

Time Present

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The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 3: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929.

Edited by Frances Dickey, Jennifer
Formichelli, and Ronald Schuchard

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. lix + 786 pages.

Reviewed by John Whittier-Ferguson
University of Michigan

I was recently going through old files in my office, making space for the new year, pitching papers into the recycling bin, and I came across a thick folder that I have moved with me ever since I finished graduate school in 1990: a collection of xeroxes from a much larger hoard assembled by my then-classmate Marjorie Howes (now a professor on the faculty of Boston College). She had, at the urging of Walt Litz, made copies of as much of the "C" section of Donald Gallup's bibliography of Eliot's work as she could find, assembling a private archive of his "Contributions to Periodicals" for those of us working in the field. Not that I was inclined to try and use this material in anything I'd want to publish; I had heard Ron Bush's accounts of the (expensive) challenges of getting permissions for the quotations he used in his groundbreaking *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style* (1984). I have recalled often, by way of contrast, this earlier, much poorer age in Eliot studies as I have been reading in and working with the new *Poems*, the *Letters*, and the *Complete Prose*. Though I'm attending here only to some moments from the third volume of that prose, the entire gathering of materials encourages us to realize that students of this centrally important, transformative poet, playwright, critic, and correspondent have until recently worked with the merest sampling of Eliot's writing, the slightest glimpses of the man—now that we have around eight thousand carefully edited, extensively and illuminatingly annotated pages open before us, with many more to follow.

Those annotations are an achievement worth dwelling on. The editors of this third volume (of the four available online as of this writing) have assembled extraordinarily rich contexts for these essays.

The glosses not only guide us through the vast expanse of hitherto uncollected and new pieces we encounter in these volumes, but they also encourage us to recalibrate our understanding of essays that have been familiar for years. Everywhere we look, we discover new writing and new angles on that writing, as well as discovering, thanks to the chronological reassembly of Eliot's work, the developing patterns of his thought. The essay on "Baudelaire in our Time," for example, regains an introduction (as well as correspondence with Marianne Moore about this introduction) that it had when it appeared first in *The Dial*, in May of 1927, as "Poet and Saint." It opened then with a paragraph chastising the editors for calling the translation under review "Baudelaire Complete":

In the case of many authors, this misstatement would not have so much mattered; for some even voluminous authors can be judged fairly by a very small part of their work. But not Baudelaire. It is now becoming understood that Baudelaire is one of the few poets who wrote nothing either prose or verse that is negligible. To understand Baudelaire you must read the whole of Baudelaire. And nothing that he wrote is without importance. He was a great poet; he was a great critic. And he was also a man with [a] profound attitude toward life for the study of which we need every scrap of his writing. (*Prose* 3 82)

The earnestness—"we need every scrap"—Eliot's insistence that the stakes attending one's reading and writing are enormously high, that our inquiries and explorations matter a great deal—this is the overwhelming impression conveyed by the essays assembled here, so many of which, as the editors point out in their useful Introduction, revolve around considerations of what can sustain and augment the edifice of human culture and our capacities for faith. The chronological position of this volume of prose means that we accompany Eliot not into certainties of Christian belief but into his wrestling with newly consequential questions. As he puts it in a brief "Note

on Poetry and Belief" from the first issue of Wyndham Lewis's short-lived periodical *The Enemy* (the first public utterance, the editors note, in the "decade-long dialogue on poetry and belief between TSE and Richards" [*Prose* 3 20, n. 3]), the question about whether a poet can wholly separate "his poetry and all beliefs, and this without any weakening of the poetry . . . is new and is important and is extremely interesting" (*Prose* 3 18). He rejects Richards's assertion that *The Waste Land* achieved such severance and closes his "note" with a dark declaration of allegiance—a resolute assertion that we must continue to care:

We await, in fact (as Mr. Richards is awaiting the future poet), the great genius who shall triumphantly succeed in believing something. For those of us who are higher than the mob, and lower than the man of inspiration, there is always doubt; and in doubt we are living parasitically (which is better than not living at all) on the minds of the men of genius of the past who have believed something. (*Prose* 3 20)

When Eliot turns from philosophy to art, this new seriousness of purpose also manifests itself. In "The Contemporary Novel" (appearing only in French in 1927; published here in English for the first time), he laments that current novelists, creating new aesthetic forms, cultivating psychologism, displaying sensibility and "all the finer thrills of sensation," "suggesting that momentary or partial experience is the standard of reality, that intensity is the only criterion" (*Prose* 3 90, 91), have forgotten that they should be addressing something more fundamental in their work: "they

"Eliot's rigorous, bracing essays...are absolutely necessary additions to the cultural store from which we might receive sustenance, in which we might find means to think about the way we live now."

all lack . . . the 'moral preoccupation.' And as I believe that this 'moral preoccupation' is more and more asserting itself in the minds of those who think and feel, I am forced to the somewhat extreme conclusion that

the contemporary English novel is behind the times" (*Prose* 3 89).

The charge from the editor of *Time Present* to those of us writing these short pieces on each volume of the

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The 38th Annual Meeting of the T. S. Eliot Society

St. Louis, September 22-24, 2017

Call for Papers

The Society invites proposals for papers to be presented at our annual meeting in St. Louis. Clearly organized proposals of about 300 words, on any topic reasonably related to Eliot, along with brief biographical sketches, should be emailed by May 15, 2017, to tseliotsociety@gmail.com, with the subject heading “conference proposal.”

Each year the Society awards a prize to the best paper given by a new Eliot scholar. Graduate students and recent PhDs are eligible (degree received in 2013 or later for those not yet employed in a tenure-track position; 2015 or later for those holding tenure-track positions). If you are eligible for the award, please mention this fact in your submission. The Fathman Young Scholar Award, which includes a monetary prize, will be announced at the final session of the meeting.

Memorial Lecturer: John Haffenden

For our 2017 Memorial Lecture, we are pleased to present John Haffenden, general editor of T. S. Eliot’s *Letters*, honorary member of our Society, Fellow of the British Academy, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Professor Haffenden is a Principal Investigator in the T. S. Eliot Editorial Research Project and, since 2009, a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of English Studies, University of London. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he completed his doctorate at St. Peter’s College, Oxford, under the supervision of Richard Ellmann. During his distinguished career teaching at the University of Sheffield (where he is now Emeritus Professor of English Literature), he wrote or edited sixteen books on John Berryman, W. H. Auden, William Empson, and others. His edition of Empson’s *Argufying* (1987) was chosen by Sir Isaiah Berlin as one of the Books of the Year in the *Sunday Times*. His edition of *The Complete Poems of William Empson* (2000) was chosen by Sir Frank Kermode as one of the International Books of the Year in the *TLS* and by David Sexton as a Book of the Year in the *London Evening Standard*. Finally, his biography *William Empson: Among the Mandarins* (2005), won the American Publishers Association Award for Biography and Autobiography. Professor Haffenden may be best known to Eliot scholars, however, as the editor of Eliot’s letters, so far six volumes, with more to come.

Peer Seminar: Eliot and Fiction

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. This year’s peer seminar, under the leadership of Megan Quigley of Villanova University, will focus on Eliot and fiction. Eliot once argued that contemporary fiction nourished his own work more than poetry did, and the time seems ripe (with the publication of Eliot’s complete prose and the recent poetry volumes) to revisit Eliot’s relationship to prose fiction and novelists. Possible topics for discussion might include:

- New materials shedding light on Eliot’s fictional influences, including Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Gustave Flaubert, Honoré Balzac, James Joyce, Djuna Barnes, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, May Sinclair, and the list goes on.
- Eliot’s impact on twentieth-century fiction, through personal relationships and literary influence
- The last twist of the knife: Eliot’s interest in detective fiction
- Eliot as fiction writer: Eliot’s “Eeldrop and Appleplex”
- Eliot as editor of fiction at Faber and Faber
- Eliot’s fictional afterlife (for example: biofiction, postcolonial fiction, contemporary British fiction)
- Fiction and the everyday: Eliot’s belief that fiction was more closely connected to daily life and how we see that infused in his verse
New readings of the New Criticism: Eliot’s relationship to New Criticism and its approaches to the novel
- Eliot in narrative theory: reading Eliot through narrative theory, formalist theory, genre theory

Participants will pre-circulate short position papers (5 pages) by September 1, for discussion at the meeting of the peer seminar on the first day of the 2017 Eliot Society conference, Friday, September 22. Membership in the peer seminar is limited to twelve on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please enroll by July 15, by sending an email with the subject line “peer seminar” to tseliotsociety@gmail.com with your contact information.

