

Time Present

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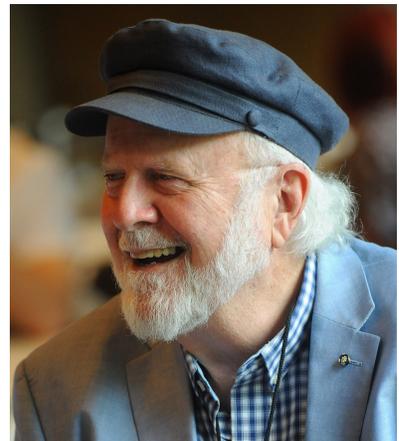
Report from the 39th Annual International T. S. Eliot Society Meeting, Sept. 21-22, 2018, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

By Craig Woelfel
Flagler College

What does it take to get the T. S. Eliot Society to travel even further south than St. Louis? In a word: Ron. In recognition of Ron Schuchard's singular contributions to Eliot scholarship and the impending publication of the final volumes of *The Complete Prose*, the setting for our meeting this year was the beautiful Stuart A. Rose Manuscript Library at Emory University. It turns out that both scholarship and fellowship travel well—it was a wonderful meeting, in a wondrous setting, and all due credit to its organizers, and to the staff and volunteers at Emory who made it possible.

For me, there were two linked themes to this year's meeting: The Fascination of What's (Seemingly) Banal, and Gratitude-and-Excitement. The former characterizes a set of talks that left me mesmerized, frankly, by aspects of scholarly work to which I'd previously given little consideration. Most obviously: David Chinitz's Memorial Lecture on the complexities and challenges of annotating the

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* A NOTE ON OUR NAME CHANGE

At its September meeting, the Board voted to change the name of our society from the T. S. Eliot Society to the International T. S. Eliot Society, in order to reflect both our actual membership and our conference venues. A quarter of our members hail from outside the United States, drawn in part by our meetings in Britain, France, and Italy. Our roots, like Eliot's, are in St. Louis, where the Society began as a small, local organization. But we now have more members from Italy than from Missouri, and our new name reflects these changed realities and our aspiration to welcome Eliot admirers from around the world.

“The Europe in which we now have to live”: *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot, Volume 6: The War Years, 1940-1946.* Edited by David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.
lvii + 853 pages.

Reviewed by Sarah Kennedy
University of Cambridge

London, in the summer of 1940, must have felt like a blasted heath; a surreal, smoking landscape of rubble and ruin, its people dazed and exhausted by the aerial depredations of bombers raining fire under cover of darkness. Throughout the assault of the Battle of Britain, Eliot continued to work at his Faber office in Russell Square, adding the duties of air-raid warden to his daytime role as publisher. Yet Eliot’s apparent “detachment of spirit”¹ during this time—as his friend Philip Mairet described it—belied a deep reckoning with the metaphysical and cultural consequences of the war. Spanning the years 1940–1946, Volume Six of *The Complete Prose* sees Eliot through the darkest period of the Second World War, and into the reconstitution of Europe. The leitmotif of Eliot’s thought during this period is the individual and social responsibility to preserve and sustain the collective, diverse culture of Europe. Given the potential insularity of such a vision, it is refreshing to find that Eliot is careful to look outwards, pronouncing in a 1946 broadcast to Germany that “when I speak of the unity of European culture, I do not want to give the impression that I regard European culture as something cut off from every other. The frontiers of culture are not, and should not be, closed” (712).

This is a well-balanced and contextualized volume, comprising several of the major essays later collected in *On Poetry and Poets* (OPP), as well as a diverse range of less well-known works ranging from autobiography to obituary, and from transcripts to tributes. Eliot’s OPP essays on Kipling (1941), Yeats (1942), and “The Music of Poetry” (1942) appear here with new and expansive annotation, as do his essays on Tennyson (1942), Poe (1943), and “The Classics and the Man of

Letters” (1942). Of particular note is the collection of essays and speeches later developed into *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), as well as a previously unpublished outline of that work, which provides new insight into the evolution and alteration of Eliot’s cultural criticism. The volume follows a tripartite structure: Part I contains 127 pieces described as “Essays, Reviews, Addresses, and Public Letters”; Part II provides transcripts and reports of lectures where no original text exists; and Part III gives a sense of Eliot the public intellectual, as a signatory to a range of open letters and documents of multiple authorship. Scholars will no doubt be delighted to find that the volume offers ready access to twenty-seven prose pieces that were not published during Eliot’s lifetime. An additional thirty-eight of the pieces gathered here for the first time were not included in Donald Gallup’s bibliography, including all four of the transcripts and summary reports of lectures that comprise Part II.

The volume’s editors David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard provide an engaging editorial introduction that usefully highlights the material conditions of Eliot’s wartime production, the juxtaposition of different campaigns and calls on the poet’s time, and the changing nature of his public and religious engagement. There is a proliferation of broadcasts and speeches, many of which were written for audiences overseas. A number of articles are the products of what Eliot referred to as “war jobs”: “any job which one only undertakes because of the war—little articles for Allied periodicals, talking to soldiers (American and Allies), presiding over ‘Books Across the Sea’ ... and occasionally jobs for the British Council” (xiv–xv). Due editorial attention is also given to the scope of Eliot’s cultural work and his spiritual commitments during the war years.

This volume is striking in making newly apparent the multiple points of intersection between Eliot’s critical thought and his poetry of the period, *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *Little Gidding* in particular. Eliot’s antiphonal model of the phases of poetic language is well known, as in “The Music of Poetry,” where he writes that “There are times for exploration and times for the development of the territory acquired” (319). This figuration is rendered less imperial and more historical by its dialogue with other pieces in this collection. Volume Six constellates this essay with a number of cognate pieces offering similarly sensitive explorations of the tidal antiphonies of poetic development. Together, they testify to the

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***Impossible Modernism: T. S. Eliot, Walter Benjamin, and the Critique of Historical Reason*, by Robert S. Lehman**

Stanford University Press, 2016. xxvi + 241 pages.

Reviewed by Ria Banerjee
Guttman Community College, CUNY

T. S. Eliot and Walter Benjamin were born only four years apart and, until the latter's death in 1940, worked across the Channel producing art and criticism that significantly overlap. Their interrogation of concepts like time, memory, and history (especially history writing or historiography) reveal two different approaches to the common problem of representing modern experience. Both canonized figures are regularly anthologized and studied, and yet a critical tendency persists in understanding them within their intellectual silos—WorldCat, for instance, lists only a handful of recent critical analyses that consider both theorists in tandem. Robert Lehman's book attempts to fill this gap by invoking both Eliot and Benjamin in its subtitle, but in confining each to their own section, it ends up reiterating a conception of Anglo and European modernisms as discrete if parallel traditions. As a sustained bipartite study of the authors' questioning of linear, causal history, however, *Impossible Modernism* invites further meditation upon how they reinvent extant traditions of recording history.

Lehman suggests that both authors are intimately concerned with the give and take between literary form and historical causality, moving beyond "the contest between historical and poetic form" towards more nuanced understandings of the historicity of literary forms and the literary nature of history (24). In "Part 1: Gathering Dust", he shows the young Eliot using the lyric form (in "Prufrock") and satire (in drafts of *The Waste Land*), then discarding both for the mythic mode (*The Waste Land* in its published form). Lehman rereads familiar lines from the poem's beginning and end, finding a buried reference to the rooster Chauntecleer that connects the last section to its Chaucerian (and Whitmanesque) opening. The mythic mode, Lehman suggests, allows Eliot to approach the edges of historical thinking. His discussion of literary historical resonances in *The*

Waste Land shows the impossibility of stepping outside chronology into a timeless sphere; the use of myths does not destroy the reliance upon linear connectivity, but establishes other kinds of causal connections.

How, then, to break the habit of relying upon sequentiality and approach a new, radical way of understanding lived experience? Meditating upon the final lines, Lehman writes, "The flash of lightning ... is an image of another sort. It appears as something without precedent, as something seemingly impossible within the sterile desert scene" (118). Distinct from other modernist epiphanic moments of clarity, the lightning symbolically marks "the impossible transition" or "nonrelation" between "the temporal, historical, seasonal, literary" and the "timeless, mythic." Eliot's lightning flash achieves a gestural movement outside of recorded history, one that remains immanent. *The Waste Land* is thus a "poem of crisis" recording the poet's encounter with the limits of language, whereas the later *Four Quartets* "offers a much more certain testimony" that is embedded in religious and historical narratives (118).

