

Time Present

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The Eliot-Hale Archive and the Uses of Biography

The 2020 volume of *Time Present* featured “first responses” to the letters T. S. Eliot wrote to Emily Hale as well as an edited publication of Emily Hale’s Introduction to their correspondence. In our Spring 2021 issue, published a little more than a year after the opening (and closing) of this extraordinary collection of letters, we are pleased to expand our focus, bringing our readers a collection of four short essays on the nature and uses of the archive as well as biography, and autobiography in Eliot’s art. One of the fortunate consequences of this archive’s opening has been a newly energized and informed consideration of what Eliot called “the progress of an artist”—that lifetime’s peregrination from “impressions and experiences” to words written on a page (“Tradition,” *Prose* 2:110).

The Temptations of the Hale Archive

Jayme Stayer
Loyola University Chicago

Articles and blog posts on the Emily Hale letters have been whetting the appetite for blockbuster revelations into Eliot’s life and work. One of the first jaw-droppers appeared a few weeks after the letters were unsealed, described by Frances Dickey in her [Reports from the Emily Hale Archive](#). In his March 19, 1931 letter to Hale, Eliot is discussing the dangers of unequal power relations among friends, and the topic leads him to reveal a hitherto unknown source for “Gerontion.” As Dickey cautions, she can only paraphrase, so a more careful scrutiny of this passage awaits full quotation. Nevertheless, it seems clear enough that Matthew Prichard, an art historian and onetime secretary to the director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, had a strong influence on Eliot during his time in Paris. In Dickey’s telling, “Eliot reflects that Prichard’s love of power over young



Matthew Stewart Prichard, 1905,
by John Briggs Potter
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

men seemed to have a sexual element although his life was ascetic. Eliot makes the remarkable aside that the figure of Mr. Silvero in 'Gerontion' is a reference to Prichard." In a subsequent letter (March 6, 1933), as Dickey paraphrases, Eliot claims that

other men have wanted his body, but only Prichard desired his soul. Eliot says that for a terrifying twenty seconds, back in his boarding house in Paris, he thought he was completely lost, sent back through thousands of years of human evolution, into the abyss, though he was only hanging over the edge. After that, Prichard lost his power over Eliot, and they went on a tour of southern France together at Christmas 1910, along with Prichard's very respectable brother, an army colonel. But Prichard had his own realization at Limoges, where he "walked all night in the next room."

This remarkable anecdote from the Hale letters is buttressed by an already published letter to Herbert Read (Apr. 9, 1926), in which Eliot confesses to having known Matthew Prichard "many years ago" but prefers not to meet him again, for reasons Eliot does not explain. "Prichard's personality is so strong," Eliot remarks to Read, "and his conviction (I might say his fanaticism) so intense, that his conversation has an almost hypnotic influence. You will need all your intellect to resist it. In any case, his sensibility to art is greater than that of anyone I have ever met, and also you will find him an interesting psychological case" (*Letters* 3:132). That last remark about Prichard as a "psychological case" probably refers to his queer sexuality, which was widely understood at the time to be deviant, a problem for medical science to study and solve.

This biography of Prichard now stands as a source for Mr. Silvero. In "Gerontion," the communal sacrament of the Eucharist has become degraded and individualistic, the cultic reduced to mere cult: "Christ the tiger" is divided, drunk "Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero / With caressing hands, at Limoges / Who walked all night in the next room" (*Poems* 1:31). I have always marveled at the creepy vibe of these lines, and now we know that their evocative power has been underwritten by an intense biographical experience. This form of compositional suppression Eliot later described to John Hayward as "some acute personal reminiscence (never to be explicated, of course, but to give power well below the surface)" (*Composition of Four Quartets*, 67).

That Prichard has been transmuted into Mr. Silvero in an act of literary creation is clear and compelling; it comes with a backstory; and it answers questions we didn't even know we had about the poem. Henceforward in discussions of "Gerontion," the complexity of Eliot's relationship to Prichard will add depth to these lines and will offer another path for biographers to follow up on. What was the nature of the abyss triggered by Prichard's attempt at control? Did others experience Prichard in this way, or is Eliot's response flecked with homosexual panic? In a #MeToo era, how do we retrospectively understand this episode? The category of verbal abuse does not seem to be operative in Eliot's complaint, but did Prichard's "caressing hands" blur the line of consent for physical contact? Between friends, the subtle levers of emotional or psychological pressure can escape modern legal categories. (What Title IX box would you check if you believed someone was trying to dominate your soul?) John Morgenstern's [research](#) on Matthew Prichard suggests that he was remarkably intelligent and charismatic (51-68). And Jean Verdenal's letters back to Eliot gently mock Prichard, their mutual acquaintance, though he concludes: "Yet I like [Prichard's] sincerity, his instinct for vital truths, and his goodness" (*Letters* 1:32n). What biographical facts remain hidden, what became transformed into Mr. Silvero, and what elements were wholly invented by Eliot are now open questions.

Since the heyday of source scholarship in Grover Smith's work, and its apotheosis in Ricks and McCue's *Poems*, there would seem to be little expectation that new sources could be found for Eliot's work, and so the identification of Prichard as the source for Mr. Silvero is the kind of revelation that archival scholars live for. Nevertheless, it is exactly this seeming clarity that should make us cautious.

Eliot was not the most reliable of narrators, particularly when it came to exegesis of his own work. Let me point to an example of Eliot offering a seemingly innocuous explanation of "Prufrock." Some fifty years after the poem was composed, Eliot wrote to Kristian Smidt, answering his question about the "you" whom Prufrock addresses:

As for "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," anything I say now must be somewhat conjectural, as it was written so long ago that my memory may deceive me; but I am prepared to assert that the

This article continues on page 9, followed by the rest of the Hale Archive sequence

Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the International T. S. Eliot Society

September 24-25, 2021

Online

After consultation with medical professionals, university administrators, and Board members, and out of an abundance of caution for the members of our Society, we have regretfully decided to forego meeting in person in 2021. See more information about this decision [here](#). We plan to return for an in-person meeting to celebrate the centennial of *The Waste Land* in 2022. In this interim, however, we hope you'll be able to take advantage of the ease of access that a virtual conference provides. Last year's Zoom-based meeting had a record-breaking number of attendees and glowing reviews from its participants. We hope that we can welcome even more folks to this year's gathering, and we expect it to be an equally compelling event.

This cfp can also be found at our [website](#). You can help us to advertise this easily attended conference far and wide: please distribute widely and post this link on your own social media sites.

Memorial Lecturer: Robert Pinsky

We are pleased to present as our memorial speaker Robert Pinsky, whose lecture "T. S. Eliot, 1933, 1958, 1962, 2016," will offer a practicing poet's impressions of Eliot's work. His entry point is another poet's impressions: Allen Ginsberg's obsessive journal entries about T. S. Eliot in 1958. Pinsky's own assessment of both Eliot and Ginsberg, when he was a college student in 1962, offers another stage of development. Finally, the poem "Mixed Chorus," from Pinsky's 2016 book *At the Foundling Hospital*, extends his still-evolving response to "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

Robert Pinsky's books of poetry include *The Figured Wheel* (finalist for the Pulitzer Prize), *At the Foundling Hospital* (finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award), and his translation *The Inferno of Dante*. As three-term Poet Laureate of the United States he founded the Favorite Poem Project, with the videos at www.favoritepoem.org. Pinsky is also the author of *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry*. He has received the Korean Manhae Award, the Italian Premio Capri, and the Harold Washington Award from the City of Chicago. He teaches in the graduate writing program at Boston University.

Call for Papers

The Society invites proposals for papers to be presented at our annual meeting, this year held over Zoom from 24-25 September (Friday to Saturday). Clearly organized proposals of about 300 words, submitted as Word or PDF documents, on any topic reasonably related to Eliot, along with brief biographical sketches, should be emailed by June 1, 2021, to tseliotsociety@gmail.com, with the subject heading "Conference Proposal."

Each year the Society presents the Fathman Young Scholar Award to the best paper given by a new Eliot scholar. Graduate students and recent PhDs are eligible (degree received in 2017 or later for those not yet employed in a tenure-track position; 2019 or later for those holding a tenure-track position). If you are eligible for the award, please mention this fact in your submission. The award, which includes a monetary prize, will be announced at the final session of the meeting.

Peer Seminars

The peer seminar format offers the opportunity to share your work in a more in-depth way with a group of participants who share your interests. Participants will pre-circulate short position papers (5 pages) by September 1; peer seminars will meet to discuss the pre-circulated papers for two hours on the first day of the 2021 Society conference, Friday, September 24. Membership in each peer seminar is limited to twelve on a first-come, first-served basis. Please enroll by July 16, by sending an email with the subject line "peer seminar" to tseliotsociety@gmail.com with your contact information.

The Society will award a prize, sponsored by *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual*, to the best seminar paper presented by an early-career scholar. Graduate students and recent PhDs who attend a seminar are eligible (degree received in 2017 or later for those not yet employed in a tenure-track position; 2019 or later for those holding a tenure-track position). For consideration, papers must be submitted as Word

CALL FOR PAPERS

or PDF documents to tseliotsociety@gmail.com by September 1 with the subject line "Seminar Prize Submission." The winning paper will present original research and a persuasive argument in clear and fluent prose; it will also respect the length requirements of a typical position paper (5 pages double-spaced). The winner will receive a monetary prize and a copy of the following year's *Annual*.

Peer Seminar I: Eliot's Influence

Led by Anthony Cuda
University of North Carolina at
Greensboro

The influence of Eliot's work on writers of succeeding generations has been the subject of sustained and fierce debate. In 1939, Robert Penn Warren called it "the most important single influence on American poetry." Not long after Eliot's death, Leslie Fiedler asked, "Why does he now seem so irrelevant to young readers and writers of poetry?" In 1964, Ralph Ellison recalled, "*The Waste Land* seized my mind. . . . Somehow its rhythms were often closer to those of jazz than were those of the Negro poets." And decades later, Amy Clampitt said, "no single poem written in this century has had more influence than *The Waste Land*." This much is certain: the debate will only intensify as more of Eliot's writing appears in new editions and archives. This seminar will focus on the varieties of Eliot's influence on writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Participants may want to consider any of the following questions:

- How have writers in the generations after Eliot adapted and transformed his work to meet their creative needs? Has their work shed new light on Eliot's?
- What historical, institutional, biographical, and cultural contexts facilitated and framed Eliot's influence on later writers?
- Eliot has been a part of academic curricula for much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and many great teachers of his work have themselves been poets and critics. How has his influence been shaped from these classrooms? Which scholars and poets have passed on particularly striking or unconventional versions of Eliot to their students?

- How have Eliot's ideas about influence affected the discussion of his own influence?
- How have critical narratives and polemics about Eliot's influence changed?
- What evidence should we consider or exclude in the discussion of "influence," including textual parallels and echoes, published correspondence, draft manuscripts, marginal markings, and other archival documents?

