

Time Present

The Newsletter of the T. S. Eliot Society

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Valerie Eliot: In Memoriam

The T. S. Eliot Society lost its foremost Honorary Member with the passing on 9 November of Valerie Esmé Eliot (1926–2012). A requiem mass was held for her in the Parish Church of St. Stephen, London, on 21 November, with a reading of “Journey of the Magi” by Seamus Heaney, a eulogy by Craig Raine, and a choral singing of Igor Stravinsky’s setting of “The dove descending breaks the air” and George Herbert’s “King of Glory, King of Peace, I will love thee,” both of which were sung at Eliot’s service there.

As a Yorkshire teenager spellbound by John Gielgud’s reading of “Journey of the Magi,” Valerie determined upon graduation to make her way to T. S. Eliot: she eventually became his personal secretary at Faber in 1949, brought him much happiness after their marriage in 1957, and became the steward of his papers upon his death in 1965. She opened or attended the openings of numerous cultural events over the years, and her generous presence at the reception and dinner during the Eliot Society’s visit to London in 2004 is remembered as a thrilling highlight by many of our members.

The obituaries have invariably described her life mainly in terms of Eliot’s, but in the forty-seven years after his death she created an extraordinary life of her own as editor of the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* and three volumes of letters; as a director and sustaining supporter of the Faber firm; and as the executrix of his estate, which was enriched by the worldwide success of *Cats*, thereby enabling her to become a major philanthropist for the nation, the arts, education, and numerous charities. She purchased works of art and manuscripts that would have left the country without her generous intervention; she supported the construction of a new wing of the London Library, of which her husband was a president; she endowed a fellowship at Newnham College, Cambridge; she funded the T. S. Eliot Poetry Prize, the most generous and prestigious in England; her Old Possum’s Trust provided scholarships for young musicians and actors and for students attending the T. S. Eliot International Summer School. In recognition for her achievements as editor, publisher, and philanthropist, several English and American universities bestowed honorary degrees upon her.

Before her husband died, he told Valerie that he did not want her to commission a biography or editions of his letters and works. When she asked him not to place such a burden of exclusion on her, he relented on condition that she take responsibility for the work herself. For the next forty-one years she loyally devoted herself to the massive task of collecting, preserving, transcribing, editing, and protecting his papers, only rarely seeking assistance with the multifarious work by commissioning editions of *The Composition of Four Quartets*, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* and *Inventions of the March Hare*. Inevitably, the academic world became increasingly impatient for access to items in Eliot’s archive and for permission to print unpublished material. She believed, however, that the scholarly world had patiently to await the establishment of a complete archive and that it was against her charge to let pieces out prematurely or indiscriminately for

use and possible abuse. She was a true friend to those who understood her mission and difficult position. Inevitably, the long permission vacuum brought attacks and harm to Eliot's reputation, but it will not be a lasting harm. As time and declining health began to overtake her, she felt by 2006 that the archive's state of completeness was such that she could in good conscience commission the T. S. Eliot Editorial Project for new and complete editions of his poetry, prose, drama, and letters, all of which are now underway and have begun to appear. It seems that her course of action has proved to be the right one: thanks to her steadfast commitment "to bring all of Tom together" we will soon have all of Eliot's work on the shelf and online for new generations of students and scholars of modern literature and culture.

Ronald Schuchard
Emory University



Remembering Mrs. Eliot

I first met Mrs. Eliot in 1974 when I began postgraduate work at Oxford on the poet's Christianity with Professor Dame Helen Gardner. There were few biographical accounts of Eliot and none of them official and exhaustive. Where they were most inadequate was in the area of Eliot's Christianity, which had dominated his life for its last forty years. Today, several biographical accounts of Eliot exist—although we are still awaiting an authorized one—but the poet's faith continues to be misrepresented or superficially discussed by writers who have little sympathy for Christianity and less knowledge of Anglo-Catholicism. This was Eliot's particular brand of Anglicanism, as he famously declared in 1928 in the Preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*, and he shared it with Valerie.

Helen Gardner agreed that the matter needed exploring, and Mrs. Eliot held even stronger views on the failure of scholars to come to grips with this central matter of her husband's life. One of my first excursions for research was to St Stephen's, Gloucester Road, South Kensington, where Eliot had worshipped from 1933, immersing himself in Anglo-Catholicism in its heyday in the inter-war period. I attended a Sunday High Mass and briefly introduced myself to Valerie afterwards, somewhat tentatively, as I guessed then (as she often later commented) how beset she was by the demands of graduate students. But my project was dear to her heart for, as she said to me in a later letter: "my husband's religious side has been neglected by most writers,



and a major book is badly needed." The book of my thesis, with much subsequent research on the subject, was finally published in 2010.

Helen Gardner was ambivalent about my contact with Eliot's widow, and I came to realize that the relationship between the two women, while professionally courteous and mutually advantageous, was personally strained. Valerie (as she soon asked me to call her) had not had a university education and was wary of academics; while Helen, the quintessential don—engaged at that time in editing the manuscripts of *Four Quartets*—was somewhat disdainful of "Mrs. Eliot" (as she always called her) in her role as "keeper of the flame." Anyone who remembers Dame Helen will know that she was not accustomed to playing second fiddle, and she had known Eliot long before Valerie came on the scene, championing his poetry in *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (1949).

The other notable woman, even less enamored of Mrs. Eliot, with whom I had dealings in those days, was Mary Trevelyan (1897–1983), Warden of Student Movement House in Russell Square. She and Eliot had been close friends, both parishioners of St. Stephen's, and he had written more than a hundred letters to her over a period of seventeen years, particularly while she was travelling overseas during the 1940s—a correspondence and friendship which came to

an abrupt end with his marriage. I asked Valerie if I might quote from Eliot's letters to Mary in my thesis, as they had much of theological and liturgical interest in them. Under no circumstances, was the reply, and I had to be content with summarizing their contents.

Many years later, when I was lunching with her in London, Valerie complained of the latest inadequate biography of "Tom." I asked, "Why don't you commission an authorized account?" "Tom was insistent that there should be no such thing, and I must abide by that." Mrs. Eliot's faithfulness in this regard has not served Eliot well, although in other areas, such as her superb editing of *The Waste Land* manuscripts, her participation in the edited volumes of Eliot's letters, slowly appearing in recent years, and the generous establishment of the T. S. Eliot Prize, she did a great work in advancing the understanding and appreciation of the life and artistry of the twentieth century's most important poet.

Barry Spurr
University of Sydney



A Tribute to Elizabeth and Leslie Konnyu

On the occasion of receiving Honorary Membership in the Eliot Society, September 29, 2012

I would like to dedicate my remarks on T. S. Eliot's exilic imagination to Elizabeth Konnyu, an exile and the wife of an exile, whose legacy includes the fellowship that binds us together tonight. Elizabeth died just before Christmas, or as we say in my church, she joined the saints of Heaven, including her husband Dr. Leslie Konnyu, whose love of poetry and respect for Eliot gave birth to the society. With your forbearance, I would like to share a few memories of my first meeting with the Konnyus.

Thirty years ago, when I was young and then as now an Eliot fanatic, I ran across a filler in my hometown newspaper with the headline "St. Louis Poet Sings Solo Love Song for T. S. Eliot." The piece said that a Hungarian poet living in St. Louis was pressing a fruitless campaign to get the city to create a memorial for T. S. Eliot. As I had planned to go to St. Louis to do research at the Missouri Historical Society, I decided to find Dr. Konnyu's telephone number and call him. He invited me home for dinner, a delicious Hungarian meal prepared by his wife Elizabeth. I shall always

remember their modest brick home in the suburbs with its wall to wall paintings by Hungarian artists. Dr. Konnyu told me how, arriving here, in exile from his beloved Hungary, he had expected to find a monument to Eliot; finding none, he embarked on a personal mission to right the wrong. This ended with Dr. Konnyu commissioning a Hungarian artist to prepare a bas-relief, and then in a public rebuke to St. Louis, he had a formal installation ceremony on his lawn and had the art attached to the front of his house. It is now at the St. Louis Public Library.

