The Journal of the T. S. Eliot Society (UK)

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The T.S. Eliot Society (UK)

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• Promote events celebrating Eliot's work

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

1925 sees the centenary of 'The Hollow Men', of the first dated collection of Eliot's poems, and of his entering publishing with Faber and Gwyer. Eliot is deep in the travails of his first marriage, and in the journey that would lead him, two years later, to his taking British nationality and being baptized and confirmed into the Church of England. A rich vein of centenaries lies ahead for the Eliot enthusiast, who is now strengthened in her explorations by the availability of ten volumes of letters, going up to 1944, the on-line *Complete Prose*, and an impressive array of resources at tseliot.com, including the letters to Emily Hale, masterfully edited by John Haffenden.

In this issue, Wei Zhou examines Vivienne Eliot, urging us to take seriously her own writing and contributions (in various guises) to the early *Criterion*. Liam Cooper takes issue with Eliot's important essay 'Hamlet and His Problems', published in 1919. Our next two contributions consider Eliot's profile beyond words on a page. Paul Keers looks at ways in which the poetry has come to be performed, and given rise to performances in other genres. Jaron Murphy considers two very different painters in their controversial engagement with Eliot – the poet's friend Wyndham Lewis, and R.B. Kitaj, whose work arraigns Eliot powerfully for his anti-Semitism. Moving back to Eliot's texts, David Ashton explores the ontology of *Four Quartets* through a comparison with the thought of Eric Voegelin. Richard Harries offers a short note on that beautiful phrase in the coda of 'Little Gidding': 'A condition of complete simplicity'.

The collection *Eliot Now*, edited by Megan Quigley and David Chinitz, the subject of my extended review, will come over as challenging to some. It certainly breaks some fresh ground in Eliot criticism. As I remark in my review, the Eliot of *Eliot Now* seems a figure from distant history, one, like Shakespeare, to be reimagined in a range of ways. With such figures – as with recent work on Homer – we unashamedly introduce our contemporary prescriptions and look for resonances with canonical texts of long ago.

The other review, of Vincent Strudwick's little book on Eliot at Kelham, I include precisely for the converse reason. Strudwick, now in his nineties, was a friend of George Every, who worked with Eliot on dramas in the 1930s, and who with others at Kelham was an influence on the poet's evolving spirituality. So there is a direct line of relationship with the historical Eliot there, of the sort that is necessarily becoming all too rare.

I end with a personal note, on the privilege of spending a few long-anticipated days in the archive at Princeton's Firestone Library, reading Eliot's letters to Emily Hale. First I want to pay tribute to the diligence and helpfulness of the library staff. Next I want to remark on something I had not heard anything about, in all the fanfare that surrounded the letters' release in 2020. Eliot used to send Hale letters he had himself received, to show her something of his professional life. So in the famous disembargoed boxes can be found, uncatalogued, letters from such figures as Joyce, Spender, and Auden, sundry church dignitaries, and very charmingly letters and drawings from the young Faber children, for whom Eliot was composing his 'Practical Cats'.

But one more thing struck me very powerfully. Almost all Eliot's letters, after the momentous handwritten one of Oct 3 1930 ('if this is a love-letter, it is the last I shall ever write'), are typed, even though his handwriting is much more legible than Hale's. Where he cannot find a typewriter he laments this absence. The machine was clearly integral to his process, even in the most intimate of the letters. More than that, the typing is very clean, with few errors. This suggests to me that the phrasing was already there in Eliot's head, in every detail, as he set to write. I could not help being reminded of those lines of e.e. cummings:

since feeling is first
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you;[1]

[1] E.E. Cummings, *Selected Poems 1923-1958* (London: Faber and Faber, [1958], 1969), 23.

As ever I very much welcome feedback on the issue, and also correspondence exploring possible future contributions. I am delighted to say that the Journal has followed the example of many important periodicals in becoming open-access; anyone now may read this and future issues on-line through our website tseliotsociety.uk, without fee (though only members of the Society can receive a free print copy).

Vivien Eliot, *The Criterion,* Autobiografiction

Wei Zhou

T.S. Eliot wrote to Harold Monro on 2 May 1924:

> The *Criterion* is run without any office, without any staff or business manager, by a sickly bank clerk and his wife: the latter has had to be on her back half the time and the former has conducted all this work in the evenings in his own sitting room, after a busy and tiring day, and subject to a thousand interruptions: without even a desk until he bought a second hand one at Christmas![1]

The early *Criterion* thus may be best positioned as an independent, family-run literary review. The 'family' actively involved in the enterprise were only Eliot and his first wife, Vivienne ('Vivien') Eliot.

Vivien's involvement in and frequent contributions to *The Criterion* from its creation in 1922 to its merging with Faber & Gwyer (now Faber & Faber) in 1925 were critical yet often overlooked. Critical reappraisal of Vivien has been limited: John Haffenden regards Vivien as 'a shrewd and satirical stylist',[2] but his commentary on her writings is confined to materials related to *The Waste Land*. Jason Harding acknowledges Vivien's efforts in passing comments when discussing *The Criterion*.[3] Ann Pasternak Slater collates Vivien's published writings and archived

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[1] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, *1923–1925*, ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, rev. ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 393. Hereafter referred to as *Letters* 2. This multi-volume edition of *Letters* includes some letters from other correspondents, such as Vivien Eliot. I will not name the author in the subsequent references to these *Letters* unless clarification is required.

