

Time Present

The Newsletter of the T. S. Eliot Society

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2015 T. S. Eliot Society

Annual Meeting
at our website

www.luc.edu/eliot/meeting.htm

Poetry (June 1915)

By Christopher Ricks

The cover of *Poetry* (June 1915) named eight contributors. Their names took markedly different forms. In order of appearance: Ajan Syrian, Arthur Davison Ficke, Bliss Carman, Dorothy Dudley, Georgia Wood Pangborn, William Griffith, Skipwith Cannell, and T. S. Eliot.

The last of these namings is more than distinctive, it is unique.

It is distinguished, first, from the five who muster two names. (Dorothy Dudley, we hear in the notes to contributors, might have featured—à la Mrs. Henry Wood—as Mrs. Henry B. Harvey.) It is distinguished, second, from the couple of contributors who sport three names: a man, whether married or not—Arthur Davison Ficke—and a married woman: Georgia Pangborn, née Wood. True, there are other unique forms of namery here: Ajan Syrian is not exactly his name (the notes on contributors have him as “Ajan Syrian” in inverted commas), and Skipwith Cannell has an accent. But it is T. S. Eliot, upon his initial appearance in a literary world beyond that of school or college, who stands out. Stands there, complete.

He went by many names. During 1915-16 he signed himself not only T. S. Eliot but T. Stearns Eliot, Thomas S. Eliot, and Thomas Stearns Eliot.

Of the other names that figure on the cover, two come twice. The first is that of a woman: “Edited by Harriet Monroe,” “Copyright 1915 by Harriet Monroe.” The second is that of a man, a contributor not to this number of “A Magazine of Verse” but to the tragedy of the Great War: there is a sequence of five poems “To Rupert Brooke,” *Died before the Dardanelles, April, 1915* (shades of Jean Verdenal, “mort aux Dardanelles”). And there are three pages of elegiac ecstasy, “The Death of Rupert Brooke.”

The names of a few of the contributors are not on the cover. Of these, two who are commentators will append solely their initials to their contributions. By convention, these are at once more modest and more proud than names, since initials may represent either subordination or ordination. The pages on the Death of Rupert Brooke, which are announced on the cover, will be initialed H.M., with editorial authority, while those on Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology*, which are not announced on the cover, will duly be initialed A.C.H., combining authority, though less of it, with assistance, more of it: Alice Corbin Henderson, editorial assistant. Relatedly, there will be (not specified on the cover) H.M. on *Some Imagist Poets – An Anthology*, and (likewise) a triple review by A.C.H. on *Antwerp* by Ford Madox Hueffer (whose name is not yet Ford Madox Ford), *Poems* by John Rodker, and *Sing-*

Songs of the War by Maurice Hewlett. So it turns out to be not only all the named contributors—with the notable exception of the last on the cover—who bear first names and surnames. This includes the author of “To Poetry: On Reading the April number in Exile” which appears under “Correspondence”: Eunice Tietjens, a name that when paraded in the immediate neighbourhood of Ford Madox Ford does make one wonder Who Goes There. (Christopher? Sylvia?) But she is Tietjens née Hammond.

Apart from T. S. Eliot, who stands apart, no one—whether writing here, or here written of—comes forward as initials-plus-surname. Granted, there are special cases. Named on the cover is a poet who is written of: “Hark to Sturge Moore.” And there are three appearances by a contributor whose name did not make the cover. To this Jack of Hearts (the only person on the scene missing), we shall return.

The name T. S. Eliot then, and there on the cover, is signal. So, unforgettably, is the title of his poem, given the intriguing name that is its climax and its anti-climax: “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” As with its author, albeit differently, no name in the vicinity takes any such form as this one.

The name Ajan Syrian may prompt a recollection. Eliot in 1959 opened with delectable dryness: “I once wrote a poem called *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. I am convinced that it would never have been called *Love Song* but for a title of Kipling’s that stuck obstinately in my head, *The Love Song of Har Dyal*.”

The title of Eliot’s poem prepares a face, and proceeds

immediately to set it against the plangent propitiations of poesy, that easeful thing. *Poetry* (June 1915) mounted the supremely new—there in Eliot’s inaugurative concluding poem—alongside the good old assurances that poetry can be relied on to supply the poetical. This is clear from all the illuminating discrepancies between

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and the company that it found itself keeping a century ago.

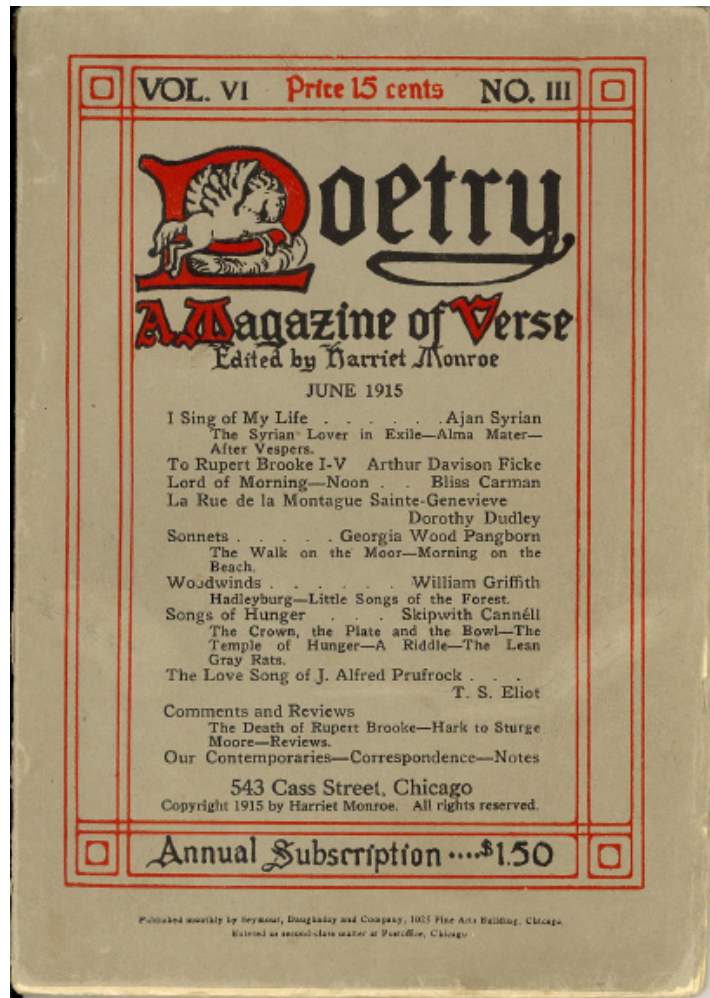
Clear, and all the clearer if we expand the titles from their summary version on the cover to those they actually bear within the magazine. Not “I Sing of My Life,” but “I Sing of My Life While I Live It.” Here there arrives what both is and is not a coincidence: is, because there had been no particular editorial placing of Eliot’s poem in the vicinity of Ajan Syrian’s; is not, because some such sugared “I Sing” was sure to be somewhere there to please current taste, being the poeticality that “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” was up against.