At our first dinner, Dr. Konnyu invited me back to give a talk, and when I arrived, I was greeted by a dozen or so people, exiles from eastern Europe and South America, assembled in his living room. You can imagine how delighted I was when several of them recited Eliot's poetry for me in their own tongues. Dr. Konnyu told me he had formed a Society, and he asked for copies of my publications so that he could see if I was worthy of being invited to join. Luckily, I passed the test and was invited to give the next Eliot Memorial Lecture at the St. Louis Public Library. On that occasion, I met a broader circle, including two natives, Earl Holt and Melanie Fathman. Before I knew what hit me, I was on the Board, and then President of the Society. At the time, I had been invited to edit the *MLA Approaches to Teaching Eliot* and was receiving proposals from many Eliot scholars. I sent each one an invitation to join the Society, and talked Nancy Hargrove into being our secretary, and Ron Schuchard into giving the next memorial lecture. I was president for two terms, and with the help of the Konnyus, the Fathmans, and other friends, organized an international centennial conference in St. Louis and published *The Placing of T. S. Eliot* (1991), a volume containing the memorial lectures arranged under my leadership. I dedicated the volume to Dr. Konnyu. He died in 1992, and the same



year, I left for a two-year Visiting Professorship in Kyoto. Nothing would have pleased Leslie more than to see how the Society has flourished under a succession of good leaders, always with the support of our hosts tonight, Melanie and Tony Fathman.

Jewel Spears Brooker
Eckerd College

Unremembering the Unremembered Gate

RNF: I'm having a problem with the line "Through the unknown, unremembered gate."

YOU: Surely you mean the line "Through the unknown, remembered gate."

RNF: No, I don't have a problem with that line at all, only with the other one.

YOU: I can tell you for certain that line does not appear anywhere in any of T.S. Eliot's poems, so how can you be having a problem with it?

RNF: Because so many people think it does.

In the above dialogue, RNF is me and YOU is anyone who knows T.S. Eliot's work and, in particular, the referenced line from "Little Gidding." Despite the fact that one of the versions mentioned above is incorrect, I was alarmed to learn recently (and quite accidentally) that many people harbor the belief that it is not. I do not know how this misbelief originated, but I do know that it exists and I will tell you how I know.

At the very end of a book I had borrowed from a friend, I found that the author had quoted several lines from *Four Quartets*, and there it was — what I assumed was a typo that had gone unnoticed. The possibility that the author had been

misled by an incorrect version on the Internet also occurred to me and so I took a look online. What I found amazed me. I had hoped that I would find the one likely culprit but instead I found an abundance of versions containing the incorrectly quoted line. An Internet search on the incorrect line yielded over 28,000 hits. Although a search on the correct line yielded far more hits than that, this is still a problem deserving of attention, especially considering the sources of some of the incorrect versions, among them a textbook published by a highly-esteemed university press and content on the website of another prestigious university.

The origin of this error being unknown (assuming that there is indeed a single origin rather than multiple, independent errors), we are left with the question as to what can be done about it. I contacted the author of the book which first exposed me to this error and he has assured me that the fix will be made in the next edition. I also intend to try to find appropriate contacts in regard to the two university-related instances mentioned above. Perhaps others who read this can perform a similar service. Also of assistance would be the presence on the Internet of at least one authoritative statement regarding the existence of this error. The complete absence of any such statement is even more amazing to me than the fact that the error exists. I don't know if anyone else cares about all this, but my position is that none of us should rest until no one remembers the unremembered gate that someone at some time wrongly remembered.

Rich Franklin

CONFERENCE NOTES

33rd Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society, 28-30 September 2012

Words alone were seldom enough for T.S. Eliot—a fact made readily apparent during the Annual Meeting of the T.S. Eliot Society this past September. The conference, whose participants hailed from as nearby as St. Louis and as far away as the UK, Italy, Israel, India, and Japan, emphasized an increasing recognition of the intermedial Eliot, whose thought and art often reached beyond the page.

This year's memorial lecture was given by Prof. Daniel Albright (Harvard U), whose keynote "T. S. Eliot's Non-Euclidean Geometry" considered Eliot through the framework of mathematics. Drawing on a draft version of

Eliot's essay on Samuel Johnson in which Eliot writes "his world is of non-Euclidean geometry," Albright argued that we might understand Eliot's own work through the same metaphor. In his dissertation on idealist philosophy and F.H. Bradley, Eliot wrestled with the idea that we are all, in a way, confined to our own realities, moving through time as sets of parallel lines that can never meet. Albright suggested that we typically read Eliot's oeuvre as an extended reflection of this problem, proceeding from Eliot's early work in the dissertation and extending into *Four Quartets*. But, Albright pointed out, parallel lines remain parallel only in Euclidean paradigms. As a consequence, we might also read Eliot's poetry not merely as the articulation of this problem, but as an attempt to break out Euclidean space—to find a world and an epistemology in which parallel lines actually can meet. The audience seemed at first skeptical of Albright's observation until he remarked that we are already living in this non-Euclidean space, since our cartographical lines of longitude are, in fact, parallel to each other and yet still

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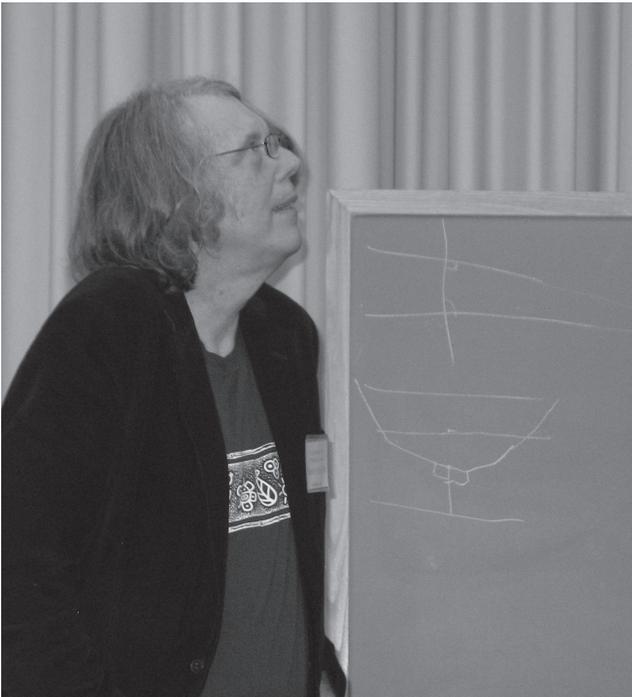
meet at the north and south poles, at the “still point[s] / of a turning world.” As we move toward Eliot’s religious poetry, Albright suggested, Eliot’s earlier enclosed worlds become more permeable or porous.

The conference began with a peer seminar, organized by Lesley Wheeler (Washington and Lee U), on sound in Eliot’s poetry. Julia Daniel, John Melillo, Elizabeth Micaković, Michael Rogalski, and Fabio Vericat provided close listenings of a wide range of Eliot’s works, from printed poems to verse plays to recorded essays. They considered, among other issues, Eliot’s attitudes towards vocal performance, his textual representations of voice and noise, and the use of rhythm and other liturgical elements in his drama. Following the seminar, John Melillo (U of Arizona) challenged standard approaches to *The Waste Land* by considering the poem not merely as a series of fragmented sonic noises, but as a poem about listening and the way that acts of listening—rather than speaking—offer us a new way to consider agency in Eliot’s work. Elizabeth Micaković (U of Exeter), the winner of this year’s Fathman Young Scholar Award, delighted the audience with her perceptive and nuanced paper, “Where Will the Word Resound?: Eliot and the Politics of Voice,” investigating the seldom discussed but important legacy of Eliot’s recordings from the latter half of the twentieth century, as well as the politics of copyright that continues to legislate that history. Malobika Sarkar (Basanti Devi College) considered the phonograph as an important aesthetic in *The*

Waste Land, reminding us that the poem’s haunting of gods and voices also encodes the rapid and perhaps uncanny innovations of modern recording technology. In addition to these discussions, Elisabeth Däumer and David Boeving (Eastern Michigan U) later presented on “Gesture and Kinesthesia in Eliot’s Poetry,” highlighting the important role that gesture plays in negotiating the often abrupt tension between sound and silence in Eliot’s writing.