[Anthony Cuda](#) is Associate Head and Associate Professor of English at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. He is the author of [The Passions of Modernism: Eliot, Yeats, Woolf, and Mann](#) (2010) and co-editor of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol. 2: [The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926](#). He is the Executive Director of the T. S. Eliot International Summer School, held annually in London, and he has been on the Board of Directors of the International T. S. Eliot Society since Fall 2011. He's finishing a book on Eliot's influence called *An Eliot Quartet: Jarrell, Plath, Heaney, and Glück*.

Peer Seminar II: The Waste Land in 2021

Led by Megan Quigley
Villanova University

At the centennial of the composition of Eliot's most famous poem and his historic collaboration with Ezra Pound, we convene this seminar to explore the texts, contexts, and reception of *The Waste Land* then and now, inviting papers on any aspect of the poem, including, but not limited to the following themes:

- What have we learned about *The Waste Land* from the study of its composition? What have we learned about the nature of artistic creativity from the record of Eliot's drafts and collaborations?
- How do the milieus that frame the poem help us think about this text? These frames include but are not limited to sources, social and political contexts, artistic and intellectual movements, technological innovations, and contemporary or subsequent history. What works by other writers can be productively brought into conversation with this poem of Eliot's?

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- How is *The Waste Land* in conversation with Eliot's other work, including poems, prose, and drama? Does his prose have a place in leading readers into his poem?
- Rachel Sagner Buurma's and Laura Heffernan's recent book, *The Teaching Archive*, has challenged us to rethink the role of the classroom in the formation and dissemination of literary scholarship. What might we learn about Eliot, modernism, and *The Waste Land* through re-visiting the way Eliot's poem has been taught in the past and how we teach it now? How were earlier students helped to understand its many voices, fragments, and forms and how do we see this influence on the subsequent 100 years of poetry and modernist scholarship? And if we are in a post-critical moment in literary scholarship, how have both scholars in the past and today, explained why we are hooked (to borrow Rita Felski's term) on Eliot to our students or fellow scholars?

[Megan Quigley](#) is Associate Professor of English, Irish Studies, and Gender & Women's Studies at Villanova University. She is author of [Modernist Fiction & Vagueness: Philosophy, Form, & Language](#) (2015) and is currently co-editing a volume on revisionary approaches to T. S. Eliot, *Eliot Now*. She edited a series of forums for *Modernism/modernity* on modernism and [#MeToo](#). Other recent publications can be found in *Poetics Today*, *Ermeneutica Letteraria*, and *Time Present*. She has held fellowships from the Harry Ransom Center (UT-Austin), The Huntington Library, The Beinecke Library (Yale), and St. Edmund Hall (Oxford).

ANNOUNCEMENT

Distinguished Service Awards

It gives us great pleasure to announce that **Nancy Gish** and **Cyrena Pondrom** have been chosen, by the unanimous acclaim of the Society Board, to receive the Distinguished Service Award from the International T. S. Eliot Society. We quote here from the letter of nomination written by David Chinitz:

"Nancy Gish and Cyrena Pondrom have served for a combined total of 26 years on the board. Cyrena is now completing her 15th year, one of the longest records of service in the 40-year history of the Society. She has served for six years in an officer position (Secretary) and for nine as a regular board member. Throughout those years, she brought a wise and decisive voice to board discussions. She also helped plan the Society's ambitious 2011 meeting in Paris.

"Nancy is finishing up her 11th year as a strong and energetic participant on the board. Throughout her term, she has organized the Society's sessions at the American Literature Association's annual conference, putting together impressive

panels that have included some very distinguished contributors. She has already volunteered to continue that work even after she cycles off the board this summer.

Cyrena's *Road from Paris* and articles on Imagism and on gender in *The Waste Land* have been important critical texts for many Eliot scholars. So have Nancy's two monographs on Eliot and her co-edited collection *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot*."



Both Nancy and Cyrena were pathbreaking feminists, as another board member put it, making their invaluable contributions at a time and "in a field that was not easy to crack," helping to make our Society a place where younger women in particular and younger scholars more generally would feel welcome. We are all of us indebted to them, and we're happy to applaud them in print now as well as looking forward to clapping and cheering whenever we next meet in person. Huzzah!!

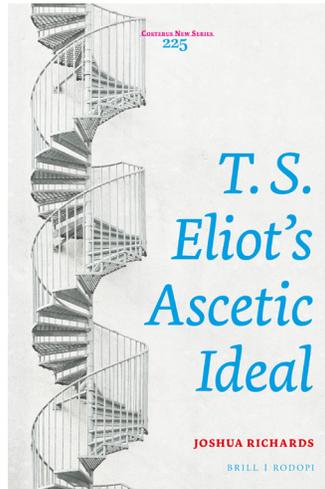
T. S. Eliot's Ascetic Ideal by Joshua Richards

Brill, 2020. 182 pages.

Reviewed by Ann Marie Jakubowski
Washington University in St. Louis

When the word “mystical” appears in literary criticism, it often seems to serve as little more than a catch-all term for any religious belief or practice that poses some interpretive difficulty. In such instances, to label something mystical is to gesture toward its theological significance while assuming that it does not actually require serious unpacking; “the mystical” is available for ready juxtaposition with “the secular,” or “the rational,” but less often is it subject to systematic exploration in its own right. In this study, Joshua Richards refuses to allow “mysticism” to stand in as a vague placeholder for complicated theology and instead offers a meticulous and revealing account of T. S. Eliot’s lifelong engagement with Christian asceticism, a key component of the Christian mystical tradition more broadly.

The ascetic ideal in Eliot’s work is multivalent and unstable, with a long and complex theological tradition. Thus, Richards does not reduce it to a single reference point but rather discusses asceticism as a constellation of concepts related broadly to processes of self-purification and self-simplification (12), which are expected to yield spiritual or otherwise supernatural knowledge. Richards quotes Underhill’s definition of asceticism as “the slow and painful completion of conversion” (2), and in that light, his study of Eliot’s relationship to asceticism is quite valuable to scholars interested in the development of Eliot’s theology up to and through his conversion. “He carried the ascetic ideal with him through parody and rebellion, through faithless longing, to affirmation, and finally to hope in its promise,” Richards writes, and, indeed, he shows the ascetic ideal to be a consistent preoccupation of Eliot’s (166-67). Rather than reading Eliot’s conversion as a stark turning point in his career, Richards’s account enables us to see subtle but important consistencies before and after the conversion.



Richards takes as his starting point the archival material at Houghton Library related to Eliot’s undergraduate and graduate coursework on mystical theology. In particular, a set of sixty undated index cards containing Eliot’s notes on key works on the subject—including Evelyn Underhill’s *Mysticism*, W. R. Inge’s *Christian Mysticism*, and Rufus Jones’s *Studies in Mystical Religion*—offers a record of Eliot’s early exposure to texts he went on to cite in his prose work from the early 1920s through the rest of his career. Indeed, this monograph does a great service by quoting these core sources in mystical theology at length, giving readers direct access to the exact editions Eliot read, the points of convergence and divergence among the theologians, and a fuller context for the details that became most central to Eliot’s own thinking on asceticism. Richards’s careful attention to this archive allows him to demonstrate how the “ascetic ideal is an occasionally submerged but permanent substratum of Eliot’s thought” (66), shaping his understanding of religion even long before he contemplated conversion.

Richards’s approach reveals how carefully attending to the particulars of the ascetic ideal can offer greater nuance and complexity in readings of Eliot’s most familiar works. For example, he reads Prufrock’s painful indecision against studies of mysticism that highlight “the behavior of individuals vacillating between moral knowledge and sexual desires” and the “profound strain upon the will” this causes (21, 22). Richards also explores the ascetic underpinnings of Eliot’s aesthetic formulations in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” connecting his claim about the artist’s “continual self-sacrifice” and “continual extinction of personality” to Underhill’s description of artistic and mystical progress in similar terms (56). In his reading of *Four Quartets*, the poem of Eliot’s that is most obviously invested in mystical theology, Richards’s familiarity with Eliot’s core sources allows him to parse its theological poetics with great precision. Tracing the workings of the ascetic ideal through the poem enables him to contextualize Eliot’s famous allusions to John of the Cross and Julian of Norwich and to clarify the parameters of the mystical knowledge that the poem invokes. Though mysticism has long been understood as a key facet of Eliot’s engagement with religion, Richards offers a concrete intellectual history of the topic that

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Poetry in a Global Age, by Jahan Ramazani

University of Chicago Press, 2020. 323
pages.

Reviewed by Kevin Rulo
Catholic University of America

Amid the increasing emphasis on interconnectivity, circulation, transnationalism, and globalization in literary studies, poetry stands out as the maverick in many ways among literary forms. To a greater extent than prose and drama, poetry tends toward the trenchantly particular, the bravely singular, the seminally local. Perhaps as a result, many of the more prominent theorists of global literature, authors like Franco Moretti and Pheng Cheah, have largely ignored it. Its perceived “untranslatability” has made it ill-suited for a burgeoning field of world literature that, according to David Damrosch’s definition, understands itself to be principally concerned with “writing that gains in translation” (213). Jahan Ramazani’s insight, therefore, in *Poetry in a Global Age*, is especially astute and timely: poetry is important and flourishing precisely because of its global perspective. Building on his previous work concerning postcolonial and transnational poetics, especially in *The Hybrid Muse* (2001) and *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), Ramazani makes a compelling case in this volume for poetry as necessarily “globally enmeshed” (5), even in those cases where it claims the granularity of the local as its primary allure. And just as his previous projects have been a boon for work exploring new temporalities and geographies, this book promises to do the same for world studies of poetry across a variety of globally informed methodologies and multi-disciplinary frameworks. Ramazani’s expansion of discipline and method, and his forays into various debates related to globality (such as those found in tourism studies, multilingualism, modernist studies, and ecocriticism) distinguishes this latest installment of his work on postnational literatures. What has remained constant across these books are his incisive historical-formalist readings and his dazzling range (enough authors are

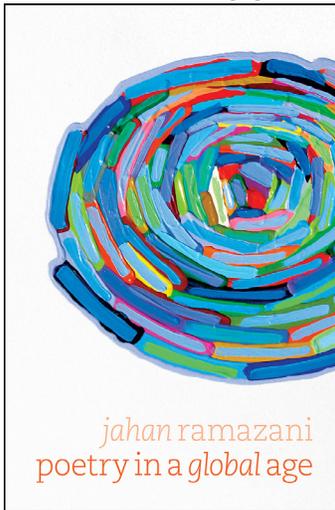
treated in the book, by my count around fifty, to provide good basis for a tub-thumping anthology of global poetry).

While *Poetry in a Global Age* covers the late-nineteenth century to the contemporary period, its structure is not chronological but conceptual. Early chapters range from examination of the “cosmopolitan sympathies” among should-be enemies in poetry of and about the First World War (chapter 1) to matters of place and reference (localism and globality in writers like Lorine Niedecker and Agha Shahid Ali) in chapter 2; poetry and place in relation to tourist discourse in chapter 3; to postcolonial poetry’s connections with modernism (chapter 4). Middle chapters (6-8) center on individual canonical poets like W. B. Yeats (and engagements with Asian cultures), Wallace Stevens (in relation to eco-global thought), and Seamus Heaney (with his “post-Enlightenment cosmopolitanism”). The final two chapters zoom out again to consider first multilingualism comparatively in a cross-section of authors from Derek Walcott to Kamau Brathwaite to James Merrill (here using the lens of code-switching, taken from linguistics) and then poetry’s relevance to the field of world literary studies, explored in questions of translation, about which more will be said below. The concluding epilogue theorizes the lyric anew as “intergeneric,” dialogical, “open to worlds beyond nation, locality, region, or hemisphere” and therefore

as a unique site for the expanding perspectives of literary studies in our moment (245). As can be seen from even this brief summary, *Poetry in a Global Age* formally enacts the pleasures of vast multiplicity and convergent interdependence for which it argues.