The first part of *Impossible Modernism* primarily concerns itself with Eliot's output of the 1920s, but "Part 2: Killing Time" offers a fascinating reading of Benjamin's work from his pre-dissertation exchanges with Gershom Scholem about Kant, to the late-career wrangles with Adorno over his Baudelaire essay, ending with a consideration of the unfinished Arcades Project. Lehman argues that Benjamin's oeuvre shows a sustained engagement with Kant, offering a mediation and formal corrective to Kantian idealism. He argues that Benjamin "may follow Kant in recommending a reorientation of historical perception," but he passes through Kantian historical idealism into his own unique historical materialism, "an *intelligent* materialist philosophy of history" that rejects the pitfalls of empiricism (155, emphasis in original). This manifests in Benjamin's collection of "physiognomies" or types of people, and his desire for historical anecdotes rather than grand narratives: "[L]ife is not, for Benjamin, a neutral container. The time it appropriates, it transforms." Thus, the anecdote-as-history offers a "different measure" of lived experience and effects a revolution in historical perception and representation (170).

The sixth chapter on Allegory focuses on another oft-quoted passage, the ninth thesis from Benjamin's "On the Concept of History." Lehman upturns the familiar reference to Klee's *Angelus Novus* to insist

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An Acclamation for Ron Schuchard and *The Complete Prose*

By Anthony Cuda
University of North Carolina Greensboro

Editor's note: The following is Anthony Cuda's toast and gift presentation for Ron Schuchard at the Annual Meeting at Emory University. It has been lightly edited.

In T. S. Eliot Society lore, there is no aged spirit—not even Eliot's beloved Ariel or his familiar compound ghost—that occupies such an esteemed place as Old Grand-Dad's 100-proof orange label Bourbon. In a roundabout way, a tall glass of that bourbon is why we are here at Emory University this year. It was in London in 1974 when Ron Schuchard—then a lowly assistant professor at Emory—received a long-hoped-for-yet-unexpected invitation to the London flat of Valerie Eliot. She met him at the door in a green silk dress and, having learned that he hailed from Texas, recounted her visit there with Tom, telling him what he had brought back: an oversized Stetson hat and a love for Old Grand-Dad whiskey. She proceeded to pour plenty of it, neat, into a tall glass. “Drink up,” she said. They talked poetry; she grilled him like a schoolmistress; and the glass doggedly emptied and mysteriously refilled itself. When Ron left the inner sanctum, floating along the London sidewalk, he had seen for the first time the manuscripts of the Clark Lectures. More importantly, he had begun to build a lifelong relationship with the sole person to whom Eliot had entrusted the care and editing of his archive.

Much later, and with similar disbelief, he got the green light to publish those lectures, the letter having arrived inconspicuously in his department mail slot. The award-winning 1993 edition, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, was the result. Still, hundreds of Eliot's essays and reviews remained uncollected and unpublished. When I was Ron's graduate student at

Emory in the early 2000s, Eliot researchers boasted not about how many articles they had published, but about how many filing cabinet drawers they had crammed full of photocopies of those rare and fugitive documents, highlighted and annotated, each labeled with its own bibliography number.

Hoarding our own copies of those cherished files, we knew that the only available editions of Eliot's prose—his own *Selected Essays* and Frank Kermode's *Selected Prose*—that these pieces represented less than ten percent of his writing as a critic. We also knew that they were filled with errors, misprints, and omissions. None of Ron's students dared to submit a paper on Eliot that cited merely a selected edition. We knew (because he told us) that there was a publishing renaissance on the horizon, but we did not know that Ron was quietly, diligently working to bring it about.



The editors of The Complete Prose: David Chinitz, Frances Dickey, Tony Cuda, Ronald Schuchard, Jewel Spears Brooker, Jayme Stayer.

In August of 2004, the time had finally come: Mrs. Eliot agreed to allow Ron to compile and edit all of the prose. “It's time to bring all of Tom together,” she said, “and I'm going to need your help.” In 2006, Ron won a Guggenheim fellowship that allowed him to spend the year in London at

the Eliot flat and the Faber archive. Thus began the collecting and digitizing, in coordination with his team of Emory's technical experts, of the hundreds of essays, reviews, lectures, and articles that would comprise a database for co-editors to use in compiling their editions. Around the same time, he began assembling his team of co-editors. He chose distinguished scholars, such as Jewel Spears Brooker and David Chinitz, but he also generously chose those of us with no editorial experience at all, because he knew that this project would train a new generation of editors.

In 2006, a major grant from the Hodson Trust to Johns Hopkins cemented their press's commitment, and the project was officially underway. It would be nearly three years before a grant from Britain's Arts and Humanities Research Council in March 2009 created the Eliot Editorial Project. Housed at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, and with

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The New Poetics of Climate Change: Modernist Aesthetics for a Warming World, by Matthew Griffiths

Bloomsbury, 2017. xii + 211 pages.

Reviewed by Elisabeth Däumer
Eastern Michigan University

Matthew Griffiths' *The New Poetics of Climate Change* rewards careful reading. Initially, his thesis appears simple enough. Modern poetry developed aesthetic strategies and modes—among them allusiveness, fragmentation, multiple voices, and shifting levels of time—that make it distinctly more useful for contemporary poetic efforts to respond to climate change than the traditional lyric poem, which remains the preferred genre of many environmentally conscious poets. Griffiths defines climate change as a complex network of cultural and biophysical phenomena, which are “largely not amenable to sense experience,” eluding traditional ontologies that oppose nature to culture, attribute agency to humans alone, or posit nature as the reliably cyclical, slow-to-change backdrop of a fluctuating and unpredictable human-made culture (4). Observable only across time and by taking into account both local and global perspectives, climate change, Griffiths argues, calls for poetic forms that can encompass myriad temporal and spatial dimensions and draw into their purview multiple subjectivities and discourses, as well as the unintentional agencies of “hybrid phenomena” like winds, floods, and droughts. The devastating force of such “hybrid phenomena” is neither solely natural nor entirely cultural, i.e., the result of human behavior alone, but an effect of their inescapable mixing.

The climate change that concerns Griffiths is the anthropogenic one, caused by the sharp rise in CO₂ emissions first noted by scientists in the late 19th century. Griffiths draws attention to the historic confluence of modern poetics and anthropogenic climate change and offers intriguing observations, for instance, concerning the “possible meteorological influence” on *The Waste Land*, which Eliot began following a six-month drought in the summer of 1921, and the ecological significance of Pound's exhortation to “Make it New,” a motto he took from Emperor Cheng Tang who carved these

words on his bathtub to commemorate the end of a seven years' drought. More interesting to Griffiths than evidence of such historic confluence, however, is the fact that modernist poetics arose at a time of unprecedented change that mirrors the upheavals of our own period. He argues that “both the context and [modern poets'] response offer an opportunity to reconsider the tradition and function of literature in the time of climate change” (22). Equally important for Griffiths is modern poetry's resistance to idealizing and nostalgic attitudes toward nature, which ensures that it “does not become a tradition to which to annex the writing of climate change,” like that of the Romantic nature lyric favored by many contemporary eco-poets and ecocritics, but “an adaptable, developing mode,” whose *modus vivendi* is a historical sense combined with radical openness to the challenge of the new, including new understandings of nature (22).

Of course, this latter observation might prompt us to wonder: why return to modernist poetics when there are contemporary eco-poets grappling in exactly the same ways with ecological degradation and disaster, including climate change—eco-poets who resist the traditional lyric and elegiac invocations of nature, experiment with new forms, and seek to intervene in anthropocentric thinking at the level of language itself? The poets included in Brenda Iijima's *Eco Language Reader* (Nightboat, 2010) serve as useful examples of this trend. This question made me realize that Griffiths' argument is more complex, and that the title of his book brings into play different meanings of “new.” By echoing Pound's exhortation to “Make it New,” Griffiths refers not alone to modernist poetics, but to the impulse for innovation and renewal within a context of limited resources and deep skepticism about progress. In this context, to “Make it New” calls for a tradition that declares renewal and openness to unpredictable, potentially apocalyptic changes (including the end of humans' terrestrial life), as much as resistance to stagnation. The new poetics was inaugurated by modernist poets who though unaware of the rise in CO₂ emissions critiqued the conditions of modernity that were very much responsible for the development of what Griffiths aptly calls “modernity's shadow tradition of greenhouse gas emissions” (26). When he invites us to consider culture as nature's other, rather than, as traditional ecocriticism postulates, the other way around, I couldn't help but wonder if he thought that CO₂ emissions exerted an unintentional impact on

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Pam Tanowitz's *Four Quartets*: World Premiere at Bard College's Fisher Center

Reviewed by Michael Rogalski

The world premiere of *Four Quartets*, choreographer Pam Tanowitz's multimedia rendering of T. S. Eliot's poem, opened July 6, 2018 to a nearly full house in the 900-seat Sosnoff Theater of the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, located on lovely grounds in the Hudson Valley, a couple hours' drive from New York City. Gideon Lester, the Center's Artistic Director for Theater and Dance, tells us in a brief program note that the idea for the piece arose in 2015 when he and Tanowitz discovered their shared love of *Four Quartets*, and he suggested that she create a "full dance performance with a reading of Eliot's poems as the score." We can thank them both.