Annual Meeting *continued*

Megan Quigley is an Associate Professor of English at Villanova University, focusing on British and Irish twentieth-century literature. Her recent book, *Modernist Fiction and Vagueness: Philosophy, Form, and Language* investigates the intertwined history of philosophy and literature in the modern British novel (Cambridge University Press, 2015). Megan received her BA at Stanford University in 1995, graduating with honors in English with a creative writing emphasis, and then went on to earn her M.Phil at Oxford University in the Modern Period. Quigley received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 2006. Her work has appeared in *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism*, the *James Joyce Quarterly*, *The Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society* (U.K.), *Modernism / modernity*, and *Philosophy and Literature*. She has twice been an invited lecturer at the T. S. Eliot summer school in London and won fellowships for her work from the Harry Ransom Center and the Huntington Library. She is currently at work on a project investigating T. S. Eliot's relationship to fiction, and will be delivering lectures on this subject at the Johns Hopkins Humanities Center and at the "Logic and Literary Form" conference at the University of California, Berkeley, in Spring 2017. Her courses at Villanova have included *The Contemporary British Novel*, *Modernist Manifestos*, *T. S. Eliot and Modern Novels*, *Virginia Woolf*, and *The Philosophy of Modernism*. In 2014 she received the *Tolle Lege* Award for Teaching Excellence from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Villanova.



Eliot and Valerie at the Jamaica Inn, Jamaica, 1961

The T. S. Eliot Foundation Debuts its Website: tseliot.com

Reviewed by Oliver Rowse

In October of last year tseliot.com was “launched”—a beginning and an end, as the word implies. The website was originally conceived by the T. S. Eliot Estate as a platform for those more workaday letters of Eliot's not published in the *Letters*—some formulaic (if not dictated) letters of rejection, others *Criterion* and Faber business-meets-pleasure correspondence of the Did-we-say-1-at-the-Athenaeum? order. These now appear online, within the Letters section, fully annotated by Professor John Haffenden, searchable by date or person, and making good on Valerie Eliot's promise of comprehensiveness. They will continue to appear in tandem with the print volumes: in greater quantity, the size and scope of Eliot's correspondence increasing with the addition of professional and public responsibilities. The letters available on the website, some 500 at the time of writing, soon to number over 1000, will be of particular interest to those researching Eliot's working life and figures connected to him in its course: Isaiah Berlin, Clive Bell and Stephen Spender, as well as Eliot's *Criterion* retainers—the likes of Bonamy Dobrée, Orlo Williams and J. B. Trend.

While the letters had given the project its point of departure, such a digital archive needed an editorial context. The need presented an opportunity, and so, in the course of development, a more adventurous course was set. The site's mission was enlarged, first in collaboration with Faber & Faber, and presently with Thinking, a creative digital agency based in Athens, Greece.

With so much of Eliot's poetry and prose freely available in pirated online editions, often inaccurate and in any case inelegant, insensitive both to the poetry and the reader, it was felt that a website might be a way of reasserting authority and quality in an age where so many readers encounter Eliot's work, its context and its reception according to the dictates of a search engine, or regurgitated by Twitterbots as a personal-motivational, commercial-aspirational meme. It was decided that the site's mission should be educational, its aim to introduce Eliot's life and work—in its full variety—to as broad an audience as possible. And in that spirit, free to the public.

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***Modernist Fiction and Vagueness: Philosophy, Form, and Language*, by Megan Quigley**

New York: Cambridge UP, 2015. xiv + 228 pages.

Reviewed by Omri Moses
Concordia University

Philosophers have long feuded about what things “really” are like, how to conceive of the world more accurately. The rise of empiricism shaped philosophers’ views, but in the early twentieth century, some of the pioneers of what is still termed analytic philosophy set out to give a special role to their own discipline in pursuing a realist epistemology, which had been mostly the preserve of science. Philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege, and others insisted that constructing a logically precise language could clarify the propositions we use to represent the world. The effort to eliminate vagueness would require them to devise a new exacting system of formal relationships akin to mathematics, correcting for the nebulous semantic indeterminacy of ordinary language. In *Modernist Fiction and Vagueness*, Megan Quigley establishes how such dreams of precision circulated between philosophers and modernist fiction writers, how these two groups, linked by mutual association, informal encounters, and lecture hall engagements, created an environment in which to indulge their respective commitments to formalism. As they confronted vagueness and debated whether it is a basic constituent of the fabric of things or just an unfortunate byproduct of imprecise language, they put language itself to higher scrutiny. In Quigley’s telling, such inquiry helped modernist writers conceive a new kind of literary realism.

The strength of Quigley’s account depends on her method of gathering and interlacing a great heap of evidence from the archive, including journal entries, essays, lectures, radio broadcasts, biographies, notes, letters, philosophical treatises, and novels, to suggest something like a shared set of values among philosophers and writers, a mutual devotion to transcribing or representing the world objectively. What thickens Quigley’s narrative is her feeling for the different pathways philosophers and writers took, despite a shared career arc. For the writers, vagueness was a thing to celebrate. Henceforth, they treated

language less as an instrument they were duty-bound to correct, hone, and improve, and more as a pragmatic tool of communication and social exchange, something one embraces for its rough-and-ready expediency. So Flaubert’s “mot juste,” T. S. Eliot’s “objective correlative,” Joyce’s obsession with the factual accuracy of place-names and Dublin topography, other proofs of the analytical and “impersonal” spirit of the age give way to the rich vagueness of a more pragmatic art. Henry James’s stylistic ambiguity in his late phase, Woolf’s fluid literary form and watery landscape in *The Waves*, Joyce’s untranslatable associativeness and wordplay in *Finnegans Wake*, and Eliot’s Christianized disenchantment with the false omniscience of academic philosophy are the fruit of this reconceived relationship to reality. Yet the surprising element of Quigley’s account is not the philosophical influence of pragmatism on literary modernists. Instead, Quigley focuses on debates between realists and pragmatists (Russell, Frege, early Wittgenstein vs. William James and John Dewey), on rivalries between pragmatists themselves (James vs. Charles S. Peirce), and on the developments that pushed realists into the pragmatist camp (Wittgenstein).

Quigley tells some appealing stories, not all of them well known, about how these figures come into contact with important modernist writers. Thus, for example, she recounts Peirce’s friendship with Henry James in her first chapter, which in 1875 saw the two young men meeting and dining in Paris on a regular basis. She establishes one way that Peirce differed from William James: he wanted to discount vagueness in favor of precision. She argues that Henry had Peirce in mind for various late satirical portraits, including John Marcher in *The Beast in the Jungle*, whose over-precise ideas about his future undo him, only to usher in the vagueness he refused to accept. In the second chapter, Quigley examines Virginia Woolf’s attitude toward Russell, whose lectures she sometimes visited. He, like Woolf’s father, serves as a model for Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. Rather than positioning Woolf either as an idealist or a realist committed to a mind-independent conception of reality, Quigley argues that Woolf’s work is animated by the tension between these perspectives. Like Russell, Woolf finds language unescapably vague, but unlike him she sees no “reason to discard it as a tool” since its “instability mirrors the multiplicity of ‘truths’” (69). For Quigley, instead of adopting apparently masculine values, such as clarity

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T. S. Eliot and the Fulfillment of Christian Poetics
by G. Douglas Atkins

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. ix + 114 pp.

Reviewed by Paul Robichaud
Albertus Magnus College

In *T. S. Eliot and the Fulfillment of Christian Poetics*, G. Douglas Atkins argues that each of the *Four Quartets* is ultimately about its own writing and that the sequence as a whole teaches us how to read itself by demanding the same forms of attentiveness—to time and the timeless, to the slipperiness of language—that Eliot dramatizes through the poetry itself. As his title suggests, Atkins reads *Four Quartets* as the culmination of Eliot’s attempts at a Christian poetics begun in *Ash-Wednesday*, and his focus is primarily on the “Incarnational” aspects of the poems. His reading emphasizes the tension between the Word and words, and the ways in which Eliot’s poems register this strain. By combining traditional close reading, contextualized by Eliot’s poetry as a whole, with a form of reader response, Atkins offers a commentary that is personal and engaging. A particular strength of the book is how it reconsiders the seemingly less successful parts of *Four Quartets* in light of Eliot’s Christian poetics and the totality of his poetry.

The central claim of Atkins’s book is that “Eliot is, in *Four Quartets*, fulfilling (the promise of) his pre-conversion work, as ‘Little Gidding’ fulfills that of the earlier parts of the essay-poem” (6). This is what Atkins means by “Christian poetics,” although it would help the reader to have a more explicit definition; the term “poetics” itself has only two citations in the index, an oddity given its prominence in the book’s title. His choice of the term “essay-poem” to describe *Four Quartets* implies an interpretation of the sequence that perhaps foregrounds its argument over its aesthetic qualities, though in practice Atkins’s reading is attentive to the ways *Four Quartets* is structured by what Eliot calls “the logic of imagination.” A poetic argument is not formed by reason alone. The “Incarnational pattern” that Atkins identifies is both a motif and a structural element within the poems that point us to the Incarnation itself, when “the past and future / Are conquered and reconciled” (*The Dry Salvages* V, 35-6).

In his chapter on *Burnt Norton*, Atkins suggests that earlier critics such as Helen Gardner and Denis

Donoghue have misread the poem by failing to take its introductory character sufficiently into account, specifically the way the poem engages in speculation that is not resolved into action until *Little Gidding*. *Burnt Norton*, in this reading, culminates in the recognition of a greater pattern in which our lives unfold, pointing us toward a spiritual journey we have not yet undertaken: “What the Incarnational pattern reveals is the necessity for purification of *merely temporal* affections” (27; italics original). What remains is the temporal seen or experienced in light of the eternal.