Other conference papers explored a range of historical approaches to Eliot’s life and work. Nancy Hargrove (Mississippi State U) retraced Eliot’s travels abroad in Italy during his 1911 year in Europe, illustrated with pictures from her re-creation of this trip—a teaser for the Society’s Italy meeting tentatively planned for 2016. Cyrena Pondrom (U of Wisconsin-Madison) analyzed cultural contexts for Eliot’s understanding of gender, part of her current project on modernist poetry and gender in the early twentieth century. Tracing some earlier influences on Eliot, Nancy Gish (U of Southern Maine) investigated affinities between Eliot and Virgil. Timothy Materer (U Missouri) considered Eliot’s lasting influence on Geoffrey Hill’s *The Orchards of Syon* and John Ashbery’s “The System.” Christopher McVey (U of Wisconsin-Madison) traced some of the unusual editorial history behind the “Notes” to *The Waste Land*. Martin Lockerd (U of Texas) presented on 19th-century decadent Catholicism and its influence on Eliot’s work. Jeremy Fedors (U of Pennsylvania) considered Eliot’s discussion of poetry’s intersection with religion in Eliot’s criticism. Kinereth Meyer (Bar Ilan U) presented on the intriguing and surprising history behind marketing Eliot, and Giuliana Ferreccio (U of Turin) offered an insightful paper on *Sweeney Agonistes* and Eliot’s Late Style in *The Elder Statesman*. Lee Oser (College of the Holy Cross), taking Eliot’s dramatic monologue at its word, presented on “Prufrock as Fool.” A special dramatic performance of *Four Quartets* by Chicago-based artist Michael Rogalski complimented these critical assessments (see Elizabeth Micaković’s review of his performance in this issue).

On Saturday evening the Society presented Jewel Spears Brooker (Eckerd College) with its highest award—Honorary Membership in the Society—for her foundational work with the Society, her careful guidance on our Board of Directors, her extensive contributions to critical discussion and enjoyment of Eliot’s writing—spanning over six books and numerous scholarly articles—and her continued work as a teacher and mentor for future generations of Eliot scholars. Prof. Brooker’s induction address, “‘Always a Foreigner’: T.S. Eliot’s Exilic Imagination,” paid homage to Dr. Leslie Konnyu, the founder of the T.S. Eliot Society, who moved to St. Louis to live in exile from his native Hungary after the German occupation in 1945. Dr. Konnyu, a poet himself,



Daniel Albright lecturing on Eliot’s Non-Euclidean Geometry

translated many Hungarian poets into English, and poets such as Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, and T.S. Eliot into Hungarian. T.S. Eliot, who himself lived willingly as an exile, seemed always to contemplate the grand theme of escape and return; it is thus unsurprising, Brooker remarked, that so many exiles are drawn to his poetry, and that his poetry might be read as a simultaneous reflection on what it means to live as an exile and to fashion a momentary sense of belonging in spite of that exile. Indeed, Prof. Brooker's own life has been dedicated to the same pursuit as Dr. Konnyu, since it is through her work and service to the T.S. Eliot Society that the Society continues to be a space where otherwise parallel lines may converge.

Christopher McVey
University of Wisconsin-Madison



Michael Rogalski's Performance of *Four Quartets*

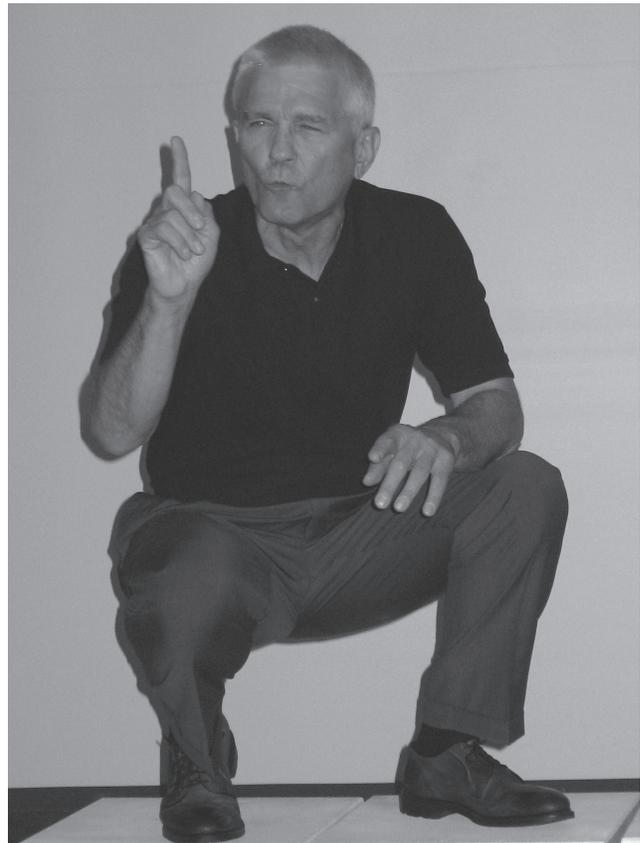
From the clipped tones of Alec Guinness's 1975 reading of *Four Quartets*, eerily redolent of the sharp undulations of Eliot's own voice, to the gentle and profoundly melancholic intoning of the poem by Ralph Fiennes in 2009, *Four Quartets*, it appears, has resisted any attempt to be crafted into a "dramatic" performance. Such a precedent, one might suggest, was set by Eliot himself, whose 1946-7 British Council production of the poem (carefully recorded and re-recorded over a period of three months), with its clinically precise articulation of consonants and tightly-controlled inflection, he considered to be his best recording of any of his poems. So definitive has Eliot's recording become that subsequent readings by such actors as Guinness, Fiennes and Stephen Dillane have maintained this tendency towards careful dramatic understatement that those audiences familiar with Eliot's own readings have likewise often come to expect.

The poem, too, presents its own obstacle to a dramatic rendering: the struggle between inaction and action – "as a Chinese jar still / Moves perpetually in its stillness" ("Burnt Norton") – infects the words themselves, which "slip, slide, perish" into near self-effacement. The frustration with ineffability, inertia, and regret bristles beneath the rhythms of the poem, but never erupts.

Michael Rogalski's performance of *Four Quartets* at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society in St. Louis

in September exploded what have come to be received or more traditional oral readings of the poem. Rogalski's, however, was considerably more than a reading: "off the book" and clearly immersed in the emotional and logical conflicts which pervade the *Quartets*, Rogalski gave a wonderfully powerful and electric interpretation. Indeed, evident immediately was his rigorous critical examination of the text, each word carefully scrutinised and interrogated, rhythms measured and momentum gauged. The effectiveness of the performance, however, stemmed from the fact that such studied preparation never denied room for spontaneity or extemporary reflection. "A key element of performance" for any actor, writes Rogalski, is that sense of 'living the moment' [...] that his thoughts and his feelings are authentic and fresh"¹. There were very few moments that felt contrived, and the performance was defined by Rogalski's ability to skillfully balance studied interpretation with natural and seemingly unpremeditated reactions to the text.

Moving sequentially through the poem, Rogalski immersed the audience within a narrative, not only engaging but also enveloping them in the linguistic and emotional whirlpools that sweep through each of the *Quartets*. This



Michael Rogalski performing the *Four Quartets*

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was, for me at least, a slightly daunting and apprehensive moment. Having been schooled (like so many in Britain, I suspect) in the unwritten assumption that poetry, and the process of responding to the *text* of a poem, was a private and securely fenced endeavour, quite separate from the detached scholastic activity of analysis, and a public poetry reading, especially when given by the author, was a matter of polite endurance, a cursory insight into “how the author ‘sounds’ the poem”. Even now, the experience of listening to Eliot’s recordings is safely guarded by a set of headphones. The vocal dexterity with which Rogalski navigated his audience through each of the *Quartets*, however, put paid to any notion that we would be in any way extraneous to the performance itself: quite the contrary. Rogalski was clearly sensitive to the undulating and changeable rhythms of each of the *Quartets*, reacting, and inciting reaction to, the variations in the emotional intensity of the poem. The remarkable expressive range of the voice, moreover, effectively conveyed the deceptive calmness of those passages that simmer and struggle with articulation, passages that were sharply punctuated by the powerfully voiced eruptions of the ineffable.

The dynamism of the piece, however, lay in Rogalski’s adeptness to combine such vocal control with powerful physical expressiveness. As the words rippled and seethed under the weight of their meanings, so too could one see Rogalski physically struggle to contain their intensity. Not so much a mediator as a conductor of this energy, the manifestation of these struggles into action defies and challenges Charles Bernstein’s assertion that the

effectiveness of the performance of poetry lies “within the limits of language alone”². Indeed, Rogalski took this even further in his use of large cubes (the only stage props), which he periodically reconstructed throughout the performance. The concept behind these cubes was in itself novel and intriguing: as Eliot strives to enforce structure and discipline on the “general mess of imprecision of feeling,” so Rogalski visually represented these futile attempts to order by reconfiguring the structure of the cubes, repeatedly revisiting that “wholly new start, and a different kind of failure” (“East Coker”). This was certainly an innovative approach (if occasionally impeded by the acoustics of the room); the static quality of the cubes, which encounter and at times resist their enforced action, embodied Eliot’s exhortation to be “still and still moving.”