Images of dance figure throughout *Four Quartets*, and so it is an easy leap to understand what drew Tanowitz and her stellar collaborators to create a work in dialogue with the poems "without," according to Lester, "attempting to illustrate or explain them." Those collaborators included contemporary Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho, whose otherworldly music was performed by four musicians of the chamber orchestra The Knights (violin, viola, cello, and harp); celebrated American painter Brice Marden, who contributed work that formed the kernel of onstage imagery; actor and Obie Award winner Kathleen Chalfant as narrator; and Clifton Taylor (scenic and lighting design), Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung (costume design), and Jean-Baptiste Barriere (sound design).

Burnt Norton, the first of the *Quartets*, was set to the crystalline air of Part VI (Fall) of Saariaho's 1991 composition *Maa*. The magnetic Lindsey Jones danced solo behind a translucent scrim tatted with a projected detail of Brice Marden's 2014 painting *Uphill 4*. Her long, elastic body brought time and space onto herself as she commanded the stage and us with aplomb. Her exquisite gesture for the phrase "perpetual possibility" ached with longing and beckoned irresistibly. She segued into "Shall we follow?" with sustained rotations (*chainés*) and answered the ecstatic vision of the dry pool "filled with water out of sunlight" with a succession of quick jumps (*soubresauts*).



Lindsey Jones (foreground), Maile Okamura, Jason Collins, and Christine Flores. Photo credit: Maria Baranova.

The second section of *Burnt Norton* continued behind the scrim; "At the still point of the turning world" brought a brief *pas de trois* into beautiful articulation. With the conclusion—"Only through time time is conquered"—the scrim was lifted to unveil the world onstage in fresh, striking clarity, a truly affecting moment that marked the beginning of the third section. An ensemble assuming ever-changing coneiform-like postures took us in a controlled riot to "descend lower" and perhaps suggested the world moving "In appetency, on its metalled ways" as they swirled about a stationary dancer at the section's close.

For all of these clear connections, however, the correspondences among text and choreography and music and image were mostly oblique, even abstruse and tenuous. This was fully apparent, for example, in the fourth section of *Burnt Norton*, which featured a solo male dancer seemingly unaware of "Time and the bell" and all that follows.

Kathleen Chalfant was seated at a table in the house, not far from the lip of the stage. A simple lamp and a microphone allowed her to read the text. Her narration was clear and intelligent. She did not perform the text per se, yet she conveyed meaning and subtleties that might otherwise have escaped the listener. And here was a double-edged virtue: while we listened intently to Chalfant's informed, persuasive reading, what we saw onstage was only occasionally coincident or even congruent with it, and the disorientation was off-putting. Yes, Gideon Lester had cautioned that the dialogue between performance and text was not meant to depict or illustrate the poetry. Nonetheless, led by Chalfant's supple craft,

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Compiled by David Chinitz

No water but only rock. In an article for Smithsonian magazine, Anna North puts Eliot on the leading edge of “climate fiction.” She writes: “Eliot’s seminal poem *The Waste Land* anticipates human-caused climate change, especially in the final section that draws on the legend of the Fisher King, his lands laid waste by his impotence.... [H]umans are not so different now from a hundred years ago. Drought has always brought despair, and thunder fear, and unusual weather a creeping sense that the world is out of joint. *The Waste Land* just seems more literal now ... that Eliot’s ‘dead mountain mouth’ reads like a description of last year in California.” (“What Happens to Fiction When Our Worst Climate Nightmares Start Coming True?,” Smithsonian.com, 14 June 2017)

Only rock. And shoegaze. The Tulsa band Endless Forms released its second LP, *If There Were Water*, in November 2017. The album, according to a review, “deftly blends shoegaze and rock influences.” The band’s frontman, Justin Allen, explains that the album’s title, from the last section of *The Waste Land*, “is a part of an expression of unfulfilled but lasting hope for rain in the desert. That dual movement of the temptation of despair mixed with the unwillingness to actually let go really resonated with us for this record.” (Nathan Poppe, “Tulsa’s Endless Forms Makes a Splash with Sophomore LP,” newsok.com, 17 Nov. 2017)

Eliot v. Ellis. In a sentencing memo, Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Scruggs compared Priscilla Ellis to the Hollow Men. Shortly after she was convicted in a “massive” fraud scheme and began serving a 40-year sentence, Ellis began hiring assassins to murder not only the witnesses who had testified against her, but the mother of one of them and the nine-year-old daughter of another. “Like the Hollow Men of T. S. Eliot’s imagination,” the prosecutor explained, Ellis’s “mind for years has dwelled in a barren land, devoid of any self-reflection and awareness of what she has wrought upon others.” Ellis’s plea for leniency was more straightforward: “‘Obviously, I had some bad judgment,’ she said Thursday as she stood shackled before Judge James Moody. ‘I apologize for that.’” Scruggs’s allusion to Eliot appears to have trumped this expression of contrition, as Ellis was sentenced to an additional 65 years in prison for soliciting murder. (Dan Sullivan, *Tampa Bay Times* online, 3–4 Jan. 2018)

To Carthage then I came. Jamie Quatro’s 2018 debut novel, published by Grove, is titled *Fire Sermon*. The final lines of Eliot’s “Fire Sermon” from *The Waste Land* serve as one of the book’s two epigraphs; the other is from the Buddha’s actual *Fire Sermon*. “Like Eliot’s poem,” according to Anthony Domestico, the novel is “a compressed and daring work that burns burns on every page.” Its theme? Adultery. (“An Interview with Jamie Quatro.” *Commonweal*, 4 Jan. 2018)

The Way the Probe Ends. Testifying before the Senate Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism in connection with alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, Danielle Brian, Executive Director of the Project on Government Oversight, observed on July 11, 2017 that Congressional investigations often go nowhere. She cited a 1977 House Committee’s investigation into the attempted bribery of members of Congress by South Korea (“Koreagate”), which ended, according to the *Congressional Quarterly*, “in a bang of hyperbole, a whimper of opprobrium, and a mass of uncertainties.” They may have meant “general mess of imprecision.” (“Testimony of Danielle Brian,” www.judiciary.senate.gov)

Preludes of his own. The New Hampshire novelist Ernest Hebert, who recently published a book of poetry, *The Contrarian Voice*, spoke with Peter Biello of New Hampshire Public Radio about his history. “I actually came of age as a poet at Keene State College,” Hebert says. “I remember reading a poem by T. S. Eliot called ‘Preludes’ that had a profound effect on me. I thought, this poem has made me feel like a better person. If I could do that for other people, my life would have some meaning. That’s when I became a writer.” (“The Bookshelf: Ernest Hebert on Poetry, Prose, and the Music of Everyday Language.” nhpr.org, 23 Nov. 2017)

The profit and loss. On Aug. 21, 2018, entrepreneur Elon Musk tweeted a screenshot of the “Death by Water” section of *The Waste Land* along with the comment “Read Eliot’s notes on *The Waste Land*.” Whether this means that he had read the notes or that he was urging others to read them is unclear. In fact the entire purpose of the tweet became a matter for intense speculation in the business community. Interpretations were apparently favorable, because Tesla stock rose 3.2% on the news.

Eliot in 1918: Exhausted Anticipation

By Annarose F. Steinke
University of Nebraska-Kearney

The “voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells” in *The Waste Land* seems like a retrospective image for Eliot and England alike at the end of World War I. He and Vivien had suffered a barrage of ailments throughout the year from chilblains to tooth decay (*Letters* 1 248; 303), and the red tape that had stymied his attempts to obtain an intelligence position with the U. S. Navy left him “feell[ing] years older” (*Letters* 1 289). While the armistice promises respite from wartime privations, Vivien remains wary that “conditions here will be so hard, harder than ever, perhaps, for a long long time” (*Letters* 1 303). Nevertheless, the war’s end at least allows Eliot to glimpse a future in which more time might be spent on creative endeavors.

Although Eliot returns to Lloyds two days prior to the armistice signing, he is still wounded from the bureaucratic blunderings of months past. Thanking those who had provided testimony for his application, Eliot repeatedly explains how he had quit the bank after being assured of an appointment with the Navy, then was told that they did not have the authority to enroll him since he was already registered with the military (as was mandatory for all Americans living abroad) (*Letters* 1 299; 302). Still, he reasons to his mother Charlotte, it is for the best, as military service “is not the same thing after the fighting has ceased, especially when one is badly needed elsewhere” (*Letters* 1 301).

