

Time Present

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Eliot on the Poetry of His Contemporaries

By Marjorie Perloff

Today, when the reviewing of new books of poetry is often little more than expanded blurb writing, singling out this or that volume from the hundreds of slim collections that pour out from the small presses, it is the greatest pleasure to read the hitherto uncollected book reviews by the young T. S. Eliot, now available in Volume 1 of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard. Written primarily for *The Egoist*, but also for such other journals as *The New Statesman*, these reviews and reflections on contemporary poetry present Eliot at his brilliant, learned, funny, and iconoclastic best.

Consider Eliot's reaction, in a 1918 omnibus review for *The Egoist*, to a lavishly produced poetry book by E. F. A. Geach and D. E. A. Wallace coyly titled *-Esques*:

The authors of *-Esques* trickle down a fine broad page in a pantoum, a roundel, a villanelle, occasionally pagan, mode of thirty years ago:

Why then, O foolish Christ,
Didst thou keep tryst
With maudlin harlots wan
With glad things gone?

To which the obvious answer is, Why did you? Young poets ought to be cheaply printed; such sumptuous pages deceive many innocent critics. (733)

Enough said! Further down the page, Eliot glances at the young Alec Waugh's *Resentment* just long enough to note that "Mr. Waugh . . . would appear to have been influenced by some older person who admired Rupert Brooke." Not even Brooke himself but "some older person who admired" him! It can't get much worse than that, can it?

Eliot is not always so cutting. A review for *The Egoist* of the Georgian poet Harold Monro's *Strange Meetings* (573) becomes a jumping off point for a discussion of the "trivial" versus the "accidental." The latter, typical of American poets, is characterized by "an arrest at the object in view" without "betraying any reaction beyond that revealed in the choice and arrangement." The trivial, associated in Eliot's mind with English poetry, can be traced back to Wordsworth. The great Romantic poet, Eliot argues, cannot let "the object" live: when, for example, he writes, in the famous concluding line of the Immortality Ode, of "the meanest flower that blows," he is insisting that we take that flower (daffodil) seriously just because it is a flower. Of the two camps, Eliot seems to favor the "accidental," for at least precise description of a given object allows for defamiliarization, "express[ing] the strangeness of . . . familiar objects" (576).

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Annie Dunn: An Eliot Society Pilgrimage

by Ronald Schuchard

The charming photograph of schoolbound Tom Eliot looking mischievously at the camera under the watchful eyes of his nursemaid Annie Dunn first appeared, without the caption by his brother Henry, in Peter Ackroyd's *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (1984). Beyond the standard description of her as an Irish Catholic in subsequent reprints, there seems to have been no interest in further identification. When she began to reappear in Eliot's uncollected prose in 1927, however,



with continuous hints of an unusually strong personal bond and spiritual influence, the editors of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* knew that a full portrait was imperative. In August 1927, two months after his conversion as an Anglo-Catholic, Eliot stated in his review of Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian* that Russell's arguments "are all quite familiar. I remember that his argument of the First Cause (as put to J. Stuart Mill by James Mill) was put to me at the age of six by a devoutly

Photo of Eliot and Annie Dunn, © Estate of T. S. Eliot, Henry Ware Eliot Collection of T. S. Eliot, 1881-1994 (Ms Am 2560), Houghton Library

Catholic Irish nursemaid."¹ Although we do not know the dates of Annie's service as Eliot's nanny, she was in place, if Eliot's memory of his age is correct, no later than 1894. In August 1930, when an editor of a St. Louis paper asked Eliot to reminisce about his youth in the city, he replied:

The earliest personal influences I remember, besides that of my parents, was an Irish nursemaid named Annie Dunne [sic], to whom I was greatly attached; she used to take me to my first school, a Mrs. Lockwood's, which was a little way out beyond Vandeventer place. . . . I find that as one gets on in middle life the strength of early associations, and the intensity of early impressions, becomes more evident; and many little things, long forgotten, recur [such as the] occasions on which my nurse took me with her to the little Catholic Church which then stood on the corner of Locust Street and Jefferson Avenue, when she went to make her devotions.²

In his recent article on "T. S. Eliot as a Schoolboy," Society member Jayme Stayer quotes a source describing Mrs. Lockwood's school as "'a kindergarten-primary school' for boys the age of seven or eight."³ Henry's surmise that he took the photograph ca. 1895 is probably correct: seven-year-old Eliot (not looking eight), with he and Annie both in jackets, was likely being escorted to Mrs. Lockwood's in the autumn for the first of three years there. And it seems likely that Annie remained in charge of her ward at least until he was enrolled in the Smith Academy in the autumn of 1898. Whatever the actual chronology and range, the evidence suggests that Annie Dunn's catechistical

¹ T. S. Eliot, "Why Mr. Russell Is a Christian," *Criterion*, 6 (August 1927), 177-79; in Dickey, Formicelli, and Schuchard, eds., *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol. 3, forthcoming on Project Muse from Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber and Faber.

² Eliot's letter of 8 August to Marquis W. Childs was published in John G. Neihardt, "Of Making Many Books," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (October 15, 1930), 3B; in *Complete Prose* Vol. 3. The Eliot home was at 2635 Locust Street.

³ Jayme Stayer, "T. S. Eliot as a Schoolboy: The Lockwood School, Smith Academy, and Milton Academy," *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 59.4 (2013), 623. Mrs. Ellen Lockwood (1855-98), a friend of Eliot's mother, Charlotte, operated the private primary school for boys at 3841 Delmar Avenue until her death in December 1898.

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The 36th Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society St. Louis, September 25–27, 2015

The Society invites proposals for papers to be presented at our annual meeting in St. Louis. Clearly organized proposals of about 300 words, on any topic reasonably related to Eliot, along with brief biographical sketches, should be emailed by June 13, 2014, to tseliotsociety@gmail.com, with the subject heading “conference proposal.”

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 the award should mention this 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 inform the President of their interest, either with or independently of a paper proposal.

Memorial Lecturer: Jed Esty

Jed Esty is Vartan Gregorian Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. His 2015 Eliot Society lecture will be drawn from a new project entitled *Ages of Innocence: Culture and Literature from Pax Britannica to the American Century*. Esty is the author of two previous books: *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford, 2012) and *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, 2004). With Joe Cleary and Colleen Lye, he coedited a 2012 special issue of *Modern Language Quarterly* on the topic Peripheral Realisms. With Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Antoinette Burton, and Matti Bunzl, he coedited *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Duke, 2005). He has published essays in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Victorian Studies*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *ELH*, *ALH*, *Contemporary Literature*, *Narrative*, *Novel*, and the *Yale Journal of Criticism*.

Esty specializes in twentieth-century British, Irish, and postcolonial literatures, with additional interests in critical theory, history and theory of the novel, colonial and postcolonial studies, and the Victorian novel. After receiving his BA from Yale and PhD from Duke, he taught for several years at Harvard and at the University

of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) before joining the Penn faculty in 2008. He has been a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Illinois.

Peer Seminar: “Prufrock” One Hundred Years Later

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” first appeared in print 100 years ago, in *Poetry* magazine, June 1915. Our 2015 peer seminar with Cassandra Laity will recognize this centennial with a focus on “Prufrock” then and now. Possible topics for discussion might include:

- how did Eliot come to write this poem? (influences historical, artistic, cultural, etc.)
- how does it intersect with ideas, experiences, and developments of the early twentieth century, or of our time? (philosophy, religion, urbanization, material culture, medical and technological advances, feminism, gender, sexuality, the body, disability, ecology, etc.)
- how does the poem relate to the milieu of little magazines in which it first appeared?
- how was the poem received?
- what is the legacy of “Prufrock” in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? (from influence to parody, from literature and other arts to popular culture)

Participants will pre-circulate short position papers (5 pages) on any aspect of the poem, its context, meaning, or impact, by September 1, for discussion at the meeting of the peer seminar from 10 to 12 on the first day of the 2015 Eliot Society conference, Friday, September 25. Membership in the peer seminar is limited to twelve on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please enroll by July 15, by sending an email with the subject line “peer seminar” to tseliotsociety@gmail.com with your contact information.