Among the book’s many merits are the close readings which, teeming from its dense pages, are uniformly insightful. Ramazani is either introducing us to poets who deserve a wider audience and showing us why—as in his explication of contemporary Jamaican author Lorna Goodison’s poem of creative awakening “Quest,” about her first encountering Eliot’s *Journey of the Magi* in school—or reconceiving some aspect of long-studied figures with a fresh angle or a new context, as he does in reading Elizabeth Bishop’s “Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance” in light of tourism studies. Of particular interest to readers

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PUBLIC SIGHTINGS

Compiled by David Chinitz

Peachy. Virginia's highly regarded Inn at Little Washington (about 70 miles west of Washington, DC) now offers a dessert called "Do I Dare to Eat a Peach?" The Inn's "Gastronaut's Menu" explains: "Each hand-painted fruit is filled with a compote of local Virginia peaches, surrounded by a peach mousse, resting on a brown butter financier, sauced with a splash of lemongrass and raspberry consommé." The dessert comes with a card that reads: "T. S. Eliot's hauntingly beautiful poem, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' inspired the name for our new, faux peach dessert. [Here it quotes three lines, ending with 'Do I dare to eat a peach?'] No one need fear eating this fantasy version of our favorite fruit."

The glitter of her jewels. Alighieri Jewelry is offering more than 50 items in its "[Love in the Wasteland](#)" series, associated with Eliot's "infernal depictions of post-war London.... This collection, with its links and grounding anchor shapes, invites you to find pockets of love, in friendship and connection in the midst of our modern day waste land."

What else is in the collection? Well, pick your favorite line from the poem, and there's probably something:

- The Memory and Desire Necklace (3)
- The Heap of Broken Images Bracelet (22)
- The Red Rock Necklace (25)
- The Clairvoyant Necklace (43)
- The Those Are Pearls That Were His Eyes Necklace (48)
- The Belladonna Earrings (49)
- The Unreal City Bracelet (60)
- The Burnished Throne Necklace (77)
- The Fisher King Necklace (189)
- The Violet Hour Earrings (215)
- The Phoenician Earrings (312)
- The Nebulous Whirlpool Necklace (318)
- The Distant Mountain Earrings (327)
- The Tale of the Cicada Necklace (353)
- The Flash of Lightning Necklace (393)
- The Pivotal Decision Necklace (403—but its key shape implies 411-14)
- The Aethereal Rumour Earrings (416)

And if you can't find what you're looking for, you might just settle for Alighieri's aptly named Wasteland Choker. ([shop.alighieri.co.uk](#), 7 Dec. 2020)

Consider Shukla. If fine jewelry is beyond your means, try 1-India Family Mart, a chain of over 100 value retail stores in northeast India. CEO Jay Prakash Shukla told the *India Times* that he loves reading poetry, especially Eliot's, which he admires for its "amazing complexity" and disruptions of convention. He finds that poetry has an effect similar to what "an intense movie does to many: evokes catharsis, but with a lot more rhythm." Eliot himself may have said something along those lines. (*Economic Times/Panache*, 18 July 2020.)

Popular culture 1. "It was T. S. Eliot who wrote that 'humankind cannot bear very much reality.' He was talking about our ability to distract ourselves from the things that matter such as connection, understanding, spiritual awakening, and cheese. (OK, so I lied about the cheese.) . . . No, Eliot wasn't talking about reality TV. But if he was, I dare say he would have rewritten the line to state that humankind (by which I mean me) can bear a lot of reality." (Elizabeth Day, "How Billionaire House Hunters Saved My Sanity." *Daily Mail*, 6 Mar. 2021)

[Actually, the part about the cheese is no lie. As Eliot once said, "A part of the reason for living is the discovery of new cheeses."]



Popular culture 2. Title in the *TLS*: "Unreal Cities: Urban Architecture in Video Games and Anime Films," by En Liang Khong. (5 Feb. 2021)

Brexit concluded. Announcing the Brexit deal, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was full of quotations from British writers, beginning with the Beatles (she described the negotiations as "a long and winding road") and ending with Shakespeare ("Parting is such sweet sorrow") and finally this: "But to use a line from T. S. Eliot: 'What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning.' So to all the Europeans, I say: it is time to leave Brexit behind. Our future is made in Europe." (<https://ec.europa.eu>, 24 Dec. 2020)

Temptations

continued from page 2

“you” in “The Love Song” is merely some friend or companion, presumably of the male sex, whom the speaker is at that moment addressing, and that it has no emotional content whatsoever. I shall be glad if this simplifies the problem, because I have recently seen some quite astonishing over-interpretation of this poem. (*Poems* 1:376)

It is unclear how seriously we should take such an explanation, since it contributes so little to our understanding of the poem, though Eliot seems to be seriously attempting just such a cut-through-the-nonsense intervention. It is hard to credit that there is “no emotional content whatsoever” in an address to an intimate companion. In fact, the explanation smells suspiciously like a red herring. Given that generations of readers attest to the pathos of Prufrock’s address, and considering the time at which Eliot wrote to Smidt, one explanation is homosexual panic. A few years before writing this letter to Smidt, Eliot had begun a correspondence with his solicitors regarding John Peter’s article “A New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*,” threatening legal action if the article were disseminated any further. At issue was the interpretation of “homosexual passion” in the poem. Given the unsettling intimacy that “Prufrock” evokes, it is possible that Eliot’s explanation—a male “companion” whose relationship bears “no emotional content whatsoever”—may be seen as an attempt to shut down any suggestion of a homoerotic subtext.

I have chosen to set Eliot’s curious explanation of “Prufrock” beside the Prichard-Silvero connection because both illuminate the poet’s vexed relationship to queer discourse and identity. And here the Hale letters will offer even more revelations, such as Eliot’s comments on Stephen Spender. Surprisingly, Eliot admits to Hale that he feels “a curious physical attraction” towards Spender (letter of “Holy Saturday [Apr. 15] 1933”). That he freely admits to feeling a physical attraction to Spender may keep critics from dismissing Eliot as a reflexively homophobic poet. These letters may also help us understand the kinds of queer discourses, public and private, with which Eliot was comfortable: the John Peter affair shows us how closely he guarded his public reputation—the Labouchere amendment criminalizing homosexuality only began to be dismantled in 1967, and for the entirety of Eliot’s life, a slur of homosexuality could ruin a career.

So now I am winding my way around to my point about the temptations of the Hale archive. If there is one subject of human experience that makes a narrator unreliable, it is sex: the tortured desire, the shame and degradation, the gentle affection, the self-annihilating ecstasy shading into violence, the whole *St.-Augustine-Tristan-und-Isolde-Marquis-de-Sade* kit and caboodle. And the Hale letters are all about sex and longing. Chaste sex, certainly—a modest restraint and a principled (or Puritanical) refusal to cross certain boundaries were marked by Eliot’s Anglican opposition to divorce. Still, the letters throb with memory and desire, the recollection of physical gestures and breathless intimacies with Hale.

Eliot is not writing these letters in order to explain his poetry to posterity. The genre in which Eliot is writing is the love letter, not analytical criticism. And the rhetorical functions of the love letter include flattery, exaggeration, and seduction. Setting aside the cynical function of keeping a lover on the back burner, for an author of good faith the point of writing a love letter is to beguile the recipient or to reaffirm a shared love. And in this, Eliot succeeded. One of the marvels of the letters is that Hale at first tolerates this shower of attention, then finds herself falling in love.

The love letter is not a neutral zone in which casually dropped references to one’s work can be understood to have an objective value. And so this should give us pause when we come across the many moments when Eliot describes Hale’s alleged appearance in his poetry. To the expected lines from *Ash-Wednesday* and *Burnt Norton*, Eliot adds Pipit, the hyacinth girl from *The Waste Land*, and “La figlia che piange.” (Pipit? One is confounded.) And not just the lines that are explicit love lyrics or evocations of sensuality, but all of his poetry. Like a smitten lover, rather than a clear-headed biographer, Eliot claims in an early letter that all these poems reveal his maturing love for Hale, and he promises that he will always write primarily for her (letter of 3 Nov. 1930).

Because these claims about his work are embedded in love letters, such ardent declarations cannot be taken as face-value assertions of truth, as disinterested explanations of how and why Eliot wrote his poetry. When he claims that every line he has ever written was for Hale, we need to recall that such claims do not line up with what Eliot says in private letters from 1916-1930, what he says from 1947 onwards, and certainly not what he says in 1963, where Hale is testily dismissed as a “ghost.” Why should we privilege the Eliot of 1931-32 over the other Eliots with their equally insistent

Temptations

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claims? The forgivable error here is to imagine that an essential Eliotic self is accessible in the Hale letters that is accessible nowhere else. The literary-critical corollary to such a mistaken belief, then, would be to charge ahead as if the Hale letters were the Rosetta Stone of the poetry. Far in the future, we will look back at the Hale letters as being the key to Eliot's work in the same way we now consider the Fisher King myth as the key to *The Waste Land*: not something to be snubbed surely, but not the Holy Grail of Exegesis either.

For the moment though—while we're all relishing the bons mots, professions of love, casual gossip, and source revelations—there's no reason to rain on the parade. There are undeniable gems here, both tantalizing suggestions and hard facts that will change the historical record and the interpretive paths ahead. However, once the entire archive of letters is available and annotated, and a re-engineering of the source scholarship gets underway, we will need to keep in mind that these are love letters, and that Eliot's claims there about his identifications and sources will need to be weighed against other evidence. As Wimsatt and Beardsley warn in the conclusion of their "Intentional Fallacy," "critical inquiries are not settled by consulting the oracle."

"A Divided Man"

by Nancy K. Gish
University of Southern Maine

Reading Eliot's letters to Emily Hale is emotionally overwhelming: the language is passionate, even hyperbolic; the emotion is intense and on the surface; the claims of commitment and eternal love must put an end to any suggestion that she imagined or merely hoped for marriage. For years he groomed her to share his feelings with words of longing, promises, and repeated urgings that she trust him and believe he had always loved her and always would. She believed he loved her because he said so. She believed he would marry her if he were free because he told her he would. From 1930 to 1947, he sent a constant stream of letters full of his love and adoration, an emotional affair at long distance. Their relationship

developed into a mutual understanding with an exchange of rings and regular visits, with walks and talks and theater, and with poems he claimed were all about her but only she would know. And despite his equally constant piety and ideal of "purity," it was physical. Although he later denied ever having "sexual relations" with her, he seems to have considered that term to mean, simply and exclusively, copulation; holding her in his arms or on his knee, touching as they walked, kissing—her neck, her lips, her naked feet—remained within his realm of "propriety," even while married to Vivien. Yet he abandoned her, denied her, and, a second time, married another woman.