Urgently needed at Lloyds while so many employees are out with the flu, Eliot anticipates needs on the postwar literary scene as well. He was preparing to resume lecturing at the University of London’s Southall extension the following term and, as *Prose* Volume I editors Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard note, he would offer his Elizabethan literature course for a reduced fee when the influenza epidemic caused enrollments to drop (*Prose* 1 759). As a critic, he also sought to raise standards that he perceived had slipped; he observes that “The absence of leisure, the pressure of political interest have tended to blunt critical discrimination and obscure the truth that only what is well written is good literature” (*Prose* 1 749). Eliot champions Ezra Pound as the critic who will haul this truth back into the light in “Studies in Contemporary Criticism II” for the November / December issue of *The Egoist*.

Above all, Eliot looks forward to focusing on his own projects. “What I aimed at was to earn enough from the bank so that I could devote my evenings and Sundays to literary work without thought of gain,” he tells Charlotte, and his increased salary (360 pounds a year) is “certainly a great improvement” toward that end (*Letters* 1 306). While he anticipates “a number of new periodicals in London soon” that could further augment his income, he concludes that to take on extra work “would be frittering [his] mind and energy away” (*Letters* 1 306). Reserving his energy instead would help him to recover from “a long epidemic of domestic influenza” in December, an illness serious enough to warrant his doctor’s orders to “not write any prose for six months” (*Letters* 1 308, xxviii). Orders, of course, which Eliot ignored.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Mark your Calendars: Next year’s annual meeting—our 40th—will be held in St. Louis, September 27-29, 2019.

Officers: At its September meeting, the Board re-elected John Morgenstern to a three-year term as historian, and David Chinitz to a three-year term as treasurer. We thank them for their continued service. John Whittier-Ferguson was elected as the next Vice President. We are grateful to have him take on this role.

Call for Nominations: The Eliot Society seeks nominations for three positions on its Board of Directors. Two of the nominees will be elected to fill the seats presently held by Julia Daniel and Melanie Fathman. These are three-year positions, running from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022. A third nominee will

be elected to complete the unexpired term of John Whittier-Ferguson, ending June 30, 2020.

Elected members are expected to attend the annual conference of the Society, at which the Board meeting is held, and to take on other tasks in service to the Society. Nominations and self-nominations should be sent to the incoming Supervisor of Elections, Frances Dickey (dickeyf@missouri.edu) by February 1, 2019. Candidates with five or more nominations will appear on the ballot.

Members may also make nominations for honorary membership and for distinguished service awards. These nominations should be made to the President at the Society’s email address: tseliotsociety@gmail.com, by July 27, 2019.

Eliot News

Call for Papers: ALA 2019.

The Eliot Society will sponsor two sessions at the 2019 annual conference of the American Literature Association, May 23-26, 2019, at Westin Copley Place in Boston. Please send proposals (up to 250 words), along with a brief biography or curriculum vitae, to Professor Emerita Nancy K. Gish (nancy.gish@maine.edu). Submissions must be received no later than January 10, 2019. For more information on the ALA and its 2019 meeting, please see the ALA website at www.americanliteratureassociation.org.

Call for Papers: *The T. S. Eliot Annual*.

The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual is now accepting submissions for volume 3, due out in 2019. Submissions should be 7,000-8,000 words and follow the *Annual's* style guide (<http://bit.ly/TSEAnnualstyleguide>). All submissions must be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 300 words and be received by February 15, 2019. We welcome submissions on any topic related to Eliot's life and work.

Volume 3 will also feature a special forum marking the centenary of the *Egoist* publication of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." This cluster seeks new ways of reading Eliot's most anthologized essay; we will privilege original readings, archival work, and essays that contextualize "Tradition" with respect to Eliot's contemporaneous prose. For further information, or to submit an essay for consideration, please contact John Morgenstern, general editor, at tseannual@clemson.edu.

Call for Papers: Collection of Essays on Eliot's Prose.

For a proposed volume celebrating *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, co-editors Jayme Stayer and Anthony Cuda are soliciting abstracts for original essays on aspects of Eliot's work that pertain to his non-fiction prose. The volume will be dedicated to the General Editor of *The Prose*, Ronald Schuchard, to honor his influence in the fields of Eliot studies and modernism. Essays may fall into the following categories, but are not limited to what is described here:

- original readings of the poems or plays that make use of the less familiar prose as context
- assessments of Eliot's role as cultural commentator, literary critic, or Christian apologist
- explorations of how Eliot's prose engages with modernism, culture, politics, theology or contemporary art

- analyses of how newly published pieces or newly annotated pieces shed different light on an aspect of Eliot's work
- descriptions of an arc or trajectory in Eliot's thought that is revealed by the chronological presentation of the prose, and/or newly published pieces
- stylistic or linguistic analyses of the prose
- discussions of the mutually informing relationships between the new editions of the prose and the letters
- a "guide" or "handbook" approach to a complex or recurrent idea in the prose

Send a 300-word abstract and a brief CV by Mar 1, 2019 to Jayme Stayer (jayme.stayer@gmail.com). Finished essays will be due sometime in early 2020.

Society Notes

Bravos to **Michael Coyle** and **Roxana Preda**, who have published *Ezra Pound and the Career of Modern Criticism* with Camden House.

A round of applause for **Christopher McVey**, whose article "Feeble Translations: Failure, Global Modernism, and *The Waste Land*" was selected as the recipient of the South Atlantic Modern Language's SAR Essay Prize for Volume 81. The essay was part of a cluster on Eliot, edited by Society member **Rod Overaa**.

Congratulations to **Joseph Maddrey**, whose book *Simply Eliot* is out in both print and digital editions, available on amazon.com.

Hail to **James Matthew Wilson**, who has published *The Vision of the Soul: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in the Western Tradition* with Catholic UP, which features Eliot extensively. James has also published a new book of poems, *The Hanging God* (Angelico). In his forward to the volume, Dana Gioia notes that the ghost of Eliot lingers in the background.

Cheers to **John Haffenden** for yet another mountain conquered: *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Vol. 8: 1936-1938* is scheduled for publication in January 2019. John warns us, or rather, whets our appetite: the volume is "another 1,000 pages, I'm afraid."

Another standing ovation for **Ron Schuchard**, who with his co-editor **John Kelly**, has published the fifth volume of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats (1908-1910)* (Oxford).

A formal salute to **Christos Hadjiyiannis**, who has just published with Cambridge his *Conservative Modernists: Literature and Tory Politics in Britain 1900-1920*.

Report: 39th Annual Meeting

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scholarly editions of Eliot's work, "What is Over-Annotation?" Aside from a useful potted history of scholarship devoted to the work of annotation (or, rather, the lack of such scholarship), Chinitz's talk enlivened the oft-ignored work of annotators by showing how even the simplest endnote brings to the fore a set of rich and difficult questions about audience, text, and context at the heart of all critical and pedagogical work. The question of what is proper annotation may be irresolvable in a general sense, but there were some spirited remarks from those in the audience that seemed to settle the question, relative to Eliot's work, in favor of the philosophy and practice evident in *The Complete Prose*. In a different vein, Sara Palmer, Alyssa Duck, and Emily Banks gave a talk on their work encoding *The Complete Prose*. They began by apologizing for the boring subject matter. But truthfully, I was enrapt—by the sheer labor of the work itself, as by the useful walk-through of its mechanics. Perhaps it was only because I taught the *Tempest* last week, but Prospero's guilty words seem à propos: "they serve in offices / that profit us...." Their work is a model for future work across the digital humanities, and it will benefit all Eliot scholars through its production of a useable database. For this relief from future labor, much thanks.

This sense of gratitude, coupled with excitement for new possibilities of future work, pervaded the conference as a whole. The roundtable on editing *The Complete Prose* was a focal point in this regard. Our community of Eliot scholars and admirers owes the editors more than can be expressed for their work—unflinching, though surely exhausting and sometimes



quixotic — and for invigorating our own. They have given us all of T. S. "Big Slam" Eliot's prose, alongside the editorial apparatus necessary to really use it. Repeating themes from David Chinitz's talk, Ron Schuchard and the other

Our outgoing, much-beloved president: Frances Dickey



The #MeToo Panelists: Janine Utell, Michelle Alexis Taylor, Megan Quigley, Nancy Gish, Erin Templeton

editors emphasized their desire to create a version of Eliot's work faithful to the texts, rich with information for advanced scholars, and accessible to international and other new audiences. The greater gift is that with this work, all of us are new to Eliot again. As Ron put it, simply: before the Editorial Project began, 90% of the work on Eliot had been done with access to less than 10% of his work. Ron is owed (at least) another bottle of Old Grand-Dad for giving us access to the rest of Eliot. Such, he related, was Valerie Eliot's intent in beginning the project over a decade ago. The promise is a new world of Eliot scholarship, and the excitement was palpable. Similar excitement was generated by a new way of engaging old Eliot, at the panel "Reading *The Waste Land* with the #MeToo Generation," led by Megan Quigley, Janine Utell, Michelle Alexis Taylor, Nancy K. Gish, Sumita Chakraborty, and Erin Templeton. Their panel connected Eliot's nearly 100-year-old poem directly to the concerns of our contemporary political discourse and, more importantly, to the lives of our students. I've never left a talk so eager to teach Eliot in a new and different way.