Cassandra Laity is currently a visiting scholar at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She was a coeditor of *Modernism/Modernity* for ten years (2000–2010) and a founder of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA).

Laity has published numerous articles on W. B. Yeats, H.D., T. S. Eliot, Elizabeth Bishop, A. C. Swinburne among other poets. She is author or editor of three books: *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge UP, 1996; pbk 2009); *H.D.'s Paint it Today* (NYUP, 1992); and, with

Nancy Gish, *Gender, Desire and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge UP, 2004; pbk 2007). She is planning to launch a new journal, *Feminist Modernist Studies* (FMS), with Anne Fernald. She is currently completing a book, *Anthropocene Feminism: Darwin's Beagle Geology from Decadence to Modernist Women's Poetry*.

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Eliot on His Contemporaries

Perloff continued from page 1

The “accidental,” although Eliot never says so, is of course Imagism, Pound’s “The natural object is always the adequate symbol.” Eliot himself, however, prefers a poetry in which “the feeling and the material symbol preserve exactly their proper proportion,” as when John Donne writes, “When my grave is broke up again . . . / And he that digs it, spies / A bracelet of bright hair about the bone.” Here, Eliot is no doubt thinking of his own poetry: what he hopes to produce is what he was to call in “Hamlet and his Problems” (1921) the “objective correlative.”

But to find “the precise formula” for emotion is never easy. Unlike his friend Ezra Pound, Eliot remains suspicious of THE NEW. Reviewing Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson’s *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (1917), he wonders how many of Monroe’s contributors really do, in Yeats’s phrase, “wring the neck of rhetoric.” Inevitably, most have limited strengths, which is not to say that the anthology isn’t worthwhile:

An anthology of contemporary verse can be a document of great importance for future generations. It ought not to contain many good poems but a few; otherwise perish. Bad poems, from this point of view, need to be as carefully chosen as good; Miss Monroe and Mrs. Henderson have chosen wisely. Most anthologies exhibit only the vices of a particular sect; and the badness of a poem is immeasurably heightened, the reader’s vision clarified and his mind instructed, when bad poems of totally different types are set off against each other. (609)

This is, it seems to me, a very commonsensical view of anthologies, as seen from an historical perspective. And Eliot has a shrewd sense of what stands out: “There is the New England of Mr. [Robert] Frost:

from a cosmopolitan point of view it is a little belated; but considered at closer range it is not quite the New England of the previous generation, or quite of anybody but Mr. Frost, and it is not a New England of ghosts. Mr. Frost has done something on his own” (609–10).

Touché. What Eliot suggests is that, compared to the great Romantics, English as well as Continental, Frost’s poetry does not exactly represent a breakthrough, but here is a poet who does have a voice of his own; his New England is one he has constructed—no mean feat—whereas a poem like *Idylls of the King* (and Eliot is not afraid to attack the British canon) “sounds often like Tennyson talking to Queen Victoria in heaven.”

Eliot the reviewer is certainly having fun. What is most remarkable about these early reviews is not their erudition, which is very impressive, nor their stringency, nor even their remarkable wit. Rather it is their display of Eliot’s very good sense—what he called in his essay on Andrew Marvell “the tough reasonableness behind the slight lyric grace” (II, 310). As a young man, he was, in many ways, a Yankee pragmatist.

Take the delightful piece “The Borderline of Prose,” published in *The New Statesman*. In World War I England, there was evidently much outcry against the “Prose-Poem,” with mainstream critics desecrating the “new” genre as decadent. Eliot refuses to engage in discussions about the difference between poetry and prose—a topic he considers fit only for “school debating societies”:

There are doubtless many empirical generalizations which one may draw from a study of existing poetry and prose, but after much reflection I conclude that the only absolute distinction to be drawn is that poetry is written in verse and prose is written in prose; or, in other words, that there is prose rhythm and verse rhythm. (538)

Aha, thinks the unwary reader, the conservative Eliot is dismissing the prose poem as not quite poetry. But, no, he immediately steps back and reminds us that “the

prose poetry of [the Nineties] was probably based upon the work of a man much greater than any poet then living—and that is Arthur Rimbaud”:

Few people in England have heard of the *Illuminations*, and most of them perhaps believe that the title indicates a supposed divine insight, instead of meaning simply “Picture-book illustrations.” Rimbaud, who I suspect is responsible for everything that is good in Verlaine, wrote his prose poems between 1872 and 1875. They are short prose pieces, as obscure as *Kubla Khan* or *Christabel* and of a similar inspiration. They are amazingly convincing, and their prose is good French prose. Their curious precision, their perfect cogency in the choice and juxtaposition of images, their evident sincerity (as if rising immediately and unreflectingly from the core of the man’s feeling), these qualities give them a position unique in French literature, and in English nearer to Coleridge and Blake than to anyone else. Beside the prose of Rimbaud, the laboured opacity of Mallarmé fades colourless and dead. (538)

That last sentence is vintage Tom playing the bad boy, daring to thumb his nose at the French poet the Symbolists of the Yellow Nineties had worshipped. We know that, in fact, Eliot was a great admirer of Mallarmé. But, when it comes to the prose poem, Rimbaud is the great innovator, just as he is a stronger poet than Verlaine. Indeed, it doesn’t matter whether we classify the *Illuminations* as “prose poetry” or claim that Rimbaud’s rhythm is “poetic.” The fact is that these “short prose pieces”—call them what you like—are great works of art; that Rimbaud’s sequence holds a “position unique in French literature.” The comparison to Coleridge and Blake seems just right. As for that “borderline of prose,” Eliot concludes:

The *Illuminations* attain their effect by an instant and simple impression, a unity all the more convincing because of the apparent incongruity of images. They find their proper expression in prose because they seem to have come to their author in that form; and Dante is not “prosaic,” nor would Rimbaud be more “poetic” if he had put his visions into verse. (539)

The approach, eminently practical, is that of a working poet who refuses to classify or to make large generalizations. Is there such a thing as the prose poem? Maybe not, but Rimbaud wrote some wonderful ones.

Annie Dunn

Schuchard continued from page 2

influence on young Tom may be underestimated. She may have been the inspirational spirit behind his eventual visits to the Paris churches of Saint-Sulpice and La Madeleine and his recorded study of Italian cathedrals during his 1910–11 year abroad.⁴

In the mid-1940s, when Eliot’s friend Janet Adam Smith, wife of Michael Roberts, wrote to Eliot to report that her son Edward Adam Roberts, Eliot’s godson, had enjoyed being taken to the Catholic Church by his nanny, Mrs. Logan, the letter triggered again “the intensity of early impressions”: “My nanny,” he replied,

(when I was at an age when a nanny, especially to the much-the-youngest child of a large family, is more important than anybody else) was an Irish girl from County Cork, and I was devoted to her—she sometimes took me into the local Catholic Church when she went to say her prayers, and I liked it very much: the lights, the coloured statues and paper flowers, the lived-in atmosphere, and the fact that the pews had little gates that I could swing on.⁵

The recurrence of such positive reminiscences over many years suggests that Annie played a significant role in shaping Eliot’s Catholic sensibility at an early age, especially when memories of the First Cause and impressionable visits to Annie’s church are set against the indifferent memories of his Unitarian upbringing. In 1927, in correspondence with Reverend William Force Stead about baptism and confirmation in the process of conversion, Eliot wrote with mocking uncertainty: “There is a form of baptism, a ritual with water, in Unitarianism. I cannot of course swear that I was baptised! I don’t remember—is a certificate needed? . . . By the way, Unitarians have a kind of Communion Service—once a month, also. I never communicated; my parents did, regularly; but they did not bother about me.”⁶ After Stead informed Eliot that it was necessary

⁴ See Nancy D. Hargrove, “T. S. Eliot’s Italian Trip, Summer 1911,” *South Atlantic Review*, 76.3 (Summer 2011), 7–32.