*Keepsake photo of Emily Hale, c. 1957,
gift to her friend Marjón Ornstein*

As late as September 1946, she is his "beloved woman," and his "Dearest, exasperating female," whom he loves and misses and longs for. In January 1947, he is still her "loving Tom." Yet, overnight, on January 22 when Vivien dies, he changes. By February 3, he cannot think of any future except just going on and feels an "intense dislike of sex in any form," and by February 14 he has "no resiliency or capacity for fresh adaptation." Years of love, permanent commitment, hopes for some future together simply dissolve. More disturbing, the letter he placed in the Harvard Library, to be read when the Hale letters were released, repudiated all he had said before. He denied loving her, claimed she would have killed the poet in him (after saying she would understand the real meaning of *Ash-Wednesday* and that *Burnt Norton* was obscure but really about her and that he would always write primarily for her), noted her "insensitiveness and bad taste" and her failure to value his opinions. And more. His letter systematically contradicts years of his claims, most of all any wish to marry her. Even the nightmare of his marriage to Vivien "saved" him from marrying Emily, though he had written that he would give his eyesight for that to be possible.

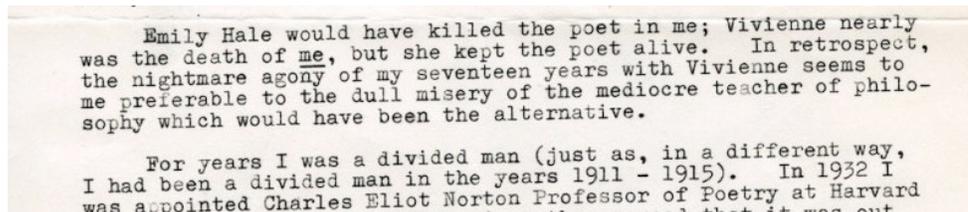
But the Eliot who adored Emily Hale metaphorically “died” after Vivien’s death, and an “other” self emerged, separate from and unlike the one who loved her. For both Emily and Eliot, his transformation raised the question of which self was “real.” His answer, despite their seemingly total difference, was “both.” Significantly, he had, over and over for years in his letters, used the word “real” for her, for him, and for their love. Nor was this transformation the first. Years before, in impassioned, even ecstatic language, he described his joy that she loved him: she has touched him, he wrote, and he is a new person, a new self—when he looks at himself he no longer sees the same face. His language is not about masks or disguises or intended choices but about being reborn, the language of psychological transformation. After such experience, and letter after letter attesting to this new person as the “real” self newly “flowering” because of their “real” love, it is difficult to understand his fierce repudiation in the Harvard letter.

Early reviews in *The Guardian* and the *New York Times* questioned what seems inexplicable, suggesting, in passive voice, that their love was “thwarted,” “doomed,” “a secret cruelty,” as if it were crushed by some external force. More to the point, James Parker in the *Atlantic* called the Harvard statement “horrible” and asked what made Eliot disavow the letters “so violently.” Explanation is not justification, but Eliot did explain. “I was,” he said, “a divided man,” echoing William James, Morton Prince, Pierre Janet, Roger Vittoz, and R. D. Laing as well as many other psychologists and psychiatrists in the early twentieth century. He knew their language and defined his own identity in their terms. His discovery that she returned his love at last, in 1936, evoked, he said, a “new life,” his own *vita nuova*. In 1947, when Vivien died, he suddenly became “a stranger,” one he did not fully know but one who predated his entire relationship with Emily Hale and was no longer a part of it.

Eliot’s contradictions and transformations, though in these letters they are specific to his relationship, were not new. Such doubling and shifting of selves appear in images throughout his poetry and are defined, by the psychologists he knew from as early as his graduate studies, as “dissociation” or “fragmentation” or “disintegration,” depending on their degree. Although I have published two studies of these images in the poetry,

I have not, before, seen direct language about himself, yet he hints at it in a 1933 *Criterion* “Commentary” when he describes Laforgue’s “*dédoublément* of the personality against which the subject struggles,” (*Prose* 4, 516). Or when, in “What Dante Means to Me,” he quoted from Baudelaire’s “Les Sept vieillards,” where a sinister old man multiplies himself seven times and ghosts accost passers-by in broad daylight, and commented: “I knew what that meant, because I had lived it before I knew that I wanted to turn it into verse on my own account” (*Prose* 7, 483). His long discussions of what he names the “dissociation of sensibility” make clear that this condition is both an aesthetic form and a psychological condition. In the Harvard letter, he traces his own experience of division back to 1911. In both that letter and his attempts to explain himself to Emily, he is explicit about himself. Moreover, despite his theory of impersonality, he insists in a letter that poems are to be spoken in one voice, and the voice is the poet’s own. If his poems are not confessional, they are deeply personal in ways we have yet to understand.

Eliot’s early and continuing use of language drawn from the psychology of doubling and multiplicity is evident even in the titles and definitions of his sources. “Double Personalities” is “Lecture IV” in



Eliot, “The Love of a Ghost for a Ghost,” from the [Houghton Library Blog](#)

Pierre Janet’s fifteen lectures on hysteria at Harvard in 1906; in the same year Morton Prince published his classic book, *The Dissociation of a Personality*; “The Divided Self” is “Lecture VIII” in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), where James focuses on the conflicts of a spiritual and physical self, a kind of “horrible duality,” and the sense that “natural good” is insufficient and false, an idea Eliot restates in letters. Ironically, R. D. Laing’s book, *The Divided Self*, was published in 1960, the year of Eliot’s Harvard letter. In Eliot’s treatment by Roger Vittoz, the source of what Vittoz diagnosed as neurasthenia was that we have both a “civilized” and a “primitive brain,” and the first must “control” the second. Eliot’s constant need for “control” reiterates the treatment he received. These words and phrases regularly appear

“A Divided Man”

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in his prose, especially the discussion of Metaphysical poets, and throughout his poems, where Stetson is a double, Tiresias is both “old man with wrinkled dug” and the typist, and the “first-met stranger in the waning dusk” is himself.

In his September 4, 1946 letter, just a few months before Vivien’s death, Eliot speaks of his continually developing love. What he now loves, he says, is “much more you and less merely my idea of you,” and “the real I belongs more completely to you than ever before.” By the following March, he warns Emily not to trust to any such self because he has never been one whole person. The “two aspects” of him that she recognizes are not the same: “it is not safe to say that one of them (the one you prefer) is the real person, and the other not.” In the letters after Vivien’s death, he does not deny any of what “he” had said before; he simply claims to be a different person. Though we do not have her voice, he quotes her use of the term “duality” and separates himself from the person he had claimed to be for seventeen years. Perhaps more difficult and more disturbing is that, although his second self knows and remembers the one she preferred, and feels guilt for deception and failures, this self feels no responsibility to live by them. As early as 1935, Eliot—happily anticipating another visit with Hale in two days—announced that he “should like us both to be like our real selves” and added that they both really know what that is. But in March 1947 he denies that both were “real” in any sense the second self now asserts: a “real” self would have to be someone who united both selves, someone she cannot know and he does not know himself.

Yet, in a complex sense, Eliot was telling the truth: he was not a single self, and his divisions appeared at times of extreme experience, whether of discovered love, when he became the new “Emily-Tom” in 1936, or the one she had never met in 1947. His oddly phrased claim that his letters were written by “an hallucinated man” and that over a thousand letters were merely from “a ghost for a ghost” is bizarre; they were real enough when he recalled her hair and mouth and dresses and kisses. Unless we assume Eliot merely lied—constantly and extravagantly and to what purpose?—we are left with the reality of both the self who repudiated Emily and the one who loved her, and who both told a truth. Just as he denied loving her, he claimed she would have killed the poet in him though as early as 1935 he wanted her to know that his “life and work” had

been “formed about” her. And even as late as 1947 he recalled all those summers visiting her at Campden as the happiest of his life, a “flowering” when he was in the garden. The poet of those years was “kept alive” by that idealized and strangely framed “love” of Emily Hale.

THE ASPERN PAPERS.

IN THREE PARTS. PART FIRST.

I.

I HAD taken Mrs. Prest into my confidence; in truth without her I should

to have lost, in their long exile, all national quality, besides having had, as their name implied, some French strain in their origin), who asked no favors

“The Aspern Papers in Reverse”: The Hale Letters As Dramatic Monologue

Jennie Hann

In the introduction to the first volume of her late husband’s correspondence, Valerie Eliot casts Emily Hale’s decision to bequeath to Princeton the 1,131 letters she received from the poet T. S. Eliot between 1930 and 1957 as a case of “*The Aspern Papers in reverse*” (*Letters* 1: xvi). I have been fascinated by this remark for years, so on 31 December 2019, as I made the three-hour drive to Princeton for the opening of the Hale archive two days later, it was, unsurprisingly, at the front of my mind. In fact, “The Aspern Papers” had been part of the motivation for my trip. Having written my dissertation on Henry James’s 1888 novella—published, incidentally, the year Eliot was born—I was interested in how both Hale’s bequest and Eliot’s reaction to it seemed to me to replicate aspects of James’s plot. As for “reverse,” well, this I found more puzzling.

Often brandished as a cautionary tale for biographers, “The Aspern Papers” recounts the obsessive quest of an unscrupulous literary historian, a man willing to stop at almost nothing to access the letters renowned poet Jeffrey Aspern sent to the ill-treated mistress who inspired his most famous lyrics. As the miles and minutes passed, I couldn’t help comparing my own need to know just how the drama around Eliot’s letters would unfold with the monomania of the Aspern narrator. The following days

did little to diminish my unease in this regard. I arrived at Firestone Library believing I'd be there a few days, maybe a week at most—sufficient time, I reasoned, to assess what I expected to be a mob scene and (if the mad crowd didn't engulf me first) to peruse any remarks Eliot had made about the disposition of his papers. Such commentary, I figured, was likely to date from around the time of the Hale bequest in 1956. For this reason, I decided to start with Box 14 and read backward chronologically—"in reverse," as it were.

Most of my calculations proved incorrect. Mercifully, perhaps a dozen researchers turned up the first week; miraculously, the archive turned out to be richer than I could have imagined. I ended up staying in Princeton for the whole month of January, then making several return visits. Truth be told, I could not stay away. Looking back, I'm struck by the sense of having gone into quarantine early; indeed, before the pandemic, I spent a total of forty days (*quaranta giorni*) in the Special Collections Reading Room, flushed with what Derrida calls "Archive Fever."