I sing of my life while I live it.

Do you, now? I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

A happy accident, the link that I have forged, happy to be a screen on which a pattern may be cast.

Take the direct though specious appeal, not quite (as the cover has it) of “The Syrian Lover in Exile,” but of the poem fully titled, “The Syrian Lover in Exile Remembers Thee, Light of My Land.” Eliot was and was not remembering the light of his land, was and was not in exile. He registered his suspicions of the poetical register that goes in for remembering *Thee*—he was



Cover of Poetry (June 1915) courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University

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T. S. ELIOT SOCIETY 36TH ANNUAL MEETING

St. Louis, September 25–27, 2015

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Washington U in St. Louis

Board Meeting 9:00–12:00
Coffee Room, 2nd floor, Duncker Hall

Peer Seminar 10:00–12:00
“Prufrock” at 100
Chair: Cassandra Laity, U of Tennessee–Knoxville
No auditors, please

Scholars Seminar 10:00–12:00
Chair: Matthew Seybold, Elmira C
No auditors, please

Lunch ad lib 12:00–1:30

Registration 12:00–1:30
Duncker Hall

President’s Welcome 1:30
Hurst Lounge, Duncker Hall

Opening Lecture 1:45–2:15
Vincent Sherry, Washington U
Eliot and the Great War

Session I 2:30–4:00
Chair: Anita Patterson, Boston U
Suzanne Churchill, Davidson C
Proletarian Prufrock
Annarose Steinke, U of New Mexico
Knowing “The Anguish of the Marrow”: Eliot, Corporeality, and the Modern Rhetoric of Illness
John Tamilio III, Salem State U
Skin Deep: Prufrock and Epidermal Barriers

Memorial Lecture 4:15–5:30
Jed Esty, U of Pennsylvania
Capes and Continents: Eliot’s Frontier and the Rhetoric of Decline

Reception 5:30–6:30

Dinner ad lib

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

The St. Louis Woman’s Club
4600 Lindell Boulevard

Session II 9:00–10:30
Chair: David Chinitz, Loyola U, Chicago
Christopher McVey, Boston U
Critical Scrutiny: Eliot and F.R. Leavis
Kevin Rulo, Catholic U
Satire and the “human engine” of *The Waste Land*
David Huisman, Grand Valley St U
The Waste Land and E. E. Southard’s *Grammar of Delusions*

Session III 10:45–12:15
Chair: John Whittier-Ferguson
Michael Coyle, Colgate U
Eliot’s “Afternoon” in the British Museum
Joon-Soo Bong, Seoul National U
Eliot’s Borders: Europe, America, and Asia
Nancy Hargrove, Mississippi State
Eliot and Asian and African Art in Paris and London, 1910–1911

Society Luncheon 12:30–1:50

Session IV 2:00–3:30
Chair: Chris Buttram, Winona State U
J. C. Marler, St. Louis U
The Philosophical Formation of the Young Artist
J. W. Case, St. Louis U
Eliot, R. G. Collingwood and Alasdair MacIntyre’s Idea of Tradition
Yangsoon Kim, Korea U
Aesthetic Concerns and Ethical Perspectives in Eliot’s Early Work

Cocktails 5:30

Announcements 6:00

Society Dinner 6:30
Home of Tony & Melanie Fathman
4967 Pershing Place

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

First Unitarian Church
5007 Waterman Boulevard

Session V 10:00–11:30
Chair: Tony Cuda, UNC Greensboro
Joshua Richards, Williams Baptist C
Residues of Aristophanic Choric Elements in “The Hollow Men”
Fabio Vericat, U Complutense de Madrid
The American Broadcast of *Murder in the Cathedral* and the Sound of Preaching
Carol Yang, National Chengchi U, Taipei, Taiwan
The Stranger Revisited in Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party*

Eliot Aloud 11:45–12:15
Chair: Julia Daniel, Baylor U

Peer Seminar Members
Joon-Soo Bong, Seoul National U
Elisabeth Daümer, Eastern Mich. U
Nancy Gish, U of Southern Maine
Deborah Leiter-Nyabuti, Clark U
William Malcuit, U of Wisconsin–Washington County
Yvette Mylett, Loyola U Maryland
Jayme Stayer, John Carroll U

Scholars Seminar Members
Hyonbin Choi, U of Wisconsin–Madison
Katherine Hobbs, U of Missouri
Megan Poole, Texas Christian U
Rebecca Rogers, U of Victoria
John Rogers

Poetry (June 1915)

Ricks continued from page 2

leaving behind his Harvard Ode at Commencement (1910), “For the hour that is left us Fair Harvard, with thee.”