⁵ See Janet Adam Smith, “Tom Possum and the Roberts Family,” *Southern Review*, 21 (October 1985), 1060.

⁶ *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, Vol. 3: 1926–1927, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), 412; hereafter abbreviated L3.

for him to be baptized in the name of the Trinity, which could not be expected in the Unitarian Church, Stead performed the sacrament himself (L3 428). In 1931, not long after relating that he accompanied Annie for her Catholic devotions, he measured his distance from his Unitarian background by criticizing D. H. Lawrence, John Middleton Murry, and Aldous Huxley for “using the terminology of Christian faith to set forth some philosophy or religion which is fundamentally non-Christian or anti-Christian”:

Perhaps if I had been brought up in the shadowy Protestant underworld within which they all seem gracefully to move, I might have more sympathy and understanding; I was brought up outside the Christian Fold, in Unitarianism; and in the form of Unitarianism in which I was instructed, things were either black or white. The Son and the Holy Ghost were not believed in, certainly; but they were entitled to respect as entities in which many other people believed, and they were not to be employed as convenient phrases to embody any cloudy private religion. I mention this autobiographical detail simply to indicate that it is possible for unbelievers as well as believers to consider this sort of loose talk to be, at the best, in bad taste.⁷

Eliot’s conflicted reflections on his religious background during and after his conversion are clearly torn between conveying his rich association with the Catholicism and devotional life of Annie Dunn and his feeling of spiritual poverty in being brought up “outside the Christian Fold” in his family religion.

Thus, Annie’s presence in the prose and letters, and even in an unpublished poem, perhaps,⁸ necessitated a literary and editorial pilgrimage: we had to get her dated, familial, placed. During the Eliot Society meeting of September 1912, I asked our St. Louis historian Melanie Fathman for advice and assistance and renewed my subscription to archives.com. We discovered that there were numerous Annie or Anna Dunns in the St. Louis area at the turn of the century; moreover, we had no dates or places of birth and death. But through a succession

⁷ See Eliot’s review of John Middleton Murry’s *Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence*, *Criterion*, 10 (July 1931), 771–72.

⁸ In the undated manuscript of an unpublished poem in the Butler Library, Columbia University, Eliot wrote a verse about unruly Jim Jum Bears who practiced tricks to try the patience of their nurse: “Was ever a Nurse so put about?”

of US census reports and death certificates we found a likely suspect: Anna E. Dunn, who died in Overland, Missouri, 13 miles from St. Louis, at age 81 on February 25, 1946. She was the daughter of Irish emigrants John and Hannah (née Sullivan) Henry, born on 6 August 1864, the widow of Thomas F. Dunn since 1914, and the mother of six children; the death certificate stated that she was buried in Calvary Cemetery, St. Louis. We determined to expand and refine our research prior to visiting the cemetery during the next Society meeting in 2013.



Tony Cuda, Ron Schuchard, Melanie Fathman, and John Morgenstern

On the basis of Eliot’s description of the location of the church, Melanie unearthed a Compton and Dry pictorial map and topographical survey (1875, plate #53) showing the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, a small frame structure on the SE corner of Jefferson Street and Lucas Avenue (now Locust Street), built in 1870 with a capacity of 300, closed by Archbishop John Joseph Kain in 1902, and later pulled down. The 1900 US census showed that Thomas Dunn (b. 1862), a telegraph operator, and Annie Dunn, a housewife, lived at 186 Evans Avenue, in the heart of the “Kerry Patch,” a working-class area where most of the early Irish settled. Both were born in Missouri of Irish parents who

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emigrated to the US before 1860, sometime after the great potato famine of 1845–52. The couple had six surviving children at home: John (b. 1884); Norine (b. 1886); James (b. 1887); Edith (b. 1889); Helen (b. 1891), and Thomas (b. 1894), with Eliot born right in the middle of them (1888). Annie would have been about thirty when she became his nursemaid, and she probably catechized him as one of her own. After her husband died in 1914, she lived with family members and never remarried.

After discovering the cemetery section (21) in which Anna E. Dunn was buried, Melanie and I broke away after the close of the Society's Sunday program in September 2013 to search for the grave. For reasons of social status and racism in St. Louis, Melanie was surprised that Annie would be buried in Calvary Cemetery; when we arrived at the two-acre section we expected to find no more than a ground-level

headstone, certainly no substantial monument; after an hour of futile searching, we had to leave, defeated; the office was closed; try again next year.

So, on Sunday, September 21, 2014, in the airport-bound company of John Morgenstern, Tony Cuda, and Aakanksha Virkar-Yates, and armed with a detailed map with section and plot numbers, Melanie turned off the freeway into Calvary Cemetery, following the winding pavement and signs to plot 1243, on the left toward the end of The Way of the Annunciation. We spread out, eyes down for headstones, except for Tony, the first to look up at a large red granite tombstone, carved in large letters, DUNN, and yell "There she is!" It was indeed the family gravesite of Annie and Thomas Dunn, together with four of their children and three other family members. Pilgrimage accomplished! Celebratory shouts and cell phone photos! A long note for Eliot's Annie: requiescat in pace!

REVIEWS

Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres.* University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Reviewed by T. Austin Graham
Columbia University

Generations of readers have tried to heed Eliot's well-known advice to approach poems "primarily as poetry and not as another thing." But that becomes much harder to do when a poem seems to want to be another thing. Can a blues verse by Langston Hughes be understood "primarily as poetry"? What about a portrait poem by D. G. Rossetti? Don't cross-generic, multi-formal literary experiments threaten the very ideas of genre and form?

Jahan Ramazani's *Poetry and Its Others* makes a strong case that they do not. Quite the opposite, in fact. Ramazani's book is a story about literary mongrels: it surveys a large company of poems as they invoke,

emulate, or draw upon modes of writing that tend to be associated with extraliterary fields like journalism, music, and the law. At least at first glance, such poems can seem to teeter on "the verge of self-extinction," and Ramazani reveals that he began his book with the intention of writing a study of "nonpoetry, parapoetry, even antipoetry" (12). But the more time he spent with poets who had lingered in the aesthetic borderlands, the more he came to appreciate how consistently and powerfully committed they were to poetry as such. Indeed, he writes, intergeneric poems tend to flaunt their "specificities as poetry" at the same time that they flee poetry's conventions, and we gain a great deal of insight "into what poetry is, or at least what it understands itself to be, by examining closely its interplay with what it is not" (12, 16).

The introduction to *Poetry and Its Others* explores foundational questions about what differentiates poetry from the rest of the arts, and it takes special care to correct Mikhail Bakhtin's influential claim in *The Dialogic Imagination* that poems, unlike novels, speak in pure, monologic voices. From there, Ramazani studies an almost dizzying array of twentieth- and twenty-first-century poets as they cross any number of boundaries, especially those suggested by the book's

chapter titles: “Poetry and the News,” “Poetry and Prayer,” “Poetry and Song.” In all cases, poems are shown to be part of a literary tradition that “feasts on, digests, and metabolizes linguistic forms” (7), and the literary examples Ramazani discusses are all diverse, multiply-voiced affairs. Yet *Poetry and Its Others* is also distinguished by an admirable particularity, whether in reading poems closely or in laying out the conventions of nonliterary styles of writing.