I was left both grateful and excited by too many panels, seminars, and conversations to mention here. My thoughts thus turn to the remarkable fellowship of the Society itself, exhibited everywhere at the meeting: the sharing of diverse approaches to a shared passion; the sharing between new scholars and admirers of Eliot with the best and most established scholars in the field; and the mix of hard thinking with a glass (or a few) of wine and genuine friendship. I left with new ideas, new colleagues, and new friends—this is what makes the Society truly special. A final expression of gratitude, then, to Francis Dickey, who over the last three years as Society President has both enriched the group and kept us what we are; and one of excitement for Jayme Stayer, whose new leadership coincides with the start of a new era for Eliot scholarship and for the Society.

Complete Prose, vol. 6

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depth of his preoccupation, and suggest the potential for a critical realignment of the relationship between Eliot's literary and moral criticism.

A lecture written for a planned 1940 tour of Italy is exemplary in this regard. In the archivally titled typescript, "The Last Twenty-Five Years of English Poetry," Eliot demurs from the expected critical judgment of the Auden generation in favor of a more abstract and characteristic excursus on the importance of poetry in the continuing evolution of language: "A language that is not merely still spoken, but alive, is a language that is changing" in the wake of "the social, material and spiritual changes" to the people who speak it (29). We are told that "The task of poetic innovators ... is to restore to verse the accents of living speech" (30), a project that takes on metaphysical urgency in the second section of *Little Gidding*, where "our concern was speech, and speech impelled us / To purify the dialect of the tribe." Such purification must be a generous and encompassing historical process, necessitating an awareness of the past dynamics of cultural interchange as well as of religious contention. Eliot wrote perceptively of Kipling, in lines applicable to himself, that "the whole of history became an historical present to his imagination" (34). That Eliot's concept of the "mind of Europe" grows from a vision of cultural, spiritual, and material exchange is also made clear in "Poetry, Speech and Music," an unpublished lecture, written for a tour of Sweden in the spring of 1942, that reworks the earlier "The Music of Poetry." The Swedish lecture's emphasis is on "revolution and renovation" (275). Its attention to the evolution of English from its Classical European, Germanic, and Scandinavian roots suggests that for Eliot the currents that renew civilization flow in organic patterns through the contact of cultures.

Given its wartime context, is it no surprise that this volume is ghosted by a sense of loss. The editors point out that the mass destruction of war was attended by the personal losses of a number of Eliot's friends, including Charles Williams, Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Paul Valéry. Much of the prose is suffused with a sense of epochal change, and the attendant pain of reckoning is recognizable from the later *Quartets*. Although Yeats, Woolf, and Joyce are all present, it is Valéry's phantom that most clearly and perhaps surprisingly asserts its



Andrew Walker and Fabio Vericat

gentle influence in this volume. In his encomium *Leçon de Valéry* (1946), Eliot writes that "it is he who will remain for posterity the representative poet, the symbol of the poet, of the first half of the twentieth century—not Yeats, not Rilke, not anyone else" (754–755). Shortly before his death in 1945, Valéry told Eliot "L'Europe est finie" (754). Although he does not share what he perceives as Valéry's nihilism, Eliot agrees that "language is finished, for me (and for a poet, his language represents his country, and Europe too) when I have come to the end of my resources, in endeavoring to extend and develop that language. For an artist who comes at the end of a period, art ends with himself" (754). For Eliot, Valéry's creative introspection is revelatory not only of his own poetic practice, but of the eternal transpersonal dynamic of cultural renewal: "every language, to retain its vitality, must perpetually depart and return upon itself; but without the departure there is no return, and the returning is as important as the arrival" (755).

¹Philip Mairet, quoted in Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot*, 253. Eliot dedicated *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* to Mairet, "in gratitude and admiration."



Michael Sutherlin and Jessica Drexel

Impossible Modernism

continued from p. 3

that “an allegorical vision of the world ... cannot be separated from the question—perhaps unanswerable—of what Benjamin’s angel sees” (181). He discusses not only Kant’s conception of the angelic, but also a figure who is often overlooked: Paul Klee himself. Using Klee’s method of “barbaric” linguistic fragmentation, in which letters are strewn across the canvas shorn of their context, Lehman argues that Benjamin points to a new way of reading history. The distinction is important: history is always written and thus subject to the norms of causal sense-making; this is emergent if not explicit from Lehman’s discussion of Eliot’s poetics as well. Benjamin instead advocates a resistant mode of reading that rejects “a meaningful, causal, epic depiction of a chain of events” in favor of “a collection of disarticulated letters” as in the Angel’s allegoric vision (188). The unfinished *Arcades Project* might have provided such an experience of interruptive reading. Lehman’s idea strikes me as particularly interesting in terms of pedagogy: what could this disruptive practice look like when employed in the classroom? How could linear (literary) history be usefully interpolated

with anecdotal evidence, not as interesting asides to the main chronology but as integral to it?

Lehman’s conclusion about the primacy of modes of reading allows me to admit a readerly bias of my own. The three chapters on Benjamin are fertile and generative explorations; however, his decision to consider only Eliot’s earliest major poems, rejecting the late works as reflecting “[their] author’s choice of an easier variety of transcendence” cuts short an otherwise absorbing discussion of literary genre vis-à-vis historical reasoning (191). Eliot’s plays, for instance, are critically overlooked as continued investigations at the limits of literary/dramatic form, historical eventhood, and theology. They present interesting analogues with Benjaminian thinking about anecdotal anti-history. As such, they are opportunities for further critical work considering them in conjunction with—and not just as parallel approaches to—Benjamin’s “intellectual intuition,” patterns of experience, and conceptions of nature (to cherry-pick a few examples from Lehman’s commentary). To close, I thus reiterate Lehman’s own conclusive call “for a different critical practice, one for which the familiar opposition of the formal to the historical can no longer be maintained” (193). *Impossible Modernism* aligns with this practice, leaving me eager for more.

Tanowitz’s *Four Quartets*

continued from p. 6

one felt impelled to reconcile word and line and stanza with music and choreography. Better for the purpose might have been a reading delivered in a manner akin to Eliot’s own monotonous recording of *Four Quartets*, with semantic nuance droned and drained away. Such a reading would not invite us to itself, would not obtrude, and would make sensible and plain that the choreography was meant to be homologous to the text and largely independent of it.

Largely independent, I say, but not entirely—for certainly there were moments of profound interpenetration. One such moment occurred in the fourth section of *The Dry Salvages*, a *pas de deux* featuring Maile Okamura and Dylan Crossman. In a notable pause, narrator Chalfant watched the dancers for an appreciable time before she spoke the opening (“Lady, whose shrine stands on the

promontory”), underscoring the independence of choreography and text. The pair danced beautifully, leaning away from one another and possessing the entire space, when at the line “Figlia del tuo figlio,” they drew nearly stationary and became vividly for an instant the reverberating image of mother and son. The miraculous emergence of the tableau was wholly unexpected and deeply moving.

The performance ended as it had begun. Lindsey Jones returned to deliver the coda of *Little Gidding* in solo to Saariaho’s “Cloud Trio III” and against a projection upstage of Marden’s exercise in lines and rectangles, *Painting Study II*, 1980. The audience greeted the conclusion with enthusiastic applause and scattered shouts, and many rose in ovation.

Pam Tanowitz’s dense working of *Four Quartets* was expertly executed. If it lacked easy consanguinity among its elements, it was no less compelling—and perhaps more intriguing—because of it. Certainly, one’s appreciation would deepen with repeated viewings, something it richly deserves.