Atkins’s reading of *East Coker* emphasizes Eliot’s perspectivism, cautioning readers not to identify any one point of view with the poet’s own, even where that temptation is strongest in the fourth section. The interpretive caution occasionally seems overdone, as when Atkins writes of part I: “Whether the ‘dignified and commodious sacrament’ refers to ‘matrimonie’ or this ‘association’ is, I think, unclear” (35). Eliot presents the “association” dramatized in the peasants’ “daunsing” as a positive good, even though shadowed by the bodily necessities of “dung and death.” But that association is not to be confused with the sacramentality of marriage, which it can only prefigure. When Atkins describes the line “For a further union, a deeper communion” (V, 35) as “an effective response to, and clarification of, the verses on the Elizabethan rustics” (40), he more effectively shows how the poem continually revisits and revises its earlier positions.

The next two chapters explore *The Dry Salvages*, in which the voice recognizes its own unknowingness, reflecting the reader’s experience of not knowing where Eliot’s poem is ultimately leading. Responding to earlier critics, particularly Hugh Kenner, who regard the second section of the poem as an aesthetic failure, Atkins suggests that the failure is deliberate: “The speaker in these stanzas (simply) gets it wrong” (53) by failing to see “the emergence of a pattern alternate to the bleak one being declared” (54). The fifth section of *The Dry Salvages* receives its own chapter, in which Atkins argues that Eliot presents not the Incarnation itself, but the larger pattern that has the Incarnation as its fulfillment. The difficulty of perceiving and understanding the pattern is mirrored by the tonal shifts and variety within the section.

The book’s last two chapters, on *Little Gidding*, show how this poem resolves the tensions of the three earlier poems through a union of opposites

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“Whispers of T. S. Eliot” by Paul Muldoon

The Inaugural T. S. Eliot Lecture at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, Sunday, 6 November 2016

Rosie Lavan
Trinity College Dublin

On New Year’s Day, BBC Radio Four broadcast readings and analyses of T. S. Eliot’s complete English poems. Ostensibly there is little to wonder at in this—there is room in the holiday broadcasting schedule for such generosity to readers of poetry—but other factors were at play. The outcome of the referendum on the United Kingdom’s membership in the European Union and the election of Donald Trump in the United States were very plain to see between the lines of explanation Radio Four advanced for its recourse to Eliot at the year’s turning: “At the end of a year in which so much that had been taken for granted seemed to fragment,” its programme description read, “our guests explain why Eliot, himself a poet of fragments, can steady us for a journey into the unknown, and for transformation.” A tall order for both the poet and the poetry, certainly—but inspired commissioning by the BBC, too. It is in a strange way heartening to think that this act of looking back, through the now seemingly definitive frameworks for retrospection which Eliot provided, did not deny dissonance, nor seek to offer salves, but instead required only reflection in the directions towards which the language of his poetry seems to point.

In Ireland, of course, 2016 was heavy with commemorations, and so occasions when the matter of the past was raised more subtly and borne more lightly were welcome. The inaugural T. S. Eliot Lecture, delivered by Paul Muldoon at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in November, might be numbered among them. It was, incidentally, the Abbey’s fiftieth year in its present incarnation—the building was opened by President Éamon de Valera in 1966, fifteen years after the original theatre was destroyed by fire. That was the stage on which T. S. Eliot stood in April 1940 to deliver the first Annual Yeats Lecture, within a year of the Irish poet’s death. In 2016, caught in the popular retrospect of Ireland’s Decade of Centenaries (2012–2022), and urged by Muldoon to dwell in the strange, suggestive possibilities of literary allusion, one couldn’t help but think about posterity. Not just in terms of the

poets themselves, though their sense of time is always pressing, but in terms—at once more fundamental and more complicated—of the transience of the word as spoken and heard. The two performances which accompanied the lecture reinforced this feeling. First came the second movement of Schubert’s Quintet for Strings in C Major, which builds and breaks and is haunted by its sense of lateness, the work having been completed two months before the composer’s death and only performed twenty years later. Then, on the bare grey stage, Fiona Shaw performed *The Waste Land*, evoking to unsettling but always compelling effect the broken images and different voices so familiar from the page, but less often seen and heard.

The lecture itself was a brilliantly Muldoonian excavation of influence and allusion in “Whispers of Immortality.” Readers of Muldoon’s criticism will have recognised and appreciated his very particular strategies of close reading, in which lines of analysis are pursued in a deliberate challenge to what seems credible but were consistently reined in and validated by the literary historical record. So it was that, in his commitment to exploring “what lies in the substratum of a poem,” he presented the network of allusions in “Whispers of Immortality” in three dimensions. Familiar presences—Webster, Wordsworth, Donne, Grishkin—were set free and made to move among Eliot’s literary, personal, and historical circumstances, as Muldoon reassembled them. There was Ruskin, delivering his enigmatic lecture “The Mystery of Life and its Arts” at the Royal College of Science in Dublin in 1868, which Muldoon deemed to be “uncannily in sync” with “Whispers of Immortality.” Ruskin’s more intimate correspondence with Charles Eliot Norton at Harvard enabled him to pursue the link across the Atlantic, and Eliot’s own Charles Eliot Norton lectures were an important touchstone for Muldoon. There too was Bertrand Russell, insinuating himself between Eliot and Vivienne, a real-life provocateur in the personal story Muldoon sought to emphasise in the “hinterland of infidelity” which the poem constructs; the first syllable of the philosopher’s name perhaps even whispered, Muldoon suggested, in the “Russian eye.” This pursuit of unexpected associations can become a performance art in itself, and the audience was responsive, and at times clearly delighted, by the display. Muldoon is a great performer, and this lecture was marked by his characteristic wit and ease of address, and a profound respect and value for the poetry under discussion

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Compiled by David Chinitz

Constellated wars. Pointing to historical events from Abraham Lincoln's assassination (April 14, 1865) to the Boston Marathon bombing (April 15, 2013), Kimberly Ricci suggests on uproxx.com that April really is the "cruellest month." Other April events on Ricci's list include the sinking of the Titanic, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the start of the Armenian and Rwandan genocides, and the massacres at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech. (April's cruelty seems to have deepened, at least in the United States, since the Waco Siege in April 1993.) After interviewing a number of astrologers, Ricci attributes April's cruelty to "the devastating energies of Aries and the moon." Nonbelievers are duly spanked. ("The Cruellest Month: An Examination Of April's Long History Of Terror And Violence," April 20, 2016)

What Precisely and If and Perhaps and But. An article in the *Independent* describes Dr. Tarif Khalidi as "one of Islam's foremost scholars and translator of the latest English-language edition of the Koran." According to the article, the anti-fundamentalist Khalidi is "a generously bearded Palestinian who talks English with T. S. Eliot precision." (Robert Fisk, "In the Fight Against Isis, There's Hope in the History of Islam," June 30, 2016)

In the waning dusk. Reviewing Katie Roiphe's recent book in the *Wall Street Journal*, Daniel Akst describes it as "a tender yet penetrating look at the final days of Susan Sontag, Sigmund Freud, John Updike and Dylan Thomas, in addition to [Maurice] Sendak." The book's title, *The Violet Hour*, "is from T. S. Eliot, chosen because 'it evokes the mood of the elusive period I am describing: melancholy, expectant, laden.'" ("Facing Up to Death," March 4, 2016)

The truth about cats and dogs. In a *New York Times* piece exploring the reasons why so many cat posts go viral on the internet, Abigail Tucker suggests that the suddenness of cats' movements, a consequence of the

ambush techniques by which they feed themselves in the wild, is part of the explanation. She argues: "Dogs, by contrast, aren't surprise predators. Their wild relatives, wolves, are long-distance hunters, tracking prey for miles. Such dogged personalities make for better long narrative arcs, which is why canines outnumber cats in movies and novels. But the internet is more like poetry: nonlinear, fragmented, spontaneous and explosive, a place to simultaneously hide and strike. And from Dr. Seuss to T. S. Eliot, poetry is a rare medium in which cats are more prevalent than dogs." ("How Cats Evolved to Win the Internet," 15 Oct. 2016.)

"from Dr. Seuss to T. S. Eliot, poetry is
a rare medium in which cats are more
prevalent than dogs."

Crosswords return. From the *New York Times Magazine*: 67 Down: "Four Quartets' poet" (13 Mar. 2016). 41 Across: "Waste Land' poet" (4 July 2016). 75 Across: "Literary inits." (15 Nov. 2015). That last—with answer "TSE"—has been reported in this column before.