He must have pored over the June 1915 number of *Poetry*, given what such publication had to mean to him; it was already four years since he had completed “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” “Mr. T. S. Eliot is a young American poet resident in England, who has published nothing hitherto in this country.” The note on this contributor has its filaments to the immediately preceding note, that on “Ajan Syrian,” likewise making his “first appearance,” likewise someone who “has published nowhere else as yet,” one “who, born twenty-eight years ago on the Syrian desert, has studied at Columbia University, and is now the adopted son and employé of Mr. Gajor M. Berugjian, of Brooklyn.” (Eliot was in his twenty-eighth year.) Ajan Syrian’s third poem, “Alma Mater,” lacked its subtitle on the cover: “The Immigrant at Columbia.” Eliot’s *Alma Mater* had been Harvard; since then, he had been an immigrant, a Yank at Oxford.

Conventionalities rule. “Lord of Morning.” “Noon.” “The Walk on the Moor.” “Morning on the Beach.” But turn enough pages and you will reach the unsentimental placing of all such sentiments, there for instance in Eliot’s bizarre sequence “I have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,” or in a man’s recourse to fashion in the interests of at once eluding and embracing passion:

*I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.*

Ah, singing, repeatedly summoned in the titles that are on *Poetry*’s cover but very seldom attuned to the kinds of singing that might be desperately needed in order to keep courage up or fear down. Rather, the usual throb. “I Sing of My Life.” “Little Songs of the Forest,” the titles under this head then including the usual insufficiently suspect properties, “Spring Song” and “Autumn Song.” And “Songs of Hunger” (Skipwith Cannell), which although they do possess something more than the usual toothlessness, remain—the distinction is one that Eliot would often make—sketches or notes for poems rather than poems. Among the books reviewed is *Sing-Songs of the War*, which could

find no way to realize imaginatively the incongruity within its undisconcerted title; set this against the fertile cross-currents in the title “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” a warrant of authentic resistance to the sing-songs of the peace that are so much less than the disturbance of the peace that is art, the truly new.

It may be that Eliot’s fellow-contributors were not moved exactly to fellow-feeling by his work alongside theirs, but one of them, at least, rose to the challenge that his art presented to theirs. Six months later, Arthur Davison Ficke was to write roundly and squarely in defense of Eliot’s allusion in “Cousin Nancy” to a line of George Meredith’s, “The army of unalterable law.” “Plagiarism is the corrupt attempt to pass off as one’s own the work of another writer; there is no possible relation between it and Mr. Eliot’s employment of a great and world-famous phrase in a position where the reader’s recognition of it as a quotation is precisely the effect aimed at.”

These contributors were presumably enjoying, or perhaps not exactly *enjoying*, their first acquaintance with “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” But the editors, H.M. and A.C.H., were in a different position, and their contributions to the number may have been tinged with an anxious sense of Eliot’s nearby poem and its provocations, its silent but telling disrespect for what *Poetry* mostly had to offer, at any rate in this particular number. But even if there is no such tingeing and we are imagining things, the collocation of their words with those of Eliot’s poem may be illuminating, as coincidences can well be.

H.M., of Rupert Brooke:

That he died of sunstroke is perhaps the more symbolic.