For me, reading Eliot's letters to Hale was like a fever dream. Throughout the month and a half I was immersed in them, I could think of nothing else, and yet I struggled to come up with a way to describe their transfixing power. In retrospect, it's clear that I stayed at Princeton not so much because Eliot obsesses constantly over what will happen to his letters (though he does) but because I became mesmerized by the endless *Sturm und Drang* of the relationship conveyed from his point of view. One moment, Eliot declares that his bond with Hale rests on an intersubjective bedrock so deep that nothing requires explication (1 September 1939). In this letter, composed in the shadow of Hale's departure at the outset of World War II, he seems to feel a need to reassure himself that he and she are experiencing the relationship in precisely the same way; he makes it sound like they are one person. A few weeks later, however, this perfect mutual understanding has been replaced by an insistence on perpetual misunderstanding; Eliot frets at length about whether he and Hale have ever been on the same page about anything. After all, given the constraints of language, how can two people ever really be sure they comprehend one another? (7 October 1939). I was fascinated by these abrupt fluctuations, spellbound by Eliot's ability to weave threadbare contradictions into an elaborate tapestry of self-justification. At a certain point, it occurred to me that I was reading the world's longest dramatic monologue.

In *The Poetry of Experience* (Norton, 1957), his seminal account of the technology of the dramatic monologue, Robert Langbaum argues that what distinguishes the

dramatic monologue from other poetic sub-genres is the fact that its meaning depends utterly on "the reader's relation to it" (78). Langbaum demonstrates that the marquee examples of the form—Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" and Eliot's "Prufrock" are two of the most well-known examples—achieve their peculiar force by aggravating the reader's feelings of conflict about the speaker. According to Langbaum, this conflict manifests as an irresolvable tension between the urge to sympathize and the need to judge. The dramatic monologue reaches its fullest expression, he writes, when the split between these two impulses is most pronounced, as, for example, when "the speaker is in some way reprehensible" (105). As readers, we're aware of this reprehensibility, yet the poem, because of its status as a monologue, requires that we accede to the speaker's own perspective on the events he describes. In essence, the monologist seduces us, holds us in his thrall; morality is "the price we pay for the privilege of appreciating" such an "extraordinary man" (83).

Technically, of course, the term "dramatic monologue" is used to refer to the utterances of a speaker who is clearly not the poet himself. Needless to say, Eliot's letters to Hale elide that distinction: deeply, unabashedly personal, they render in exquisite detail the day-to-day life, the everyday turmoil, of a celebrated man of letters. There is no mistaking the fact that they are the records of an important poet who was aware of his own importance, both for his own cultural moment and for posterity. Still, it seems to me there is much to be gained from considering them in the context of theories of the dramatic monologue, and not only because it was the dominant mode of Eliot's early verse and, as Langbaum asserts, he "contributed more to the development of the form than any poet since Browning" (77).

Significantly, several of the letters Eliot wrote to Hale express a concern about sounding monologic (see, for example, 15 October 1939; see also 21 December 1942). Eliot surely knew that reciprocity is fundamental to the concept of correspondence; it's built, in fact, into the word itself, which combines the Latin roots *cor* ("together") and *respondere* ("to answer"). He seems to have known, too, that the intensely self-focused quality of his dispatches to Hale was at odds with the ideal of mutuality he, at times, desperately insisted formed the core of their relationship. Still, his monologic



“The Aspern Papers in Reverse”

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discursions persist, page after page of single-spaced, twelve-point type, often with very few paragraph breaks. And we should not forget that he ultimately instructed Peter du Sautoy to destroy her side of the conversation in 1963.

Eliot seems to have had a knack for getting the last word. “*The Aspern Papers in reverse*” turns out to have been his turn of phrase. On 2 January 2020, the same day the Hale letters were opened to researchers in Princeton, Harvard’s Houghton Library released a statement Eliot had composed some sixty years earlier detailing his view of the matter. Of Hale’s decision to give the correspondence to Princeton, Eliot writes, “it seemed to me that her disposing of the letters in that way at that time threw some light upon the kind of

interest she took, or had come to take, in these letters. *The Aspern Papers in reverse*.” In this context, it’s clear that the remark is intended to disparage; by casting doubt on Hale’s motives, the allusion to James serves as an aspersion.

Nevertheless, since it’s not clear what it would mean for James’s story to be “reversed,” the allegation does more to beguile than to revile. Ultimately, the key to understanding *The Aspern Papers* lies neither with the poet nor the woman who safeguarded his missives but rather with the narrator—the single-minded researcher who “tells his story with such candor and ingenuousness that he reveals his own duplicity, his easy rationalizations,” as James biographer Leon Edel puts it (*Life of HJ* 3: 220). In other words, *The Aspern Papers* exploits the technique of the dramatic monologue. To a fascinating degree, Eliot’s letters to Hale do the same.

true, before she knew that I was going to get married. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that her disposing of the letters in that way at that time threw some light upon the kind of interest which she took, or had come to take, in these letters. The Aspern Papers in reverse.

Eliot, “*The Love of a Ghost for a Ghost*,” from the [Houghton Library Blog](#)

Figures in the Carpet: A Choice of Kipling’s Verse and Occult Autobiography

Bruce Redford
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In a document made public on the day his letters to Emily Hale were unsealed, T. S. Eliot declares emphatically: “I cannot conceive of writing my autobiography.” Nevertheless, he goes on to do just that, albeit on a miniature scale. In his cameo self-portrait, Eliot blends the confessional with the polemical in an effort to counter-balance, even to displace, the full-length portrait that emerges from the Hale letters. Central to this revisionary enterprise is a terse but forceful allusion to Henry James: Hale’s gift to Princeton, Eliot claims, amounts to “*The Aspern Papers in reverse*.”

This allusive gesture—at once shocking and subtle, compact and expansive—aligns James’s story with Eliot’s life story in several ways. It affiliates Hale with the avaricious Juliana Bordereau, who seeks to sell at an excessive price a miniature of her long-dead lover, the famous poet Jeffrey Aspern. To invoke “*The Aspern Papers*,” moreover, is to suggest a parallel between Hale and Juliana’s niece, the faded spinster Miss Tita: as the unscrupulous narrator plots to obtain Aspern’s love letters, Tita puts pressure on him to marry her. The allusive force field also includes the implicit charge that Hale has behaved like the plotter himself, a “publishing scoundrel” who is “full of stratagems and spoils.” In quest of protection against such stratagems, Eliot devises a spoiler alert.

The rhetoric of the Harvard document is allusive but not elusive: Eliot writes like a wounded surgeon who uses his scalpel obtrusively and unsparingly. His customary practice, by contrast, is less incisive: in Eliot’s critical essays and even in many of his letters, the reader is invited by indirection to find directions out. This

guarded approach to self-disclosure might well be called “occult autobiography.” Perhaps the most striking example of the genre is *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse*, published in December 1941. The combination of idiosyncratic anthology—*A Choice* signifying *My Choice*—and expansive introduction allows Eliot to conceal self-portrait within portrait, to play a magisterial game of hide-and-go-seek. His description of the project is also an invitation: “We look, in a poet as well as in a novelist, for what Henry James called the Figure in the Carpet” (*Prose* 6:217).

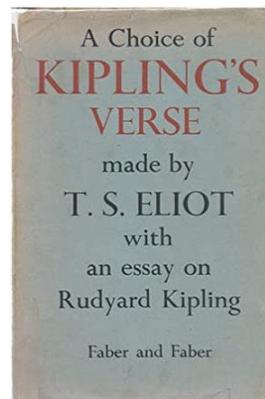
Why turn to Kipling in time of war? Two letters to John Hayward provide an external clue. In the first (27 June 1941) Eliot describes preparations for the anthology and revisions of *Little Gidding*, lamenting his lack of progress on the latter while describing the former as “a kind of War Work.” In the second letter (5 August 1941) he returns to both endeavors, this time singling out Kipling’s “They” as an important source for *Burnt Norton* and casting himself allusively as Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, the serio-comic Bengali from *Kim*. These letters reinforce evidence internal to *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse*, evidence that closely intertwines Eliot’s critical and poetic enterprises. As elsewhere in his oeuvre, Eliot throws up a protective screen—asserting in the introduction, for example, that “part of the fascination of this subject is in the exploration of a mind so different from one’s own” (*Prose* 6:218). However, a close reading of the anthology undercuts this claim by revealing that profound affinities far outweigh fundamental differences.

Signs of close kinship permeate the text. At the outset, for example, Eliot insists that Kipling’s “verse and his prose are inseparable” and that in both mediums he cared passionately for “the craft of words” (*Prose* 6:210, 216). He goes on to characterize this “integral prose-and-verse writer” as “the most elusive of subjects: no writer has been more reticent about himself, or given fewer openings for curiosity, for personal adoration or dislike” (*Prose* 6:219). Filtering Kipling’s poetic oeuvre through his own, especially the ongoing project of *Four Quartets*, Eliot then draws attention to “a queer gift of second sight, of transmitting messages from elsewhere” (*Prose* 6:222). The visionary spirit he discerns in Kipling exalts “a harmony with nature *which must be re-established* if the truly Christian imagination is to be recovered by Christians” (*Prose* 6:230, my italics). Although Eliot acknowledges that Kipling’s is “not a Christian vision,” he chooses, by means of a hortatory relative clause, to blend their prophetic voices.

Scholars such as Lyndall Gordon have identified specific passages in the introductory essay that not only echo but also comment upon *Four Quartets*, especially *East Coker*. Indeed Gordon goes so far as to observe, in a footnote to *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, “How curiously TSE’s Kipling and EC merge” (639 n 383). That merger is consummated when Eliot comments upon Kipling’s fascination with the making of the English landscape: “Kipling, especially in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*, aims I think to give at once a sense of the antiquity of England, of the number of generations and peoples who have laboured the soil and in turn been buried beneath it, and of the contemporaneity of the past” (*Prose* 6:229). The elective affinities on display in this passage also condition the structure of the entire project, whose formal patterns reinforce its thematic preoccupations.

“In my end is my beginning”: the same applies to Eliot’s introductory essay, whose final section starts off, “I return to the beginning.” So too the anthology proper is book-ended by elegiac poems (“L’Envoi” at the outset, “The Appeal” at the close) that speak to one another across the span of the collection. In fact Eliot largely discards linear chronology in favor of what he calls a structure “analogous to musical form.” This structure is reinforced by Eliot’s preference for hymn-like lyrics such as “Recessional”—a poem “in which something breaks through from a deeper level . . . something which has the true prophetic inspiration” (*Prose* 6:217). For Eliot, such break-throughs also occur in poems devoted to celebrating and recreating a numinous *genius loci*. In the scene he sketches for Hayward on 5 August 1941, it is easy to imagine the typescript of *Little Gidding* in proximity to a marked-up volume of Kipling, which Eliot has opened to “Sussex”: “So to the land our hearts we give / Till the sure magic strike, / And Memory, Use, and Love make live / Us and our fields alike.”

I return to the beginning. All the available cues suggest that, in key autobiographical texts, James, Kipling, and Hale combine to form figures in Eliot’s carpet—or, in the language of Ezra Pound, “radiant nodes or clusters.” The node in Harvard’s document, radiant in heat more than in light, grows even more significant when we take note of a second allusion to James, this time to “The Jolly Corner”: “But I came to



see that my love for Emily was the love of a ghost for a ghost, and that the letters I had been writing to her were the letters of an hallucinated man, a man vainly trying to pretend to himself that he was the same man that he had been in 1914.” Eliot made use of James’s devastating ghost story in *The Family Reunion*; here he casts himself, hauntingly, as a bifurcated Spencer Brydon and Emily Hale as a disembodied Alice Staverton. In the occult autobiography of *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse*, Hale completes the node, so to speak, by means of those passages and poems that summon up *Four Quartets*.