Word processors. To illustrate the thesis that before word processors were introduced, they "already existed, just in a different form: the human woman," Josephine Livingstone cites "Valerie Eliot, widow and legacy-keeper of T. S. Eliot," who "performed secretarial duties for Eliot with ferocious competence during his life and guarded his papers after his death with an equal loyalty." ("Word Perfect: How Did Word Processors Transform Literature?" *The New Republic* June 2016: 73)

Worst-sellers. Jerry Bowyer praises what he calls the "Found Generation"—writers whose experience of WWI "left them with empathy and wisdom along with their permanent scars." He opines: "The lost generation dragged high culture down into nihilism and low culture into decadence, but the Found Generation founded a counter-counter-culture. The novels of Tolkien, and not those of Gertrude Stein, or T. S. Eliot, or even Ernest Hemingway are read widely by the general public." Indeed, Eliot's novels have very few readers today. (forbes.com, July 26, 2016)

The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot

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Complete Prose is that we illustrate what these editions offer to scholars now working on Eliot. It is scarcely possible to overstate the significance and extent of those offerings. I would like to conclude with an assertion that this project of assembly and annotation and publication is important, too, in ways we may not even yet fully realize. I am thinking here of the intemperance, the demagoguery, the ostentatious thoughtlessness so prevalent in this political age, and of how essayists like Adam Gopnik and Stephen Burt have turned to poets to help orient us in our vexed times. Eliot's rigorous, bracing essays—so many of them scattered, before this edition, across decades of periodicals and newspapers, unpublished or hidden away in unannotated, xeroxed copies passed among his admirers—are absolutely necessary additions to the cultural store from which we might receive sustenance, in which we might find means to think about the way we live now. His skeptical intelligence can provide us with passages like this salutary rebuke from a 1928 review of books about fascism:

There is a general sickness of politics, and a general admission that it is not worth while worrying, as all politicians are alike, and their activity is just as remote from ours as the meditations of Einstein, and our vote doesn't matter anyway. And in this state of mind and spirit human beings are inclined to welcome any regime which relieves us from the burden of pretended democracy. Possibly also, hidden in many breasts, is a craving for a regime which will relieve us of thought and at the same time give us excitement and military salutes. (*Prose* 3 546)

And he can offer us an equally bracing defense of the hard work of thought, asking that language be used carefully for this work, rather than being "chiefly employed for the purpose of publicity" (*Prose* 3 293). His *Criterion* Commentary, from the end of 1927, urges us not to subside into complaisance, to keep working at the kinds of labor that modernity seems so often to dismiss as unnecessary:

It is possible, of course, that evolution will bring the human race to such a point of perfection that

thinking will no longer be necessary. Thinking is painful and requires toil, and is a mark of human incompleteness. Theology will no doubt become obsolete: the day is already at hand when we shall be able, for a few shillings, with the approval of the London County Council and to the sounds of soft music, to contemplate with vacant minds the newest close-up of the Crucifixion. But in this painful "meanwhile," as Mr. Wells would say, during which we are still obliged to think that we think, a great many theological works are being published, and presumably being read by somebody; a great many speeches are being made, which play with what are still known as ideas, and probably a few auditors with "headphones" now and then attend to what is being said. And some persons still believe that if words are not to be applied to the purpose of thought for which they have been used in the past, they should not be used at all. There are other noises available. (*Prose* 3 293-94)

Even before we are using these volumes in our own scholarly and classroom inquiries—following the generative lines laid down in the notes, collating letters with essays, seeing how Eliot's other readings and interests come into play, understanding newly elaborated frames for the poetry and drama—we are likely to find, as we spend time simply reading this measured prose, that we have discovered correctives to, antidotes for those other noises in our own time.

T. S. Eliot Foundation Website

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Partly to aid navigation, a division between Life and Work was maintained. Work is in turn separated into Poetry, Drama, Prose, *The Criterion*, and Faber, the last of which draws on the Faber & Faber production files to elucidate relations with authors such as Joyce, Auden, MacNeice and David Jones. Each section is topped with an introduction: Professor Ron Schuchard and Dr. Jason Harding survey their research beat, Eliot's prose and *The Criterion* respectively, paring the wisdom of years to an overview. There is also an introduction to Eliot's poetry

from Dr. Hannah Sullivan, strikingly thought and written, and a welcome contribution from the Faber archivist, Robert Brown, sketching the development of Eliot's role as a publisher. At the center of the Life section is Dr. Lyndall Gordon's biographical entry, complemented by *A Life in Pictures* and *People in His Life*, the latter featuring Eliot-centric biographies of those important to the poet, with the relevant print correspondence indexed.

At the heart of *tseliot.com*, however, is Eliot himself. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* are available in full, with B. C. Southam's notes, along with a selection of recordings—available in the Poetry section, organized by volume, and following the plan of Eliot's own *Collected Poems*. And it is Eliot who does most of the introducing: clicking on a particular volume will lead visitors to the link *In Eliot's Own Words*, excerpts from Eliot's letters and essays concerning the volume in question. The Prose section publishes in full twenty or so of Eliot's most famous essays, along with one or two unpublished items, and detailed extracts from more than fifty. A section on *The Criterion* provides facsimiles of the magazine's first and last issues. Preoccupations, a section found under Life, is a kind of commonplace book, tracing under headings such as Religion, Emotion, and Rhyme the personal and poetic currents of a lifetime—again using Eliot's letters and essays. In all, *tseliot.com* reproduces over 150,000 words of Eliot. Many more, it is hoped, will follow. And then, of course, a feast of pictures, many of them rare—Eliot among the winnowed Merton Freshmen of 1914—some never been seen before.

Finally, *tseliot.com* is a means of broadcasting and organizing Eliot news and affairs, principally the work of the T. S. Eliot Foundation, which is responsible for the T. S. Eliot Prize, T. S. Eliot House—the writers' retreat at Eastern Point, home of Eliot's childhood summers, ready to receive its first visitors in early summer—and a range of other philanthropic commitments.

In essence, as indicated above, the website is educational: a guide for initiates, a resource for study, and a port of call for researchers round the world. It is there for the Eliot community, present and future. To that end, and in the interests of vitality and accuracy, the Eliot Foundation would welcome suggestion and criticism from all. You will reach us at <http://tseliot.com/foundation/contact/>, or by clicking Contact in the website's footer.

Modernist Fiction

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and solidity, Woolf's embrace of vague language leads her to *The Waves* and to gender identifications that are less rigid and schematic. And in the third chapter, Quigley draws roundabout connections between James Joyce and Wittgenstein, whose orbits intersect by means of the linguist C. K. Ogden, inventor of Basic English, a simplified language intended to facilitate international communication.

Quigley's final chapter, on T. S. Eliot, retroactively reveals the exaggerated symmetry of her own narrative. She recruits such key Eliotic concepts as impersonality and the objective correlative as evidence of his commitment to precision, aligning him with his former friend and patron, Russell, whose affair with his wife notoriously wrecked his marriage. Not a novelist, Eliot's early-career attraction to objectivity and precision, then his subsequent acceptance of the "wobbliness of words" track the broad arc of twentieth-century literary criticism from New Critical formalism to deconstruction and onto the erosion of disciplinary boundaries that "fuzzy studies" provides in both the sciences and the humanities. Hence, for Quigley, Eliot becomes a good stand-in for the absorption of modernist concerns into academic criticism. New Critics, such as William Empson, may have overstated the degree to which ambiguity, paradox, and polysemy may be anatomized and specified—made un-vague—but worry not, deconstruction teaches us that the inability to grab hold of unity and wholeness itself has important rhetorical (read: intellectual-pragmatic) effects, even without transparent referentiality. If Quigley's goal were simply to uncover these various pragmatic effects that vagueness had as a formal, rhetorical, and political ideal in twentieth-century literature, her book's collection of evidence and philosophical-historical context would stand for themselves. But especially with Eliot, the tidiness of the before-and-after narrative is not as seamless as she suggests. And Quigley wishes to attach vagueness to a specific realist philosophical attitude that presumes an overriding mimetic ambition for literary language. Yet, for Eliot, the terms "objective correlative" and "impersonality" do not simply promote empirical or positivist objectivity, however much Eliot flirted with scientific metaphors. Instead they signal his dissatisfaction with expressivist psychological accounts of the self.

Quigley frequently treats experimental writers as though they were like philosophers or, more precisely, as though they were like those philosophers concerned merely with the conditions for representing the world and naming its individual parts—rather than investigating why our concern with representation as a social practice might matter. However, most of the writers in Quigley’s panoply had broad constructivist ends in mind for their writings in all phases of their career. Many times, what Quigley refers to as the “vagueness” of modernist fiction has more to do with their effort to make space for what remains inchoate or in process in experience, what is not fully formed or developed. Such incompleteness invites readers to exercise their imaginations, to project onto and recompose the scenes they are witnessing. As Quigley well knows, vagueness poses a philosophical problem for realists, but not for pragmatists, who take it as a matter of course that experience can be vague and open-ended. Why is it necessary to frame the debate between realists and pragmatists in ways that privilege Russell-like worries about representational accuracy over pragmatist concerns with how our intellectual perceptions recreate experience?

Putting aside these worries, Quigley’s case is too suggestive and the broad patterns she finds in modernist writing too pervasive and sustained simply to ignore her argument. For that reason, scholars of modernism, particularly those invested in philosophical inquiry and intellectual history, should not neglect this book.