J. Alfred Prufrock:

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

~~~~~

Fortinbras:

Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have proved most royally.

H.M.:

And so on his fair young brow let us place the ancient laurel, and bear him, ‘like a soldier,’ to his tomb.

J. Alfred Prufrock:

*No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be.*

Or there is A.C.H., establishing for herself a contrast between an American poet and some unnamed Europeans:

I can not help but feel relieved by the general sense of tragedy that pervades Mr. Masters' book. There is nothing unhealthy or morbid or hopeless about it as there often is about that of European writers. It is simply the sense of the tragedy of broken and wasted lives—of unnecessarily wasted lives.

Aware as she has to have been of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and its appearing earlier in the number, did A.C.H. think, or half-think, of Eliot as among the Americans or the Europeans? "Mr. T. S. Eliot is a young American poet resident in England, who has published nothing hitherto in this country." He never published "Opera" (1909) and A.C.H. could not have known of it, but it makes clear—as does the poem that she did already know, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—that Eliot was vigilantly sceptical of "the general sense of tragedy."

*We have the tragic? oh no!  
Life departs with a feeble smile  
Into the indifferent.*

"There is nothing unhealthy or morbid or hopeless about it as there often is about that of European writers": Eliot would have found something to agree with there, but he would not have been as confident that "hopeless" quite fitted "unhealthy" and "morbid."

*Time to turn back and descend the stair*

*Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?*

A.C.H. opened her round-up review:

When the *inteligencia* of London are hit with a new fashion in art, they are hit hard. They live with it—they think it, dress it, eat it; one may almost imagine the *Nude Descending the Stair* in ice-cream.

There remains the multiple contributor, unnamed on the cover, for whom a relation to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is not a matter of coincidence at all: Ezra Pound.

He makes three contributions, very different and

entirely characteristic. Two of them have no particular application to Eliot's poem. One takes the form of "A Rejoinder": "I am boring my little hole in the adamantine stupidity of England, America, New Zealand and a few places elsewhere. I even enjoy the job." The other is an endearing effrontery: "Mr. Pound has just discovered a misprint in his second *Renaissance* article in the March number. Page 284, line 10, *most dependent* should read *least dependent*."

Publication of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" had proved to be not most but *entirely* dependent upon Pound. Only Pound's pertinacity made Harriet Monroe yield.

Pound to Monroe, October 1914: "Here is the Eliot poem. The most interesting contribution I've yet had from an American. Yrs E.P. Hope you will get it *in* soon."

31 January 1915: "Now as to Eliot: 'Mr. Prufrock' does not 'go off at the end.'"

10 April 1915: "*Do* get on with that Eliot."

1 December 1915: "As to TSE the *Prufrock* IS more individual and unusual than the *Portrait of a Lady*. I chose it of the two as I wanted his first poem to be published to be a poem that would at once differentiate him from everyone else, in the public mind."

Subsequently, Eliot to John Quinn, 4 March 1918: "Personally, I cannot forget the length of time that elapsed before Pound succeeded in persuading Miss Monroe to print *Prufrock* for me."

Was there a further way in which Pound could be of service to the poem? I believe that his "Hark to Sturge Moore" is alive with and to the greatness of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Whether or not Pound was conscious of it, his appreciation of Sturge Moore constituted an intimation of Eliot's, not Sturge Moore's, immortality. Pound chose to begin the final paragraph of his review-essay with the adjuration "Let us then close" (in play with an opening that said "Let us go then"?), and he chose to end with lines that could not but invite comparison:

Row till the sea-nymphs rise  
To ask you why  
Rowing you tarry not  
To hear them sigh.

*I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.*

*I do not think that they will sing to me.*

*We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

Pound had begun by saying that this wasn't actually going to be a review.

Mr. Sturge Moore's last book, a triologue between three nice men in tweed suits concerning the nature of style and the beautiful, is, so far as I am concerned, a mere annoyance, and I will therefore refrain from reviewing it. (*Hark to These Three*, by T. Sturge Moore – Elkin Mathews.)

The name T. Sturge Moore has a smack of J. Alfred Prufrock about it, and those nice men in tweed suits might be played against not only "men in shirt-sleeves" but the sartor resartus himself:

*My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –*

*I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled*

*I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the  
beach.*

Sturge Moore's men were talking about the usual aestheticisms, the nature of style and the beautiful; Prufrock, and those whom he imagines, are not, although the poem itself is a masterpiece of style and of the beautiful.

There is a cumulative plausibility about such moments in Pound's piece as might reflect handsomely on Eliot's nearby poem. Juxtapositions may be the economical way of trying to show so. Pound:

discovering each week a "new Shelley" or a "new Keats" or a "new Whistler." (I even remember one lady who said her husband was known as "the American Whistler.")

*In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo*

Pound:

*I have been reasonably meticulous  
Politically, cautiously, and meticulously*

Pound:

The essential thing in a poet is that he build us his world. It may be Prospero's island, it may be the tavern with Falstaff, or the stripped world of Candide, or Florence which has spread its futile reputation into the nether reaches of hell.

Prospero's island would have to wait for *The Waste Land*, but Falstaff is already built into the world of Eliot's poem:

*I grow old. . . I grow old*

and one of them is fat, and grows old (*I Henry IV*)  
I am old, I am old (*II Henry IV*)

And Florence and hell are there in the epigraph from the *Inferno* that is borne by "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." This, with "futile" having for Pound an apposite reach. To Monroe, 31 January 1915: "a portrait satire on futility can't end by turning that quintessence of futility Mr P. into a reformed character breathing out fire and ozone." Hell fire is something else.

Many of Pound's observations here as to Sturge Moore may be, more deeply, observations as to Eliot. "Good poets are too few and the exacerbations of life are too many." "The charm of first books" (of any first publication, such as this very one of Eliot's?) is that "the young are for the most part without an audience; they write for their own ears, they are not spoiled by knowing there will be an audience." Pound's eloquence as to cadence is brimming over with Eliot's poem no less than with Sturge Moore. "Sturge Moore is more master of cadence than any of his English contemporaries." (But not than a certain young American?) Compared with Yeats, Sturge Moore "has the greater variety of cadences," and excels Yeats "in varying and fitting the cadence to its subject emotion." One caveat, though, which would not have been needed à propos of Eliot: "He has not escaped rhythmic monotony in these seven lines."

"Hark to Sturge Moore." *Hark to These Three*. Hark, last and most, to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem that was sticking obstinately and fecundly in Pound's head.

The end of all Eliot's exploring was a return to his beginnings. *Poetry* (June 1915) was with his art to the very end.

## ESSAY

Eyes that have too much seen, too much confessed  
("The Syrian Lover in Exile Remembers  
Thee, Light of My Land")

*And I pray that I may forget  
These matters that with myself I too much discuss  
Too much explain*

(Ash-Wednesday)

~~~~~

In flame and anguish; proving how we lie
Who dreamed a nobler banner now unfurled
Over mankind—while bitter smoke-wreaths curled
Up from the Moloch-lips we had denied!

But you not as this age's sacrifice
Should have gone down [. . .]
("To Rupert Brooke," II)

*Water and fire deride
The sacrifice that we denied.
Water and fire shall rot
The marred foundations we forgot*
(Little Gidding)

Eliot, whose family crest was the Elephant, never forgot.

REVIEWS

Young Eliot: A Biography by Robert Crawford

London: Jonathan Cape; New York: Farrar,
Straus, and Giroux, 2015.

Reviewed by Lesley Wheeler
Washington & Lee University

In 1919, T. S. Eliot mused about how close one can feel to a writer, despite gaps of time and space:

This relation is a feeling of profound kinship, or rather of a peculiar personal intimacy, with another, probably a dead author. . . . That you possess this secret knowledge, this intimacy, with the dead man, that after few or many years or centuries you should have appeared, with this indubitable claim to distinction; who can penetrate at once the thick and dusty circumlocutions about his reputation; can call yourself alone his friend: it is something more than *encouragement* to you. It is a cause of development, like personal relations in life. Like personal intimacies in life, it may and probably will pass, but it will be ineffaceable. ("Reflections on Contemporary Poetry [IV]," *Complete Prose* 2.66-67)

Robert Crawford, author of *Young Eliot*, links these comments to Eliot's transformative encounter with the

works of Jules Laforgue. Many contemporary readers, however, experience a "peculiar personal intimacy" with Eliot himself, and with less justification than poet-scholar Robert Crawford, whose meticulous biography penetrates many circumlocutions. Despite Eliot's famous resistance to biographical interpretation, rereading those resonant poems and essays inspires us to project a character, to build a narrative about who the man was and what he felt. Anyone perusing this newsletter is likely to know not only scholars and students but actors, IT specialists, and other passionate Eliot fans who feel themselves "alone his friend." This is surely a common motive for reading and writing literary biographies in the first place: hunger for a more personal understanding of the human being who wrote the poems that changed us.