The results of Ramazani’s comparative analyses are often counterintuitive and surprising. In his section on “Poetry and the News,” for instance, he shows how a poem that might appear to be exclusively concerned with a current event can be understood as something very different, as a “thicket of long-remembered aesthetic structures that entwine the news with alternative temporalities” (71). Any number of public-minded poets have set out to memorialize, say, the Easter Rising of 1916 or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and yet the resulting artworks often float about in time, situating present acts of violence within much longer historical vistas. As for the musical poets Ramazani studies, they might sample or quote from popular songs in one moment, but then work to resist those imported sounds in the next: paradoxically, the most tuneful poems are often ones that yearn for the silence of the literary.

A poem, Ramazani argues, can often be thought of as an “open system” that faces “both inward and outward,” (8, 7) and one could say much the same thing about *Poetry and Its Others* itself. Rather than limit itself to a particular coterie of authors, a single national tradition, or a narrowly defined historical period, *Poetry and Its Others* is a wide-ranging affair that travels throughout the English-speaking world and is as engaged with the contemporary as it is with the established canon. This diversity will not surprise a reader of Ramazani’s previous books, most recently *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), but it is singularly appropriate for a study of aesthetic cross-fertilization and hybridity. By taking broad, intergeneric dynamics as his subject, Ramazani is free not only to study multiple discourses, but also to consider how those discourses have evolved over time and in different places: the relation of “Poetry and the News” changes when we leave newspaper days behind for the Internet era, while the Georgia folksongs of Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923) do rather different work than the “world muzak” compositions of Cathy Hong’s *Dance Dance Revolution* (2007). Marrying methodology and content, *Poetry and Its Others* becomes the rich and varied thing it sets out to consider.

Poetry and Its Others will be of particular interest to readers of Eliot, for he emerges here as both an example of open poetics and a theorist of it. The “Poetry and Prayer” section gives Eliot his fullest treatment, arguing that the religious inflections of his verse did not change quite so dramatically after his 1927 conversion as has generally been assumed. The younger Eliot, Ramazani writes, was a “bricoleur” (145) whose early work “draws on the ritual energies of prayer while immobilizing them in an icy reserve” (144). Some critics have found blasphemy in his pre-1927 tendency to treat prayer as a “discourse that can be understood and practiced only as one among the many” (146), and they have believed later works like *Four Quartets* to be more sincerely devotional, “prayers tout court” (152). But Ramazani still detects “theological and tonal fissures” (150) in Eliot’s later writing, which unites the work of prayer and the work of poetry but declines to do so seamlessly. In these “almost-prayers” (152), and in many other moments of *Poetry and Its Others*, an artist considers what it might mean to write “another thing,” but his allegiance to poetry “as poetry” remains.

Bequest from Eliot’s Library to Magdalene College, Cambridge

By M. E. J. Hughes

Director of English Studies and Pepys Librarian,
Magdalene College, Cambridge

T. S. Eliot enjoyed a long relationship with Magdalene College, Cambridge, and he numbered several fellows among his personal friends—notably the famous literary critic I. A. Richards and his wife Dorothea (the mountaineer Dorothy Pilley), and the First World War ace Francis Turner. Over the years, Eliot preached in the Magdalene College Chapel, was seen a little worse for drink at an annual Samuel Pepys Commemorative Dinner, and became an honorary fellow. In a famous line of succession from Hardy and Kipling, he was elected to the honorary fellowship on April 29, 1939. (Later incumbents were Benjamin Britten, Seamus Heaney, and, the present holder, the UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy.)

Two years later Eliot wrote to Turner, then the Pepys Librarian, asking whether the College would like to have some manuscripts of his latest poems (“my prose is not worth bothering about”). Earlier materials

had gone to the Bodleian and to Eliot House at Harvard. Manuscripts, typescripts, and marked-up proofs of *The Dry Salvages* were later joined by those of *Little Gidding*, and these are now housed in the Magdalene Old Library collection. Eliot charmingly thanked the College for accepting the manuscripts, thus reducing the volume of “national pulp.” His splendid Nobel Prize diploma (1948), designed by Bertha Svensson, followed. In late 2013, the collection was further enhanced by a very generous legacy from the late Mrs. Valerie Eliot.



Peeps Library, Magdalene College

The Valerie Eliot bequest comprises 368 books, most of which were owned by Eliot or given in his lifetime by him to his wife. Mrs. Eliot herself also made a point of collecting foreign editions of her husband’s work. Many of the volumes that arrived in Magdalene in 2013 are translations of Eliot’s writings: the collection includes 215 books and items from journals in 32 different languages apart from English.

A small number of the books are annotated, and perhaps the most interesting of these are various volumes of philosophy by F. H. Bradley and his pupil Harold Joachim (one of Eliot’s tutors at Merton College, Oxford), dating back to the time before the Great War when Eliot was working on his doctoral dissertation *Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. A copy of *The Nature of Truth* by Joachim (signed by the author) is inscribed, obviously at a much later time: “I believe I bought this copy while at Harvard writing my thesis for the PhD, and took it to Oxford with me in 1914.” There are several passages in Joachim’s essay that have been underlined in pencil

or indicated for attention by marginal lines. More substantial marginal annotations are to be found in a copy of Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*. Completed, passed, but not awarded (the author did not attend to defend his thesis), Eliot’s doctoral dissertation examined Bradley’s theories of perception, signaling for many commentators an intellectual movement away from Bergsonian influences. Christopher Ricks (in *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*) has produced a masterful exposition of the influence of Eliot’s research on his subsequent poetry: the thoughtful annotations now found in the Magdalene copy of Bradley—in which Eliot struggles with ideas of time, experience, and perception—substantially reinforce Ricks’s account of the importance of the earlier philosopher. Recent discussions of the relative importance of Bergson and Bradley to Eliot (as in Paul Douglas’s *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature*) show how central the poet’s readings and formal study in these early years still prove to be. The annotations contribute a peculiarly immediate and intriguing slant to this undertaking.

There are some further gems. The first edition of *Prufrock and Other Observations* is a highlight of the bequest. It was, of course, Eliot’s first published work, printed in 1917 by *The Egoist* magazine in a limited print run of 500 copies. The inscription on the title page reveals that Eliot may not have owned a first edition of *Prufrock* before he was given this one as a gift in 1958 by a Mr. Skinner, very possibly Aubrey E. Skinner, the librarian and Eliot scholar at the University of Texas.

As well as items of scholarly interest, there are many touching aspects to the bequest, with volumes that evoke a real sense of Eliot the man. In particular, several of the books are inscribed by Eliot to his wife in highly affectionate and personal terms; it is a privilege for those of us working on the collection to see the humor, love, and individuality of the relationship revealed in these brief sentences.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Eliot’s death and the arrival of the Valerie Eliot bequest, the College mounted an exhibition curated by the Peeps Librarian (Dr. M. E. J. Hughes) and by the Archivist (Dr. Ronald Hyam) in January 2015. A list of books in the bequest, revising and extending the list provided by the executors, has been prepared by the Deputy Librarian (Miss Catherine Sutherland) and is available on request or by following the link on the library’s website (www.magd.cam.ac.uk), where essential information for scholars and visitors to the historic libraries of Magdalene may also be found.