In these pages John Whittier-Ferguson has wisely reminded us that archival material, however revelatory,

should not be viewed as a privileged source of insight into complex works of art (see Spring 2020). The Harvard self-portrait needs to be handled with care, especially given the circumstances of its production and dissemination. So too such public texts as *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse* wear masks that both promote and disguise private revelation. The truest autobiography is also the most feigning—to adapt what Touchstone says about poetry in *As You Like It*. Read in tandem with the Eliot oeuvre, what the Eliot archive can do is refresh our vision and invigorate our mission, thereby bringing into sharper relief the figures in the carpet.

REVIEWS

Eliot’s Ascetic Ideal

continued from page 6

excavates its presence across his work, in places that are sometimes expected but other times surprising.

His approach illuminates Eliot’s lesser-known work as well. Attention to the subtle details of mystical theology allows Richards to contrast the parodies of asceticism proffered in the poems “Saint Sebastian” and “Narcissus” with the more earnest appearance of the ascetic ideal in “Gerontion,” where the speaker’s torpidity is seen as, in part, the result of his failed asceticism. Richards dwells at length on the plays *Sweeney Agonistes* and *Murder in the Cathedral* as well, making the case that the underlying structure of each is an Aristophanic drama of competing ideals, and, further, that in each case the ideal that the protagonists represent is essentially ascetic. This suggests that the ultimate drama being staged in each is not an interpersonal conflict between characters but an allegorical collision of competing principles—asceticism and worldliness.

Richards’s work also enables us to see how Eliot’s 1927 conversion to Anglo-Catholicism emerges against the backdrop of his longer-term interest in the ascetic ideal, beginning as early as 1909. The third chapter reveals how the matrix of intellectual conservatism evoked in Eliot’s famous declaration that he was an “Anglo-Catholic in religion, a classicist in literature, and a royalist in politics” is rooted in the ascetic ideal, with each term in the triad reinforcing the others. For example, literary classicism and royalist politics can both be seen as requiring the submission of oneself to the power of an external ideal, and the artistic process

requires an “extinction of personality” that converges with the practice of a Christian ascetic seeking access to a mystical community.

The decision to leave *Ash-Wednesday* out of this account seems like an odd omission. Richards justifies its absence by explaining that the poem takes up the ascetic ideal only superficially and that “the concept of turning is an image of conversion and not asceticism,” making it a “very religious” poem but one wherein “the ascetic ideal is not strongly present” (4, 5). Still, given the Underhill quotation above that articulates an integral relationship between conversion and asceticism, I would have been interested in a more sustained exploration of how the ascetic ideal functions differently in *Ash-Wednesday*. In particular, the poem’s opening litany beginning “Because I do not hope . . .” feels not dissimilar to the lines in *East Coker* (“I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope / For hope would be hope of the wrong thing”) that Richards examines at length (144-46). Additionally, the paradoxical “Rose of memory / Rose of forgetfulness” image in the second section of *Ash-Wednesday* resonates with the Dantean trope of the mystical rose which Richards explores in relation to “The Hollow Men” (111) and *Little Gidding* (163). Such suggestive correspondences make me wish Richards had offered his reading of the ascetic ideal in *Ash-Wednesday*, if only as an illustrative contrast to the other poems where it is more central.

The story of T. S. Eliot’s development as a poet and critic has long been understood as inextricable from the story of his ever-evolving relationship to institutional Christianity. Books by Ronald Schuchard, Barry Spurr, and Jewel Spears Brooker, among many others, have parsed the intersections of these two stories and explored

REVIEWS

their mutual implications, and Richards's book makes a valuable contribution to this area of Eliot studies. In the end, "ideal" proves to be an essential element of his title. The final goal of Christian ascetic practice—union with the Divine and with others—motivates and complicates Eliot's theological poetics, even though it is understood as ultimately more an ideal than a reality, always pursued but never attained. Richards's study makes this complexity newly visible, opening up opportunities for us to return to Eliot's poetry and prose with a more nuanced sense of the theology that alternatively underlies or resists it.

Poetry in a Global Age

continued from page 7

of Eliot is the section "T. S. Eliot, French, and (Un) Translatability" (chapter ten), which engages questions of transability and world literature. Ramazani shows convincingly the value of Eliot's writings on the subject of translation (including portions of a not-yet-published letter from Eliot to a translator of his poetry, the French Jesuit Jean Mambrino). Ramazani unveils how Eliot, writing against the prevailing thought in his time, argues that translation has the potential to enrich poetic expression in the target language—illustrating just one of the ways in which lyric poetry can elicit "gains in translation" similar to those associated with narrative genres of world literature. Further into his

chapter on Eliot, Ramazani builds his reading of "Mélange Adultère de Tout" around the fascinating question not of whether Eliot is an American or a British poet but of whether and in what ways he can be considered a French poet, demonstrating thereby the gains that can be had also in "nontranslation." "Eliot's own poems in French," he argues persuasively, "embrace French traditions and techniques built up in the language over hundreds of years" (230). In so doing, Ramazani unearths the formal nuances of French prosody and versification in the poem, making evident how Eliot's adoption of French frees him to experiment with a "costume-shuffling globalism" (233) that makes for playful self-mockery of shifting identities and geographies.

Eliot also makes various cameos throughout the book, including a fascinating consideration of the Kashmir-born poet Agha Shahid Ali's debts to him, and these consistent references manifest Eliot's continued central role in the poetry of the last hundred years, a role that does not diminish when our lens expands to the global. The same could be said of the modernism of which Eliot was so much a fixture. Among the many luminous insights worthy of Ramazani's erudite brilliance that readers will find in the pages of *Poetry in a Global Age* is its account of the extent to which early and high modernism was already a global modernism enriched by the cross-pollinations and exchanges of an increasingly cosmopolitan, interconnected globe—just one of many reasons why this book is well worth careful study.

ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Two candidates received nominations this winter for two positions on the Society board. Since the election was uncontested, no vote was held. We welcome our new board members (but longtime Society members) **Megan Quigley** and **Ria Banerjee**, whose three-year terms begin July 1. We would also like to thank retiring board members Cyrena Pondrom and Nancy Gish for their service to the Board, the Eliot Society, and to the profession.

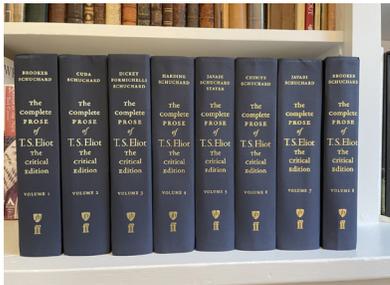
Members may also make nominations for honorary membership and for distinguished service awards. These nominations should be made to the president two months before the next board meeting, on Sunday, September 19, 2021.



Hydraulic Press Brick detail

Resources

The co-editors of the online edition of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition* proudly announce the publication of the corresponding eight-volume print edition by Johns Hopkins University Press, now for sale in sets (each weighing 25.4 lbs) in North American countries only. Durably and beautifully bound in dark blue boards with gold lettering, the volumes are generously illustrated (in color and grayscale), the texts and notes are printed in very readable fonts, and the pagination is exactly



matched with the online edition for accuracy of citation and ease of transference between the digital and print volumes. The editors are also excited to announce that, this summer, Project MUSE will launch a full HTML rendition of all eight volumes, featuring a mobile-ready, adjustable reading interface, PDF and EPUB downloads (for reading away from the computer), linked cross-references and annotations, and extensive search capabilities and refinement options, making new research in Eliot's vast prose archive even more efficient and accessible to scholars worldwide.

Sarah Coogan was the lucky winner of our October Conference drawing for this eight-volume set.

Our thanks to **Michael Webster** at Grand Valley State University, who has brought to our attention a number of resources pertaining to Eliot that have been digitized by the British Library. They are gathered on the Library's [Eliot page](#); additional resources are linked [here](#).

The Spanish research group TEATREL-SP ("T. S. Eliot's Drama from Spain: Translation, Critical Study, Performance") has developed a website (<http://teatrel.linhd.uned.es/>) and blog (<https://eliotdrama.hypotheses.org/>) dedicated to Eliot's drama. International T. S. Eliot Society members **Teresa Gibert**, **Dídac Llorens**, **Viorica Patea** and **Fabio Vericat** are among the researchers involved.

Conferences and Calls for Papers

Please join **Marjorie Perloff**, **Janine Utell**, and other Eliot scholars online for a **free mini-conference** organized by **Nancy Gish** (U of Southern Maine) for the [32nd Annual Conference of the American Literature Association](#). This event, organized last year and postponed due to Covid, will be held via Zoom on **June 4, 2021, from 1:00 to 3:15 p.m. Eastern time**, with live presentations and Q&A to be recorded for the ALA conference in July. For more information, please contact Nancy K. Gish, nancy.gish@maine.edu. Zoom link: <https://uncg.zoom.us/j/98558902184>

Session I: 1:00-2:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Translations and Relations: The 21st-Century *Waste Land*

- **William Best**, U of Calgary: "The Digital *Waste Land*: 2020"
- **Susan Edmunds**, Syracuse U: "Eliot at the Border: Reimagining *The Waste Land* as a 'Translation Space'"
- **Marjorie Perloff**, Stanford U: "To Translate or Not to Translate: Foreign Language Citations in *The Waste Land*"

Session II: 2:15-3:15 p.m. Eastern Time

Tradition and the Individual Life: Eliot's Sources

- **Kate E. Jorgensen**, U of New Hampshire: "The Darkness of God? Eliot and the Miltonic Allusions of *East Coker III*"
- **Janine Utell**, Widener U: "Delivering the Impossible: Voice, Affect, and Intimacy in the Eliot/Emily Hale Letters"
- **Frances Dickey**, U of Missouri: "His Heart on His Sleeve: Eliot, Emily Hale, and the Personal Work of Art"

The International T. S. Eliot Society will host a panel at [SAML A 2021](#) (to be held in Athens, GA from November 4-6); the panel's theme will be "Eliot Networking and Eliot Distancing." The conference theme is "social networks, social distances," and this makes an apt occasion for considering Eliot's own efforts to develop networks (aesthetic, critical, personal, ideological, etc.) and/or to distance himself from various ideas, people, movements, etc.

throughout his complex career. The panel falls on the 100th anniversary of Eliot and Pound's collaboration on *The Waste Land*, itself an excellent focus for explorations of networks, but the panel invites papers on any subject related to Eliot. Please submit a 250 word abstract and brief bio to **Craig Woelfel** (cwoelfel@flagler.edu) by June 15th.

The International T. S. Eliot Society is accepting proposals for a panel at the 2021 [Midwest MLA conference](#) in Milwaukee, to be held November 4-7, 2021. Any proposal on a subject reasonably related to Eliot studies will be considered. Papers drawing from relatively recently released materials from the *Complete Prose* or the *Letters* would be especially welcome. If you are interested in participating, please send abstract proposals (up to 250 words) to **Edward Upton** (edward.upton@valpo.edu). Please also forward a CV and brief biographical statement. Submissions must be received no later than May 15th.