Rogalski, in his performance, has not “cease[d] from exploration.” His was a bold, refreshing, even courageous approach to an essentially theatrical performance of *Four Quartets*. Beautiful delivery combined with a wonderfully imaginative and energetic enactment of the poem served to release the text from the page.

“As the words rippled and seethed under the weight of their meanings, so too could one see Rogalski physically struggle to contain their intensity.”

1. Quoted from Rogalski’s paper “*Four Quartets: Stage and Study*” presented at the 2012 peer seminar “Sound in Eliot’s Poetry”.

2. Bernstein, Charles, ed. *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Elizabeth Micaković
University of Exeter



Left: New members of the class of 2012
Above: John Melilo, Lesley Wheeler, Tony Cuda
and Ron Schuchard

G. Douglas Atkins, *Reading T.S. Eliot: Four Quartets and the Journey toward Understanding*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Reviewed by James R. Zimmerman
James Madison University

For readers wanting a coherent monograph that explores *Four Quartets*, this is a disappointing book. It is difficult to know what kind of audience Atkins had in mind. Admittedly personal, and referring to Atkins' own teaching and students, *Reading T. S. Eliot* is neither exactly a monograph nor a collection. Atkins unapologetically pursues his own "journey towards understanding" (vii) in this mistitled, disorganized volume, which reads like a self-edited collection of papers on various Eliot works. His approach emphasizes the way Eliot's major poems "rhyme" with each other, foregrounds "Incarnation," and insists that *Four Quartets* is as much an essay as a poem. Atkins veers between pedantry and humility, and often seems "distracted from distraction by distraction" in his tangential explorations of Homer's Odysseus and Swift's Gulliver, among others.

Reviewing a personal book like Atkins' about Eliot's journey is a challenge. Sometimes Atkins' critical efforts verge on a form of Scholasticism in the layering of Christian theological detail; other times, the commentary is simplistic, as in this sentence in the book's penultimate paragraph: "Eliot could not have written *Four Quartets* in 1917" (145). For me, the journey is sometimes organizationally and compositionally incomprehensible. Atkins gets in his own way. In a notorious review, "Euripides and Professor Murray," Eliot critiqued the kind of imposition that mars Atkins' work: "Professor Murray has simply interposed between ourselves and Euripides a barrier more impenetrable than the Greek language." Similarly, I am inclined to say, Atkins manufactures supplemental complexities of his own, devising and presenting himself as the critic who can elucidate "the pattern" in all of Eliot, the kind of thing other critics have gotten only "half right" (154).

Four Quartets invites readerly subjectivity because the four poems appear to offer evidence for almost any point of view, as long as the angle has a lot to do with profoundly meaningful reflection. We are familiar with the notion that we must live in the present moment and be ever mindful. That kind of popular thinking, I confess, colors my own too-casual habit of enjoying *Four Quartets* as a companion to my preferred translations of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I re-read Eliot's hypnotic lines as if I am a stand-in for the reluctant Arjuna,

and I savor Eliot's mystically wise voice as a twentieth-century variant of Krishna's. This very personal and even emotional reaction on my part is a symptom of what Anthony Lane bemoaned in the *New Yorker* when commenting on Anthony Julius' attack on Eliot as an anti-Semite: "What is most depressing about the Eliot issue is the moral vanity that seems to have crept into our reading habits—the demand that authors confirm our own convictions" (3/10/97, 91). In order to make this review behovely, I am highlighting my personal differences with Atkins, but I must also insist that, even in the areas in which I agree with him, Atkins might have expressed himself more artfully.

*"He tends to generalize, rationalize,
and integrate anything problematic
in the T. S. Eliot oeuvre, apparently
unwilling to accept any kind of
'difficulty' that really might include
irreconcilable facets."*

Above all, Atkins must be taken to task for his inconsistency. Veering between humility and over-assertiveness, he appears to misapply what he presents as Eliot's own critical principle: "That the critic is the medium through whom the text speaks points to a purifying of his desire too; without the prior purification, the text could not speak, the critic not letting be, but instead asserting and imposing" (43). His one reference to George Eliot (in relation to *Adam Bede*), inevitably called to mind Mr. Casaubon and his "Key to all Mythologies" in *Middlemarch*, and that's never a good association. Atkins, like Casaubon, repeatedly promises to catalogue and tie up every loose end and have the last word on every contested interpretation. He tends to generalize, rationalize, and integrate anything problematic in the T. S. Eliot oeuvre, apparently unwilling to accept any kind of "difficulty" that really might include irreconcilable facets. Does *The Waste Land* present difficulties? Yes, but not to worry if you accept Atkins' lens. His reductive summations include lines like this one: "We may not adequately understand *The Waste Land* apart from *Four Quartets*, but we cannot understand the latter without knowing the former" (98).

So I don't like the book. Nevertheless, I really do admire Atkins' fearlessly personal and tirelessly enthusiastic approach. Many of us have moments when we think we could write a book about Eliot that would put everything straight once and for all. Of course, the *sui generis* impulse runs the

risk of alienating readers, and I wish Atkins had been more careful to avoid pushing his views heavy-handedly, both in terms of tone and sentence construction. For example:

What eventually dawns on the responsible reader of Eliot is, I suggest, earned recognition that, even as you enter his greatest work at any point in it, eschewing the sequential and the linear (as well as the circular), you nevertheless end up at the same point: the still point around which everything else revolves, that intersection of timelessness with time, which is Incarnation. (5)

That sentence may seem daunting, but it is only 63 words long. The very next one embarks on its epic journey with the phrase “The pilgrim reader,” and finally reaches its destination after 102 words. This is the kind of writing we lovers of Eliot must take care to avoid. Obviously, Atkins reveres Eliot’s grammatical extravagance. I don’t blame him.

However, to my way of thinking, Eliot’s poetry fares forward more successfully with this sort of compound-complexity than does Atkins’ prose. At the sentence level, there is simply too much complexity, too much difficulty, such as in this example from the beginning of the final chapter:

Following—succeeding—the climactic declaration in “The Dry Salvages” that “The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation,” “Little Gidding” feels different, almost as if in “another dimension,” a sense perhaps confirmed by opening declarations concerning “midwinter spring” and “may time” (distinct from “May”), instances alike of “coniunction,” “impossible union,” and paradox, whose epitome is Incarnation” as represented in the last section of the previous poem. (123)

I will also observe that the six-page footnote Atkins gives us about “Incarnation”—including 28 lines of Browning’s “Fra Lippo Lippi”—stands out awkwardly in a sea of *Ibids*.

Ultimately, what Atkins offers is a teacher’s zeal for his subject. I can imagine that the students in his Eliot classes find his detailed allusions and literary anecdotes fascinating. He offers an enthusiastic and ambitious tour of literature and criticism, however jumbled and self-contradictory I might find it. Perhaps this is the sort of book that can capitalize on the academic momentum a good teacher engenders in novice students of Eliot. As an undergraduate I would have been happy to find it in the library. However, when I first opened the book, I had hoped for much more. In one of his humbler, less assertive moments, Atkins admits that he may not understand *Four Quartets* (131). Similarly, I must admit that I do not understand *Reading T. S. Eliot*.

T. S. Eliot, *Poesie 1905/1920*. Edited and translated by Massimo Bacigalupo. Rome: Newton Compton editori, 2012.

T. S. Eliot, *Il sermone del fuoco*. Edited and translated by Massimo Bacigalupo. Milan: Corriere della Sera & RCS Libri, 2012.

Reviewed by Francesco Rognoni
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

Italy has long been receptive to the work of T. S. Eliot. Mario Praz and Eugenio Montale, two major figures in 20th-century Italian letters, criticized and translated some of his work. Bompiani, his Italian publisher, brought out a massive two-volume Italian edition of Eliot’s *Opere* (1992-93), including all the poetry and collected prose (except *After Strange Gods*). This was edited by Roberto Sanesi (1930-2001), himself a poet of some stature, and the translator of the standard authorized edition of the poems—*Poesie* (1961)—which however omits *Four Quartets*. Unfortunately, although Sanesi is good at producing a convincing Italian poetic text, his knowledge of English was deficient, and so his standard translation, still the only one available, is marred by many misunderstandings. For example, Prufrock’s “advise the prince” is rendered with “*avvisare il principe*” (“warn the prince”), and “downed with light brown hair” is rendered as “*avvilita da una leggera peluria bruna*” (“made vile by light brown hair”)—as if “downed” were related to “putting down”! Translation is always a tricky business.