New Poetics of Climate Change

continued from p. 5

culture, bringing about new literary forms capable of expressing humans' entanglement with biophysical processes that our own and our ancestors' behavior effected. Griffiths seems to indicate as much when he notes the affinity between modernism and climate change in terms of their oppositional quality and resistance to received ideas of nature. Such argument finds indirect support from Amitav Ghosh's collection of essays, *The Great Derangement* (published in 2016 and perhaps not yet available when Griffiths completed his book), in which Ghosh links the rise of the realist novel, with its focus on the "regularity of bourgeois life" and "banishing of the improbable," to the advent of the Anthropocene and the changes in climate patterns that accompanied it. Ghosh calls this the beginning of the "Great Derangement"—by which he means the obtuseness with which an era so proud of its self-awareness disregarded the manifold signs of human impact on nature and the climate. Griffiths' book, focused on poetry rather than the novel, makes a complementary argument according to which modernist self-consciousness about the limits of referentiality and the inevitable entanglement of cultural and natural processes, including the way "nature" is constructed by human perception, created the perceptual and aesthetic means for grasping and imaginatively responding to the reality of climate change in its "new" and seemingly improbable enormity and disruptiveness.

Individual chapters of the book focus on T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Wallace Stevens's "The Poems of Our Climate," Basil Bunting's long poem *Briggflatts*, and David Jones's *Anthemata*. In a final chapter addressing contemporary climate change poems through the lens of modernist aesthetics, Griffiths discusses Jorie Graham's *Sea Change* as a poem that extends, and repurposes, the concern of *The Waste Land* with the "tension between the human imposition of order and vital, persistent material forces." In Chapter Two, "A New Climate for Modernism," he undertakes impressive theoretical groundwork and approaches *The Waste Land* through Bruno Latour's actor-network-theory, whose emphasis on the constantly shifting relationships between the social and natural worlds Griffiths finds anticipated by modernist poetics. What appears initially a slightly circular argument reveals itself as a



Lisa Chinitz and Chris Buttram

mark of his tendency to engage readers in recurrent reversals of conventional thinking, as when he notes: "We now read *The Waste Land* in a context of climate change; but what might it mean to read climate change in the context of *The Waste Land*" (45)? For instance, what can the experience of reading the poem teach us about our own entanglement in human-induced environmental processes like the waste and pollution—"oil," "tar," and "dust"—that accrue symbolic and material agency in the poem, compelling us to register the dirt in which we live and breathe? And to what degree do these material objects serve, for contemporary readers, as "objective correlatives," in Griffiths' words, "for the invisible, insensible emissions of greenhouse gases" (47)? He also traces the multiple ways water assumes agency in the poem, "running as an image through the poem and resisting any fixity that our perception attempts to impose on it" (48). Eliot, he argues, removes water from allusions (for instance to Cleopatra in "A Game of Chess"), "symbolically dehydrat[ing] his sources to connote their exhaustion" (50). The poem's contested ending—holding out a promise for regeneration or succumbing to "exhausted collapse"—assumes new and urgent meaning at the present time, when the "cultural malaise" dramatized in *The Waste Land* has become a profoundly environmental one as well.

The New Poetics of Climate Change helps us appreciate the continued vitality, and salience, of modernist aesthetics as we seek to understand what it means to live, read, and write (and teach literature) in the ever more uncertain world of our warming planet.

Acclamation for Ron Schuchard

continued from p. 4

acclaimed scholar John Haffenden as the Principal Investigator, the Editorial Project coordinated, for the first time, the editing and publication of Eliot’s poetry, plays, and letters. What many scholars do not know—and what Ron is too modest to remind us—is that the *Prose* was not simply first out of the gate; it was the arm that lifted the gate and allowed for the other wings of the Project to follow.

Bafflingly, Eliot’s own publishing house, Faber, declined the critical edition early in the process. It eventually found a home at Johns Hopkins, who pledged to publish the edition electronically. Roadblocks, ruffled feathers, and obstacles—all of these Ron met with a composure and good humor that comes either from nature, nurture, or Abeline, Texas. Ron encouraged his editors to keep their eyes trained on the end-goal as each wave of trouble came and went.

Ron would want me to emphasize that it was a labor of love. But it was also a labor of *labor*. Ron retired officially in 2012 after forty-three years (as he says) of “deliriously joyous paper grading.” Since then, as a Heilbrun Distinguished Emeritus Fellow, he has worked longer and more eye-blurring hours than ever, handcuffed to the desk of his library carrel, which he affectionately refers to as his “Dilbert cubicle.”

All of his co-editors, in fact, were handcuffed to our respective desks. Very few of us took leaves of absence; we graded papers and taught during the day; edited, annotated, and revised thousands of proof pages at night. And because we each began work on our volume well before the preceding ones were finished, the rollout of the completed work was swift and exciting. In 2014, totaling up to a combined 1,887

pages, the first two volumes were published with two very definite articles in the title: *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*. The Modernist Studies Association recognized the work with their first distinguished edition prize. One reviewer called them “an incomparable intellectual feast,” and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* said that they would “set in motion a golden era of Eliot scholarship.” Volumes 3 and 4 appeared in 2015 to similar acclaim. Volumes 5 and 6 followed in 2017. Vol. 7 is in in proof now, with the final volume on track for completion in 2019. It is a staggering achievement: five years from the appearance of the first volume to the last. Soon, it will total in excess of 7,500 new pages of annotated prose, over 850 items, including never-before-seen lectures, notes, and essays that were thought to have been lost to history. When the final volumes are published digitally, Johns Hopkins has pledged to issue a hardcover print version, and library shelves everywhere will groan with approval under their combined weight. What sounded like hyperbole when Ron said in seminar some twenty years ago has proven to be true: we stand on the brink of a new age of Eliot publishing and scholarship.

So that is why we are at Emory University in 2018: to celebrate the near-completion of Ron Schuchard’s vision, a grand and hard-fought achievement, more than forty years after that woozy afternoon in Valerie’s flat. We hereby dedicate this meeting of the Eliot Society to *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, an attainment of such stature and significance that “monumental” seems an adjective too fragile and fleeting. Lastly, as a small sign of our esteem, we’d like to present this token of appreciation: a bottle of Old Grand-Dad for the Conductor of Collaboration, the Eminence of Editors, and the Old Grand-Dad of the Eliot renaissance, Ron Schuchard.



Left: David Chinitz;
Right: Paul Robichaud,
Paul Stasi,
John Angell Grant



39th Annual Meeting of the International T. S. Eliot Society, Atlanta
September 2018

CROWD-SOURCING “RETURN TO *THE WASTE LAND*”:
MARGATE IN 2018

In recent years, discussions surrounding concepts of public scholarship have been gaining prominence in academic circles and beyond. Such examinations recently interacted with Eliot scholarship at the Turner Gallery in Margate. In 2018, Professor Mike Tooby oversaw a “crowd-sourced” exhibition related to Eliot’s composition of *The Waste Land* in this English coastal town in 1922. Members of the public, whether familiar with Eliot’s work or not, were invited to participate in a lengthy immersion with his life and writings that eventually led to this exhibition, which closed in May, 2018. In this talk, I discuss the process and its outcome within the context of theories associated with public scholarship. A wide range of art works were included in the exhibition, which emerged after its numerous curators attended workshops, visited sites associated with Eliot, participated in book clubs, and otherwise threw themselves into the worlds of Eliot and of exhibition creation. “Return to *The Waste Land*” attracted numerous visitors and significant attention in the press. This talk considers the advantages and pitfalls of encouraging non-specialists in this kind of endeavor, which is most commonly restricted to experts.

Sheila T. Cavanagh
Emory U

“WILD THYME” / “WILD TIME”: JOHN ASHBERY’S ELIOT

In this paper, I propose that Ashbery’s most significant invocations of Eliot allow his work to approach a region of emotional experience of which Eliot’s *Four Quartets* is, for Ashbery, the most authoritative exploration. While the title of a poem in *Chinese Whispers* wryly acknowledges the poet’s proximity to the Christian structure of feeling as “His Reluctance to Take Down the Christmas Ornaments” (76), Ashbery’s relationship to Eliot cannot be reduced to an ironic claim to a position in literary history or any other “pattern” marked by Eliot’s modernist monuments. Instead, they defer to Eliot’s post-conversion poems as an admirer would defer to “a late essay by the master’s hand” (*Worldly* 24). Given their fullest scope, as they are in two of Ashbery’s books of the 2000s—*Chinese Whispers* (2002) and *A Worldly Country* (2007)—such allusions permit Ashbery to posit relationships between

the emotional range of his work, particularly its anxious concern with guilt, forgiveness, and mercy, and Eliot’s Dantean understanding of “the logic of sensibility” in which “[e]very degree of the feeling of humanity, from the lowest to the highest, has ... an intimate relation to the next above and below, and all fit together” (“Dante” 727). I focus on the echoes of *Four Quartets* and “Journey of the Magi” in these two books, taking as central the acknowledgment in “The Handshake, the Cough, the Kiss” that “the present is unredeemed” (*Worldly* 30). Seeing this as an allusion to *Burnt Norton* allows one to hear the seriousness of the child-like eagerness of the final line of “They Are Still Rather Lovely,” which with apparent innocuousness incorporates two of the *Quartets*’ recurrent words: “Can we have our presents now?” (*Worldly* 45); it also allows one to explore the full resonance for his poetry of Ashbery’s assertion that “God will find the pattern and break it” (*Worldly* 60).