Robert Crawford's "Tom"—Crawford uses this intimacy throughout and, to my surprise, it isn't irritating—is not quite my Eliot. Nevertheless, his portrait is complex, useful, and largely persuasive. The justification for Crawford's project lies in newly available material and developments in the Eliot estate. In the first biography to quote extensively from Eliot's writings, Crawford draws on previously untapped letters, school records, book marginalia, newspaper archives, and other items to complicate our understanding of how the poet came into his own. While Crawford acknowledges his debt to Peter Ackroyd, Lyndall Gordon, and others who have provided influential accounts of Eliot's life,

he correctly observes that because of suppressed or difficult-to-access sources, “earlier biographies of this particular poet are misleadingly proportioned” (xix), passing quickly over his formative years. Crawford, instead, lingers over Eliot’s childhood and education, not arriving at publication of *The Waste Land* for four hundred pages. He projects a second volume to be published after 2020, when the Emily Hale correspondence becomes available to scholars.

In the meantime, the first few chapters of *Young Eliot* are, indeed, especially fresh. With great vividness, Crawford conjures destructive storms and blackface performances in St. Louis, risky summer sailing off Gloucester, and “loafing” at Harvard. Rather than a young scholar with the “academic prowess”

Ackroyd ascribes to Eliot, Crawford gives us a person of talent and financial advantages scraping by with indifferent grades. His Eliot, while ever increasing in confidence and skill, is a dark horse in the race for poetic success. This is oddly cheering. We may never know why his Milton classmates hailed him as “Big Slam Eliot, boisterous haranguer,” but understanding the environments of his younger years, right down to school curricula, makes new sense of his early poetry (68).

It helps to know, for example, that Boston was “crazy over Wagner” (125) in 1909, and that Eliot heard Tagore lecture at Harvard, although what Eliot made of these encounters is only indirectly available to us now, refracted through his public writing. Some revelations are more entertaining than consequential—that the poet parted his hair behind upon returning from Paris, for example, or that Vivien nicknamed Tom “Wonkypenky” in a letter signed “Wee.” Yet even those details echo Prufrock’s fashion worries and Eliot’s concern with sexuality and fertility in *The Waste Land* (Crawford glosses “Wonkypenky” as “faulty penis”). Crawford’s depiction of Eliot’s first marriage, too, is both illuminating and evenhanded. Eliot’s sexual desire, fear, and disgust receive careful parsing, but so do his persistent concern for his wife’s well-being, and, in turn, her fierce advocacy of her husband’s talent. Here, Tom and Viv are damaged, mismatched partners who nevertheless strive to behave honorably by each other.

“Crawford gives us a person of talent and financial advantages scraping by with indifferent grades.”

Lottie Eliot’s apologetic anti-Semitism is also revealing: “it is very bad in me, but I have an instinctive antipathy to Jews, just as I have to certain animals,” she writes in a letter to her much-adored youngest son. Although Eliot becomes worldly, escaping his parents’ suspicion of all things Parisian, he does not transcend all the bigotry of upper-caste St. Louis. Generally Crawford gives a fair account of the nascent poet’s privilege and prejudice, but anti-Semitism and misogyny receive more nuanced treatment than other biases. Addressing Eliot’s childhood encounters with “the supposedly ‘primitive,’” for instance, Crawford cites “‘Indian mounds’”

in Forest Park and a treasured photograph of “Native American, Chief Joseph, wearing a suit” (15). I would have welcomed more detail here, especially a tribe’s name for Chief Joseph, to update the related passage from Crawford’s 1987 *The Savage and the City in the Works of T. S. Eliot*—although the Forest Park mounds were built centuries before Columbus by the Mississippian culture that preceded the Illinois Confederation, and all were destroyed before the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. Crawford also mentions that the Fair displayed “live ‘Aborigines’ from America, Africa, and Japan” as well as “a vast ‘Philippine Encampment’” (49) without comment, other than to signal that Tom was inspired to write fiction based on the latter. Yet these human zoos celebrated American empire in a particularly brutal, degrading way, and the slightness of the description feels out of balance with the thorough detail elsewhere.

Crawford will also be too euphemistic for some in his characterization of vile early verses as “laddish” or Eliot’s anti-Semitism as “unattractive.” Nor is his praise of Eliot’s genius always convincing: “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is wonderful, but not “one of the bravest poems about gender ever authored” (150). Yet Crawford is, more often, scrupulously just. At its best, *Young Eliot* roots Eliot’s achievements in his flaws and failures as well as his better impulses, and this intimacy enriches rather than undermines the literature. Crawford rightly extols the extraordinary music of the poetry “Big-eared Tom” (41) would grow up to compose. His biography has a few tone-deaf moments, but still captures the song and the noise of Eliot’s life with higher fidelity than any record yet.