In 1995, Massimo Bacigalupo provided a more satisfactory rendering of Eliot’s two first volumes and of the early poems. This edition, *Poesie 1905/1920*, included extensive commentaries (pp. 134-157) and also the 1920 “Ode.”

2012 has been a good year for Italian readers of Eliot. *Poesie 1905/1920* was reprinted with corrections, after having been unavailable for some time. An interesting correction in the revised apparatus concerns “In the room the women come and go...”. In the 1995 edition Bacigalupo reported B. C. Southam’s contention that this is an adaptation of lines by Laforgue: “*Dans la pièce les femmes vont et viennent / En parlant des maîtres de Sienne.*” This notion is dropped in the 2012 reissue: Bacigalupo obviously discovered that the lines quoted by Southam (and others)

BOOK REVIEWS

as Eliot's source are actually from Pierre Leyris's brilliant translation of "Prufrock," much abused by Umberto Eco in his 2003 book on translation *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation* (where Eco also takes issue with Bacigalupo's equally inventive rendering of the famous couplet: "Le donne vanno e vengono nei salotti / parlando di Michelangelo Buonarroti"). In the 2012 revised edition of *Poesie 1905/1920* Bacigalupo has also made changes to the translation. In general, however, he is chiefly concerned with a correct rendering that also reflects the spirit and the rhythm of the original.

In 2012, Bacigalupo also offered a wholly new rendering of the major poems, from "Prufrock" (in a slightly different version) to *The Waste Land*, *Ash-Wednesday*, *The Hollow Men*, the Ariel Poems, and *Four Quartets*. This major addition to the Eliot canon in Italian appeared with the suggestive title *Il sermone del fuoco* as part of a weekly poetry series issued by *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's premier newspaper. It may come as a surprise to American and English readers that newspapers in Italy often produce series of books sold on newsstands with the paper at a reasonable price. *Il sermone del fuoco* was part of the series "A century of Poetry", which included Szymborska, Kavafi, Heaney, Neruda, Walcott and many others. To see the titles

(and order the Eliot book) one can Google "corriere della sera un secolo di poesia."

Unlike *Poesie 1905/1920*, *Il sermone del fuoco* provides only a summary apparatus and a succinct biography and bibliography. However, the important achievement of this book is a new translation of Eliot for the new millennium. Bacigalupo responds sensitively to Eliot's music and is usually careful in rendering the major tenor of the lines. No easy feat, especially in lyrics like "Garlic and sapphire in the mud" ("Aglione e zaffiro nella melma") and "Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing" ("Quando avrà fine, il lamento senza suono"). In the quatrain poem "Whispers of Immortality," and especially in "Cat Morgan Introduces Himself" the translator clearly enjoys finding Italian rhymes to reproduce the playfulness of the original. There are a few slips (a line skipped in *Ash-Wednesday*, 4; "Trams and dusty trees" rendered as "Tram e strade polverose"—"Trams and dusty streets"). But there is always room for improvement and in a recent article about his prize-winning translation of *The Prelude* Bacigalupo has indicated that he is only thankful for corrections. And Italian readers have good reason to be thankful for what he has already done to set the Eliot record straight.

PUBLIC SIGHTINGS

Compiled by David Chinitz

The Word in the Desert. The computer game "Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception," according to Wikipedia, "won several 'Game of the Year' awards" and "shipped 3.8 million copies worldwide on launch day," November 1, 2011. Chapter 18, "The Rub' al Khali," as Society member Chris McVey explains, includes "A pretty extensive, if not indulgent, quotation from *TWL*, cutting across multiple scenes from the game." See it on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYLjNYDyWPA>

Wastelands in Motion. Letter to the Editor of the *TLS*: "In his review of *Who is Ozymandias?* (28 Oct. 2011) Graeme Richardson points out that John Fuller accuses me and various other Professors (Bowlby, Greer, Phillips, etc.) of calling T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* 'The Wasteland.' My spelling is generally rather unreliable, I admit, but I do know the correct title of Eliot's great poem.... I also know that when I give telephone or face-to-face interviews with journalists, and happen to mention *The Waste Land*, the title often appears in an incorrect form when the conversations are written up—giving the impression that I'm the guilty party when in fact it's the journalist." (Andrew Motion, *TLS* 4 Nov. 2011: 6)

Election Wrap-Up. In his first post after the U.S. presidential election, Professor Sam Wang of the Princeton Election Consortium, a poll-aggregating site, led off with a quotation from "Little Gidding"—the four lines beginning "We shall not cease from exploration." The promise of better and better statistical analysis of political polls beckons! ("After the Storm," election.princeton.edu, 7 Nov. 2012)

More Groucho. In "From Chaplin to Groucho to T. S. Eliot," Michiko Kakutani reviews *Hello Goodbye Hello: A Circle of 101 Remarkable Meetings*, by Craig Brown. Drawing from the book, Kakutani recounts Eliot's exchanges of letters and his eventual meeting with Groucho Marx as well as the bum review he got from the Queen Mum. (*New York Times* 6 Aug. 2012: C1)

Vicious. The poem "Culture," by Robert Pinsky, includes a reference to *After Strange Gods*: "Charlie Chan, Life with Luigi, The Goldbergs, Amos'n'Andy. Japanese / Detective Mr. Moto played by the Jew Peter Lorre, who fled the Nazis. // Der Stürmer, lynchings, rapes, internment camps. Eliot's vicious book / Of lectures on Culture, delivered in Virginia, that he chose to suppress." (*The New Yorker* 10 Sept. 2012)

Abstracts from the 32nd Annual Meeting of the T.S. Eliot Society, Paris, France, July 18–22, 2011

Sounds Like Writing to Me: Eliot's Radio Talks and the Auditory Imagination

In March 1947, T. S. Eliot was due to deliver a talk at the British Academy on Milton. The BBC's Talks Booking Manager, Ronald Boswell, approached him to suggest they record the talk for broadcast. Eliot declined, arguing that "he did not want to find himself talking to a microphone." The gesture may be insignificant, but the anecdote raises fundamental questions about Eliot's position on the relation between text and performance—poetic drama being its felicitous fulfilment for Eliot. After all, radio is where the performance is lost in the blindness of the medium; where words may simply decay into mere sound.

*"Not for nothing his greatest
compliment had been for the poet
of visions, Dante, because he
'makes us see what he saw.'"*

Eliot had variously argued that under "blind" conditions poetry may become *rhetorical* and *musical*; namely, and with disastrous effects for English Poetry, in Milton. Or so he had already argued in an essay written back in 1936, which coined for posterity the phrase "auditory imagination." In 1947 Eliot was, however, just about to *talk* his way into some kind of a retraction—later published as "Milton II." And talking is perhaps the best way to make the gesture good as a concession to the sound he had originally objected to, though not good enough yet to put it to the full test of the radio. This was not an expression of antipathy against the medium—he had been broadcasting for the BBC since 1929 and continued quite happily till 1963—but it signalled a continued hesitation towards a technology which, as a fourth wall, stood to block the only sounds worth establishing as a poet: conversational speech.

As he was to note in his Milton lecture, the problem arises when poetic style "is not based upon common speech." Radio thus allegorizes Eliot's lifelong preoccupation with semantics. Not for nothing his greatest compliment had been for the poet of visions, Dante, because he "makes us see what he saw." This essay focuses on Eliot's increasing commitment to fit acoustics into his poetics by considering

sound-bites, such as "the sound of the sense of the word" in the Clark Lectures (1926), whose sense does not always deliver on their acoustic promise. Yet Eliot's poetics raise questions about his persistent return to the radio "prose" talk, whose practice would seem to go against the grain yet enlighten such critical dictums about poetry: Charles Siepmann of the Adult Education Department at the BBC had told Eliot in 1929: "you have in the whole succeeded admirably in giving the impression of conversation." But really Eliot may have been unwittingly enjoying the vision the blind medium ultimately affords, the drama of writing itself.

