” *Ulysses* allows for a reading that views love as the tie that binds humanity together and that love is imagined in a variety of forms: romantic love, familial love, carnal love, and religious conceptions of love. However, lines such as “Love loves to love love” (1493/273) can be read as an ironic depiction of sentimentality or as a critique of a form of self-involved, fruitless love. More broadly, *Ulysses* is encyclopedic and comprehensive in order to depict the fullness of the human

experience. If one is going to promote a particularly narrow reading, one needs to provide a justification for excluding all others. According to Sicari, "Love loves to love love" shows that Joyce believed "language is inherently fraudulent" (79) because it is ultimately inadequate in its attempt to express the ineffable. Even if Joyce found language flawed, all of his works demonstrate the immense creative capacity of language and his love of wordplay, which is more than one can say about his feelings toward a religious institution he walked away from as a young man.

Also, Sicari often neglects to provide the full context of particular lines he cites. In the Ithaca episode, which is constructed in the narrative style of a catechism, we are told that Stephen initially saw Bloom as "the traditional figure of hypostasis" (783/ 565). Sicari states that this proves that Bloom is the Incarnation of Christ. I am reminded here of the proverbial Devil reading scripture to suit his purpose — one line in a catechistic chapter regarding Christ and Bloom does not mean Bloom is meant to be read primarily as the Incarnation. Sicari ignores the various religious, cultural, and historical aspects of Bloom that inform his character, as well as his position within a literary tradition that not only includes the Bible, but also Greek epics, Elizabethan drama, and Irish folklore. If Sicari's argument had addressed how Bloom's role as Christ engaged with and complicated his other quotidian and epic roles, the result would have been a far more useful and thought-provoking reading.

Sicari's sins of omission recur in his chapters on Lewis and Pound. For example, in Sicari's consideration of Pound's *Cantos*, he claims that the secular form of humanism as imagined by the Enlightenment was the catalyst for Pound's anti-Semitism: "Pound's development of an intellectual hatred of Jews and of a paranoid belief in a worldwide conspiracy against civilization is one possible fruit of such Enlightenment convictions" (137). While Sicari allows that "not everyone who believes in the rational mind and the autonomous will becomes paranoid and anti-Semitic" he insists that "the logic is there" (137). In his avowal that secularism "logically" leads to the irrational hatred of a religious people, Sicari leaves the history of conflict among religious communities, such as Muslims, Christians, and Jews, unmentioned.

Finally, Sicari turns to Eliot and examines *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* as modernist humanist texts. I agree with Sicari that, "Of the modernists in this study, [Eliot] was the most explicitly religious" (161), particularly if we are talking about post-conversion Eliot. However, I part ways with Sicari in his reading of *The Waste Land* and his contention that it "is a poem about silence, nonsense, prayer, and God's voice" (162). He begins by describing the relationship between the hyacinth girl and the speaker, asserting that the line "Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (41) is the Christian response to Conrad's nihilistic *Heart of Darkness*.

And yet, this claim ignores earlier lines in the verse: "Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images" (21-23), which undermines the reassuring permanence Sicari wants to find in the poem. When interpreting line 41 in this broader context, the silence in the heart of light might suggest nothingness rather than rapture. In fact, Sicari does not address the nihilism often associated with *The Waste Land*, which one should if one is going to make the rather unorthodox claim that the poem offers the hope of Christian love. Later, Sicari suggests that interpreting the sound of thunder as God's voice makes "nonsense," because we are incapable of comprehending God. Sicari acknowledges the Hindu origins of the thunder's voice, but quickly diverts into a tangent on the timeliness of "Da" given that *The Waste Land* was written during the Dada movement. Sicari merely glances at Eliot's explanations of the Hindu origins of "Da" in his notes. Moreover, Sicari entirely overlooks the translations of "Datta," "Dayadhvam," and "Damyata" within the poem, which demonstrate Eliot's desire to make explicit sense of words Sicari deems largely meaningless. For Sicari, these "nonsensical" words are further evidence of the inadequacy of language, which enables him to impose a Christian reading of *The Waste Land*. Sicari's reading of the poem and, particularly, his readiness to gloss over the Vedic tradition at play, reveals his inability to comprehend a higher power as anything other than a Christian God. When Sicari moves on to *Four Quartets* he is on more sensible ground, as this poem was written by a firmly Anglicanized Eliot, and the Christian message in this poem is readily apparent. According to Sicari, *Four Quartets* resolves the conflicts of *The Waste Land* because Eliot was more committed to religion, which provided him with the answers for which he had been searching. *Four Quartets* provides a "point of intersection of the timeless with time" and "for the Christian poet [this leads] inexorably to the dogma of the Incarnation" (189). The Anglican Eliot thus best conforms to the kind of modernist humanism Sicari has described.