Compiled by David Chinitz

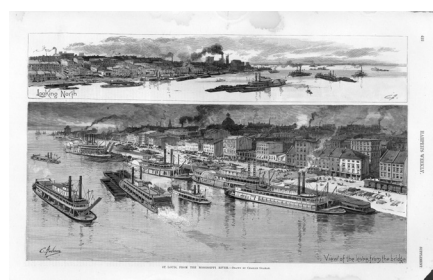
Melodeath. In our ongoing series on Eliot-inspired rock musicians, *Public Sightings* presents Noumena, a Finnish melodic death metal band founded 1998. (Melodic death metal, a thrash-inflected subgenre of death metal, is considered somewhat less gloomy than black metal, though far more gloomy than power metal.) Noumena's latest album, *Death Walks with Me* (2013) opens with the song "Handful of Dust," in which the protagonist and his love have "Suffered through the April's cruelty / Blinded by the fury of the sun." She promises, in turn, "I shall offer you a handful of dust / We remember both the diamonds and rust." The song's allusions extend beyond Eliot ("The candle burns at both ends not minding it all hurts"), though *The Waste Land* remains the primary source ("Burning desire defies my memories"). As the lead track on the album, "Handful of Dust" sets the tone for such merry titles as "Let It Run Red," "Season of Suffocation," and "Nothing."

Political cats. Labour politician John Biggs on Conservative Boris Johnson, the mayor of London: "Boris is like Macavity, the mystery cat. The bills will arrive after he's safely left office—and he's more than happy to leave a big IOU for whoever comes in next" (*The Guardian*, 4 Mar. 2015). And a *New Statesman* post begins: "'On Margate sands. I can connect nothing with nothing.' After watching Ukip's [UK Independence Party's] Spring Conference at Margate this week-end, many of us would agree with T. S. Eliot's bleak words from *The Waste Land*" ("Britain's Top Institutions Are Still Dominated by the Privileged," 3 Mar. 2015).

Drowning and starving. Letter to the Editor of *The New York Times*, in response to "a column by Nicholas Kristof touting the benefits of a liberal arts education": "Nicholas Kristof begins by quoting E. O. Wilson's observation that 'we are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom.' T. S. Eliot offered a similar formulation of the relationship between wisdom and information in his poem 'Choruses From *The Rock*': 'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? / Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?' Mr. Kristof's point that knowledge of great literature cultivates the wisdom necessary to sustain our essential humanity finds its perfect embodiment in Eliot's lines" (25 Apr. 2015).

Spirit of the River. At his inauguration on Jan. 31, 2015 as St. Louis' first Poet Laureate, Michael Castro read a poem written for the occasion and titled "Re: Birthday St. Louis Two Fifty." Some lines commemorate important cultural figures:

Mr. Handy, Miles Davis, Chuck Berry, Scott Joplin,
opened the world's ears to musical innovation
infused with the river's vital vibration.
T. S. Eliot, Tennessee Williams, William Burroughs,
Kate Chopin & Maya Angelou,
travelled with the river's spirit, liberating writing
with fresh language & points of view.



St. Louis, from the Mississippi River, by Charles Graham, from *Harper's Weekly*, 1888

Alias Tom. In *Turks and Caicos* (2014), the British spy Johnny Worricker (Bill Nighy) uses "Tom Eliot" as an alias. He and a shady American (Christopher Walken) quote "Prufrock" to each other. The script, by playwright David Hare, deploys Eliot as a symbol of the insidious penetration of American values into British culture—a role Eliot has played since the WWI era.

Burnt Norton in bed. In *Vikings*, a History Channel series, King Ecbert of Wessex, in the course of seducing Judith, his son's wife, recites: "What might have been is an abstraction, remaining a perpetual possibility only in the [sic] world of speculation. What might have been and what has been point to one end which is always present. Footsteps echo in the memory down the passage [which] we did not take, towards the door we never opened." Ecbert glosses the lines, "Somehow, we are always here at this moment, you and I." But Judith rejects this high-flown interpretation.

Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence by Vincent Sherry

Cambridge UP, 2015.

Reviewed by Martin Lockerd
University of Texas at Austin

Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence concerns itself, above all, with history. Vincent Sherry's history is a corrective, a "history of critical misprision" (3), that begins in part with Arthur Symons's rebranding of "The Decadent Movement in Literature" (1893) six years later under the new title *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). This shift in nomenclature, according to Sherry, evinces a collaborative effort on the part of Symons and Yeats to disavow decadence in favor of the more spiritualized and serious "Symbolisme." Sherry's introduction traces in detail the critical legacy of Symons's act of renaming through influential narratives of modernist origins from Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* (1931) to Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era* (1971) and beyond.

This decoding of critical diction calls into serious question many truisms about the vital energy of modernism and its supposed investment in newness. Pound's famous directive, "make it new," we are reminded, was not uttered until 1934. By setting aside the familiar characterizations of modernism as a shocking revelation of new artistic energy and decoding symbolism as a thin mask over the corrupted face of decadence, Sherry insists on acknowledging the mood of decay at the heart of much of the collective modernist enterprise. This mood finds its most potent expression in what he refers to as decadent temporality: "an imaginative apprehension of living in a late historical age, of time winding down, all in all, of *decay* as a condition of current circumstance and, more generally, of historical existence" (235). Decadent time becomes the defining theme in Sherry's critical counter-narrative.

Chapter One begins with a return to the early nineteenth century, to the Romantic school of which decadence is a "late" or degenerate manifestation. After establishing some of the origins of decadent temporality in the work of Poe and Baudelaire and Marx, Sherry adds greater definition to the phenomenon by highlighting its recurrences in the poetry of Swinburne,

Dowson, and other icons of the fin de siècle. For them, he tells us, history is entropy, "which, with the residual memories of the failure of revolutionary futurity, is contributing substantially to the new allure of the feeling of things just running down" (68).