[2] John Haffenden, 'Vivien Eliot and *The Waste Land*: The Forgotten Fragments', *PN Review* 33, no. 5 (May 2007): 18-23, ProQuest. The online edition of the article has no page numbers.

[3] Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11-12.

materials for the first time. However, Slater's biography accompanying the collated writings is mainly concerned with Vivien's medical conditions and unstable moments inferred from extant letters.[4] This essay will address the lacuna by focusing on the fascinating double act of the proliferation of Vivien's fictional selves as both imaginary authorial identities and literary characters as well as the concealment of her authorship. By examining self-invention and self-effacement in and about Vivien's writings, I will also shed light on the literary form of autobiografiction and the platform of Vivien's publications, *The Criterion*, and how the latter's early trajectory is inseparable from Vivien's contributions.

Double Lives, Multiple Names

Vivien's earliest contribution to *The Criterion* resides in the title itself,[5] which turned out to be irreplaceable when Eliot relaunched the journal with Geoffrey Faber and decided to restyle it as *The New Criterion*. In January 1923, Vivien commented '*Criterion not bad*' from Eastbourne.[6] Following the resignation of the assistant editor, Richard Aldington, and the then secretory in November 1923, Eliot and Vivien were the only *Criterion* staff to put together the first issue of 1924.[7] Vivien had to gain editorial experience rapidly, as she said to her confidant Sydney Schiff in February 1924: 'I am by now so accustomed to reading typed MS and to having to form my opinions on it before I see it in print'.[8] Whilst undertaking editorial work, she also started writing over the Christmas of 1923, and her writings soon appeared in *The Criterion*.

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[4] Ann Pasternak Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*: *Vivien Eliot's Life and Writings* (London: Faber & Faber, 2020). All citations from Vivien's writings are taken from 'Part II: Writings' of this edition unless otherwise stated.

[5] Vivien Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 1, *1898–1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, rev. ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 701. Hereafter referred to as *Letters* 1.

[6] *Letters* 2, 9. Emphasis original.

[7] *Letters* 2, 318-19.

[8] *Letters* 2, 310. Sydney Schiff was a close friend of the Eliots and a generous patron to many modernist writers. He made literary contributions under the pseudonym 'Stephen Hudson'.

Between February 1924 and July 1925, Vivien published twelve pieces in *The Criterion*, using a range of aliases such as F.M., Feiron Morris, Fanny Marlow, and even her husband's name, T. S. Eliot. Though scholars have previously listed Vivien's *Criterion* contributions,[9] it is still necessary to create a list grouped by her aliases here for my discussion below:

- Publications under the initials 'F.M.':
  1. 'Letters of the Moment—I' (February 1924)
  2. 'Letters of the Moment—II' (April 1924)
  3. 'Necesse est Perstare?' (April 1925)
  4. 'Review of David Garnett, *A Man in the Zoo* and J. Middleton Murry, *The Voyage*' (July 1924)
  5. 'Review of Stephen Hudson, *Myrtle*' (April 1925)
- Publications under the name of 'Feiron Morris':
  1. 'Thé Dansant' (October 1924)
  2. 'Night Club' (April 1925)
  3. 'Review of Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*' (January 1925)
- Publications under the name of 'Fanny Marlow':
  1. 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I] (January 1925)
  2. 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II] (April 1925)
  3. 'Fête Galante' (July 1925)
- Publication under 'T. S. Eliot':
  1. 'On the Eve' (January 1925)

As to why Vivien wrote anonymously, her lack of confidence seemed to be the main reason.[10] The financial incentive also played a part, as she wrote to Ezra Pound in June 1925: 'I thought out this skeme [*sic*] of getting money out of the *Criterion* a year ago. Because was always annoyed by spouse getting no salary'.[11] A cheque of £1.10 for F.M.'s book review in

[9] Jim McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE'. *The Review of English Studies* 68, no. 283 (2017): 123–24. doi:10.1093/res/hgw073. McCue did not include 'On the Eve' in the list of Vivien's publications.
[10] *Letters* 2, 350-51; 626.
[11] *Letters* 2, 684-85.

the July issue may be modest in 1924,[12] but, as Harding reminds us, Vivien got paid for all her anonymous contributions to the *Criterion* without Lady Rothermere's knowledge.[13] Choosing anonymity does not mean that Vivien was entirely on the defensive. The ways she deployed various aliases demonstrates her creativity in inventing alternative selves in and beyond texts.

Vivien's use of aliases creates a theatrical space for role-playing, adding fictionality and dimensions to her authorial identity. In a note addressed to Schiff, Vivien wrote: 'Fanny is the money maker – she spins on for ever like a spider. There is no *end* to Fanny! But Feiron will never make money. And he does not spin. He is a nasty fellow'.[14] Using Fanny Marlow as the corresponding author's name, Vivien creates a fictional profile of a bluestocking spinster as an imaginary author. In September 1924, the publisher of *The Criterion*, Richard Cobden-Sanderson, sent proofs of the story 'Thé Dansant' to 'Miss Fanny Marlow', which would be published under the name of Feiron Morris.[15] The publisher must have recognised that Fanny Marlow and Feiron Morris were the same contributor, but he seemed unaware that the author of authors was the editor's wife.