Compiled by David Chinitz

TSE, the father of rap. Flushed with excitement over the London revival of *Cats*, Andrew Lloyd Webber has shaken up existing histories of contemporary culture with this observation: “I came to the conclusion, having read Eliot again, that maybe he was the inventor of rap.” As evidence, he cites the opening lines of “The Rum Tum Tugger,” thereby refuting at a stroke the prevailing theory that hip-hop music originated in inner-city African American communities (*The Independent*, January 12, 2015). The composer’s epiphany may also explain the existence of an American hip-hop artist named Lloyd Banks.

TSE, the father of hipsterism. Not to be outdone, Professor Karen Swallow Prior (English Department, Liberty University) argues that Eliot articulated the sensibility of contemporary “hipsters” a century in advance. “An embodiment of turn-of-the-century angst wrought by a world sucked dry by skepticism, cynicism, and industrialism,” she writes, “Prufrock bears striking similarities to a subculture of mostly white, urban, detached-yet-sensitive young adults at the cusp of our own century. One might say Eliot invented the hipster” (*The Atlantic*, January 4, 2015). Readers may judge for themselves.

“The Strange Case of *Cats*.” The American playwright Sarah Ruhl writes: “If we were contemporary Aristotles, trying to make generalizations about the nature of drama from contemporary successful works, we would deduce a poetics from *Cats* that eschewed reversal, recognition, and the tragic flaw, in favor of cat makeup, bodysuits, and feline leg warmers. . . . One can imagine T. S. Eliot in the afterlife being punished for his sins, watching a DVD of *Cats* over and over again, projected onto some large cloud. Perhaps he would be moved to revise his dictum that he preferred to give pleasure to the one intelligent person in the audience who understood his intentions and in the afterlife become a man of the people. We cannot say with any certainty. We know only that he would be puzzled by the leg warmers” (*100 Essays I Don’t Have Time to Write* (2014): 128–29). [Ed. note—The “dictum” Ruhl attributes to Eliot is not his.]

Vacant interstellar spaces I. After a columnist complained that the movie *Interstellar* “requires a 324-page book to explicate it,” Louis Phillips of Manhattan wrote to the *New York Times*: “I believe a similar problem cropped up in 1922 when a 434-line poem—*The Waste Land*, by T. S. Eliot—upset many readers who asked: ‘What kind of a poem needs endnotes to explain it?’” (November 24, 2014).

Vacant interstellar spaces II. Eliot’s *Selected Poems* actually makes an appearance in the film as one of the books that Murph’s “ghost” knocks off her bookcase. (It looks like the 2009 “Faber 80th Anniversary Edition.”) Director Christopher Nolan explains: “Concepts of time and space at their most complex are sometimes best expressed through art rather than science. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* are as thought-provoking about time as any scientific text” (“9 Easter Eggs From the Bookshelf in *Interstellar*,” *Wired* November 17, 2014). Of course the *Quartets* are not included in *Selected Poems*, but one can’t have everything.

Tom à l’orange. In season 2, episode 3 of *Orange Is the New Black*, two characters are having a conversation in the prison library. As Officer John Bennett secretly speaks with inmate Dayanara Diaz through an opening in a bookcase (ca. 16:50), the 1974 biography *Great Tom: Notes Towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot*, by T. S. Matthews, can be seen clearly on the shelf to Bennett’s right.

Šanti, Šanti, Šanti. Ted Willoughby Kulp, a Toronto-based sometime politician, provocateur, and linguistic reformer, has recently published—i.e., photocopied and mailed to unsuspecting recipients—an 86-line abridgement and translation of *The Waste Land* into Kanadio, his invented language. Sample: “Wat ar el ruttēs dhāt clûc, / Wat brāncēs gro aut ūv dhis stonnik rubbish? / Son ūv man, you kân not say, or ges.” He has added some original touches, including an expansion of Eliot’s “Falling taurri” to include “Nu-York, Torronto, [and] Kalkutta.” The “Kûlp-Wastlând,” he declares, is nothing less than “el poem del senturi.”

Lyndall Gordon Awarded Honorary Membership

The Board of Directors of the T. S. Eliot Society is pleased to announce our election of Lyndall Gordon as an Honorary Member, to recognize distinguished service in perpetuating the memory of the poet and knowledge of his work. Author of *Eliot's Early Years* (1971), *Eliot's New Life* (1988), and a combined and updated biography, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (1999), Gordon has also authored five other biographies and two memoirs. Jewel Spears Brooker writes, "She is not only a wonderful writer, but an incisive and charming lecturer, whose presentations have deepened our understanding of Eliot's poetry, particularly the *Quartets*."

T. S. Eliot International Summer School

The seventh annual T. S. International Summer School will convene in Bloomsbury, at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, from 11-19 July 2015, beginning with an opening address by the poet Craig Raine. Founded by Ron Schuchard and now under the direction of Gail McDonald, the School will continue its tradition of lectures; seminars; visits to Little Gidding, Burnt Norton, and East Coker; poetry readings; walking tours of London; and social events. The School welcomes people of all ages and nations who wish to immerse themselves in study of T. S. Eliot and his time.

The 2015 academic program features lectures and seminars by distinguished Eliot scholars from the US, Italy, and the UK, including McDonald and Schuchard, Massimo Bacigalupo, Michael Coyle, Robert Crawford, Nancy Gish, Lyndall Gordon, Jason Harding, Nancy Hargrove (and guest appearance of Guy Hargrove in "T. S. Eliot and Popular Music"), Michael Levenson, John Paul Riquelme, Vince Sherry, and Wim Van Mierlo. This year marks the first time in the School's history when a former student of the School, Joanna Rzepa, returns as a presenter. Sinéad Morrissey, winner of the 2013 T. S. Eliot Prize for her book *Parallax*, will give a reading at a special evening event in the London Library. In addition to the academic program and trips to three locations of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, faculty and students have many opportunities for informal conversation and

conviviality, at teas, lunches, and evening gatherings in the Lamb, a Bloomsbury pub.

Students of all educational and national backgrounds are welcome to attend the School. A limited number of bursaries (tuition waivers) and partial bursaries are available for deserving students who could not attend without some financial support. For further information about tuition, fees, and accommodation, visit the website at <http://ies.sas.ac.uk>.

Eliot Studies Annual

Clemson University Press is pleased to invite essay submissions to *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual*, to be published each year starting in 2016 to coincide with the annual meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society. *The Annual* aims to be the leading venue for the critical reassessment of the poet's life and works in light of the ongoing publication of his complete letters, critical editions of his complete prose, and forthcoming volumes of his complete poetry and drama.

The *Annual's* advisory board is comprised of Ronald Bush, David Chinitz, Anthony Cuda, Robert Crawford, Frances Dickey, John Haffenden, Benjamin G. Lockerd, Gail McDonald, Gabrielle McIntire, Jahan Ramazani, Christopher Ricks, Ronald Schuchard, and Vincent Sherry.

For further information, or to submit an article for consideration, please contact John Morgenstern, general editor, at tseannual@clemson.edu. Submissions should be styled according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition) and follow Merriam-Webster's current edition for spelling. All submissions must be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 300 words by December 1, 2015, for consideration in the first volume.

CFP: South Atlantic MLA

T. S. Eliot and the Arts

The Eliot Society will be sponsoring a panel at the SAMLA conference in Durham, NC, November 13-15, 2015. This panel welcomes papers concerned with the life and works of T. S. Eliot. Paper proposals addressing Eliot's many-sided engagement with the extraliterary arts, the SAMLA 87 theme, are especially welcome. By June 1, please submit a 250-word abstract, brief bio, and A/V requirements to John Morgenstern, Clemson University, at jmorgen@clemson.edu.