Faber and the T. S. Eliot estate are, as the [headline on their website](#) proclaims, welcoming "responses to *The Waste Land*" during 1922: "To mark *The Waste Land*'s centenary, the Eliot estate would like to invite theatre-makers, dramatists, choreographers, video artists, composers and artists to respond to the poem." The estate and the press extend a general invitation to creative responders: "Feel free to write to thewasteland@setcopyrights.co.uk, and the Eliot estate, together with Faber, will make every effort to consider each application carefully and be back in touch."

Publications and Conversations

Congratulations to **Jahan Ramazani** on *Poetry in a Global Age*, published by Chicago UP in 2020 and glowingly reviewed by Kevin Rulo in this issue of *Time Present*.

Our thanks to **Paul Keers**, who announces the publication of this year's edition of the *Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society UK*. Edited by Scott Freer, the essays in the 2021 edition cover a wide span of T. S. Eliot's literary career, from his early female portrait poems (1908) to *The Cocktail Party* (1947). For details about this issue, as well as information about how to obtain a copy, please visit the "Journal" tab on the [Society's website](#).

Karen Christensen has recently recorded an interview with Xiaolong Qiu, a novelist and poet who first

translated Eliot into Chinese in the 1980s. The conversation ranges widely, from the experience of translating Eliot's poetry to the challenges of telling stories set in China. The interview may be found at [this link](#).

Marianne Thormählen has published two essays referencing Eliot in *English Studies*: "[Reassigning 'Modernism'](#): The Case for Adopting the Concept as a Period Designation in the Study of British Poetry" (2019) and "[Edward Marsh and Modern English Poetry](#)" (2020).

Cheers to **Joanna Rzepa**, who has just published *Modernism and Theology: Rainer Maria Rilke, T. S. Eliot, Czesław Miłosz* (Palgrave Macmillan 2021). With two substantial chapters on Eliot, her book examines the interface between literary and theological modernisms. It provides a comprehensive account of literary responses to the modernist crisis in Christian theology from a transnational and interdenominational perspective.

For further reading and listening on the Eliot / Hale archive:

- **Frances Dickey**, "[May the Record Speak](#): The Correspondence of T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale" *Twentieth-Century Literature* 66, no. 4 December 2020 (431-62).
- **Frances Dickey** and **John Whittier-Ferguson**, "[Joint Property, Divided Correspondents](#): The T. S. Eliot-Emily Hale Letters." *Modernism/modernity* Print Plus, Jan 29, 2021. Volume 5, Cycle 4.
- **Matt Seybold**, Director of the [Center for Mark Twain Studies](#), also hosts the Center's podcast, "[The American Vandal](#)" (primarily but not entirely focused on matters pertaining to Twain). Matt invited **Megan Quigley**, **Frances Dickey**, and **John Whittier-Ferguson** for a conversation that he shaped into a podcast: "[Unsealing the Archive of T. S. Eliot's Love Letters to Emily Hale](#)" (posted 16 March 2021).

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

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Anita Patterson, Cyrena Pondrom, Nancy Hargrove, and Julia Daniel



Members of the Society gathered at the "Wheels" sculpture in St. Louis, 2019

41st Annual Meeting of the International T. S. Eliot Society

October 1-3, 2020

Illustrating Eliot: The *Ariel Poems* and Edward McKnight Kauffer

In 1962, T. S. Eliot insisted that he would “not allow any artist to illustrate” his work, because, “I want my readers to get their impressions from the words alone and from nothing else.” It is a conviction that sits well with our general impression of the poet, adhering to a poetic formalism of Eliot’s own design. However, several of Eliot’s poems were illustrated or decorated over the years by some of the most renowned illustrators and graphic designers of the time, including David Jones, Gertrude Hermes, and Edward McKnight Kauffer. Furthermore, Eliot’s sustained correspondence and friendship with the American artist and illustrator, Kauffer, underscores a cross-fertilisation of ideas about inter-art aesthetics, the relationship between word and image.

This paper explores the collaboration between Eliot and Kauffer from 1927 to 1931 in a series of illustrated poetry pamphlets called the *Ariel Poems*, sold by Faber and Gwyer as Christmas greetings. In the first series, Faber issued four pamphlets with individual poems by Eliot and accompanying cubist and abstract illustrations by Kauffer: *The Journey of the Magi* (1927), *A Song for Simeon* (1928), *Marina* (1930) and *Triumphal March* (1931). I contextualise the Bloomsbury group’s aesthetics of illustration and book design in the art writing of Roger Fry, which praised but also influenced Kauffer’s burgeoning illustrative work. Kauffer engaged with, interpreted and adapted a hitherto uncharacteristic visual language employed by Eliot in the *Ariel Poems*. In the aftermath of *The Waste Land* and Eliot’s conversion to Anglicanism, the poet began to articulate the importance of the image and epiphany, beginning with the Christian subject matter of his *Ariel Poems* but extending into his literary criticism in the 1932-33 Charles Eliot Norton lecture series delivered at Harvard. Taken together, Eliot’s poetry, prose, and correspondence of the period elaborate the importance of the image and the visual significance of poetic language. No longer words alone but words in search of images and illustration.

Jack Quin
Trinity College Dublin

“A strange and pleasant literary sensation”: Eliot and the Poetry of Alan Seeger

My paper explores the poetry of Alan Seeger and its relationship to the quatrain poems of T. S. Eliot. Alan Seeger’s war poetry retains a certain interest even today—especially in France where he is memorialized—but Seeger’s wider poetic oeuvre has been largely forgotten. Seeger’s connection with Eliot goes back to his Harvard days, where the two were classmates (and roommates for a time). After graduation, Seeger moved to Paris, wrote and dallied, and, true Francophile that he was, volunteered for the French Foreign Legion when war broke out in 1914. He was killed in battle two years later. His *Poems* appeared posthumously in 1917, and Eliot reviewed them, anonymously, that same year in *The Egoist*. While Seeger was far too conventional a poet for the liking of his modernist former classmate, Eliot nonetheless expressed appreciation for Seeger’s serious and “dignified” verse. Ricks’s notes to *The Poems of T. S. Eliot* and Robert Crawford’s recent biography have already considered briefly the potential impacts of Seeger on Eliot’s poetry. In this paper, I join with and expand significantly on these initial efforts by offering wider and more thorough treatments of Seeger’s poetry and their cultural contexts in connection with Eliot’s verse. In so doing, I will provide a fuller account of the extent and interest of Eliot’s use of Seeger’s poetry in poems like “Sweeney Among the Nightingales” and of its importance for our understanding of Eliot’s work. Comparative analysis of Seeger’s non-war poetry with Eliot’s quatrains (in light of Eliot’s review of Seeger’s book) demonstrates that Seeger was a significant influence both for the images and motifs that he provided but also as an example of exaggerated yet sincere theatricality that could be placed alongside other examples that Eliot was collecting and taking note of as he was aiming to craft a verse of satire and caricature in the late 1910s. This analysis promises to further thicken the historical, aesthetic, and social contexts of Eliot’s composition during this period and will thereby open us to new resonances and meanings for his quatrain verse.

Kevin Rulo
Catholic U of America

“Disconsolate Chimera”? Emily Hale and Eliot’s revisions to “A Dedication to My Wife”

In this short paper I shall speculate that the evolution of Eliot’s last published poem (whose revision from its 1959 version appears to be the sole reason for the terminal date of *Collected Poems* 1909-1962) can be related to what Eliot knew (or thought he knew) about Emily Hale’s intentions with regard to the depositing of his letters to her at Princeton. Drawing on the “statement” Eliot wrote, dated 25 November 1960 (and slightly revised in 30 Sept 1963) and made public at the unsealing of those letters earlier this year, on Hale’s own statement and her own revisions, made available online by Princeton University Library shortly thereafter, and (to a lesser extent) on the blog created by Frances Dickey of her reading of the correspondence, as well as on details in the Ricks / McCue edition and in the foreword to Valerie Eliot’s edition of vol. 1 of Eliot’s *Letters* (1988), as well as on Lyndall Gordon’s *Imperfect Life*, I want to see whether establishing a sequence of who knew what, and when, explains the nature of the additions made, in a poem to which he wished to give some prominence, but which, as a consequence of these alterations, sounds an oddly adversarial note.

Tony Sharpe
Lancaster U

“I Like the Gin-Sodden Holy Reprobate”: T. S. Eliot, Basil Bunting, and Questions of Influence

Beyond observing similarities between *The Waste Land* and *Briggflatts*, scholars seldom pair T. S. Eliot and Basil Bunting, both of whom were closer to Ezra Pound than to each other. The younger poet, pointedly distancing himself from the London literary scene, resented “the pressure of [Eliot’s] phenomenal prestige.” In later years, however, Bunting acknowledged Eliot’s formative influence on his own poetry and on English literature as a whole. Eliot, for his part, rejected Bunting’s work repeatedly for publication, but also attempted to stay in touch. As Bunting observed, “Considering he don’t really like anything I’ve ever written, and knows I got a lot of reservations about his work [. . .] I think it’s a sign of something somewhere.” While Bunting did perhaps make a favorable impression on Eliot

after all, I might also venture that such a “sign” heralds both poets’ numerous reflections on the myriad ways that writers might impress each other, inadvertently yet indelibly shaping the movements of their times.

This paper highlights the nuanced discussions of influence that permeate volumes seven and eight of the *Complete Prose* and that concur with several of Bunting’s observations on literary influence in his own essays. As Eliot neared the last years of his life—and various institutions called upon his “phenomenal prestige” for lectures and memorials—he turned increasingly toward the concept of influence and how such influence is understood (and often misunderstood) when reflecting on particular writers and thinkers who have profoundly influenced each other and the political climates of their respective eras. Bunting, while not as prolific a poet-critic, shares many of Eliot’s own views regarding how some of the most enduring forms of influence are often the least anticipated. Furthermore, both poets situate local and regional influence (an aspect of Eliot’s thinking that the *Complete Prose* brings into the foreground) as vital to restoring English literary culture in modernity. By considering the questions of influence that repeatedly occupy one of the most public literary figures of the twentieth century, as well as one of the most obscure, perhaps we might revisit our own common perceptions of the networks, dialogues, and legacies that continue to affect understandings of poetic influence within and beyond modernist studies.

Annarose Steinke
U Nebraska Kearney

“Things that Cling”: Marine Attachments in Eliot

This paper will examine the presence of marine attachments (claws, roots, tentacles) in T. S. Eliot’s writing in relation to the author’s reading of biological texts by Charles Darwin, E. W. Macbride, and Walter Pitkin. In his reading, as well as in his writing, Eliot’s imagination appears to have been particularly drawn to the prehensile powers of marine organisms, finding himself, to quote “Preludes,” “moved by fancies that are curled / Around these images, and cling.” Recent work in the “Blue Humanities” has emphasised the ways in which the sea unsettles dominant epistemologies, dissolving our terrestrial sensibilities and reconstituting the human subject in a liquid element. In the writing of Eliot, I will argue, it is possible to uncover an alternative set of meanings attached to the sea and its living inhabitants—namely those which relate to the idea of attachment

itself. By focusing on entities that have been able to gain a foothold in turbulent waters, Eliot found in marine life a curious strength and purchase on the surrounding world quite unlike the feeble grasp of human subjects.