T. S. Eliot and Fulfillment

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that “dramatizes Incarnational understanding” (67). Atkins suggests that the poem “may be read as an *essai* in essaying” (68), exploring the paradoxes attendant on the “intersection” of the timeless with time. The speaker’s encounter with the “familiar compound ghost” receives a detailed analysis in the final chapter, where Atkins again stresses the poem’s multiple points of view and Eliot’s recognition of the evasiveness of language: “*Four Quartets* works by means of its various and diverse dramatizations of complexity and the ‘necessary conjunction,’ the ‘impossible union’ of

apparent oppositions” (99). One comes away from Atkins’s reading with a sense that the tonality of *Four Quartets* is a more complicated matter than it had seemed before, and that those passages that seem less aesthetically successful may deliberately dramatize failures of language, perception, and our own interpretive capacities. Published prior to Christopher Ricks’s and Jim McCue’s splendid critical edition of *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, Atkins’s book should now be read alongside their commentary to *Four Quartets*, which sheds considerable light on Eliot’s thinking during his composition of the sequence and so clarifies at least some of the interpretive questions raised by Atkins’s study. By raising such questions, especially those concerning voice and tone, Atkins offers a fresh reading of *Four Quartets* that shows the sequence is even richer and stranger when considered in light of Eliot’s Christian poetics.

Paul Muldoon

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which was not—even in an appreciative public lecture of this kind—inhibited by reverence. But his real subject, here and elsewhere in his criticism, is intention. The deliberately ludic deconstruction of Eliot’s poem was anchored by an abiding preoccupation with some of Eliot’s key prose statements. More than once he returned to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*; certainly Eliot’s assertion there that “the current tendency is to expect too much, rather than too little, of poetry” seems to have been guiding Muldoon’s rather cautious hand in his own admission, early in this lecture, that “while one tries to resist the idea of poetry as being solely what is encoded, I’m not sure that’s possible in this poem.” We’re left, at last, with strangeness, and it was to C. K. Stead’s gloss on Eliot’s Norton lectures that Muldoon turned to remind us of this. “All good poetry,” Stead wrote, “contains much that is strange, even to its author.” Muldoon raised more questions than he answered—both of himself, and of Eliot—but his process of analysis, unique among the poet-critics of his and perhaps any age, was as diverting as ever.

Calls for Papers

SAMLA 2017, November 3-5; *Prufrock and Other Observations: A Centenary*. This special panel sponsored by the T. S. Eliot Society invites papers on Eliot's life and work. In particular, papers on the 1917 volume *Prufrock and Other Observations* are especially welcomed. **This year's conference theme** is *High Art/Low Art: Borders and Boundaries in Popular Culture*. By June 1, 2017, please submit a 250-word abstract, brief bio, and A/V requirements to Craig Woelfel at Flagler College (cwoelfel@flagler.edu). This year's South Atlantic Modern Languages Association (SAMLA) conference will be held in Atlanta, GA, November 3-5, at the Westin Peachtree Plaza. For further information, please see the SAMLA website, <https://samla.memberclicks.net>.

MMLA 2017, November 9-12. For this panel sponsored by the Eliot Society, we seek the best work on any aspect of T. S. Eliot's poetry and/or criticism, especially reflecting the new editions of his poetry, prose, and letters. Papers may focus on Eliot's social and political activism, but we will consider proposals on all Eliot-related topics based on the quality of the research and writing. Please send abstract (350 words) and brief bio to teliotsociety@gmail.com by April 5, with the subject line "MMLA proposal." The Midwest Modern Language Association Conference with the theme "Artists and Activists" will be held November 9-12 at the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Eliot Annual: Volume 1 of *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual* is now available for purchase at clemson.edu/press. Volume 1 features contributions by Jamie Callison, Anthony Cuda, Elisabeth Däumer, Frances Dickey, Nancy Gish, Nancy Hargrove, Michael Opest, Anita Patterson, April Pierce, Joshua Richards, Christopher Ricks, Ronald Schuchard, Matt Seybold, and Jayme Stayer. For additional information about the *Annual*, or to submit to volume 2, please contact John Morgenstern, General Editor, at tseannual@clemson.edu.

Other News

John Haffenden has clarified that the Faber & Faber edition of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Vol. 7: 1934-1935*, which was mistakenly advertised as appearing in January 2017, is in fact scheduled to be published in June 2017.

Cassandra Laity, in cooperation with Routledge, has launched *Feminist Modernist Studies*, a new modernist journal that looks at women and feminists of all genders in literature, culture and art. She is accepting essays on Eliot and gender down the line. A call for papers and more information can be found at this link: <http://explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/ah/feminist-modernist-studies-launch-cfp>

On 22 December 2016, **David Moody** took part in a discussion of *Four Quartets* in the BBC's regular literary program *In Our Time*.

Double bill with *Cats*? According to Richard Morrison, chief music critic of *The Times*, the incoming music director of the English National Opera, Martyn Brabbins, "longs" to bring Ildebrando Pizzetti's operatic version of *Murder in the Cathedral* to the ENO stage, having recently conducted it at the Frankfurt Opera. Morrison comments that he is "not sure the ENO could afford to stage it any time soon." Interested patrons with millions to spare might contact Brabbins directly.

Jeremy Irons has recorded the complete poems of T. S. Eliot, many of which were broadcast on BBC 4 on New Year's Day 2017. The recordings are no longer available on the BBC website, but presumably they will eventually be made available for sale. For the month of January, when the recordings were available, the BBC 4 website included this promotional blurb:

Join us for an extraordinary journey at the turn of the year, as Jeremy Irons reads the complete collection of T. S. Eliot's English poems, almost in their entirety, across New Year's Day. This celebration of Eliot's work comes in five parts, each of which are introduced by Martha Kearney and special guests, including the actress Fiona Shaw, the writer Jeanette Winterson, Rory Stewart MP, and the lawyer Anthony Julius. At the end of a year in which so much that had been taken for granted seemed to fragment, our guests explain why Eliot, himself a poet of fragments, can steady us for a journey into the unknown, and for transformation. Our journey includes the "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" with its exquisite depiction of the loneliness of [a] young man, the post-war turmoil of *The Waste Land*, the spiritual struggle of poems like *Ash-Wednesday*—and concludes with the lucent imagery of time and possibility in the *Four Quartets*; there may be no better preparation for the coming year.

SOCIETY NOTES

Congratulations are due to **Martin Lockerd**, who has accepted an assistant professorship at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX, beginning this fall.

Another round of huzzahs goes to **Craig Woelfel**, who has signed his first book contract with University of South Carolina Press. His book, entitled *Varieties of Aesthetic Experience: Literary Modernism and the Dissociation of Belief*, reads Eliot's poetry and aesthetics as part of a larger argument about literary modernism and secularization.

And a lifetime's worth of cheers to **David Moody**, whose three-volume biography of Ezra Pound has been

awarded the Ezra Pound Society's book prize for 2015. Addressed to "Colleagues and Poundians," the announcement reads: "It gives me great pleasure today to announce that the Ezra Pound Society book prize for 2015 has been awarded to Prof. David Moody for his outstanding contribution to scholarship, *Ezra Pound: Poet*. This monumental biography, the most detailed and comprehensive to date, was published over a period of eight years, ending in 2015. It is only fitting that our society honours this work, which will be on our reference shelf for many decades to come."

T. S. ELIOT SUMMER SCHOOL

The T. S. Eliot International Summer School

London, July 8-16, 2017

The ninth annual T. S. Eliot International Summer School will convene in Senate House, Institute of English Studies, University of London, close to the former Faber offices in Russell Square where Eliot worked for forty years. Since its founding in 2009, the School has attracted students from thirty-one nations, a testament to the worldwide resurgence of Eliot studies as the Eliot Editorial Project provides student access to new editions of his poems, prose, and letters.

The School will be formally opened by Alan Jenkins, award-winning poet and Deputy Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*. Thereafter, the School features two day-long excursions to sites of the *Four Quartets*—Little Gidding and Burnt Norton—with picnics, readings, and lectures on the grounds by distinguished professors Marjorie Perloff and Robert von Hallberg, respectively. During the week, students choose one option from a variety of afternoon seminars for in-depth study under the guidance of a seminar leader. The seminars cover a range of subjects on Eliot's poetry, criticism, and drama. In the mornings, there are two lectures on all aspects of Eliot's life and work, featuring Christopher Ricks, co-editor of the two-volume *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, Robert Crawford, Eliot's biographer, Ronald Schuchard,

general editor of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, and state-of-scholarship lectures by Eliot scholars Jewel Spears Brooker, Sarah Kennedy, Kinereth Meyer, Stephen Romer, and Joanna Rzepa. Simon Armitage, the Oxford Professor of Poetry, will give a reading and signing at the London Library, followed by a gala reception.

Generous bursary funding is available for students and independent scholars. For application forms, program information, and accommodation details, please visit: <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/ts-eliot-international-summer-school>, or contact Hannah Pope, Eliot Summer School administrator: Hannah.Pope@sas.ac.uk.



The rose garden at Burnt Norton

Eliot in 1917: The Bohemian Banker

Kit Kumiko Toda
Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon

To any Eliot scholar, 1917 means one thing above all: the publication of *Prufrock and Other Observations*. As Lyndall Gordon writes, it was a “turning-point,” the year in which he was “born a poet” (*T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* 143). But for Eliot himself, 1917 did not appear, certainly at first, to be ushering in the auspicious beginnings of a great poet. It began on a note of great instability and anxiety in almost every aspect of his life: his jobs, his marriage and his poetry.