Publications by Members

Amélie Ducroux has published a new book on Eliot, *La Relation et l'absolu: lecture de la poésie de T. S. Eliot* (Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014).

David Moody's *Ezra Pound: Poet. A Portrait of the Man & His Work, Vol. ii. The Epic Years 1921–1939* was released from Oxford University Press in 2014.

Mariwan N. Hasan Barzinji, writing in from Iraq, announces the publication of her book, *The Image of Modern Man in T. S. Eliot's Poetry* (2012), available on Amazon.

Two articles by **Dominic Griffiths**: “The poet as ‘worldmaker’: T. S. Eliot and the religious imagination,” in Francesca Knox & David Lonsdale, eds., *The Power of the Word: Poetry and the Religious Imagination* (Ashgate, 2015): 161–75; and “Looking into the Heart of Light: Considering the Poetic Event in the Work of T. S. Eliot and Martin Heidegger” in *Philosophy and Literature* 38.2 (2014): 350–67.

John Tamilio III delivered a lecture at the Boston Athenaeum on March 18, 2015 entitled “The Experience of Reading T. S. Eliot as an Interpretive Strategy.” Also, his article “Eliot on Eastern Point: Gloucester’s Land and Sea Once Inspired the Poet” appeared in the April 2015 edition of *North Shore Magazine* (15.3): 106–112.

Society Notes

Congratulations to **Maggie Greaves**, who will be joining the English department at Skidmore College as an assistant professor of poetry and poetics in the fall, and to **Julia Daniel**, who has accepted a position as assistant professor of modern American poetry and drama at Baylor University. (In a season with only two jobs in modern poetry, this is big news!)

Please send news to the editor at:
tseliotssociety@gmail.com

REVIEWS

Omri Moses, *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life*. Stanford University Press, 2014.

Reviewed by Corey Latta
Visible Music College, Memphis

Writing to challenge the idea that morality necessitates faithful adherence to a fixed belief system, Omri Moses explores the dynamic depictions of morality in the works of Henry James, Gertrude Stein, and T. S. Eliot. Moses argues that the works of philosophers Henri Bergson, William James, and Friedrich Nietzsche catalyzed a shift in literary characterization in the early twentieth century from religiously grounded assumptions of behavior to a dynamic notion of self that evolves with changing social contexts. These vitalist philosophers transformed

perceptions of selfhood, prompting Eliot and his contemporaries to experiment with new iterations of characterization, relationality, and communal living.

Moses sees Eliot’s presentation of character as a self-affirming expression culled from years of engagement with Bergsonian vitalism and later with F. H. Bradley’s idealist theories of personality. As Moses insists, the self is both an intentional subject of judgment and an object of interpretation. To strike such a balance, to make character a shifting socio-textual adjustment between authorial product and interpretive construction, Eliot must extend reality, an idea about which he wrote in his doctoral dissertation, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. Eliot’s characters extend beyond fixed selfhood into a community of conflicting, interrelating, and cohering perspectives.

Moses usefully discusses Eliot’s engagement with vitalist philosophy in chronological order, first Bergson and then Bradley. From Bergson, Eliot gleaned notions of a complexly evolving consciousness. For Bergson, and so, for Eliot, the self maintains a frozen surface that hides the continual flux of life’s animated states. For

Bergson, there is no finality to the self's flux. Ironically, Eliot would eventually turn from Bergson's ideas because they bore no marks of a final reality. Moses contends that Eliot's relationship with Bergson needs rethinking because of the poet's complex acceptance and subsequent dismissal of the philosopher's thinking. In his drift away from Bergson and toward Bradley, Eliot maintained an attraction to the idea of making philosophical truth, not necessarily finding it. In the creation of truth, character could evolve into dynamic iterations in vitalist community with other emotional selves.

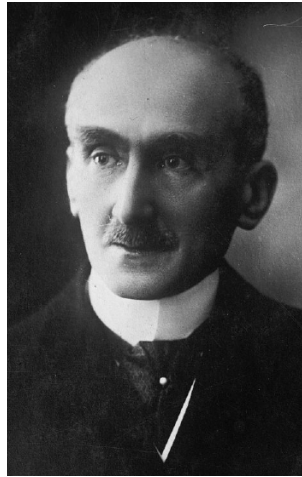
Eliot's presentation of emotional perspective through contextually constructed character—Eliot's primary purpose in characterization, according to Moses—eventually takes on a Bradleyan shape. As with his discussion of Bergsonian vitalism, Moses does a rather convincing job of showing Eliot's absorption of Bradley's impersonality, a theory that establishes the primacy of individual perspective by situating the self in wider, more diverse contexts. When the acquisition of knowledge or exposure to new experience enlarges an individual's perspective, dependence on internal consistency and fixed frameworks of character lessens and the self evolves. Eliot's characters, such as the incomparable Prufrock, give voice to other voices, each creating a layered texture of character leading to a more vivid impression of reality. Although Eliot hadn't read Bradley until after beginning *Prufrock*, Moses observes that the poet's notion of individual perspective in constructing character had already started to manifest along Bradleyan lines in the poem. The nature of character in Eliot's ironic "love song" is not that Prufrock collects too many voices but too few. His overgeneralization of the chattering women and his self-enclosed monologue prevent Prufrock from actualizing reality as constructed by the poem's social constellation of characters.

It is at this level of social awareness, Moses posits, that Eliot valued Bradley most. Unlike Bergson, Bradley's vitalism revealed itself in social sensibility, an ability to account for the social value

of several contexts in which individual perspectives combine to create a sum greater than their parts. In this way, and from both Bergson's evolution of consciousness and Bradley's impersonal perspective, Eliot constructs characters that operate in various contexts, and thus are able to oscillate between other selves in the relational flux of social life. Moses rather ambitiously concludes that for Eliot, personality is illusory, produced by perspective when context is abandoned for some sense of objectivity. Defining characters by fixed properties when placed against the tones of personality, then, proves unrealistic in literature as well as in Eliot's own modern world.

While Moses insightfully converses with Eliot's theoretical essays—for example, his treatment of Eliot's use of voice in varied contextualization in "The Three Voices of Poetry"—his adeptness lies in his close reading of Eliot's verse. Perhaps one example will suffice. In his reading of "Prufrock," Moses notes that the speaker's inner monologue exists with the voices of others in the room, gaining Prufrock an audience by which he better knows himself: "We have lingered in the changes of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown / Till human voices wake us, and we drown." Not only does Moses detect a Bergsonian vitalism in the speaker's voice, an acceptance of change as the agent of self-realization, but, he argues, Prufrock subscribes to a Bradleyan reality principle, a reminder of human relationality.

This interplay between Prufrock's voice and those of the women in the room defies the idea that characterization springs from static origins, such as inner consistent belief in moral integrity. Prufrock's case shows that for Eliot, character coalesces in the context of other characters. Indeed, the traditional creative notion of constructing a character from a commitment to the fixity of internal consistency—a most "out of character" notion for early modernist authors writing under the influence of dynamic philosophical thinkers—gives way to the realistic dynamism of contextualization and to the vivacity of selfhood.



Henri Bergson



F. H. Bradley

The Little Spaniel Theatre's Adaptation of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

Reviewed by Hussain Azam
University of St. Andrews

Watching the Little Spaniel Theatre's adaptation of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was an electrifying experience. The play ran from May 16 until June 14, 2014 at the Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great, one of the most striking medieval cathedrals in London. This young company, founded in 2009, skillfully portrayed the tension between the metaphysical questions of faith and self-sacrifice embodied in Eliot's play about the murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, who met a gruesome death in Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170 at the hands of the king's knights.