Luke Carson
University of Victoria

NOT NOTHING: THE VIRTUAL POTENCY OF NEGATIONS IN
T. S. ELIOT’S *THE WASTE LAND*

Bare. Barren. Arid. These are the words often associated with T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, perhaps largely because of the profuse amount of negations and the negative indefinite pronoun “nothing” Eliot uses throughout this long poem. There is “no shelter,” “no relief,” and “no sound of water” in this empty land. “Nothing?” the woman in “A Game of Chess” demands hysterically to her partner. There is an abundance of images that signal absence and lack in *The Waste Land*, but it is hard to claim that these negations indeed lead to nothing or simply dwindle into the mad ramblings of Hieronymo. Rather, Eliot’s use of negations and the pronoun “nothing” transcend the Aristotelian negation in syllogism, or the Platonic or Hegelian negation in dialectics that spirals into a totalitarian whole. Drawing upon Bergson’s and Deleuze’s idea of the virtual, my presentation delineates how Eliot’s negations move away from syllogism or dialectics, but virtualize language by simultaneously negating and evoking images. Furthermore, Eliot uses the word “nothing” in *The Waste Land* as an alternative with the potential to transcend categories and identities defined by negations. Building on close readings of Eliot’s use of negations and the word “nothing,” I also offer a new

ABSTRACTS



Naomi Gaddes, Hyonbin Choi, Elysia Balavage, and Steve Pinkerton

reading of Tiresias as one who connects “nothing with nothing.” As an entity of multiplicity, Tiresias embodies the potential of negated images and nothings, existing in the in-between space of “throbbing between two lives,” yet to be actualized. Eliot’s poetic experiments in *The Waste Land* virtualizes language by presenting images of absence, negation, and the virtual, creating and expanding the potency of the text. My reading of *The Waste Land* highlights the fluidity and openness of the poem, which requires the reader to constantly repeat the Möbius-like loop of virtualization and actualization, always in the process of forming an image.

Hyonbin Choi
U of Wisconsin-Madison

EVERYDAY NETTLES

With the new attention garnered for “Eliot and the Biological”—whether ecological or bodily—I present part of a longer essay, taking a transformative look at *Little Gidding* III’s attempt at reconciliation: what Denis Donoghue calls the “unfinished business” of the *Quartets* (Lobb, 19): the problematic tensions of oppositions internal to Eliot’s entire oeuvre as he tries to discern a “clear conception of what the word human implies.” Through a close reading of the crux of the underdeveloped analyses of the nettles in relation to the medieval Catholic mystics, I take an orthogonal approach to one of the few serious critical interpretations of the text: John Paul Riquelme’s claim that “[t]aking the complex relations among the words seriously can lead to setting aside their everyday meanings” (*Harmony of Dissonances* 222).

I track where the poetic language and images intend to alienate through deception and where affirm through reconciliation—through faux and genuine pictures of reality and supra-reality. Resonant with Julia Daniel’s recent research into dirt and defecation in *East Coker*,

I examine the nettles as part of the environmental conversation relating to animal husbandry and land use. Further, I advance a new reading of how the nettles might legitimately illustrate “[t]he use of memory” (LG III.7), with Eliot implanting a literary palimpsest of references to Aristotle, Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, and James Joyce.

LeeAnn Derdeyn
Southern Methodist U

CRUCIFIXION CAN SEEM LIKE STANDING IN AIR

In this lecture, I rethink how we read and have read *The Waste Land*. I bring an analytic philosophical training to my understanding of the poem’s words and its poetics. But my goal is to reach a new sense of the poetics of *The Waste Land* through its logical grammar. In particular, I investigate the ways the poem’s deformations of sense, its fall into half-sense, correlate with the dead and the half-dead. In the poem, the unintelligibility of life (its nonsense) becomes analogically similar to the inevitability of death. Focusing on this analogy allows me to redescribe the ethical concerns and power of the poem, to reflect its beauty in a new way that is both revelatory and precise.

Brett Bourbon
U of Dallas

THE HYPNOTIC TWIST IN “RHAPSODY”: BERGSON, CHARCOT, AND ELIOT IN PARIS

In this paper, I explore how the city environment and the flaner it is supposed to evoke in the wandering persona of T. S. Eliot’s “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” explain the bitter tone of the poem’s end. If we compare the poem’s imagery with Henri Bergson’s descriptions of the *durée*, we see how the poem’s speaker attempts to use the city environment, with its rhythmic gas lights and provocative sights, to access pure memory. Critics largely agree that Bergson’s thought lies behind the poem, and textual evidence shows Eliot indeed first drafted the poem while he was in Paris, where he attended Bergson’s lectures. At the same time that Bergson was sweeping Europe and Eliot was abroad, Jean-Martin Charcot was developing a new medical practice based in the relatively new science of psychology and easily tested on Paris’s rich supply of urban, poor test subjects: hypnosis. I suggest Eliot combined these Parisian influences in his poem by considering whether hypnosis could induce the passive state necessary for poetic inspiration. A hypnotized speaker fits with the other passive and vulnerable speakers Anthony Cuda

identifies in Eliot's early poems. I suggest that when the hypnotic session/poem ends without the access to a prelingual or deeper consciousness it promises, the persona reacts with a vehemence which prefigures Eliot's later dismissal of Bergson's ideas. Don Childs discusses the poem's twisting knife as the intervention of practical memory that aborts the experiment; however, I suggest that it is the speaker's fear of vulnerability that ultimately dooms his attempt to access pure memory, as only disgust at one's own limitations could inspire such hauntingly dismal lines.

Naomi Gades
Loyola U Chicago

T. S. ELIOT, MODERNISM, AND BOREDOM: AFFECTIVE ECONOMIES IN *PRUFROCK AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS*

We do not usually associate modernism with boredom. From Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* to Ezra Pound's injunction that modern artists must "make NEW" the traditions of art, modernism often branded itself with the rhetoric of novelty, energetic liberation, and daring experimentation. In an effort to counter and nuance this critical habit—even if momentarily—this paper will consider instead what it might mean to explore modernism's preoccupation with boredom, ennui, and exhaustion, specifically as these themes manifest themselves in the work of T. S. Eliot.

Whether measuring out one's life in coffee spoons or pressing lidless eyes while waiting for a closed car and a knock upon the door, Eliot's work consistently registers the deeply affective and existential experience engendered by boredom. Privileging boredom as an embodied and deeply psychological encounter with the self, but also a paradoxically social one reinforced through ritualistic social exchanges, this paper draws on Sara Ahmed's notion of "economies of affect"—wherein affect itself is both produced and enacted socially rather than held internally—to analyze what I term "affective impoverishment" throughout *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Suggesting that experiences of boredom are a product of being "affectively poor," I show how Eliot frequently positions the figures of his poetry as personages who attempt to participate in a broader social affective economy, but find that they cannot. The paper closes by arguing that this inability to participate—to feel on a social level—is itself a cornerstone of the cultural malaise Eliot explores in his later work.

Christopher McVey
Boston U

"THE LAST OF EARTH LEFT TO DISCOVER": ORIGINAL SIN, ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE, AND THE EDENIC RETURN IN *FOUR QUARTETS*

My paper puts forth an ecocritical reading of *Four Quartets* by considering how T. S. Eliot's theology informs his perspective on the environment. Raised in industrial St. Louis, Eliot was keenly aware of harmful environmental practices, which is evident in the "river [that] sweats / Oil and tar" of *The Waste Land* (266-67). In his *Quartets*, Eliot gives his environmental discussion a theological inflection, such as when the speaker explains being unable to "think of ... an ocean not littered with wastage" before transitioning to the "Prayer of the one Annunciation" almost immediately thereafter (*Dry Salvages* 2.21-36). Given that he yokes the ecological to the theological, Eliot's *Quartets* invite us to interrogate Christianity's role in legitimizing humanity's abuse of the environment, particularly upon considering the importance of Genesis for establishing anthropocentrism.

While many ecocritical studies undermine anthropocentrism, the key for Eliot rests not in rejecting human pre-eminence but, rather, in undoing the sinfulness that leads to exploitative environmental practices. Though it establishes anthropocentrism, Genesis also suggests that sin has a profoundly negative impact on humanity's relationship with the earth, as the expulsion from Eden indicates. Eliot thus concludes *Four Quartets* by pointing to an eschatological end where God restores humanity's relationship with the earth by re-establishing Eden: "And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started ... When the last of earth left to discover / Is that which was the beginning" (*Little Gidding* 5.27-32). In a poem continually working through the paradoxical connections between beginnings and endings, it is fitting that the final scene of *Four Quartets* involves a return to humanity's beginning, an idyllic natural world where "all shall be well" (*Little Gidding* 5.42).