He had just given up his school teaching, for he found that he was “losing in every way”; he was unable to “pursue . . . literary connections,” and it was having an adverse effect on the quality of his writing (*Letters 1* 173). He hoped, instead, to earn his living by lecturing and journalism, with the aim of becoming self-sufficient in a year’s time, despite the fact that Vivien felt “very strongly” that journalism would be “the ruin of his poetry” (*Letters 1* 171). As it happens, Eliot wrote fewer reviews than usual in the first months of 1917.

The couple at this point had only “£22 in the bank” and was dependent on Eliot’s father to pay the rent—a circumstance that caused him great worry. In February, the U. S. broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, edging closer towards a full declaration of war. Eliot hurriedly wrote to his father, asking him for a year’s rent in advance if it could be spared, fearful that the war would disrupt the transfer of money and leave them desperate. In the letter following this urgent request, Eliot appears very keen to impress upon his father that his literary reputation was growing and that his seeming lack of worldly success was due to the disruptions of war.

However, in this year, Eliot managed to take a definite step towards achieving financial security: a friend of Vivien’s parents recommended him to Lloyds Bank. In March, he began working in the Colonial and Foreign Department at their headquarters, a steady job with good opportunities for promotion. Despite

the infernal description of the be-suited commute, which found its way into *The Waste Land*, Eliot mildly enjoyed the work, finding it comfortable and not “uninteresting” (*Letters 1* 182-3). According to Vivien, his health improved greatly thanks to this new-found stability (*Letters 1* 192). He also began to recover from his poetic drought, writing himself out of his block by the unusual means of adopting another language, resulting in three French poems published in the July issue of *Little Review*.

The figure of Eliot as banker—a man spruce and prim in what Woolf slyly called his “four-piece suit”—is a popular image, and many accounts suggest that he exuded a certain stiff correctness. But in the same year that Eliot became a banker, his and Vivien’s lives were becoming increasingly enmeshed with that of the Bohemian upper classes. Their libertine sexual values were to have an impact on the Eliots’ already strained relations and would turn Eliot’s poetry towards darker explorations of sexuality.



Photo, with sun stroke, taken by Henry Ware Eliot, Jr. in 1921. Looking down Lombard St., Lloyds Bank is on the left, the church of St. Mary Woolnoth on the right.

Abstracts from the American Literature Association Conference San Francisco, May 2016

Eliot the Young Reviewer: The Formation of Aesthetic Judgment

With the publication of the digital edition of Eliot's *Collected Prose* (Johns Hopkins), it is possible to read closely the early literary criticism, in the form of fugitive pieces and book reviews never reprinted and often taken lightly by the poet himself. To read the literary reviews of the 1910s in such journals as *The Egoist* is to discover a mind, not only brilliant and witty, but also very daring. The young Eliot was not yet the circumspect editor of *The Criterion*; he expressed his views quite freely and openly, taking potshots at the folly and mediocrity of his contemporaries. At the same time, he was already refining his own aesthetic, as in his piece on Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, where he takes up the much debated issue of the "prose poem" only to destroy it by declaring that Rimbaud's book was a brilliant piece of writing in prose, whatever we choose to call it.

In this essay, I discuss the early critical prose vis-à-vis the poetry of the same period so as to show how original and ground-breaking Eliot's writing really was.

Marjorie Perloff
Stanford University

Day-Lewis & Eliot: A Thirties Poet Reads *The Waste Land*

When C. Day-Lewis published the book-length essay "A Hope for Poetry" in 1934, it was immediately recognized as a manifesto for a movement in poetry coalescing around a group of Oxford-trained, bourgeois-born, left-leaning poets that included—besides Day-Lewis—W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice. Day-Lewis begins the essay by listing three forebears who opened the way to a new poetry: Hopkins, Owen, and Eliot. Why these three and for what reasons?

He goes on to answer those questions, and his complex response to Eliot's early poetry in particular, and to *The Waste Land* most particularly, raises interesting questions about what constitutes "English" poetry and what constitutes "modern" poetry. This paper pursues these issues by tracing Day-Lewis's reading of Eliot then and as it evolved through the careers of the two poets.

Albert Gelpi
Stanford University

Eliot's Ekphrases

T. S. Eliot was never much interested in composing ekphrastic poetry: of the other arts, he engaged far more substantively with music, opera, and drama than he did with poetry's so-called sister art, painting. This paper accounts for Eliot's early reluctance towards ekphrasis by arguing the genre signified to him a set of poetic dispositions— affective, immersive, participatory—that could not be neatly reconciled with the Laforguean persona he crafted in the poetry of the 1910s. For while the poems printed in *Prufrock and Other Observations* often turn upon failures of identification with the fine arts and artistic communities—famously, in *Prufrock's* isolation from the women "Talking of Michelangelo"—Eliot's unpublished ekphrases insert the poetic voice (either literally or emotionally) within the described artwork's diegetic space. In these poems, ekphrasis offered Eliot a space not for poetic interpretations of encountered artworks, but for representing his speakers' deeply affective or immersive experiences of them. In "Embarquement pour Cythère," for instance, Eliot's speaker is among the party of bourgeois "Ladies" in Watteau's *fête galante*, and in "The Love Song of St. Sebastian," the poetic voice masochistically embodies the experiences of the self-flagellating martyr. In these ekphrases, the speaker is affectively, and ambivalently, immersed in the poetic object, a disposition that Eliot would otherwise censure in his criticism and eschew in his verse. Though it may be minimally represented in Eliot's oeuvre, ekphrasis represented to the young

poet a generic context for determining the place for identification and aesthetic experience in his developing poetic sensibility.

Frank Capogna
Northeastern University

“Less than madness and more than feigned”: T. S. Eliot’s Traumatic Reading of *Hamlet*

This paper examines Eliot’s 1919 reading of Shakespeare’s play through the lens of trauma theory by exploring the writer’s interest in the question of how misdirected emotion can impede psychological health, a topic that was also of great concern to Freud in his 1917 discussion of “Mourning and Melancholia.” For both writers, individuals who are attempting to process a psychological wound—especially one tied to a lost loved object—can struggle if they do not identify and understand their overwhelming emotion by connecting it to an external object. The effect of this blocked condition fascinated both men, especially because such individuals seem unable to act in their own self-interest. Life is “poisoned” and action is “obstructed” in Eliot’s version, while in Freud a self-reproaching behavior emerges in which there is “an overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life.”

The paper locates the origins of some of Eliot’s ideas in J. M. Robertson’s book on *Hamlet*, which Eliot was ostensibly reviewing in his essay. Robertson’s argument is crucial for Eliot because it rejects previous schools of thought about the play that focused on aesthetic and structural issues and instead hones in on the Freudian question of Hamlet’s inconsolability, which perfectly sets up Eliot to unfold his theory of the objective correlative. While he problematizes Hamlet’s inaction, Eliot is ultimately interested in the larger question of the agony of artistic creation, a conflict that parallels some of the character’s struggles. Shakespeare ends up emerging as a similarly blocked figure because of his inability to manage “intractable material.” Hamlet’s “bafflement” slides into the

writer’s “bafflement,” thus repositioning the artist as a traumatic figure incapable of processing what Janet called “unassimilated happenings.”

Richard Badenhansen
Westminster College

One World to Hold Them All: The Mythological Crisis of World in *The Waste Land*

This paper argues that reading mythology tautegorically in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* illuminates the crisis of world within the poem. Unlike reading myths allegorically where meaning is displaced onto a separate object—and where myth is at best a failed expression of truth or at worst a fanciful spin on the “real” world—rethinking mythology tautegorically stresses a unity of form and content, shifting the emphasis from the symbolic to the ways in which mythology allows us to give thoughts direction and make sense of the world. As tautegorical, mythology becomes more than a singular and outdated interpretation of the world, but instead a continuous process of meaning-making that, through continuous acts of interpretation, defines the very conditions of the world as we understand it. With this conception of myth in hand, I argue that the crisis of the *The Waste Land* is not one of the absence of myth, but rather the problem of negotiating the proliferation of worlds (myths) collected under the colonial lineage established in the poem. As various dead myths, the relics of formerly meaningful world-constructions, amass and haunt the poem, it becomes impossible for the modern and supposedly mythless subject to meaningfully organize the world. I argue *The Waste Land* is best read as what I call “mythological crisis,” the disruption of this world-defining function and its ability to make sense of and position oneself within the world. Myth, I hold, is more than meaning-deferred form; myths not only help determine our world but make our very conception of the world possible.

Jennifer Van Houdt
University of Washington

Eliot's Phlebotomies: A Circulatory Model of Commerce and Culture

The fourth section of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "Death by Water," makes up a mere ten lines, but in Eliot's work brevity never indicates a lack of significance. In many ways, the enigmatic verses concerning Phlebas the Phoenician offer far more than an image of transience and dissolution. I argue that Phlebas the Phoenician conveys a fundamental figure, not only of decay, but also of cultural migration, influence, and transformation. *The Waste Land* famously amalgamates fragments in order to both critique and elegize form in a way that both localizes and amplifies each detail. Given this section's emphasis on aquatic imagery, the "flow" of time and commodities becomes the central concern, but like other fragments in the poem, it creates an intertext with socio-historical references as well as other figures in the poem. More specifically, one should ask exactly what is making these journeys through space, time, and language. Eric Sigg keenly identifies the connections among Phlebas, Mr. Eugenides, and the currencies of trade, but "currants," the fruit carried in Mr. Eugenides's pocket, further bind the enigmatic Phoenician to his Greek counterpart and the wider history of Mediterranean trade. One should also note that, despite being a Phoenician, Phlebas's name derives from the Greek word for "vein." While this fact may seem trivial, the Ancient Greeks adapted the Phoenician's Canaanite alphabet into what would become the template for many other world languages. Moreover, this fact indicates that one of the crucial elements of European civilization emerged from a Semitic culture. Along with the commodities, "the profit and loss," come language and ideas, a commingling of cultures embodied and transferred in Phlebas, the "vein" of commerce and language.