In his conclusion, Sicari explains his methodology as "provid[ing] new meanings of these highly canonical texts as a way of following their responses to cultural conditions, a formalism with a historical aim" (197), which is an inaccurate depiction of his purpose as otherwise expressed throughout the text. Rather, he reads these texts from a Christian perspective while ignoring other cultural and historical contexts, such as a shell-shocked, post-WWI London and a 1904 Dublin stumbling on the road to independence, in part because of its blind adherence to the Catholic Church. Sicari calls for our civilization to discover universal values as a corrective to our intellectualized cynicism, attempting to qualify his argument by claiming that "it is not at all necessary that a twenty-first century humanism be Christian, but it does need to be a theistic humanism"

(200). Considering that statement in the context of Sicari's previous 199 pages, one wonders how sincere the claim truly is. If other religions like Hinduism are treated as "nonsense," if Jewish Bloom should be read only as the Incarnation of Christ, and if no other religions are mentioned as examples of theistic humanism, what else could Sicari envision as a viable twenty-first century theistic humanism outside of a Christian humanism? In the end, his argument depends on turning a blind eye to the diverse influences (cultural, historical, literary, and personal) that inspired the creation of these richly complex modernist texts without imparting a productive or particularly innovative reading of modernism.



## Stephen Dillane's Reading of *Four Quartets*.

Reviewed by Michael Rogalski  
Provision Theater

In remarks introducing a public reading of *The Waste Land* in 1988, poet Ted Hughes highlighted the role of the *reacaire* in the ancient Celtic world. Poets of the highest order never recited their own poems. "For that," said Hughes, "they were dependent on another professional—the *reacaire*—the reciter." Such a one is Tony Award winning actor Stephen Dillane. His rendering of *Four Quartets*, directed by Katie Mitchell and presented at New York's Lincoln Center from November 8 to November 12 last year, offered the best of the *reacaire's* art.

Mr. Dillane graciously agreed to meet with me to discuss *Four Quartets* and his approach to it. We spoke one evening in a Lincoln Center rehearsal room a few days before I saw his Saturday matinee. A vital and articulate man with a winning directness, he explained that his principal goal was to relay the meaning of the poem afresh from moment to moment. On Saturday afternoon he more than succeeded.

Comfortably dressed, he walked alone onto the stage of the Clark Studio Theater with a bottle of water and a well-thumbed copy of *Four Quartets*. The playing area, designed by Vicki Mortimer, was a lean empty rectangle painted black—the walls matte, the deck reflective. The audience of about a hundred was seated in four tiered rows along one side. The lighting design by Jon Clark involved a stark array of white fluorescent tubes overhead that seemed to wash the room with an almost unsettling astringency.

Mr. Dillane left his bottle of water and his book near the upstage wall. He approached the audience, now hushed, and quietly announced, "Burnt Norton." And then he took us.

The poem unfolded freely in Mr. Dillane's masterful, unadorned delivery. One heard each syllable and word and thought and each constellation of thought plainly and clearly. He did not impose meaning. He did not interpret. Instead he allowed meaning to reveal itself like wind that "wrinkles and slides" upon the water. Yet he also added graceful accents to aid our understanding, as when he related the sad litany of districts and stations in "Burnt Norton" ("London, / Hampstead and Clerkenwell") with enough deliberate monotony that one vividly sensed the "gloomy hills" beyond. With easy command he found occasion to pause a beat, even two, letting a particular thought or image steep in the silence. Nor did the humor escape: "That was a way of putting it," he quipped with a twinkle after delivering the "periphrastic study" in "East Coker," and the audience responded warmly.

Between quartets, he crossed unhurriedly back upstage for a drink of water. He would wait a moment, return to the audience, announce the next piece ("East Coker"), and begin anew.

Another route to *Four Quartets* might have called for the actor to inhabit the poem theatrically and to lead the audience in an "approach to the meaning" by way of an arc of discovery. Stephen Dillane took the arguably more difficult tack. Rather than inhabit the poem, he allowed the poem to inhabit him—and to be radiated outward to his audience through a wonderfully simple, direct, and pellucid performance.