As well as using a fictitious name for correspondence, Vivien provided the publisher with an alternative address. Cobden-Sanderson sent cheques and proofs to Fanny Marlow at 38 Burleigh Mansions, St Martin's Lane, London. 38 Burleigh Mansions is a small flat which Eliot initially rented as an office.[16] It was never made an official address for *The Criterion* but used alternatively for writing retreats by Eliot and Vivien. Writing from 38 Burleigh Mansions, Vivien first confided in Schiff when discussing his manuscript. In order to make progress, she said, 'I have removed myself, sore throat and all, to this address. I cannot work, or find the atmosphere *I need*, at Clarence Gate. All the same, I shall be backwards and forwards

[12] Hugh Haughton, 'Biographical Commentary:1923-1925', in *Letters* 2, xxi. See also McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE', 131.
[13] Harding, *The Criterion*, 12, note 15.
[14] Quoted in *Letters* 2, 517, note 3. Emphasis original.
[15] McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE', 131.
[16] *Letters* 2, 6, note 2.

and in and out, so it wd. [*sic*] be *safer* to send the MS. to *Clarence Gate*.'[17] At that time, the Eliots lived at 9 Clarence Gate, where the editorial work of *The Criterion* took place in their sitting room as mentioned earlier. Going between two addresses, Vivien lived a double life as a *Criterion* contributor and as the *Criterion* editor's unsuspected wife. At home, she had been assisting with the journal's editorial work. By asking Schiff to send his manuscript to her home address, Vivien was able to put on her editorial hat to give feedback and compartmentalise her writing and editing for the same journal.

Vivien's use of aliases and different addresses may create the necessary distance between her roles as a writer and an assistant editor. Eliot, too, separates the real author Vivien from the imaginary one in his letter to Schiff on 21 October 1924: 'Vivienne has been belittling the contribution of Feiron Morris and saying that it is trifling and insignificant… This is quite the contrary of my own judgement'.[18] Here Eliot comments on Vivien's self-doubt over her story 'Thé Dansant'. Feiron Morris proved to be a useful alibi later when Eliot expanded Vivien's draft of a review of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Brown and Mr Bennett* (1924). As Slater comments, assuming the alias of 'Feiron Morris', whom Vivien casts as 'a nasty fellow', Eliot liberally gave backhanded compliments without worrying about offending his friend.[19] The review of Woolf, perhaps more in Eliot's hands than Vivien's,[20] is the only book review that Vivien published under the name of Feiron Morris.

Vivien's aliases exhibit the traits of what the Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa calls 'heteronym', which refers to a fully-fledged fictional authorial identity in contrast to a pseudonym, which is no more than a fictitious name. Whereas 'heteronym', in its broad sense, refers to his 72 aliases, Pessoa specifically used the term for his fictitious identities that are different from his sense of self. Meanwhile, he states that 'Bernardo Soares is a semiheteronym because his personality, although not my own, doesn't

[17] *Letters* 2, 311. Emphasis original.
[18] *Letters* 2, 517.
[19] Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 540.
[20] Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 695.

differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it'.[21] It seems thus fitting that Pessoa used 'Bernardo Soares', a slice of himself, to write part of his lifelong project *The Book of Disquiet* (1982). Published posthumously, *The Book of Disquiet* is what Pessoa calls a 'factless autobiography' consisting of a collection of fragments.[22] Whilst the narrow definition of heteronym entails a fictional personality that supposedly differs from the author's own, such heteronyms of Pessoa's are configurations of his past, potential, desired, or imagined beings and becoming. As Richard Zenith comments,

> all of Pessoa's characters were carved out of his own soul – of what he really was (in the case of Soares) or of what he wanted to be (in the case of the early, adventurous Campos) – and they each received only a piece of him … [T]hey are Pessoa, or parts of Pessoa, who made himself into nothing so that he could become everything, and everyone'.[23]

Here Zenith uses 'characters' to refer to Pessoa's heteronyms because these imaginary authorial identities are akin to dramatis personae, and heteronymous writing is compared to a dramatic utterance. The theatricality of heteronyms blurs the boundaries between the creating and the created, the real and the fiction, and the self and the other.

The concept of Pessoa's heteronym in its broad and narrow definitions can inform our understanding of Vivien's aliases in relation to her sense of self. The prolific and profitable writer, Fanny Marlow, was almost Vivien's self-image in and around 1924 and 1925, with the only difference being their marital statuses. Fanny Marlow can be said to be Vivien's semiheteronym. In contrast, Feiron Morris, which Vivien depicted as an unpleasant and unearning man, is Vivien's heteronym by Pessoa's narrow definition of the term. However, the shared initials, F. M., cannot fall into either of these sub-categories of heteronym or semiheteornym. F. M. should be seen as a stand-alone heteronym in its broad sense because the fictional identity of

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[21] Fernando Pessoa, *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*, ed. and trans. Richard Zenith (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 258-59.
[22] Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, ed. and trans. Richard Zenith (London: Penguin, 2002), 21.
[23] Richard Zenith, 'Introduction', in *The Book of Disquiet*, xii-xiii.

the initials projected in the corresponding contributions is a poet, reviewer, and literary journalist. Furthermore, the initials encompass both aliases of different genders and accommodate the Eliots' collaboration in 'Letters of the Moment'. The heteronymous initials are deliberately fluid yet distinctively approximate to Vivien's role in producing *The Criterion*.