Kyle Joudry
Queen's U

ELIOT'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Long before Eliot edited *The Egoist* or *The Criterion*, he published *Fireside*. Written in his own hand and distributed to family and friends, the pages of *Fireside* bring readers along on Eliot's childhood adventures in wonderland. Alongside advertisements for products that instantly transform consumers from thin to fat or from intoxicated to sober appear the poet's earliest

surviving verses, closely modeled on Lewis Carroll's "The Mad Gardener's Song." Over the following decade, Eliot copied laboratory experiments into a poetry notebook that he tentatively titled *Inventions of the March Hare*, once again placing his own poetic inventions in Carroll's wonderland. While critics have rightly associated the *March Hare* verses with Eliot's discovery of French Symbolism, emphasis on Jules Laforgue's tonal modulations and self-mocking irony in these poems has largely occluded Carroll's continued presence. Laforgue taught Eliot to render his most serious thoughts and feelings with a comic edge, which cuts deeply into these early poems, but Carroll's satiric imaginings persist in Eliot's poetry beyond the notebook. The hippopotamus who descends a bus in Carroll's song, for instance, reappears in Eliot's *Fireside*, prefiguring "The Hippopotamus." This paper writes Carroll back into the chronology of Eliot's aesthetic influences, following the twists of his many returns to "the laureate of nonsense" (Eliot's phrase), from his beginnings in *Fireside* and the poetry notebook to his midcareer satire before turning to his attentive reading of Walter de la Mare's *Lewis Carroll* while drafting the allusive passage to wonderland in *Four Quartets*.

John D. Morgenstern
Clemson U

ENCODING *THE COMPLETE PROSE OF T. S. ELIOT*

This presentation sheds light on the process of encoding the prose of T. S. Eliot. The texts are encoded using the standards of the Text Encoding Initiative, a nearly thirty-year-old organization that maintains an elaborate set of semantic codes for marking up documents. Semantic encoding distinguishes the content and appearance of digital text. The markup preserves the meaning of the segments of text, such as titles or lines of poetry, while allowing for different presentation styles to be applied later. We have implemented a subset of these codes in order to preserve the original typographic layout of the source material but also to lay the foundation for a website that will render the entire eight volumes fully searchable and cross-referenced. Supplementing the invaluable contribution of the online PDFs, the website will open new avenues to researchers, making it possible to investigate Eliot's thinking on a wide variety of subjects, both those central and adjacent to traditional Eliot scholarship. One example of the latter is the ability to trace Eliot's brief commentary on cinema, from significant misgivings to his ultimate collaboration on a film adaptation of *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is exciting

to play a role in enabling scholastic inquiry and we are eager to share insight into the many years that this encoding has been ongoing. In our talk, we discuss our workflow and the technical decisions we have faced in thinking about how to best prepare the texts for both PDF and website publication.

Sara Palmer, Alyssa Duck, Emily Banks
Emory U

GWENDOLYN BROOKS, T. S. ELIOT, AND THE CHICAGO RENAISSANCE

In her autobiography *Report from Part One* (1972), Gwendolyn Brooks recalled that during the 1967 Fisk University Writers' Conference, she was introduced to the aesthetics and politics of the Black Arts movement. As a result of her awareness of this movement, she dismissed her modernist formal experiments from the 1940s and 1950s as "white writing." The question of whether or not Brooks's modernism ultimately impeded her development as a poet has been subject to much critical debate. In this paper, I argue that, rather than stifling her originality, Brooks's discovery of Eliot's work, most notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady," fostered her artistic individuality, and, in "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith," helped her to develop a poetics that would criticize black poverty and racial terrorism in the United States. Although Brooks's poetic tribute to Robert Frost is better known, in her autobiography, Brooks made no secret of her admiration for Eliot's poetry and recalled first reading him when she was sixteen. In 1959, Brooks published a review of Hugh Kenner's *The Invisible Poet* in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, where she wrote, "You may ask, Why another of these studies? Why another venture into the careful candors of Eliot-land? But Hugh Kenner ... discusses everything Eliotic (Kenner's word), and discloses influences that may surprise you." As we shall see, in "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith," Brooks simultaneously alludes to Carl Sandburg's haiku-inspired "Fog," and to the cat-like yellow fog in "Prufrock," which Grover Smith, in a somewhat Prufrockian aside, once described as "(a Sandburg cat, no doubt)." In doing so, Brooks hints at important, neglected interconnections between *Poetry* magazine and the South Side poets, and helps us to bridge a longstanding divide between the emergence of so-called "high" modernism and the first and second phases of the Chicago Renaissance.

Anita Patterson
Boston U

ELIOT AMONG THE BLASPHEMERS

In the introduction to my recent book *Blasphemous Modernism*, I included some brief remarks about Eliot’s literary and cultural criticism that I explore further in this paper. In the book I use Eliot’s thoughts on blasphemy (in *After Strange Gods*, “Baudelaire,” and elsewhere) to elaborate a theoretical framework for interpreting the often blasphemous writings of Eliot’s modernist contemporaries and inheritors. In short, I defend and develop Eliot’s logic—i.e., that genuine blasphemy depends on contexts of genuine faith—while disputing his verdict that blasphemy had become “obsolescent” in a rapidly secularizing modern world.

In this conference paper I flesh out the implications of these ideas in greater detail, with keener attention to Eliot’s own writings. I consider how the concept of blasphemy helped to shape an evolution in Eliot’s thinking, including his shifting attention from classicism and romanticism to orthodoxy and heresy. As Ronald Schuchard has shown (in *Eliot’s Dark Angel*), by the early 1930s these keywords had been supplanted in Eliot’s lexicon by the newly “pivotal concept” of blasphemy: “the most valuable term” for understanding Eliot’s moral and literary theories of that period.

My paper addresses how blasphemy proves pivotal not only for grasping Eliot but for making sense of a range of literary practices by other modernist writers. It also links this concept to a series of Fall narratives that informed Eliot’s poetics and criticism: original sin, the dissociation of sensibility, and the modern decline into secularism. (Or, as Eliot put it, into “a world where blasphemy is impossible.”) Finally, I consider whether Eliot himself, as he seems to have allowed, was a “blasphemous” poet according to his own logic and criteria—and, if so, whether he belongs to the ranks of the “first-rate blasphemers” he so admired.

Steve Pinkerton
Case Western Reserve U

THE UNCANNIEST OF GUESTS AND A PROPER HOST: ELIOT AND NIHILISM

In *Modernism and Nihilism* (2011), Shane Weller argues that an understanding of modernism is unattainable without acknowledging the function that Nietzschean nihilism performs within. Expanding this line of inquiry, this paper shows that Eliot instead resisted the embrace of the “new Nietzschean nihilism” that surrounded literary modernism since *The Will to Power*’s publication in 1901. In investigating Eliot’s value-positivity from a philosophical rather than a theological



Jewel Spears Brooker, John Whittier-Ferguson (our new Vice President), and Nancy Gish

perspective, I propose that Eliot’s commitment to value originates before his religious conversion, progressively strengthens throughout his career, and culminates in an image of absolute but generative annihilation at the end of the *Four Quartets*.

The ghost of new nihilism lingered over modernism like a dank fog that refused to lift. Literary critics and authors alike perceived this, with Elliot Paul declaring in his essay “The New Nihilism” (1927) that after the Great War, “old values had become meaningless” and Herbert Read pronouncing in his introduction to “A War Diary” (1962) that “nihilism—nothingness, despair” was literary modernism’s “universal state of mind.” Such observations seem fitting to describe the work of writers like James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Ernest Hemingway, but Eliot’s disposition differs: he resisted the new nihilism’s bleak meaninglessness since his student years. Presenting Eliot’s reading of nihilism alongside *The Hollow Men* and *Four Quartets*, I argue that his interaction with nihilism was shaped by his graduate school study of Benedict de Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, and Georg W. F. Hegel rather than Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power*. This shows Eliot writing in a tradition of value-positive “old nihilism” that *The Will to Power* largely eclipsed for a modern audience. By drawing on my archival research at Cambridge University, including annotations in Eliot’s personal copy of the *Ethics* (1677) and his typescripts of *The Hollow Men* and *Little Gidding*, and by interrogating Eliot’s depictions of annihilation and emptiness, I further argue that Eliot erases the negativity of vacuity and replaces it with divine plenitude. Through a distillation to stillness and the absolute nihil, the process of recreation begins within a proliferant void that Eliot constructs out of nothingness.

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