Fabio L. Vericat
Universidad Complutense de Madrid



Influences of Eliot's 1910–1911 Year in Paris on "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Throughout my book on *Eliot's Parisian Year*, I point out a variety of likely influences on this first masterpiece, which he wrote during his sojourn in Paris and completed while in Munich on a summer trip immediately after leaving the French capital when he had the time (and solitude) to contemplate all that he had experienced. In two paragraphs at the end of the book, I summarize these various influences on the title, the character of Prufrock, the interior monologue, the fragmented structure, the urban setting, the comparisons to John the Baptist and Lazarus, and Prufrock's clothing. In this paper I give detailed discussions of each of these (whereas I do not in the book), and I add an analysis of the language, meter, and texture of the verse in terms of the influences both of French poets such as Laforgue and Baudelaire but moreso of the French language that Eliot spoke and heard on a daily basis which allowed him to speak in a new, modern, and distinctly personal poetic voice. Thus he accomplished his main goal in coming to Paris of finding his own poetic voice.

Nancy Hargrove
Mississippi State University

Abstracts from the American Literature Association San Francisco, CA, May 24–27, 2012

T. S. Eliot's Adolescence: Discoveries from the Archives

As an adult, T. S. Eliot tended to recall his days as a schoolboy with varying degrees of exasperation or irritation. In short asides, he became a master of the self-deprecating anecdote, describing his own “laziness and caprice” as a student and gleefully admitting his incompetence in science: “I was always three or four behind with [laboratory experiments]; I never used to get anything to explode.” Scholars have followed suit. Lyndall Gordon’s biography of the poet describes Henry Ware Eliot’s disappointment in his school-age son as a result of Eliot’s poor grades at Smith Academy: “his grades, mostly C’s, gave no indication of latent gifts” (*T. S. Eliot*, 6).

But new discoveries from the archives of Washington University, Brown University, and Milton Academy completely overturn this view. Eliot, in fact, was a fine and conscientious student at Smith Academy, which he attended from age 10 to 16, and at Milton Academy, which he attended for a year at age 17. In considering the revelation that his grades were overwhelmingly A’s and B’s, I offer some speculations about Eliot’s own motives in characterizing himself as a poor student. I also discuss the curricula of Smith Academy and Milton Academy, which now give us a fuller account of the texts Eliot read and the courses he took. Other discoveries in the rosters of Smith Academy and Milton Academy include names of classmates that Eliot later poached for pseudonyms and character names in his plays and poems.

The gem of my discoveries is a series of 1899–1900 advertisements for Prufrock’s furniture which first appear in the *Smith Academy Record* when Eliot was a ten-year-old student beginning his own run of a domestic magazine, *Fireside*. A 1912 advertisement for the St. Louis furniture-maker, William Prufrock, had been identified long ago as a possible source for Eliot’s Prufrock. But by 1912, Eliot was long gone from St. Louis, and he had already drafted “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” By contrast, the *Smith Academy Record* advertisements for a “student chair” are certain to have been seen by Eliot and reveal much about turn-of-the-century attitudes to schoolwork, hucksterism, and decision-making.

Jayme Stayer
Boston College

What Modernist Women Serve for Supper: Philomela’s Revenge and Lil’s Hot Gammon in T. S. Eliot’s Waste Land

The Waste Land’s “A Game of Chess” explores women’s communities. Eliot highlights an ongoing game between black and white hierarchical pieces, especially queens of chess, who attack each other on behalf of their rulers. Appropriately, Eliot’s poem begins with the story of Cleopatra, a black queen, who fights Octavia, a white queen, both oppressed by male rulers.

On Cleopatra’s mantel is an image of Philomela, one like Rubens’s *Procne and Philomela*, offering Cleopatra an alternate history through female community. When Tereus becomes impassioned for Procne’s sister, Philomela, and rapes her, Philomela threatens to tell of his abuse, so he cuts out her tongue. But sending a tapestry, a message through female artistic traditions, Philomela communicates her plight, and together, the two sisters hatch an infamous revenge, serving Tereus his own sons for supper. But for Cleopatra, the art on the wall constitutes an unlearned history, her wealth blinding her to the enslaved status she shared with all women, even Octavia.

The scenario of two female rivals arguing over an oppressor is repeated in Lil’s relationship with her unnamed “friend,” who threatens to steal Lil’s husband, Albert. When Albert returns home from war, Lil invites her friend for a supper of swine, echoing the supper served by Procne and Philomela. Lil’s implicit insult suggests a division even among working-class female communities, the “pawns” of chess, unlearned history repeating itself once more.

In the painting on Cleopatra’s wall in “A Game of Chess,” Eliot explores the possibilities of female and working-class community as a way out of the kinds of hierarchical oppression that eventually cause war. But because the women of Eliot’s work are conditioned to division, complicit in perpetuating the very systems that separate and disenfranchise them, they are destined, in Eliot’s view, to participate in other movements that cause future wars.

Bonnie Roos
West Texas A&M

Eliot and Virgil in Love and War

Although Eliot claimed in “What is a Classic” (1944) that, having read Homer and Virgil as a schoolboy, it was the “world of Virgil” that most appealed to him, and, in “Virgil and the Christian World” (1951), that Virgil was “uniquely classical,” even a “universal classic,” recent scholarship includes very little on Eliot’s debt to Virgil. His own more consistent commentary on Dante may well account for this, yet the “world” Eliot so admired in youth, with what he conceived of as “maturity” and “consciousness of history” pervades both major critical positions and his poetry, early and late. Despite this, and despite previous critical groundwork by Hugh Kenner and a few others, as well as a major book on Eliot and Virgil by Gareth Reeves, recent major texts on Eliot, addressing new topics, tend to include many references to Dante but none or few to Virgil; and those are primarily citations for allusions or references to the Virgil figure in Dante. Yet if Eliot had, by the post-WWII period, largely incorporated the Augustan reception of Virgil as the poet of the “Augustan Peace” and Roman destiny in the Christian world—even to today—the poet of *The Waste Land* seems to be far more attuned to Virgil’s own writing and to the ambiguities and complexities of war and love in *The Aeneid*—a focus of many current Virgil studies.

In fact, if one examines *The Waste Land*, both the published version and the *Facsimile*, in the light of their many references to and parallels to *The Aeneid*, one finds not only significantly more use of this source than has been generally noted but implications not typical of the readings given them. For example, the Punic Wars had a profound meaning for the rise of Rome not suggested by the usual note on Mylae as part of a “trade war”; the references to Dido, as has been noted before, incorporate the fall of Carthage and the story of Aeneas as well as Augustine; and the long question of any mythic template or definitive ending is complicated not only by the lack of any consistent narrative or even imagery from Weston, except in “What the Thunder Said,” but by a counter set of references to Virgil and his “world” later to be part of Eliot’s sense of destiny. Moreover, parallels between the aftermath of the wars leading to the “Augustine Peace” and the aftermath of WWI leading to Versailles haunt the poem.

Nancy K. Gish
University of Southern Maine

Space in Eliot’s Poetry: Centered on *The Waste Land*

This paper aims at exploring topographically the symbolic meanings of various spaces, mainly focusing on proper places in the poetry of Eliot, the “poet of space,” especially in *The Waste Land*, the “spatial poem.” The places in the poem—the Starnbergersee, London, London Bridge, King William Street, Saint Mary Woolnoth, the Cannon Street Hotel, the Metropole Hotel, the Strand, Queen Victoria Street, Lower Thames Street, the Thames, Greenwich Reach, the Isle of Dogs, the Tower of London signified by “white towers,” Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, Highbury, Richmond, Kew Gardens, Moorgate, Margate Sands, Carthage, and sunken Ganga—are included in Bachelard’s concept of the “hostile space,” whereas the Hofgarten, Léman, St. Magnus the Martyr, and Himavant are categorized in his concept of the “felicitous space.”

Thus Eliot, through the whole of *The Waste Land*, depicts the overwhelmingly dominant and destructive spaces, composed of sexually degraded modern men and materially civilized cities, represented by the City of London, similar to Baudelaire’s “fourmillante cité,” rather than the blessed space which provides leisure, life and immortality to man and nature as well. In conclusion, Eliot represents the perspective of a Dantean Inferno, matched with the metaphor of the title of the poem itself, by employing appropriate symbolism and significant connotations in terms of a variety of proper place names inclusive of urban landscapes, townscapes, river landscapes, desert landscapes, and seascapes.