Exterior Personalities

As Vivien's relationship with Eliot contributed to the rediscovery of her writings, scholarly attention is often laid on the famous poet in and through her creative output.[24] One main area of such research interest lies in the literary collaboration between the Eliots, especially in terms of her feedback on *The Waste Land* and her reuse of some draft materials in 'Letters of the Moment– II'.[25] Another critical trend is to draw upon the strong autobiographical element in Vivien's work to shed light on Eliot's own. Downplaying Vivien's literary contributions, Jim McCue writes: 'Unable to transcend the autobiographical, she gives us a glimpse of the exigencies of TSE's writing life'.[26] Defending Vivien as a modernist writer, Melissa Johnson critiques the autobiographical 'phallacy' which male critics often hold when approaching female writers.[27] Either way, autobiographical writings appear to be considered of a lesser literary value.

Vivien's creative prose encompasses what may appear to be life writing such as 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' as well as short stories including 'Thé Dansant', 'Night Club', and 'Fête Galante'. These sketches transgress literary genres, as her life writing is fictional and her fiction autobiographical. The main characters in Vivien's short fiction are all

[24] McCue finds a brief mention of Vivien's writing in *Contemporary British Literature: A Critical Survey* (1935), edited by Fred Benjamin Millett, John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert. McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE', 133.

[25] Haffenden, 'Vivien Eliot and the *Waste Land*'.

[26] McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE', 147.

[27] Melissa C. Johnson, 'The Muse Writes Back: Vivien Eliot's Response to High Modernism'. *Philological Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2005): 452. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A178219390/LitRC?u=leedsuni&sid=summon&xid=e0c373b1.

modelled after herself, her family, her friends and the Bloomsbury group. Her draft materials included keys to fictional characters based on real-life models.[28] Some main characters recur across her work with different names. For example, Eliot appears as Alexander in 'On the Eve' but shows up as André in the unpublished story 'The Paralysed Woman'. Though 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche', as the title suggests, appears to be Vivien's autobiographical account, the first-person narrator is a fictionalised version of Vivien's heteronym, Fanny Marlow. 'Fanny Marlow' printed at the end of each instalment of 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' rather than under the title suggests that the epistolary fiction may also be a form of journalism, despite its fictional elements, in contrast to typical literary correspondence reporting the latest trends in European capitals.

The critical element is more pronounced in 'Letters of the Moment', with Vivien's heteronym 'F.M.' printed at the end as with other editorials and literary correspondence. 'Letters of the Moment' constitutes a form of literary journalism incorporating personal experience and cultural commentary but adopts the style of epistolary fiction. The recipient of these letters is Volumnia, a name imported from Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*, but an early draft revealed that Vivien originally addressed the fictional letters to Irene Pearl Fassett. Fassett had been Vivien's friend before working as the secretary for *The Criterion*; she is also incarnated as Felice, a recurring character in some of Vivien's stories. Vivien refers to people and events by their real and fictional names: George Bernard Shaw is mentioned by his real name whilst the Phoenix Society, a theatre group engaged in reviving Restoration Drama, is referred to as the Mermaid Society.[29]

Vivien's heteronymous and genre-defying writings thus broaden our understanding of 'autobiografiction', which Max Saunders defines as 'autobiographical experiences strung on a fictionalized narrative'.[30] In establishing autobiografiction as a major genre spanning the long

[28] Quoted in Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 649-50. See also ibid., 590.
[29] Quoted in Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 650.
[30] Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26, note 16.

twentieth-century literature,[31] Saunders conceptualises a modernist mode by drawing upon Pessoa's notion of heteronymous writing:

> Pseudonymous works are by the author in his own person, except in the name he signs; heteronymous works are by the author outside his own person. They proceed from a full-fledged individual created by him, like the lines spoken by a character in a drama he might write.[32]

Saunders contrasts Pessoa's practice of writing outside personality with Eliot's principle of impersonality, emphasising that for the former, personality 'is not abandoned or escaped, but fictionalised; made imaginary'.[33] However, Pessoa's 'heteronymity' may be more approximate to Eliot's 'impersonality' than Saunders attests. In *The Book of Disquiet*, Pessoa writes: 'To create, I've destroyed myself. I've so externalized myself on the inside that I don't exist there except externally. I'm the empty stage where various actors act out various plays'.[34] The annihilation of one's self in tandem with the creation of alter egos corresponds to, not contradicts, Eliot's symbolist self-annihilation and polyphonic voices.

As Jean-Michel Rabaté points out, Eliot (nicknamed possum) relinquishes his authorial self and subjectivity to a literary tradition through a necromantic communion with dead authors, which anticipates Roland Barthes' theory of the death of the author.[35] Eliot's authorial 'death' is symbolist: abandoning a personal style shaped by his American upbringing to merge with a French (as well as European) tradition serves as a prerequisite of self-reinvention. Aided by the learnings of both living and dead writers, Eliot creates a style which is capable of expressing modernity

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[31] The Edwardian writer Stephen Reynold first coined the term in 1906. Stephen Reynolds, 'Autobiografiction', *The Speaker: The Liberal Review*, 15, no. 366 (6 October 1906): 28. See also Saunders, *Self Impression*, 167.
[32] Quoted in Richard Zenith, *Pessoa: An Experimental Life* (London: Penguin, 2021), xviii.
[33] Saunders, *Self Impression*, 307.
[34] Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, 254.
[35] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Pathos of Distance: Affects of the Moderns* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 108.

in parallel with antiquity.[36] Eliot deployed such a style to write about his life throughout his writing career,[37] though his principle of impersonality had taken on such a status of literary doctrine that Saunders takes pains to justify a modernist model of autobiografiction.[38] In contrast to Eliot, Vivien plays possum by relinquishing her real authorial identity whilst inventing alternative selves to fictionalise her experiences and observations. The ways in which Vivien uses female, male, and genderless heteronyms liberate her to explore a range of personalities and shift the boundaries of the self.