Commissioned for the 1935 Canterbury Festival, *Murder in the Cathedral* was first performed at the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral, the site of Becket's demise. Staging this play at St Barts gave the production a similar sense of authenticity. However, the play was performed at the altar and in the aisle of St Barts, where acoustics can vary uncomfortably depending on the relative position between performers and audience members.

Nevertheless, Claire Monique Martin brilliantly directed the chorus (Ava Amande, Cristina Basche, Clare Brice, Anna Buckland and Eluned Hawkins,

and Martin herself as lead), which represents the plight of the people of Canterbury. This group widely varied in their ages, and the dialogues were thoughtfully distributed among them. The performance reached its most effective scenes in moments like Becket's (Martin Aukland) powerfully delivered final speech, followed by the enchanting singing of the lead singer and the chorus.

The Little Spaniel Theatre has only staged three plays as yet, with a series of Elizabethan dramas lined up to be performed this summer. In choosing *Murder in the Cathedral*, the company promisingly demonstrated that it can bring together drama, history, and poetry with the thrill of a good murder plot.



Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I am the last person to dispute John Worthen's statement that "Moody is not always right" (review of Carl Krockel's *War Trauma and English Modernism: T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence*, *Time Present* Summer 2014, 7). Getting things right does matter, even small details when large arguments are erected upon them by third parties. So let's get this small detail right. First, I did not in fact write that the "man in mocha brown" in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" is "probably"

a soldier returned from the war. What I wrote was that "there is reason to suppose" that he is, and this on the basis of the pattern of allusions in the poem (*Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, 64). Second, in response to my adding after that, "Mocha brown could be a shade of khaki," Worthen protests, "But khaki was never mocha brown." He should take that up with my authority, given in a note: Brigadier Peter Young, editor of Purnell's *History of the First World War*.

~ A. David Moody

T. S. Eliot Society Annual Meeting in St. Louis, September 2014

Dismantled Modernity: Built Spaces in the Onstage Eliot and Beyond

This paper examines three plays that show a remarkable coherence in their depiction of built spaces: *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), and *The Cocktail Party* (1949). Focusing on descriptions of Canterbury Cathedral, Wishwood Manor, and the doctor's chambers in each, I argue that Eliot metaphorically dismantles them from singular entities into component parts. For instance, the manor develops from a stultifying house to a collection of rooms, doorways, and passages in which old secrets lie hidden. The epiphanic climax of each work hinges upon the central character perceiving these immense structures as piecemeal conglomerations.

A dismantling of the self is at the heart of each play and mirrors the architectural disassemblage. Thomas Becket, Harry Monchensey, and Celia Coplestone are revealed to themselves through their encounter with these buildings. Each realizes that other monoliths like destiny and personality are also constructed in the human consciousness and can be disassembled. True spirituality in Eliot's vision comes with accepting the unfinished nature of human time.

This literary /dramatic trope that relates built spaces with selfhood has important implications for twentieth-century modernity. The latter half of this paper focuses on Eliot's defense of London's disused churches in the 1920s and '30s, showing how his arguments prefigure his dramatic work and are diametrically opposed to concurrent tenets of modernist architecture. Hence, while Le Corbusier called for monumental buildings that expressed the progressive spirit of the twentieth century, Eliot defended the necessity for almost-empty churches. Whereas architecture called for modern buildings designed on the principle of transparency that rejected the dogma of the previous century, Eliot's vision of modernity insisted on including the ephemeral.

This paper ends with two related insights: first,

that Eliot's writings from 1927 onward show he was deeply concerned with the urban everyday. Second, his metaphorical dismantling of buildings parallels that of modernity to include space for the unempirical. Instead of yearning for wholeness, Eliot shows that the modern subject must turn to faith in order to bear the difficult injunction to "not . . . clear your conscience / But to learn how to bear the burden of your conscience" (CP 357).

Ria Banerjee
Guttman Community College, CUNY

Inaccessible Imagination: Eliot's Later Poetic Drama

In a 1950 theater chronicle in *The Partisan Review*, editor William Barrett cites a friend's elated reaction upon seeing Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*: "Isn't it wonderful! It's poetry but you never know it." This strangely absolute meta-knowledge—knowing that you never know it—is for Barrett an "ambiguous compliment" at best. But this response seems a promising way of thinking through the bigger implications and stakes of Eliot's experiments onstage. In other words, attention to how his poetic drama feeds off inaccessibility may help us situate Eliot's later aesthetics with fresh eyes. In particular, it would complement but also recuperate Eliot's dramatic work from staunchly *thematic* readings that have neglected some of the most peculiar and interesting problems of his plays. Here I am not using the term "inaccessibility" as synonyms for "opaque," "difficult," or "elitist," none of which seems at all precise or generative descriptions of Eliot's writing for the theater. Neither am I suggesting that Eliot is allegorically troping a spiritual world that remains beyond the reach of our temporal existence. Instead, I invoke the term "inaccessibility" to illustrate a more literal kind of unrealizability, which can end up generating a unique affective value of its own, as hinted in the opening anecdote. I take up *The Cocktail Party* as an example of Eliot's later work that stages a more complex theory of cognition and recognition than we realize. Strategies of overt transparency—such as the overloading of external information,

the characters' over-eagerness to supply reasons for one another's behavior, the use of extremely plain language throughout, and the totalizing concealment of archetypal allusions—paradoxically create a sense of reflective impenetrability. And it is the theater as public assembly that enables a shared experience of this oddly hermetic world. It is as if Eliot's objective is to make the perception of non-perceptibility possible, but to make this apprehension of alterity an explicitly communal task.

Mary Kim
Stanford University

The Activist's Eliot: Shantih, War, and *The Waste Land*

This paper arises out of an interest in R. S. White's proposition that "war is always a direct threat not only to human beings themselves but also to the Humanities since its function is to undermine the human values and rational methodologies that are at the centre of our disciplines." A sweeping statement of that kind, if taken seriously, necessarily invites consideration of the relationship of any project in the Humanities, any particular avenue of study or object of inquiry, with the business of war, or peace, or both.

The life's work of T. S. Eliot, moreover, might be said to represent a kind of primer course in Humanities, spanning as it does the disciplines of literature, languages, theology, philosophy, classics, even music. If production in the Humanities is fundamentally opposed to what are sometimes called the arts of war, what insights, then, are to be found regarding this opposition in the study of Eliot's unparalleled body of work across the Humanities? What does Eliot's work have to say about the arts of peace? For the purposes of this paper, I will limit the answers to such questions to those that apply to *The Waste Land*, whose origins in a time of war are perhaps the most well-known and consequential in Eliot's oeuvre.

This paper, then, explores what happens to the work of Eliot when enlisted for activist purposes. What resounds, and what is stifled? What is made clearer, and what is distorted? It is in a way a further consideration of ideas I raised in a 2012 paper on Eliot's Coriolanus poems in light of the then clamorous Occupy movement. Fully alive, now as then, to the risks to scholarship attendant upon the movement from ostensible detachment to political engagement,

I nevertheless take up White's provocation and ask how well an implied peaceful imperative might guide a reading of *The Waste Land*.