This paper will specifically explicate the historical and linguistic ties, both ancient and those contemporaneous to Eliot, of Phlebas in *The Waste Land*. Furthermore, it will use the imagery of economic, historic, and somatic currents in order to identify more generally Eliot's theory of culture. In "What is a Classic?," Eliot writes, "We need to remind ourselves

that, as Europe is a whole . . . so European literature is a whole, the several members of which cannot flourish, if the same blood-stream does not circulate throughout the whole body." While Eliot is famously concerned with European civilization, his works also point to a dynamic flow that indebts itself to traditions both ancient and foreign. *The Waste Land* opens these "veins," enriching us with its enigmatic yet inexorable flow.

Alexander Ruggeri
Tufts University



Holy Trinity Church, Finstock, Oxfordshire, where Eliot was baptized on 29 June 1927. Novelist Barbara Pym is buried in the churchyard.

Abstracts from the Modern Language Association Conference
Philadelphia, January 2017

Sweeney Agonistes in Noh Mask: Eliot, Pound, Yeats, and the Japanese Noh Theater

The expansive reach of the ancient Japanese Noh theater as it influenced modernist performance and poetics took in T. S. Eliot as well as Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats, the more commonly recognized Noh aficionados. Pound took T. S. Eliot to the premiere of W. B. Yeats's Noh-inspired *At the Hawk's Well* in 1916, one of the few occasions that we know all three writers were in the same room. Thirty years later, Eliot recalled Ito Michio, the "celebrated Japanese dancer," who choreographed and danced the role of the Guardian of the Hawk's Well and who, according to Yeats, made his play "possible." Eliot wrote that his experience in the audience for *At the Hawk's Well* made him think differently of Yeats, "rather as a more eminent contemporary than as an elder from whom one could learn" ("Ezra Pound," 326-39, 326). Eliot reviewed Pound's translations of Noh plays, based on drafts by Ernest Fenollosa, as "The Noh and the Image," published a year after he saw *At the Hawk's Well*. He was particularly interested in Pound's idea that Noh possessed a "unity of image," a unity that was partially imagined and mistranslated but would allow Pound to expand his spare Imagist aesthetics into a long poem, even *The Cantos*. Pound passed the idea of Noh's unity to Euro-American poets, especially Yeats and Eliot, and it is now a commonplace that modernist and contemporary poetry, in the absence of classical form, regular meter, and rhyme, is organized by recurring images that build upon each other until the trope resolves itself in a revelation or unified impression.

The Noh aesthetics Pound taught to modernism certainly shaped Eliot's poetry, but this paper discusses Noh's overlooked influence on Eliot's theater. Eliot's comments on "The Noh and the Image" emphasized theatricality: "The peculiarity of the Noh is that the focus of interest, and center of construction, is the scene *on the stage*." In *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, scenes are

imagined "as they would be in reality," but Noh provides a folded red kimono to symbolize a sick woman or a piece of cloth hung upon a tiny imitation pine tree to represent an angel's feather mantle. Eliot claimed, "The English stage is merely a substitute for the reality we imagine; but the red kimono is not a substitute in this sense; it is itself important" ("The Noh and the Image"). He praised the "symbolist" and "dreamlike" quality of Noh in which "it is only ghosts that are actual" and "enacted," while human "passions" are seen in "retrospect." Pound and Yeats's interpretations of Noh introduced Eliot to new performance techniques and structuring devices for poetic drama. In a letter describing his vision of *Sweeney Agonistes*, he called for masked actors and an accompaniment of "light drum taps," claiming "[t]he action should be stylized as in the Noh drama—see Ezra Pound's book and Yeats' preface and notes to *The Hawk's Well*" (cited in Hallie Flanagan, *Dynamo*, 83). Considering *Sweeney Agonistes* as a dance play influenced by Poundian/Yeatsean Noh principles clarifies the unique theatricality of Eliot's plays and poetry, the stylized and symbolic gestures that haunt his texts.

Carrie J. Preston
Boston University

Gesture and Kinesthetic Excess in T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Poetics

In this presentation, I examine Eliot's gestural poetics employing Carrie Nolan's understanding of gesture as both cultural inscription and acts of corporeal embodiment that create "kinesthetic sensations . . . in excess of what the gestures themselves might signify or accomplish." In his poetry, Eliot explored the continuous tension between gesture as cultural

inscription materialized in bodily regimes (walking, lifting hands, drinking coffee, etc.) and as productive of kinesthetic excess allowing for curious forms of bodily regression, agency, and emotional expressiveness (clutching, crawling, turning, etc.). This tension surfaces early on in his interest in marionettes and the mechanized or highly conventionalized gestures of urban life, and later in his interest in ritualized gestures such as kneeling and prayer. I am especially interested in what Nolan describes as gestures that “mobilize the mnemonic and kinesthetic force of... universal default positions in human experience.” Nolan mentions the fetal position; Eliot draws on other default positions: kneeling, walking on hands and feet, clasping hands or clutching a finger, most of them gestures rooted in childhood, in what might be called archaic gestural regimes, unaffected or overlaid by conventionalized gestures. Such gestures, Nolan suggests, are especially effective in creating kinesthetic empathy in readers. Eliot’s poetry not only represents such gestures but through carefully orchestrated bodily directions, also produces them in readers.

Elisabeth Däumer
Eastern Michigan University

Arranging Change, Practicing Habits: T. S. Eliot, John B. Watson’s *Behaviorism*, and Belief in Bodies

When Watson’s *Behaviorism* was first published in England, Eliot did not simply dismiss it. Why might someone of his milieu have expected, and why might someone of our milieu expect, Eliot to have ignored or scorned the work? Which dimensions of *Behaviorism* seem to have tugged at his approval and pulled his attention past whatever sections might have made him frown or yawn (and so skim)? Why these dimensions? To what effect?

Focusing the inquiry further, one may cast these questions in the context of Eliot’s persistent interest in habit, a subject to which he brought advanced academic knowledge as well as diverse further studies. Personal, professional, political, and beyond, his interests in

habit spanned decades, crossed topics, jumped genres, and—most significantly, here—often fused and refused apparently separate, even opposite, phenomena: mind and body, ideas and matter, thoughts and emotions, will and instincts, awareness and unconsciousness, beliefs and behaviors, gestures and reflex, performance and identity, self and other, and more.

Because of, but also perhaps in spite of, its profound physicality, habit offered Eliot one way to imagine a mechanism for changing himself and his culture for the better. Of course, Eliot was no pioneer in having hopes for habit. Nor was he alone in grasping that the very same mechanisms of habituation could easily, even simultaneously, thwart his and others’ agenda for personal improvement and social amelioration. Such psychophysiological inertia, such resistance to malleability, did not seem altogether unhelpful to Eliot, however.

Eliot’s finding some hope in habit’s effectiveness as both a facilitator and a frustrator of imposed or self-imposed change is a mixed, shifting layer of his more general ambivalence toward humans’ deep embodiment of habitual thoughts, feelings, and behavior. The promise and problems of Watson’s *Behaviorism* were among the factors in the mid-1920s that let Eliot continue, or arguably start, the humbling process of seeing less unclearly and saying less unclearly how he might move his whole being into a condition somehow new and somewhat better.

Chris Buttram
Winona State University

Midwest MLA Conference, St. Louis, November 2016

Suspended Temporality and the Double Rhythm of T. S. Eliot’s “Gerontion”

Written in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and published less than a year after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, T. S. Eliot’s “Gerontion” is often read as a reflection on a civilization ruined by war. But rather than looking back toward the past, the poem marks a painful present moment that is caught between stalled historical time and cyclical natural time. Through the meditations of an aged speaker, Eliot establishes a sense of suspended temporality in which the present is at once dragged back by the memory of the horror of war, and pulled forward by the unrelenting motion of earth’s cycles. By highlighting this tension, Eliot captures the feeling of existing in an age that has outlived ruin—an idea represented in the figure of Gerontion, the little old man who lingers in a decayed house with no will to go on after his civilization has been destroyed. This feeling of a time suspended between the past and the future can also be felt in the rhythms of the poem, as Eliot shifts between a weighted, irregular meter and a more natural, forward-moving blank verse.