The heteronymous identity of 'F.M.' is most approximate to Vivien's involvement in editing *The Criterion* and mirrors Eliot's role as a poet/editor. Vivien's first publication, 'Letters of the Moment' bearing the name of 'F.M'., was written under the auspices of Eliot, so the very early use of the heteronymous initials represents two selves in an intersubjective and collaborative relation. Finding echoes between Vivien's 'F.M.' and William Sharp's Fiona Macleod,[39] Grover Smith comments on the double literary identity that troubles genders in *The Waste Land*: 'To a very small extent *The Waste Land* itself was a collaboration with Vivien; one may wonder what implications Tiresias might have carried had the poem, too, been signed "F.M.".'[40] Before Eliot helped with Vivien's writings, Vivien had supported Eliot with *The Waste Land*, which was first published in the inaugural issue of *The Criterion* in October 1922. Vivien's intervention is

[36] Rabaté, *The Pathos of Distance*, 109, 115.
[37] For example, Eliot's final poetic masterpiece *Four Quartets* traces his holidays in Cotswolds with Emily Hale in 'Burnt Norton', journeys to his ancestral village in 'East Coker', childhood in Gloucester (Massachusetts) and St Louis in 'The Dry Salvages' and pilgrimage to the historical site of Nicholas Ferrar's commune in 'Little Gidding'. His comparatively lesser-known poem, 'Mélange Adultère de Tout' (1917), is mostly a poetic CV, tracking his academic and professional experiences as a literary journalist, lecturer and banker before his imagination takes him to Mozambique at the end. See Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, eds., *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*. Vol 1. (London: Faber & Faber, 2015). Hereafter referred to as *Poems* 1.
[38] Saunders, *Self Impression*, 292, 306.
[39] Grover Smith, *The Waste Land* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 102.
[40] Grover Smith, *The Waste Land*, 102.

beyond the written suggestions mostly found in Part II of the poem in its original form. In November 1921, Eliot wrote to Schiff from Margate that 'I have done a rough draft of part of Part III [of *The Waste Land*], but do not know whether it will do, and must wait for Vivien's opinion as to whether it is printable'.[41] Some leaves not collected in Valerie Eliot's edition of *The Waste Land Facsimile* have been discovered in Vivien's archive at the Bodleian.[42] The passage about the socialite Fresca that originally opened *The Waste Land* [III] was deleted from the final text of the poem but reappears in F.M.'s 'Letters of the Moment – II' in the April 1924 issue of *The Criterion*.

In 'Letters of the Moment– II', some of the Fresca couplets, restored and revised, are inserted in a self-deprecating manner. The first-person narrator muses upon a 'few poor verses' on the way home:[43]

When sniffing Chloe, with the toast and tea,
Drags back the curtains to disclose the day,
The amorous Fresca stretches, yawns, and gapes,
Aroused from the dreams of love in curious shapes.[44]

As John Haffenden points out, Vivien's handling of the resuscitated depiction of Fresca corrects her husband's misogynistic and demeaning treatment of the character,[45] particularly the problematic line 'Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes'.[46] Vivien's reinvention, such as sniffing Chloe, also enhanced the satirical verse in the appropriation of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Jonathan Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room'. The Fresca verse fits in the narrator's ironic comments on the resurgent interest in Restoration literature and theatre in London in the 1920s.

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[41] *Letters* 1, 601.
[42] Haffenden, 'Vivien Eliot and *The Waste Land*'.
[43] Vivien Eliot, 'Letters of the Moment– II', 522.
[44] Vivien Eliot, 'Letters of the Moment– II', 522.
[45] Haffenden, 'Vivien Eliot and *The Waste Land*'.
[46] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), III, 4.

The resuscitated materials from the drafts of *The Waste Land* have been much commented upon especially in relation to the couple's partnership on Eliot's landmark poem,[47] but not so much has been said about how Vivien repurposes the materials in 'Letters of Moment – II' to report the literary scene and partake in the journalistic debate between Eliot and John Middleton Murry. The debate between Eliot and Murry is primarily on the direction of literary criticism, with the former championing classicism and the latter romanticism. As Harding remarks, the debate between Eliot and Murry, which had started from an intellectual place, extended to competition in literary publishing and marketing. Eliot's *Criterion* and Murry's *Adelphi* (founded in 1923) were rival journals in the interwar period. *The Criterion* and *The Adelphi* were positioned differently, with the former targeting a niche and elite audience and the latter general readers.[48] Whilst *The Criterion* was not a profitable journal, Eliot aimed to make it literarily outstanding and financially self-sufficient.

In 'Letters of the Moment–II', the revised Fresca verses which the narrator is thinking when running home is juxtaposed with a comment on *The Criterion*'s contemporaneous literary reviews on the table. Whilst this hybrid text assuming a style of epistolary fiction rejects a coherent, linear narrative, some paratextual materials suggest that the Eliots reworked the Fresca verse into a trope to respond to the periodical culture and the literary scene in which they inhabited. On a bakery bill dated 12 April 1924, both Eliots jotted down and built up a sequence of satirical verses entitled 'A Commentary (would be smart!)' in the Fresca model. Eliot published excerpts from Wyndham Lewis's work in progress, *The Apes of God*

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[47] For example, Richard Badenhausen, *T. S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87-97.