Patrick Query
US Military College, West Point

A Good Deal of Looking Back: Passionate Aging in T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens

In *Modernism, Memory, and Desire* (2008), Gabrielle McIntire demonstrates how T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf both enfold history and memory into an "intricate hermeneutics and poetics of the past." Moreover, for Eliot, "the act of remembering" involves the "reanimat[ion] [of] earlier desires" and the subjection of "oneself [. . .] to the past through the difficult labor of loving it." But how, my paper asks, does one continue to assay this labor when one also feels the pressures, difficulties, and losses (mental and physical) of old age? In taking McIntire's work on Eliot and Woolf as a point departure, I aim to show how Eliot and Wallace Stevens provide distinct though mutually resonant responses to the problematic relation between reconstructing the past (historical or personal), the reanimation of desire, and the debilitating effects of growing old. Because old men and women recur across Eliot and Stevens, I will limit my remarks—with an occasional critical detour—to "Ash Wednesday" (1930) and a small selection of poems from the latter's final poetic sequence, *The Rock* (1954). This small selection includes "An Old Man Asleep," "Vacancy in the Park," and "To an Old Philosopher in Rome." In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot imagines the exhausting impossibility of laying to rest a life of ambition ("Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?") while also learning to feel out a novel relation between the past and present ("restoring / With a new verse the ancient rhyme"). The late Stevens sequence—at a glance so much barer than his earlier verse—constructs a similar problematic, though it does so by exploring the mundanity, precarity, and sublimity of "a kind of total grandeur at the end." In sketching lines of affinity between these poets, I anticipate a more detailed account of a poetics of lateness in Anglo-American modernism.

Benjamin Hagen
University of Rhode Island

Modern Language Association Meeting in Vancouver, January 2015

Eliot’s Wild(e)ness: Artists as Critics in Dark Dialogue

This commentary on Wilde as an important precursor for Eliot, though one that Eliot was reticent to acknowledge, focuses on dialogue (variously construed) and on specific genealogies of modernism: more than one by Eliot, who largely excludes Wilde, and my own, which does not. By Wild(e)ness I mean a dark quality, an uncivilized, uncivil, untame, savage, gothic, unclassical aspect of significant writings by these two highly cultivated, intellectually refined authors who were also in important ways outsiders. The wildness is Dionysian by contrast with the ostensible serenity of Apollo. I characterize Eliot of the teens and twenties as a surrealist writer working in a genealogy of darkly inflected modernism that flows from Poe through Baudelaire and then from Wilde through Eliot. I identify a generative process of negativity at work in the two writers, one that reveals itself in the form of dialogue, including Wilde’s literary dialogues, the dialogical character of his writing and Eliot’s, and part two of “Little Gidding.” I trace Wilde’s place and his usual absence in the various genealogies of modernism that Eliot presents in his essays, from “A Preface to Modern Literature” (1923) through “Arnold and Pater” and “Baudelaire” (both 1930) to “From Poe to Valery” (1948). I bring out Eliot’s ambivalence concerning a heritage of dark aestheticism self-conscious about the creative process, arguing that in their dialogical writing about art’s coming into being both Wilde and Eliot participate in the dark aesthetic tradition that Eliot distances himself from in “From Poe to Valery.”

Jean-Paul Riquelme
Boston University

“Small theories”: Eliot’s Atomism

British philosophy began the 1890s rooted firmly in the monistic idealism of F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart; it ended the decade deracinated into the pluralistic atomism espoused by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore. If this intellectual seachange can be conceived as analytic philosophy inventing its wheel, we could say that Eliot re-invented it in the 1910s, when he, too, turned to a kind of atomism as recourse over dissatisfaction with Bradley’s Absolute. Many scholars have discussed Eliot’s relations with Russell, and many have connected his dissertation with his poetics. None, however, have assayed the ways in which atomism, one reminiscent of that developed by Russell in the late 1890s, might have been construed as an aesthetic principle for the young Eliot, as well as a philosophical one. In contradistinction to an Absolute, what powers can an atom have? What value can there be in smallness, in specificity, in particularity? Or even: can an atom be beautiful, or poetic? I argue that *Prufrock and Other Observations* and *Poems* (1920) address these questions by exploring the stakes of making small decisions and attending to miniscule details: eating a peach would be the classic example. From that poem, I think also of the “pair of ragged claws”—so much more compelling than the whole, ragged crab. In focalizing small parts and bits and moments, little atoms of experience, Eliot demonstrates a distinctively atomistic aesthetic.

Jeffrey Blevins
U of California, Berkeley

Thanks to Vince Sherry for organizing our 2015 MLA panel on “Eliot and the Fin de Siècle.” Vince also presented a paper, “From the Nineties to the Twenties: A Poetics of Decadence in *Poems* (1920).”

ELECTION OUTCOME

Three candidates received nominations this winter for three positions on the Eliot Society board. Since the election was uncontested, no vote was held. As a result, Vince Sherry will join the board through June 30, 2017. In addition, Nancy Gish and Cyrena Pondrom

will return to their seats on the board through June 30, 2018. Welcome to the board, Vince, and welcome again, Nancy and Cyrena! The Society is grateful for your service.

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ANNOUNCEMENT



Ragged Claws:

T. S. Eliot's "Prufrock" at 100

Amy Lowell Room, Houghton Library

Harvard University

April 6–June 27, 2015

The publication in June 1915 of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was a pivotal event in modern poetry. While many critics dismissed it at the time as unskilled and obscure, "Prufrock" is now acknowledged as the first masterpiece of modernism in English, as well as Eliot's first important publication. In both its themes and technique, "Prufrock" broke sharply with the conventions of Romantic and Georgian poetry.

The exhibition, curated by Carey Adina Karmel, PhD candidate at the University of London, explores the genesis of the poem by way of various manuscript and typescript reproductions, as well as "exploding" the poem by providing materials illustrating Eliot's evocative imagery, such as an authentic magic lantern. The exhibition includes multiple printings of "Prufrock," from its debut in 1915 in *Poetry* magazine to its first independent appearance in book form in 1917, along with books from Eliot's library that provided source material. Events have included a lecture by Sir Christopher Ricks (Editorial Institute, Boston University) on "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock: 'the Muse in a psychopathic ward'" and by Robert Crawford (University of St. Andrews) on "Was T.S. Eliot Ever Young?" For additional information, contact Leslie Morris at Houghton Library, 617-495-2449.

ELIOT CENTENNIALS

The publication of "Prufrock" in June 1915 marked the beginning of an era for Eliot and modern literature. Yet in spring of that year, the poet was at a crossroads. Immersed in Plotinus, Plato, and Aristotle, he was not entirely satisfied with philosophy, writing "my relativism made me see so many sides to questions that I became hopelessly involved, and wrote a thesis perfectly unintelligible to anyone but myself," resolving in his next paper (which he gave to the Moral Science Club at Cambridge in March), to "try to show sufficient reason for attempting to get along without any theory of judgment whatsoever" (*Letters I*, 89). He laments to Conrad Aiken that he can't foresee staying in England ("disgusting food") or returning to Cambridge, Massachusetts ("the nausea of factory whistles at seven and twelve o'clock"): "The great need is to know one's mind, and I don't know that" (96). Over the Christmas holidays and as

often as possible during term, Eliot flees the academic atmosphere of Oxford for the livelier artistic and social scene in London. "There are at least a dozen people whom I like in London, and that is a great deal," he writes to Isabella Stewart Gardner (101). He attends "cubist teas," Vorticist exhibitions (liking Edward Wadsworth particularly), music-halls, the cinema, and dances. To his cousin Eleanor he writes on 24 April: "I have met several English girls, mostly about my own age, and especially two who are very good dancers. . . . As they are emancipated Londoners I have been out to tea or dinner with them several times, and find them quite different from anything I have known at home or here. . . . They are charmingly sophisticated (even 'disillusioned') without being hardened; and I confess to taking great pleasure in seeing women smoke. . . . [they] have such amusing names—I have met two named 'Phyllis'—and one named 'Vivien'" (105).

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