The remaining chapters are largely dedicated to rereading the texts of modernism in light of this sense of decadent time—late time, exhausted empire, and unraveling history. Though much of this book is concerned with disrupting and establishing larger metanarratives about modernist genealogy, Sherry's greatest strength can be found in his close readings: at the heart of Yeats's fascination with "symbolism" and hopes for an Irish literary revival, he finds a corollary engagement with England's decline; in the anarchists of Conrad's *Secret Agent* (1907) and Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), he discerns sympathies with the politics and poses of the fin-de-siècle dandy; in the new women of D. H. Lawrence's novels, he reveals reincarnations of the decadent femme fatale who becomes, paradoxically, a symbol of both historical progress and decadence. In each instance Sherry manages to do more than simply trace lines of direct influence from individual decadent texts to individual modernist ones. He unsettles accepted literary-historical classifications by gesturing to the decadent nature of the aesthetic category we are continually redefining as modernism. The final chapter of *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* provides an invaluable synthesis and expansion of Sherry's past work on Eliot and decadence. Contrary to the common wisdom that Eliot began as an adolescent imitator of the British and French decadents before maturing into his own modernist aesthetic, Sherry insists in no uncertain terms that the poet of *The Waste Land* "grew into" rather than out of the decadent sensibility that first inspired his art. This bold narrative inversion might seem like an exaggeration were it not for the precision with which the chapter documents Eliot's progressive sublimation of the older school. Thankfully, Sherry resists the urge to simply catalogue decadent motifs and allusions in Eliot's corpus. Instead, he focuses his attention primarily on reading and explicating the influence of the already established trope of "decadent temporality" on the poet's "preoccupation with the signal interest of time" (236).

Broken up into four subsections following Eliot's poetic maturation in roughly chronological order, the chapter begins by arguing that the early, notebook poems demonstrate Eliot's sympathy with the decadent view of entropic, anti-progressive history. This groundwork in

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place, section two turns to a consideration of the Great War, an event that Sherry suggests crystalized the end-of-empire feeling of the fin de siècle—a feeling realized most notably in the exhausted stanzas of “Gerontion.” Again, Sherry’s goal is the reversal of popular narratives of modernism’s newness. Rather than erasing the old world through the cataclysm of modern warfare and laying the foundation for something wholly novel, the Great War, for artists like Eliot and Pound, ratified the aesthetics of decadent temporality. Sherry pivots from the Great War to Eliot’s anxieties about the collapse of the British Empire under the pressure of Irish agitation for independence and general cultural “degeneration.” These anxieties express themselves

most forcefully in the quatrains of the Sweeney, Burbank, and Bolo poems. The final section focuses primarily on the traces of decadence excised from early drafts of *The Waste Land*. Here, Sherry is at his best as a close reader, calling attention to and making sense of the echoes of Poe, Gautier, and Stoker that reverberate with a dying repetition through the drafts of Eliot’s defining work. The section, representative of Sherry’s project as a whole, is admirably less interested in reading decadence forward into modernism than reading modernism back into decadence. The only unwelcome surprise in the otherwise fascinating

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ELIOT NEWS

Calls for Papers

The T. S. Eliot Society will again sponsor a session at the annual **Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900**, to be held at the University of Louisville, February 18-20, 2016. Abstracts for 20-minute papers on any subject related to Eliot are invited, but those drawing on volume one of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition* are particularly welcome. This first volume, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, includes Eliot’s juvenilia, his graduate essays in philosophy and the social sciences, and his early journalism. There will be a talk on Eliot’s philosophical papers by Jewel Spears Brooker, co-editor of the volume, at this year’s session. The online edition of *Complete Prose* is available in many libraries and by individual subscription on the Project MUSE website at Johns Hopkins (<http://muse.jhu.edu/about/reference/eliot/>). For further information on the 2016 conference, please visit the website: www.thelouisvilleconference.com.

Those interested should send a 300-word abstract to Anita Patterson (apatters@bu.edu) no later than September 5, 2015. Please include your academic affiliation (if applicable) and a brief biographical note with your abstract.

The **T. S. Eliot Society of Korea (TESK)** is hosting a conference at Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea, on October 24, 2015, on the topic of “Time and Place in T. S. Eliot’s Writings.” Papers should address one or more of the following: writings on poetry, prose, religion, philosophy, history, politics, etc. Please indicate your intention to propose a paper

at your earliest opportunity to susie4086@gmail.com. Abstracts are due on 31 August 2015. For more information, visit our website, <http://www.soeliot.or.kr>; <http://www.teliots.com>.

Prufrock Centennial at MSA

Ronald Schuchard, Anita Patterson, Jayme Stayer, Tony Cuda, and Frances Dickey will participate in a roundtable discussion of “Prufrock at 100” at the 2016 Modernist Studies Association conference in Boston, November 19-22.

Eliot Summer School 2016

The 8th T. S. Eliot International Summer School will take place at the University of London, 9 - 17 July 2016. Info at www.ies.sas.ac.uk. Save the dates!

Society Notes

Congratulations to two society members with new jobs this fall: **Joshua Richards**, Assistant Professor of English at Williams Baptist College, and **Matthew Seybold**, Assistant Professor of English at Elmira College.

Patrick Query is now Co-Editor of *Evelyn Waugh Studies*, with Jonathan Pitcher of Bennington College.

Jewel Spears Brooker will be giving the Keynote Address for the T. S. Eliot Society of Korea in Seoul on October 24.

Email news to the editor at teliotsociety@gmail.com

review of Sherry, continued from page 11

chapter on Eliot is that, in spite of the emphasis on time and temporality, *Four Quartets* receives no attention.