[48] According to Michael Whitworth, the first issue of *The Adelphi* 'sold at least 18,000 copies … By contrast, the first issue of *The Criterion* had sold 600 in October 1922'. Michael H. Whitworth, 'Enemies of Cant: *The Athenaeum* (1919–21) and *The Adelphi* (1923–48)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. Peter Brooker, and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 379. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199654291.003.0022.The sales of *The Adelphi* saw a sharp drop in 1925 to 4,000 copies but still much more than the sales of *The Criterion* which was never above 1,000 copies per issue.

(1930), in the first two issues of *The Criterion* in 1924 and received rebuttals for printing Lewis's sharp satire of literary London.[49] In response to the controversies *The Criterion* caused, the lines 'Write nasty articles on apes/Or speak of love in curious shapes' were written in both Eliots' hands.[50]

These paratextual verses with a particular focus on Murry's editorial ethos correspond with the comment in 'Letters of the Moment-II'. After the self-mockery of the verses about Fresca, the narrator turns to comment on Murry's editorial principle as if it were a stream of consciousness: '"Golly!" as Mr J. Middleton Murry says in his last outcry but one, revealing his "sensitiveness to the living soul of the language"'.[51] Here Vivien satirises Murry's editorial aim that *The Adelphi* be primarily concerned with literature in relation to life and conduct heart-to-heart communication with the reader. In the paratextual verse, Vivien writes that Murry 'imitates – [']mong other tricks/The *Daily Mirrors* politics'.[52] She perhaps compares Murry's *Adelphi*, a literary review displaying adverts of products - ranging from typewriters to knickers - and appealing to a wide public, with the *Daily Mirror*'s populistic approach. It should be noted that 'the Daily Mirror' was written in the margin of the Fresca verse as an alternative to 'a page of Gibbon' in one of the drafts of *The Waste Land*.[53] In these 'spin-off' verses, Fresca seems to be the personification of a fashionable and pretentious artist getting busy with the mass market and art critics: 'But Fresca looking rather sly/ Says Do appeal to Roger Fry'.[54]

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[49] *Letters* 2, 356-57, 412.

[50] Vivien and T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary (would be smart!)', 634. Slater reprints the set of verses in italics for editorial reasons. In this essay I reformat quotations from the verses in Roman. See also the lines, with slight alternations, in Vivien's hands: 'Write nasty articles on Apes/Or speak of Love in Curious Shapes'. *Poems* 1, 645.

[51] Vivien Eliot, 'Letters of the Moment-II', 524.

[52] Vivien and T. S .Eliot, 'A Commentary (would be smart!)', 634.

[53] Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, 22-23. Lady Rothermere's husband, Harold Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Rothermere, owned *The Daily Mirror* between 1913 and 1935.

[54] Vivien and T. S .Eliot, 'A Commentary (would be smart!)', 635.

Murry is unfortunately a target.[55] The paratext thus provides a formal structure, albeit informally put, for the inner logic of 'Letters of the Moment – II'. In contrast to the satiric (anti-)heroic couplets used as a critical apparatus on the bakery bill, 'Letters of the Moment' published in *The Criterion* is written in a conversational style appropriate to epistolary prose.

The next sketch Vivien published is 'Thé Dansant' under the heteronym of Feiron Morris. Eliot specifically praised the story as being modern perhaps because it reflects the flapper culture in the 1920s by depicting the short-haired, hedonistic and gender-defying Sibylla. [56] The flapper had a much-celebrated cultural image of being young, rich, idle, hedonistic and rebellious. The flapper rebelled against traditional femininity by bobbing their hair, wearing makeup and short skirts, smoking cigarettes, and having a casual attitude towards sex.[57] Sibylla's defiance of social constraints is most effectively portrayed when she twists her neck: 'She rubbed the back of her neck and head violently, rumpling up her short hair, was in too much pain for some seconds to observe her admirer, who apologised adequately, but was alarmed and embarrassed at her outcry'.[58] The genuine yet unrestrained physical reaction and unfeminine appearance (as in women in short hair in the mid-1920s) seem to be excessive even to a man attracted by her flapper appeal, but Sibylla 'gathered her wits sufficiently to walk towards the dancing-floor'.[59] Audacious, self-assured, and worldly, Sibylla enjoys flirtation whilst maintaining a sense of detachment and vigilance: 'I don't mind a pick up in the right place, but not marching home with you and finding out where you live and so on'.[60]

The story 'Night Club' opens with Sibylla's rejection of the traditional ideal of romantic love. '"Love", she said, "… You're out of date. Nobody wants

[55] Murry previously edited *The Athenaeum* and published Roger Fry, Eliot and other modernists in the journal.
[56] For Eliot's praise, see *Letters* 2, 517.
[57] See Linda Simon, *Lost Girls: The Invention of the Flapper* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017).
[58] Vivien Eliot, 'Thé Dansant', 534.
[59] Vivien Eliot, 'Thé Dansant', 534.
[60] Vivien Eliot, 'Thé Dansant', 537.

love" – she flicked a crumb off the table'.[61] Calling her admirer Mike 'love', Sibylla doubles the rejection of his affection through an ironic pun on the term of endearment and address. Meanwhile, Sibylla does not always exhibit superficial traits usually associated with flappers. Instead of showing the flapper's iconic straight waistline, Sibylla refuses to dance further until she puts on a belt in 'Thé Dansant'. In 'Night Club', when Mike asks her to have a drink, she declines, 'I can't drink … I can't even smoke. What a horrible woman.'[62] Sibylla's reply knowingly implies that she is not keen to fit in an updated gender role for new women when drinking and smoking were in vogue. The negative modal verb 'can't' may suggest a sense of inability and restriction but also sets boundaries.