Joong-Eun Ahn
Andong National University



Fabio Vericat, Cyrena Pondrom and Nancy Gish

“Minority Culture”: New Negro Cultural Politics after *The Waste Land*

This paper juxtaposes Eliot’s 1922 “London Letter” eulogizing Marie Lloyd with three prominent Harlem Renaissance essays: Wallace Thurman’s “Negro Artists and the Negro,” Langston Hughes’s “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” and Alain Locke’s “Toward a Critique of Negro Music.” All three works consider the relation of the artist and artistic work to the nation and the past imagined as the literary and cultural tradition of a particular group of people. Like Eliot, black modernists focused on the individual artist’s ties to the group, the black masses in this case, from which the artist comes and to whom or for whom he or she purports to speak. For Locke especially, concerns about possibility of an authentic popular culture are inseparable from and motivated by the rise of technologies of mass production available to the culture industry that is quickly replacing folk forms or using them as fodder for corrupted mass-produced versions of what it has destroyed. Eliot’s attack on the English bourgeoisie as a class that lacks any “independent virtues” is echoed in Thurman and Hughes’s critiques of the middle class itself in its definitive role as the new mass subject of contemporary commodity culture. For Eliot, Lloyd’s art springs from her intimate knowledge of and sympathy for the everyday practices of everyday people. While Hughes assumes the value of black working class culture, especially when compared to the deracinated culture of the aspiring black bourgeoisie, for him, African-American culture is a living tradition, not just prior to modernity and commercialization, but continuing in new and vital forms within them.

Jane Kuenz
University Southern Maine

Classicism as Radiotherapy: Eliot and Seneca’s Non-Theatrical Drama

The modernity of Roman Classicism does not come more alive than when Eliot affirms that “Seneca’s plays might, in fact, be practical models for the modern ‘broadcasted drama.’” These words are almost prophetic because published in 1927, the same year the BBC had only just completed its incorporation, and also because Eliot’s “Seneca in Elizabethan Translation” marks a turning point in Eliot’s poetic and critical approach towards performance, as playwright, lecturer and broadcaster. Thus, the radio literally reenacted in the 20th century the literary influence that Seneca had had on poetic drama four centuries earlier. Seneca’s influence had, then, been exerted radioactively in the sense that it came to the Elizabethans as a sound recording, not in tape but in writing. Seneca’s *Hercules Furens*, Eliot presumes, must “have been composed solely for recitation; like other of Seneca’s plays, it is full of statements useful only to an audience which sees nothing.” By blindfolding the audience to an actual theatrical performance, Seneca revealed poetic sound as dramatic in itself; it exploits what Eliot later identifies as “the sound of the sense of the word” and which he identifies with the acoustic quality of actual conversation. Modeled on Seneca’s non-theatrical drama, radiotherapy is implied by Eliot as the Modernist treatment for poetic dissociation, where verse is no longer in touch with the sense of the sound. The cure forces the disembodiment of the voice into the writing as a drama of sounds. The question is whether, in the end, verse actually survives the treatment.

Fabio L. Vericat
Universidad Complutense de Madrid



Far left: Malobika Sarkar
Left: Music at the Fathmans’ – Timothy Materer, Elisabeth Daümer, Julia Daniel, Tony Fathman, and David Chinitz

Abstracts from the 33rd Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society, St. Louis, MO, Sept 28–30, 2012

“Where will the word resound?” T. S. Eliot and the Politics of the Voice

In the last of his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, delivered at Harvard in March 1933, Eliot at once endorses the idea that all poets wish to write for a socially diverse community of readers whilst issuing caution over the dictum on “a little learning.” “I myself,” he remarks, “should like an audience which could neither read nor write” (UPUC 152). Such a confession, made all the more startling by the occasion on which it was uttered, is significant not merely for its *seeming* embrace of illiteracy: it serves to highlight Eliot’s privileging of oral and auditory methods of learning and exchange between poet and audience. Speaking almost five years after his first radio broadcast on the BBC, by which time, as both Michael Coyle and Todd Avery have pointed out, Eliot had readily aligned himself with the Reithian paradigm of radio broadcasting, he was more than aware of the powerful potential of the speaking voice to shape both opinion and cultural reception.

But behind Eliot’s remark, I will argue, lurks a greater anxiety and ambivalence over the proprietorship of the voice. By drawing on materials from the BBC Archives, my paper charts Eliot’s struggle to retain control over the “frequency” and “bandwidth” of his broadcast voice, which, released on air, threatened to resist any claim to ownership. I explore the extent to which Eliot sought to situate his voice outside of radio’s inherent predisposition to reproduction by inscribing it into a system of regulation reserved for the printed word. My paper reveals attempts by Eliot to militate against the dissolving of the partition between the spoken and the written word, which *The Listener* magazine inevitably breached, in an effort to maintain the authenticity of his voice.

Elizabeth Micaković, University of Exeter
Winner of the Fathman Young Scholar Award for 2012



Past and present Fathman award winners Julia Daniel (left) and Elizabeth Micaković (right)

Rewriting *Four Quartets*: Geoffrey Hill’s *The Orchards of Syon* and John Ashbery’s “The System”

Ezra Pound wrote that “the most intense form of criticism” is criticism through new composition” (“Date Line,” *Literary Essays*, 75). Such criticism is still more intense when a poet not only echoes but also re-conceives the work of a predecessor. Geoffrey Hill’s *The Orchards of Syon* (2002) and John Ashbery’s “The System” (*Three Poems*, 1973) are to a remarkable degree reworked versions of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Hill criticizes Eliot’s verse in the *Quartets* for being less imagistic than the early poetry and his themes for being reactionary. *The Orchards of Syon* suggests what *Four Quartets* might have looked like if Eliot composed it in his earlier style. In contrast, Ashbery’s “System” imitates Eliot’s late style and treats Eliot’s themes more sympathetically. The contrast between the two contemporary poets and their understanding of Eliot’s late poetry helps us to understand better its achievement and limitations.

The talk has three sections:

1) The Echoes. My presentation provides a chart of the lines Hill and Ashbery echo in *Four Quartets*.

2) Style. Hill dislikes what he has described as the “ruminative, well-modulated voice” of *Four Quartets*. In *Syon* Hill’s reflections on places such as Syon’s orchards, or the landscape of his childhood, are found in glimpses and not the more extended moralizing descriptions of the *Quartets*. On the other hand, Ashbery embraces the discursive style that Hill considers merely “ruminative” and takes Eliot’s convoluted meditations, such as the opening of “Burnt Norton,” to a further level of complexity. Although Lee Oser and other critics believe that Ashbery is parodying Eliot’s style, Ashbery’s style in “The System” is as much a homage as a parody.

3) Theme. Hill is troubled by what he considers Eliot’s commonplace references to “that vast but amorphous body of residual Christian acceptance.” To Hill Eliot’s language about reaching a timeless moment appeals, not to the difficult “process . . . of self-enlightenment,” but to the understanding of “the average reader-auditor.” In *Syon* he refuses unlike Eliot to grant any transcendent significance to the seemingly timeless moments and childhood memories that he so beautifully invokes: “the heartland remains / heartless—that’s the strange beauty of it.” Ashbery’s theme is also the possibility of finding a still point within the flow of time: “the razor’s-edge present which is really

a no-time.” His search for these moments is a religious quest that is more open to the “hints and guesses” about a transcendent reality than Hill’s poem. Ashbery is more ironic and less doctrinaire than Eliot, but the spirit of his inquiry is closer to Eliot than Hill.

Timothy Materer, University of Missouri



Decadent Catholicism in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot

The figureheads of the decadent school, including Oscar Wilde, Lionel Johnson, John Gray, Lord Alfred Douglas, and J. K. Huysmans, flirted not only with people of the same sex, but also with Roman Catholicism. Given the biographically queer nature of these artists, as well as their consistent representations of non-normative sexuality, conversion to Catholicism, a religion that opposes all expressions of traditionally aberrant sexuality, seems almost paradoxical. Critical interpretations of decadent Catholicism are as antithetical and confused as the term itself. Catholic apologists and convert-hunters depict the conversions of decadent artists as patent victories and unimpeachable affirmations of the universal magisterium of the Church. Conversely, cultural and queer theorists impeach the sincerity of conversion and associate decadent Catholicism with sadomasochism, subversion of Victorian sexual proprieties, and dandyish posturing. Such readings often seem overly intent on appropriating individual artists and labeling them as either conservative or radical.