There are other lacunae in *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*. In a book that does so much to broaden the critical conversation regarding the contentious relationship between decadence and modernism, it feels somewhat overdemanding to ask for more. Nevertheless, there are several places in Sherry's narrative where the insistence on reading "decadent temporality" in terms of the unraveling history of European empire seems to exclude considerations of other elements vital to the decadent conception of time, such as religion. One could argue, for example, that the almost universal fascination with Catholicism among French and British decadents played an important role in both their conception of history and their reception at the hands of men like Pound and Yeats. But such observations express less discontent with the book itself than a desire to see its project expanded in the future. Sherry has done something significant. He has disrupted a number of conventional narratives and, in doing so, provided the critical space necessary to reinvent our own conceptions of the role of decadence in the age of modernism.

Ascetic Modernism in the Work of T. S. Eliot and Gustave Flaubert

by Henry Michael Gott

London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013.

Reviewed by Joshua Richards
Williams Baptist College

Let me begin with the conclusion of the review: those interested in religious aspects of Eliot's early poetry will need to engage with Henry Michael Gott's *Ascetic Modernism in the Work of T. S. Eliot and Gustave Flaubert*. My review focuses primarily on Gott's discussions of Eliot, which appear in largely self-contained essays side by side with companion pieces on Flaubert. This format makes the volume more accessible to readers focusing on what Gott has to say about Eliot.

The title notwithstanding, Gott's interest—his fatal Cleopatra—is *The Waste Land*, with discussions of "Prufrock," "The Death of St. Narcissus," and other poems marshaled in service thereof. For Flaubert, Gott focuses on *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. The omission of Eliot's post-conversion works from significant discussion limits the book's impact even if it is consistent with Gott's emphatically nonreligious definition of asceticism: "a strategy of empowerment based on renunciation, characterized by self-reflexivity and a concern with process" compounded with the assertion that asceticism is "a quality of the text itself" (6). Such a definition seems counterintuitive given that the core thesis of his work is that the saint's life is a central motif in Eliot and Flaubert. These preliminary issues aside, let me proceed to the chapters.

In the Eliot section of his first chapter, titled "Non-verbal Redemption in *The Waste Land* and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,'" Gott analyses how apophatic mysticism is depicted formally in the two poems, although "Prufrock" receives only a single page of analysis here. He theorizes that an ascetic text is "non-discursive by nature, and so provides an escape not only from language but also from time—another form of discourse definitive of the text's stratified nature, and one which conforms, moreover, to the ascetic structure of an escape which is also an immersion" (45). However, the lack of detailed analysis leaves this claim somewhat unconvincing.

The second chapter provides a relatively psychoanalytic reading of the "St. Sebastian" and "St. Narcissus" poems. Here as elsewhere, Gott plays somewhat fast and loose with the chronology of Eliot's life—using quotations from the time of *The Waste Land* to interpret poems written nearly ten years earlier. While this is consistent with his focus on *The Waste Land*, it weakens the readings of the two saint poems.

The third chapter unifies the discussions of Eliot and Flaubert into a discussion of the literal or metaphorical desert as a space of escape. This reading of landscape in *The Waste Land* seems germane and may be the book's strongest segment, although Gott's analysis remains breezy rather than close. For example, in his discussion of Eliot's portrayal of City crowds, Gott quotes from *The Waste Land* lines 55, 62–3, 368, 369, 383, and 382 in the space of three sentences (101).

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By **Elisabeth Däumer**
Eastern Michigan University

Books, book chapters, journal publications, reviews, and dissertations listed separately below. If you are aware of any 2014 citations that do not appear here, please contact Elisabeth Däumer at edaumer@emich.edu. Omissions will be rectified in the 2015 listing.

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review of Gott, continued from page 12

Structural parallels between *La Tentation* and *The Waste Land*, particularly in their inconclusive endings, are the subject of chapter four. Gott discusses how form and composition evince a saint's life through "the text's intimate relation to the author's own creative processes" (105). Most of the Eliot section is taken up with recapitulating the compositional history of *The Waste Land*; Gott argues that a greater weight ought to be given to the "Death by Water" segment, but his precise reason is difficult to discern and may not be known even to him. Gott writes at one point of using Franco Moretti's outline of the poem "to support my impression of the importance of the Phlebas episode" (122).

The final chapter discusses the vortex as a symbol for ascetic experience and its applicability to Eliot's poetry, an approach probably inspired by an unwritten work by Flaubert titled *La Spirale*. Even more so than in previous chapters, Gott's magpie tendency leads him to pull quotations and ideas from hosts of early twentieth-century works.

Passing from appraisal of the chapters, let me make two related, general criticisms of the book. My first is that roiling clouds of secondary literature darken the face of the prose. The argumentation in places dissolves into tissues of quotation. While in more cynical moments I wondered whether Gott's contract paid per proper name, I could only wish, for the sake of readability, that the many critics mustered had been

introduced better and their relevance explained. To cite by no means the worst example, Peter Ackroyd's biography of Edgar Allan Poe is summoned to provide some winsome phrasing on Eliot's engagement with low culture (85). Additionally, the text is full of little asides to other Modernist works, which distract more than enlighten; in a work on asceticism, the reader is ironically left wishing that more restraint had been employed.

My second criticism concerns the seemingly uncritical application of contemporary theorizations of asceticism, such as G. G. Harpham's and David Jasper's, whose flashing phrases are often employed, though their comments rarely seem to refer to Eliot or Flaubert. Why these critics in particular? No explanation is given; Jasper, especially, seems an odd choice for a work bent on avoiding the religious aspects of asceticism. Neither Eliot nor Flaubert could have read most of the works Gott cites. For instance, why not quote from the edition of Heraclitus that Eliot actually read? At least in Eliot's case, given the wealth of documentary evidence, we need a justification for Gott's choice to emphasize recent theorizations over more historically appropriate sources.

Those interested particularly in Eliot's connection with Flaubert and religious themes in *The Waste Land* will be well served by consultation of Gott's book. My own bookshelf has a place for it, but scholars of other aspects of Eliot's work may wish to weigh the limited focus and necessary sifting beforehand.

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