These 'Feiron Morris' stories about Sibylla reflect the flapper culture in the British context in contrast to F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's branding of flappers. Whilst the Fitzgeralds write manifestos and popular fiction to celebrate the flapper,[63] Vivien showcases a flapper without labelling her.[64] Unlike the Fitzgeralds who are committed to reinforcing the image of the flapper, Vivien's character engages with the trend but at the same time maintains her individuality. Vivien herself may have been an early flapper in her youth at the onset of the Great War,[65] as her diary shows that her

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[61] Vivien Eliot, 'Night Club', 561. Emphasis original.
[62] Vivien Eliot, 'Night Club', 563.
[63] The most typical examples include F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920) and Zelda Fitzgerald's articles on flappers such as 'Eulogy on the Flapper' (1922) and 'What Became of the Flappers?' (1925).
[64] As David Fowler comments, the image of British flapper was much more low-key compared to the counterparts in America and France. David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920-c.1970: From Ivory Tower to Global Movement - a New History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 62.
[65] The flapper emerged in 1910s and became popular in 1920s. In the article 'Eulogy on the Flapper' (1922), Zelda Fitzgerald (only two years younger than Vivien) mourns the 'death' of the flapper in the sense that by early 1920s, 'the founders of the Honorable Order of Flappers' lost their distinctive statuses because every young woman imitated their style: 'Flapperdom has become a game; it is no longer a philosophy'. Zelda Fitzgerald, 'Eulogy on the Flapper', in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 392.

routine included dancing and shopping and that she had premarital sex (not with Eliot).[66] She was normally short-haired after childhood in the extant photos, some of which show her la garçonne style.[67] Her 'Feiron Morris' stories written in her mid 30s defined and simultaneously defied the youth cult of flappers by presenting Sibylla as cared for by elder friends (modelled on the Schiffs) in 'Night Club' but not confining the character to the age range. Bertrand Russell's comment that Vivien was 'vulgar' often leaves a tinted impression on the contemporary reader,[68] but the aristocrat apparently held a Victorian view on how women should behave. Virginia Woolf, six years older, repelled by Vivien being 'powdered',[69] was perhaps not enthusiastic about the idea that makeup which had only been worn by actresses and sex workers for decades suddenly became popular in the 1920s.

In 'On the Eve', published under Eliot's name, Vivien writes of her fictional self as Agatha from a third-person perspective. In contrast to Sibylla the flapper, Agatha is a level-headed middle-class wife discussing the latest politics with her family at the dinner table. Vivien provides a fictionalised account of her domestic life in the context of the 1924 General Election. The story, sharing the title with Turgenev's novel, concerns the first Labour Government's proposed policy of resuming economic relationships with Russia. The main characters are modelled on Vivien's family, including Eliot, her brother Maurice, and her housemaid, Ellen Kellond. Whilst spotlighting a middle-class household's reactions to the political event within the confines of their domestic space, the story also pays attention to the housemaid, Rose, who has a more immediate concern. Her employers are too absorbed in their conversation to realise that the housemaid has finished her shift and ought to be paid and let go.

Vivien signed off with Fanny Marlow for the first time when she published Part I of 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche'. Reclaiming female authorship, the

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[66] See Vivien Eliot, *1914 Vivien Eliot Diary*, ed. Ann Pasternak Slater, accessed 1 April 2025, https://tseliot.com/vivien/diaries/1914-diary.
[67] See the plate section in Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, page 1.
[68] Quoted in *Letters* 1, 124, note 3.
[69] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, vol. 2, *1920–1924* (London: Penguin, 1988), 304.

serialised yet unfinished fictional diary transgresses the boundaries between autobiographical and fictional accounts. With 'Paris on £5 a week' as a working title,[70] 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I] about a writer lodging on a budget on the Left Bank could potentially be placed alongside Jean Rhys's *The Left Bank and Other Stories* (1927), and George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1930).[71] McCue and Seymour-Jones suggest Vivien recounted her trip to Paris in December 1921, before Eliot joined her from Lausanne.[72] Vivien stayed at the Hôtel Pas-de-Calais at 59 rue des Saints Pères and wrote to Mary Hutchinson from there: 'What makes life difficult is the awful expense. I am paying for this myself. I live in a high up little room, and having meals *en pension* which I loathe, to save money'.[73] As Slater points out, £5 per week in 1924 was no cheap rate.[74] (The Hôtel Pas-de-Calais, a four-star hotel, is still operating, charging from £238 per night as of March 2025.)[75] As with her protagonist, Vivien was indeed lodging on budget because of the *awful expense* [emphasis my own] one would expect of a hotel in the 6th arrondissement, one of the most expensive areas in Paris. However, from a storytelling point of view, the trope of an impoverished writer struggling in the Left Bank matches the profile of the bluestocking Fanny Marlow and meets the reader's expectations.

However, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' is not based on a single visit. Its autobiographical elements fuse Vivien's experiences of staying in Paris at various points, mostly alone in an otherwise co-dependent relationship with Eliot. Vivien had stayed at the Hôtel Pas-de-Calais before December 1921. On 22 May 1921, Eliot exclaimed: 'So you are living at Vivien's old hotel!'