In this paper I intend to demonstrate that decadent Catholicism, as it manifested itself in the lives and works of artists such as Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson, was sublimated into the modernist poetry of T. S. Eliot. Immature poems such as “The Burnt Dancer,” “The Love Song of St. Sebastian,” and “The Death of Saint Narcissus” show clear signs of the *mal du siècle*, but I am less interested in connecting Eliot to the decadent school of the 1890s in general than I am in showing what he does with the legacy and influence of decadent Catholicism in particular. Unlike Yeats, who explicitly rejects the decadent Catholicism of the “tragic generation” as an historical aberration, Eliot internalizes and transforms the conflicted aesthetic. My hope is that this investigation of the links between Eliot and the literary phenomenon of decadent Catholicism may add nuance to the critical conversation about the complex relationship between Eliot’s faith and art.

Martin Lockerd, University of Texas

“Feeble” Translations: Reconsidering the Textual History of the “Notes” to *The Waste Land*

When T.S. Eliot added the “Notes” to *The Waste Land* for the 1922 Boni and Liveright edition of the poem, he did far more than provide his readers with a list of allusions or references. As early as 1933, F.R. Leavis highlighted the irony of the final note, suggesting that “‘the peace which passeth understanding’ is a feeble translation of the content of this word” undermines any sense of closure or resolution originally suggested by the “Shantih shantih shantih” mantra. Regardless of Eliot’s dismissal in *The Frontiers of Criticism* (1956) that the “Notes” were generated simply as a means to provide a few more pages of printed matter, though they ended up as “a remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view today,” it is clear that they exist in an ambivalent and dialectical tension with the poem, as more recent critics such as Jewel Spears Brooker, Louis Menand, and Stanley Sultan have discussed.

However, not many recall or notice the important change in this final note as the poem has been republished. When Faber first printed Eliot’s *Poems 1909–1925*, the final note was left unchanged. But for the 1932 Faber and Harcourt Brace reprinting of *Poems 1909–1925*, the note was altered to “‘the peace which passeth understanding’ is our equivalent to this word,” and it is this new amended version which has remained in virtually all reprintings of *The Waste Land*, including Eliot’s *Collected Poems* and the current Norton Critical edition. Other contemporary reprintings, such as *The New Anthology of American Poets: Modernisms, 1900–1950* oddly combine the two versions together as, “‘The Peace which passeth understanding’ is our feeble equivalent to this word,” even though no such version of the note existed before.

This paper discusses the unique textual history behind this particular note, addressing both why Eliot made this change from “feeble” to “equivalent,” and how the change fundamentally alters the way we read the poem as a whole. It also considers how the textual history of this note challenges the standard reliance upon the 1922 Boni and Liveright edition of the poem, and underscores the importance of identifying the textual history behind Eliot’s work more generally.

*Christopher McVey
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

RECENT AND UPCOMING CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Modern Language Association Convention (Boston, Jan 2013)

Eliot, H.D., and New England

1. "Eliot's New England," Anita Patterson, Boston Univ.
2. "'And the Reputation the Place Gets': Eliot in Boston," Michael Gordon Coyle, Colgate Univ.
3. "'Inviolable Voice': 'Pervilgium Veneris' in *The Waste Land* in the Light of H.D.'s 'Cras Amet,'" Miranda Brun Hickman, McGill Univ.



Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900 (Feb 2013)

New Directions in Eliot Studies

1. "Eliot, the Modernist as Decadent." Vincent Sherry, Washington Univ. in St. Louis
2. "T. S. Eliot's Music Hall vs. the Cinema." Barry J. Faulk, Florida State Univ.

3. "Eliot, Versailles, and the Politics of the European Mind." Gabriel Hankins, Clemson Univ.

American Literature Association (Boston, May 2013)

The T. S. Eliot Society will sponsor two sessions at the 2013 annual conference of the American Literature Association, May 23–26, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, organized by Nancy K. Gish. For information on the ALA and its 2013 meeting, please see the ALA website at www.americanliterature.org.



34th Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society, (St. Louis, Sept 27-29, 2013)

Information about our next Annual Meeting will appear in the spring issue of *Time Present*, including our official CFP, topics of peer seminars, and announcement of our next memorial speaker. It's not too soon to be thinking about your plans for September. Save the date!

CALL FOR PAPERS

Modern Language Association (Chicago, Jan 2014) and Collected Volume

T. S. Eliot and the "Other Arts"

We invite 500-word proposals for papers to be included in a panel sponsored by the T. S. Eliot Society at the 2014 MLA on the topic of T. S. Eliot and other arts. Proposals will also be considered for inclusion in a collected volume of essays on this topic, edited by Frances Dickey and John Morgenstern. Essays will explore intermedial

dimensions of Eliot's poetry and thought, presenting new research on the relations between his work and extraliterary art forms such as music, the visual arts, dance, drama, and cinema. Contributions may investigate Eliot's engagement with one or more extraliterary artist, artwork, or artistic medium; use Eliot's work as the occasion to theorize the relationship between poetry and another art; or trace the manifold ways in which his poetry and/or critical writings stimulated developments in the other arts. Those not able to attend MLA can apply just for inclusion in the volume; please indicate on proposal.

Send abstracts for consideration to both Frances (dickeyf@missouri.edu) and John (j.morgenstern@chch.oxon.org) by March 1, 2013.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Supervisor of Elections seeks nominations for the position of Board Member to fill the seat presently held by Chris Buttram and the vacant seat held until recently by Tony Cuda (now serving as Secretary). Those elected will serve three-year terms from June 1, 2013, to May 31, 2016.

Board members must attend the annual meeting of the

Society, at which the Board meeting is held, and will be expected to take on other tasks in service to the Society.

Nominations and self-nominations should be sent to the incoming Supervisor of Elections, David Chinitz (dchinit@luc.edu) by February 15, 2013. Candidates with five or more nominations will appear on the ballot.

BOARD REPORT

Report from the T. S. Eliot Society Board 28 Sept. 2012, St. Louis, MO

The Board elected Frances Dickey Vice President of the T. S. Eliot Society. Her three-year term began on January 1, 2013. In 2016 she will succeed Michael Coyle as President. Frances has served ably as the Society's Historian for the past six years. Her election to the Vice Presidency left the position of Historian open, and the Board elected John Morgenstern to that position.

After four years' service as Book Review Editor for *Time Present*, first under David Chinitz's editorship and then under Michael Coyle's, Julia Daniel will be stepping down after the current issue. Julia recently completed her PhD at Loyola University Chicago. The Society offers its congratulations and sincere thanks to Frances, John, and Julia. Thanks also, once again, to William Harmon, who is now cycling off the board after serving nine years as Vice President, President, and Supervisor of Elections.

The board discussed the idea of holding the 2016 Eliot Society meeting in Rapallo, Italy. Incoming President Michael Coyle is heading a committee to explore this possibility. Please communicate any suggestions to him (mcoyle@mail.colgate.edu).

T.S. ELIOT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP LIST DECEMBER 2012

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *Time Present*—a Fall issue that became a Winter issue—will be my last as editor. I now move into the President's chair, and my old duties are being assumed by the energetic and capable Frances Dickey. As *Time Present* develops it becomes ever more demanding on its editor, and for that reason especially I hope you all will take the opportunity to wish Frances the best. From here on the physical preparation of *Time Present* will happen at the University of Missouri, but for the past three years it has happened at my own home, Colgate University, and I

would like once more to thank our Dean of Faculty for all his support.

I would also like to thank Julia Daniel for her dedicated and proficient service as book review editor. This issue will be for her as well as for me a final appearance as editor. Beginning with our Spring issue review copies should be sent to John Morgenstern. Authors and publishers seeking to place a review in *Time Present* should contact John at j.morgenstern@chch.oxon.org.

Michael Coyle

Email Listserv

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

To join, please contact the **Secretary**.

For Help With Society Matters

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

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

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

The Society **Historian** is John Morgenstern (j.morgenstern@chch.oxon.org).

President

Michael Coyle

Department of English / Colgate University / 13 Oak Dr. / Hamilton, NY 13346

(315) 228-7264 / mcoyle@colgate.edu

Vice President

Frances Dickey

Department of English / 211 Tate Hall / University of Missouri / Columbia, MO 65211

(573) 882-9601 / dickeyf@missouri.edu

Treasurer

Melanie Fathman

c/o First Unitarian Church / 5007 Waterman Blvd. / St. Louis, MO 63108

Administrative Assistant: Yvette Clemons

(314) 361-0595 ext. 21 / yclemons@firstuustlouis.org

Secretary

Tony Cuda

Department of English / University of North Carolina – Greensboro / Greensboro, NC 27412

ajcuda@uncg.edu

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