## CALL FOR REVIEWERS

*Time Present* is in need of book reviewers. Reviews are around 1,500 words and we can often accommodate your schedule. If you are interested in reviewing any of the texts below or in placing your name on our list of reviewers, please email Julia Daniel for details: juliadaniel@rocketmail.com

*T. S. Eliot: A Short Biography* (Worthen)

*War Trauma and English Modernism: T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence* (Krockel)

*Djuna Barnes, T. S. Eliot, and the Gender Dynamics of Modernism* (Faltejskova)

*T. S. Eliot in Context* (Harding)

*Poetic Craft and Authorial Design in Shax, Keats, Eliot and James* (Wright)

*Reading T. S. Eliot: Four Quartets and the Journey toward Understanding* (Atkins)



## SOCIETY BUSINESS

**A**t a couple points during the Paris meeting the editor was asked if there was any interest in reviving the “Society Notes” feature of the newsletter. Perhaps in the era of Facebook such a thing is unnecessary, but we’ve decided to see. Appropriate news could include anything from publications and career moves to relocations, retirements, marriages, and similar items of personal interest.

The purpose of these “Society Notes” is to help members of the Society get to know each other and keep track of one another, recognizing that not everyone is able to attend every Annual Meeting. Any society member who wishes to contribute to *Time Present* need only send such news to Michael: [mcoyle@colgate.edu](mailto:mcoyle@colgate.edu).

## PUBLIC SIGHTINGS

Compiled by David Chinitz

**Do I dare?** “When I was young, I used to be so brave. I’d ride the Muni, then eat a slice of pizza.” This comment, overheard by Paul Baker, was reported as the “2011 version” of Prufrock’s “Do I dare to eat a peach?” (*San Francisco Chronicle* 10 Aug. 2011: E10)

**And do I dare?** “I sat down with my back propped against the rear wall of the garage, rummaged in my bag, and brought out a Payday. I held it up and considered poor old J. Alfred Prufrock. I wasn’t so different, although it was a candybar I wasn’t sure I dared to eat.” (Stephen King, *11/22/63* [2011])

**Blue Nights.** In *Blue Nights* (2011), a memoir about her daughter Quintana Roo, who died in 2005, Joan Didion recalls the poems she read at her daughter’s funeral: “I read the poems by Wallace Stevens and T. S. Eliot, ‘Domination of Black’ and ‘New Hampshire,’ with which I had put her to sleep when she was a baby. ‘Do the peacocks,’ she would say once she could talk. ‘Do the peacocks,’ or ‘do the apple trees’” (163).

**“Gerontion” and genocide.** (1) Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2005. (2) Roger Bromley. “After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness? Cultural Representations of Reconciliation in Rwanda.” *French Cultural Studies* 20.2 (2009): 181–97.

**Teamwork.** Broadcasting his *Prairie Home Companion* from St. Louis on 27 Aug. 2011, Garrison Keillor announced

that two famous St. Louis artists, Chuck Berry and T. S. Eliot, had once collaborated on a song. He then proceeded to sing a rockabilly parody beginning:

Well, let’s go to St. Louis, Baby, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky.  
The novels, tea-cups, and the skirts that trail along the  
floor,  
Just a half a mile from the Mississippi shore.

Let’s go to half-deserted streets, to one night cheap hotels,  
The yellow smoke and sawdust restaurants with oyster  
shells.  
And the afternoon, the evening sleep so peacefully,  
Help me, information, get in touch with my Marie.

**Song of Lunch.** Set in London’s Soho neighborhood, this long poem by Christopher Reid—dramatized by the BBC in a 2010 production starring Alan Rickman and Emma Thompson—includes a fleeting vision:

And there goes T. S. Eliot,  
bound for his first martini of the day.  
With his gig-lamps and his immaculate sheen,  
he eases past you like a limousine:  
a powerful American model.

Please send your own public sightings to David Chinitz ([dchinit@luc.edu](mailto:dchinit@luc.edu)).



The editor would like to dedicate this issue  
of *Time Present* to the memory of  
Katherine Distefano Myrick (1942-2012).

When I took over the editing of *Time Present* in 2010 this quarterly was in the process of a serious physical upgrade, a transformation really begun by David Chinitz in his tenure as editor. But an increasingly ambitious newsletter entailed not only changes in content but also in layout and form — and these were beyond my own meager desktop publishing “skills.” I was lucky to be able to enlist Katherine’s professional assistance, and the look of *Time Present* will for the foreseeable future reflect her imagination and eye.



### **Email List Serve**

Members are invited to subscribe to the Society's informational list serve, which is used for occasional official communications only—never for discussion.

To join, please contact the Secretary.

### **For Help With Society Matters**

To submit papers for any conference session sponsored by the Society, or to make suggestions or inquiries regarding the annual meeting or other Society activities, please contact the President.

For matters having to do with *Time Present: The Newsletter of the T. S. Eliot Society*, please contact the Vice President.

To pay dues, inquire about membership, or report a change of address, please contact the Treasurer.

The Society Historian is Frances Dickey ([dickeyf@missouri.edu](mailto:dickeyf@missouri.edu)).

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