I want to suggest that this imaginative conception of a temporality of afterward not only characterizes “Gerontion,” but also shows how closely linked it is to the next new poem Eliot published, *The Waste Land*. Eliot considered including “Gerontion” as a prelude to the longer poem, and although Pound convinced him not to pair them, Eliot nonetheless chose to open *The Waste Land* with an aged figure who has lived past her time: the epigraph features the withered Cumaean Sibyl, who, suspended in a jar, says only, “I want to die.” The sense of a time beyond ruin that Eliot establishes in “Gerontion” continues to echo through the body of *The Waste Land* in the images of plants sprouting from dead land and dead bodies, and in the double rhythm of the poem’s free verse. Thus, looking at the way “Gerontion” represents the temporal mood in England in the immediate aftermath of the Great War not only sheds light on Eliot’s interests in the shorter poem, but provides a window into his thematic concerns and formal decisions in *The Waste Land*. And finally, it suggests that “Gerontion” deserves greater attention as one of the poems that helped to define Eliot’s signature style in the years following the war.

Anna Preus
Washington University in St. Louis



Holy Trinity Church, Finstock, interior. In the early part of the 20th c., the stone baptismal font with wooden lid, surmounted by cross, was placed in the center aisle.

 South Atlantic MLA, Jacksonville, Florida, November 2016

Chinese Walls and Chinese Jars: Orientalist Objectification in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*

In 1919, a young T. S. Eliot described himself “as traditionalist as a Chinaman, or a Yankee” (Ricks, xxv). Thirty years later, in *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, he laments the fact that “European culture has an area, but no definite frontiers: and you cannot build Chinese walls” (62). Eliot’s poetry often looks to the Chinese as symbolic of cultural and historical permanence: the lotus flower and Chinese jar of *Burnt Norton* present the most obvious examples of Eliot’s transmogrification of the Asian-Pacific region into static artifacts. This objectification of the Chinese suggests not only admiration of the culture, but what Edward Said would describe as an Orientalist attempt to commodify the region. When read in congress with Eliot’s aforementioned treatises on tradition and culture, an Orientalist reading of *Four Quartets* reveals a pointed anxiety over the viability of the English government to be a lasting monument in a de-stabilized nation. To bolster its claim that Eliot objectifies the Orient, this paper compares the imagery in *Four Quartets* with images from Eliot’s early sequence, “Mandarins.” Published only recently in *Inventions of the March Hare*, this poem has yet to receive much critical attention, despite its status as Eliot’s first attempt with the sequence form and one of Eliot’s first meditations on culture and tradition. This paper demonstrates how *Four Quartets* and “Mandarins” represent the fracture of English culture and Eliot’s attempts to reconstruct it using an Orientalist trope as a model par excellence.

D. E. St. John
Georgia State University

The Place of *Four Quartets* in Eliot’s Poetic Oeuvre

If Eliot sought precise and exact imagery in his poetry, and if *Four Quartets* was Eliot’s “farewell to poetry,” as Frank Kermode and critics thereafter have claimed, then it is curious that the last resolutive note with which Eliot chose to close his poetic oeuvre is not an image at all, but a metaphysical concept—that of unity. The end of *Little Gidding* culminates with the fire and the rose, overused and vague images in themselves, becoming “one.”

What are the implications of this literary decision? This paper will suggest that it indicates a great deal about a long-standing debate within Eliot studies, namely, the issue of the relationship between the “early” and “late” Eliot. Drawing from his early critical work in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” biographical details about Eliot’s preoccupations with “union” in his graduate studies and later religious leanings, and readings of key passages in his early and late poetry, I make an argument that Eliot sought to establish a dialogical continuity between his pre- and post-conversion poetry through the introduction of new work that was meant to subsume and give a definitive shape and trajectory to the earlier poems, and a wholeness to his poetic oeuvre.

Just as Eliot believed that past and present literary works affected one another, so too did he conceive of his own late poetry (such as *Four Quartets*) to be making claims about and responding to his early poetry (such as *The Waste Land*) and vice versa, as evidenced by details in the letters and interviews, and in his own recycling and transfiguring of poetic images throughout the course of his career. The paper also suggests that the early poetry does not internally “point toward” the religious or seemingly nationalistic positions of his late poetry, as some critics have contended, but that Eliot attempted to enact a retroactive hermeneutic of unity through the introduction of *Four Quartets*, one that altered, if ever so slightly, how subsequent readers might approach the relationship between his pre- and post-conversion poems.

A. J. DeBonis
Yale University

Abstracts from the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture after 1900, Louisville, February 2017

The Dystopian Eliot: Dystopian Motifs in the Post-1920 Poetry

The genre of dystopian literature is typically thought of as comprising works of prose fiction, and, to an increasing extent, film. With respect to Euro-American modernism, novels like Huxley's *Brave New World*, Wells's *The Time Machine*, Zamyatin's *We*, Kafka's *The Trial*, and Orwell's *1984* immediately spring to mind. Yet dystopian poems most certainly exist, Lord Byron's post-apocalyptic "Darkness" being one of the more well-known examples. T. S. Eliot's most famous poem, *The Waste Land*, has often been referred to in passing as a "dystopian" poem, but there is virtually no sustained analysis of Eliot's oeuvre from this critical perspective. This paper examines several poems from Eliot's mature period in order to trace a number of recurring dystopian motifs that collectively constitute a sustained critique of Western society. Given the increased scholarly attention to the so-called "critical dystopias" of the 1970s and '80s, the current popularity of Young Adult dystopian fiction, and the continuously evolving audience for and conventions of the genre of dystopian literature, I argue that the dystopian dimensions of Eliot's later poetry offer new avenues for considering these works and the relationships among them.

Roderick B. Overaa
University of Tampa

"Echoes of Cruelty and Nonsense": Stevie Smith and T. S. Eliot

Stevie Smith's review of *Murder in the Cathedral* stands as her most public statement on the work of T. S. Eliot. In it she pointedly criticized a tendency in contemporary writing which she thought Eliot represented: "it seems curious, condemnable really, that so many writers of these times, which need courage and the power of criticism, and coolness, should find their chief delight in terrifying themselves and their readers with past echoes of cruelty and nonsense." Smith's resistance to Eliot may appear unsurprising when we consider the obvious differences between the two writers: Eliot's conversion to Christianity in the 1920s vs. Smith's lifelong critique of religious institutions; Eliot's turn to public writing during World War II vs. Smith's insistence that poets should "remain silent about the war"; not to mention the gap between the large-scale complexity of a poem like *The Waste Land* and the seemingly minor and derivative quality of Smith's own poems. And yet in her work of the 1930s Smith frequently alluded to the poems of *Prufrock and Other Observations*—in particular "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." These appropriations suggest that, despite her later criticism of Eliot's drama, Smith was attracted to the curious mixture of "cruelty and nonsense" in his first book and sought to capture its effects in her own poems. At the same time, she was also troubled by Eliot's attitude toward his subjects, being uncertain whether he did not find a cruel form of pleasure in them. Thus, we find in her poems of the thirties an effort to depict the "cruelty and nonsense" of the modern world (as Eliot had done) without becoming in thrall to them (as Eliot ambiguously had or had not).

Florian Gargaillo
Boston University

Ash-Wednesday and the Abandonment of Shibboleth in Eliot's Verse

Ash-Wednesday is, of course, an accepted line of demarcation in Eliot's career, his so-called "conversion" poem wherein both prosody and rhetoric were significantly modified to reflect a "changed" person. On a somewhat subtler level— and embedded within the more salient aspects of fresh rhetorical trappings—I see within it the absence of the tests of acculturation that so predominate and in great measure define "Pru-frock," "Gerontion," and *The Waste Land*.

In part, I would argue that in constructing a kind of monument to an already dominant mythology, Eliot rightly judged it unnecessary to conspicuously outline within *Ash-Wednesday* the characterizing habits of the Christian ethos. In effect, the shibboleth is faith itself, not any of a variety of matters of doctrine. Further, it seems sensible to suggest that the whole effect of having found or achieved "peace" rests, qua Eliot, on the surrender of the motif of burdensome and discontinuous erudition.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I suggest that the shibboleth, as such, disappears in *Ash-Wednesday* because the poem represents a radical shift from habits of exclusion to practices of inclusion. In "finding" Anglicanism, Eliot found a community. Like many religious communities, its expressed aim (distinct, of course, from facts of practice) is expansion through conversion. Ironically, the world of advanced philosophical study and modernist poetic innovation is cast much closer to a sect in this dynamic than the world of religious belief and practice. *Ash-Wednesday* ultimately asks of its audience only one question: do you believe? That's at quite a remove from the litany of forensic questions that shape the works that preceded it, all of which begin with an implied, "Do you know...?"

Bryan G. Salmons
Lincoln University, Missouri

SOCIETY ELECTIONS

T. S. Eliot Society Board of Directors Election

Two seats on the Eliot Society's Board of Directors are up for election this year. Three persons have been nominated: Vince Sherry, John Tamilio, and John Whittier-Ferguson. All members in good standing are eligible to vote. Ballots must be submitted by April 30 at the latest. The election will be conducted using an online ballot. To vote, please follow these instructions:

1. Click the "Eliot Society Election" link on our website (www.luc.edu/eliot).

2. In the login box that pops up, enter the user name **Eliot** and the password **Criterion22**.
3. On the ballot screen, enter your first and last names and your email address, then use the check-boxes to select up to two candidates.
4. When you are ready, click the "Submit Your Vote" button.

If you lack internet access or are otherwise unable to use the online ballot, please contact the Webmaster, David Chinitz (dchinit@luc.edu), and he will be happy to enter your vote manually.

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