Rachel Murray
U Sheffield

Eliot's *The Rock*: No Longer "Reading Without Seeing"

About T. S. Eliot's *The Rock* (1934), Virginia Woolf wrote "[i]n reading, without seeing, perhaps one got the horror of that cheap farce." As a pageant play, *The Rock* was better suited to the indoor confines of Sadler's Wells theatre, and, although produced on a smaller scale than conventional outdoor pageants, the 300+ participants impressed audiences. However, reviews such as Woolf's, which rely upon the text rather than the complete theatrical setting, have led to what Hazel Atkins calls "a critical tradition that has not, in general, been kind to *The Rock*." I propose a new reading, largely based upon the surviving music manuscripts of Eliot's understudied pageant play, that considers the performance context in addition to the text.

Director E. Martin Browne's involvement in Eliot's theatrical career is well documented; however, the contribution of composer Martin Shaw is overlooked in the few studies on *The Rock*. Shaw's orchestral score for *The Rock* comprises fifty-two separate cues and accounts for a substantial portion of *The Rock* in performance. The music engages with intertextual references to hymns and songs in Eliot's text, indicating that the writer and composer shared drafts, discussed ideas about the drama, and actively collaborated on creating *The Rock*. Published correspondence between Eliot and Shaw confirms some of this exchange, but my research also engages with unpublished correspondence, drafts, sketches, and other paratexts to demonstrate the collaborative efforts required to create and stage *The Rock*. My paper considers Eliot's preference to be recognised as the writer rather than the author of the text, exploring the role of the pageant writer alongside the other contributions of Shaw, Browne, the organiser R. Webb-Odell, designers Eric Newton and Stella Mary Pearce, choreographer Antony Tudor, and vocal coach Elsie Fogerty.

Parker Gordon
U St. Andrews

Modern Language Association Convention January 2021

Emily Hale and the Gift of Poetry: *The Dry Salvages*

Eliot's letters to Emily Hale, opened in 2020, revealed many personal secrets, especially her importance in his emotional life from as early as 1906 and lasting throughout his literary career. At first, he is eager to explain her place in his poetry (the "hyacinth girl," the "Lady" of *Ash-Wednesday*) extending through the composition of "Burnt Norton," which he tells her is "our poem," but afterwards such revelations cease and she would seem to play little role in the subsequent *Quartets*. However, details from Eliot's letters in 1936 about their time together in New England, such as the sound of the tolling bell off the beach at Woods Hole, where they spent a week in September, connect closely with moments in *The Dry Salvages*, suggesting that Eliot still had Hale very much in mind as he composed his

poem of New England and St. Louis. Hale was depressed during the summer of 1936, and seeing her suffering up close gave Eliot a clear example of "the agony of others," one of the leitmotifs of the poem, especially as he may have wondered how much responsibility he bore for her worries that their "future" as a couple was "futureless." Withering flowers, her face outside the window as his train pulled away from Northampton station, and the rhythmic sound of the "drumming liner" that carried him back to England appear in both his letters and the poem. The biographical dimension of this *Quartet*, far from invalidating other interpretations, adds a personal depth to this otherwise philosophical poem. When we see the role that Hale plays in this poem, it is no surprise that he did not mention it to her, for this is not a love poem, but a poem of the end of love.

Frances Dickey
U of Missouri

Emily Hale vs “Emily Hale”

This paper pits what scholars and critics expected to learn about the time-line of Eliot’s relationship with Hale against what his letters at Princeton actually revealed. I want this to be very specific: When did they meet? How often did they correspond? How many summers did they meet in the UK? How long did Hale seem to believe they were going to be wed? When did he make it clear that he no longer envisioned marriage? When did he write her after Vivien’s death? How long after his marriage to Valerie did he inform her of it? How many times did he visit in Cambridge with Valerie after they were married when they did not look up Hale? The answers to these bare facts have differed over the years and point to significant divergences in the interpretation of Hale’s longstanding personal importance to Eliot and as a source of inspiration for Eliot’s poetry. The paper ended up focusing on one primary question: When did they first meet?

In particular, I compare four sources of knowledge to the Hale letters: 1) The edited editions of Eliot’s poetry (Rainey, Ricks & McCue), 2) Prominent literary criticism of Eliot (Gardner, Bush, Schuchard, Donoghue, McIntire), 3) Major biographies of Eliot (Ackroyd, Gordon, Crawford), and 4) Fictional imaginings of Eliot’s life (Gilbert, Cooley, Fitzgerald). I ask: Which of these most closely reflects what has actually been found in the archive? What does this show about our assumptions, methodologies, and desires as we tackle these different scholarly and creative tasks? What can we learn from the space between Emily Hale and “Emily Hale”?

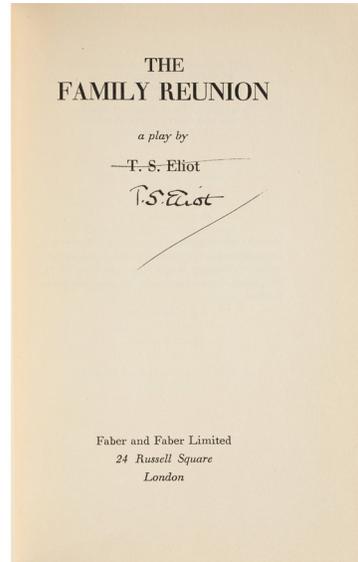
Megan Quigley
Villanova U

Mary’s Play: T. S. Eliot, Emily Hale, and *The Family Reunion*

The Eliot-Hale archive has forever changed the proportions of *The Family Reunion*—a play that was written and rewritten during some of the most fraught years of the relationship between T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale (1934-1938).

Critical discussions of *The Family Reunion* have dwelt primarily on Harry and on his aunt Agatha and his mother Amy. Eliot himself contributed to this focus in his well-known criticism of his play in “Poetry and Drama” (1951), where he confessed to “not knowing whether to consider his play the tragedy of the mother

or the salvation of the son. The two situations are not reconciled.” But there is another “situation”—Mary’s story—that the archive has brought to the center of my attention. Lyndall Gordon’s essential critical biography had already called Mary downstage, noting “It may be that Emily’s fate was sealed from the time that [Eliot]



first conceived the play in 1934-35. . . It is a one-man show” (Gordon, *Imperfect Life*, 333). And yet I’d offer a small but I think important revision to Gordon’s assertion that Mary is “barely a character” (Gordon 333). This becomes true by the play’s end, but the scene that closes the first part of the play, which was, Gordon tells us, “the first scene that [Eliot]

worked out in any detail” (Gordon 322), is not only the showcase for Mary but a point where the play almost turns against itself and its hero, almost complicates its simplistic moral and theological schema, almost becomes the first successful instance of a new kind of verse drama that it was Eliot’s ambition to write, almost allows Mary a second act. It is Mary’s story that the Eliot-Hale Archive has made more real, more captivating, more heart wrenching than anything else in this cold drama. *The Family Reunion* remains, I think, a failure, but it’s differently fascinating, darker, and more complex after the opening of the Archive, with drama surprising us, off center—a drama of Mary’s discernment and resistance, a struggle, of sorts, between this woman who cries out at the end of the play’s first act: “Look at me. You can depend on me” (253) and her creator, who does her in.

John Whittier-Ferguson
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South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention
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**T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale:
Keeping Secrets, Avoiding Scandal**

For nearly thirty years, Eliot and his first love, Emily Hale, maintained a relationship that, even if celibate, was still, at times, very passionate. Yet only a handful of their friends knew about the true nature of their relationship before Eliot's letters to Hale were opened, 50 years after Hale's death. On the basis of the newly released letters and archival research about Hale's life, this paper explores how the two succeeded in guarding their secrets, even as Eliot became an international celebrity. I further explore why Hale was willing to accept a relationship on the terms Eliot demanded and reasons Hale may have been willing to continue to guard their story, even after Eliot's second marriage. Finally, I review their evolving views about whether and how to share their correspondence with future scholars.

Sara Fitzgerald

**Canceling T. S. Eliot: Cancel Culture,
Modernism, and Fascism**

Is it possible to celebrate an author's literary accomplishments without endorsing their politics, beliefs, or actions? For adherents of "cancel culture," wherein artists, celebrities, or public figures are ostracized, the act of "canceling" unethical public figures is a relatively novel form of collective action enacted through social shaming and boycott. Yet Eliot became embroiled in a debate about whether he, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis displayed Fascist and anti-Semitic sympathies and if their work should be disregarded out of hand because it is tainted by intolerance. Writing three separate letters to the Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1957, Eliot vociferously denied accusations that he harbored Fascist sympathies at any point in his career. At the same time, Eliot was writing in the press about the need for Ezra Pound to be released from St. Elizabeths in Washington, to which he had been committed after surrendering to American troops for his radio broadcasts in support of Mussolini and Hitler. In a letter to Robert Frost, Eliot observes "the issues with which Pound was there concerned are now dead, the errors which he then committed are now irrelevant." Though much has been written about Eliot and anti-Semitism, this paper will explore Eliot's decision to defend Pound, as well as the hornet's nest

of scandal that ensued, tarnishing Eliot's own legacy in ways he recognized and tried to control shortly before his death in 1965.

Chris McVey
Boston U

**Living in History: Subjectivity, Destiny,
and Human Agency in Eliot's *Little
Gidding***

In this paper, I consider aesthetic subjectivity in the late poetry of T. S. Eliot and his portrayal of human agency during a time of European crisis. In *Little Gidding*, he speaks through a dialectic of self-disclosure to reason with the course his life has taken. Motivating him to confront personal agency through self-reflection is his interest in questions of fate/destiny, which are encouraged by certain historical realities. While not necessarily subscribing to any deterministic theology, Eliot considers the implications of seeing life as a series of impersonal events rather than private decisions, ultimately arriving at a balanced conclusion between the extremes of complete agency and predestination—even if paradoxically finding comfort in the truth of divine providence. But at a time when Europeans were witnessing the cataclysmic effects of civil strife, both world wars, and new manifestations of evil in the form of death camps, such a postulation might seem dangerously uninformed, even hypocritical. Why now, of all times, suggest the illusion of human choice when the evils of fascism and racial prejudice have splintered a continent and massacred millions? And further, why celebrate godly omnipotence? Indeed, Eliot's vision here is rather revolutionary, especially in a secularizing, nihilistic post-war Europe. Yet influenced by his belief and experience during the world wars, he manages to present a nuanced and articulate perception of human agency, one that complicates notions of a cruel God neglecting to act against evil while also celebrating and reclaiming life. In *Little Gidding*, Eliot continued to provoke the European status-quo and redefine what it meant to be poet, critic, and philosopher. Wrapping epistemological and teleological uncertainties in an aesthetic of self-disclosure, Eliot points to a common crisis of agency in twentieth-century Europe and an area of modernist thought in need of further examination.

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