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[70] Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 548, note 74.
[71] Both Vivien and Jean Rhys started their literary career in 1924. Rhys published her first story 'Vienne' in *The Transatlantic Review* edited by her lover, Ford Madox Ford. The story was later included in *The Left Bank and Other Stories*.
[72] McCue, 'Vivien Eliot in the Words of TSE', 148. Carole Seymour-Jones, *Painted Shadow: A Life of Vivienne Eliot*, new ed. (London: Constable, 2002), 392.
[73] *Letters* 1, 618.
[74] Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 548, note 74.
[75] 'Hôtel Pas-de-Calais', accessed on 21 March 2025, https://www.hotelpasdecalais.com.

in response to Dorothy Pound's update about her and Ezra's recent relocation to Paris.[76] In November 1924, Vivien revisited Paris with Eliot when he visited Lady Rothermere at her flat at 33 Quai Voltaire to discuss *The Criterion*.[77] They stayed at Lady Rothermere's flat, but after Eliot returned to London on 16 November, Vivien seemed to move to the Hôtel Pas-de-Calais, which is only twelve minutes' walking distance from 33 Quai Voltaire. The street name, the Quai Voltaire, is mentioned near the end of Part I.[78]

Assuming the semiheteronym 'Fanny Marlow' to publish 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche', it appears that Vivien writes an autobiographical account with a fictional name. However, the narrator of 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I], an independent expatriate writer, is deliberately different from Vivien's real-life persona of a dependant and ill wife but shares the same traits such as detachment, wit and sarcasm. By staging an encounter with an American tourist, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I] satirises Henry James's trope of American innocence and European vice. In the text, an American tourist approaches the narrator under the impression that she is English, asking whether it is acceptable to take Miss Newton, who is aged about forty, without a chaperone to the Bal Bullier. Irritated by the tourist's assumption 'that all European women are *au courant* with every form of vice… whereas… the female of their own species is supremely innocent and unsullied',[79] the narrator is provoked to respond that she 'has never been to a ball in Paris'.[80] The use of the absolute indicates the narrator's denial as a defence against the assumption and a way to exit the encounter. The denial also draws a sharp contrast with the real author Vivien's passion for dance and the recurring theme of dancing in her pieces under the alias of Feiron Morris. The narrator/protagonist may be a case of her as what Peter Boxall calls 'counter-self', which is, in simple terms, the opposite of

[76] *Letters* 1, 564.
[77] *Letters* 2, 521, 545. Eliot told his brother Henry that he had been wanting to discuss the plan of increasing *The Criterion*'s circulation (so that he could pay for his editorial work and leave the bank) but had struggled to schedule a meeting with the globetrotting Lady Rothermere. See *Letters* 2, 389-92.
[78] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I], 554.
[79] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I], 550.
[80] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [I], 550.

one's being.[81] Vivien's mockery of the Jamesian theme would strike back in 1936, a few years after Eliot formally separated from her. Still in denial of the separation, she signed off as 'Daisy Miller' in her letters as her incognito to lament her own lost innocence.[82] The identification with a type of her character she had mocked signalled a tragic turn in her life.

'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II] makes it clear that a fictionalised version of Fanny is the first-person narrator as well as the main character: '"*Promise* me you won't walk along the path, Fanny," Agatha said, and I had to'.[83] In this part, Fanny meets her friend Agatha in the Tuileries Garden on the Rive Droite. Unlike Fanny, Agatha's experience of Paris consists of endless games of bridge and comfortable lodging at the affluent Auteuil. Fanny and Agatha are both fictional avatars of Vivien. Agatha makes an appearance as a middle-class housewife in an earlier story 'On the Eve'. The card game of bridge the character plays in the fictional diary was popular amongst Vivien's family. In the draft of an unfinished story entitled 'Bridge', she captures a bridge game and names the main character based on herself as Sibylla.[84]

By casting her two fictional selves, a left-bank writer and a right-bank bridge player, as friends on parting, Vivien negotiates her different experiences and the split self. The name of the card game, bridge, puns on the path across the river. Fanny's and Agatha's gaze merges in the same direction bridging the two sides of the river Seine: 'We looked silently for a long, long time up the river and then, crossing the bridge'.[85] The two spheres that the two characters temporarily inhabit signify two different worlds: one entails writing in a salon and the other 'polite conversation at meal-times' and 'eternal evening bridge'.[86] Whilst such a division between the bohemian left bank and bourgeois right bank may be an easy stereotype, it is reinvented in the depiction of an attempt to rejoin a divided selfhood:

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[81] Peter Boxall, *The Prosthetic Imagination: A History of the Novel as Artificial Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 227.
[82] Quoted in Slater, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 466-7.
[83] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 566. Emphasis original.
[84] Vivien Eliot, 'Bridge', 603.
[85] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 566. Emphasis original.
[86] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 567.

> "We will come back in June", we both exclaimed at the same time, and as we spoke we looked at each other, and Agatha's eyes said so clearly and mournfully: "but we know we *shan't* come back in June". My eyes must have said it just as plainly, for Agatha said, 'But life owes it to us.'[87]

Fanny and Agatha are parting and know that they will never return to the same place. Correspondingly, the aspects of Vivien's identity as a poet's wife and a writer are closely related but not united. It seems that Vivien hopes her writerly and domestic selves can coexist, but she is not willing to relinquish the former to return to her old life. From Fanny's point of view, the bridge-playing leisure life is, by extension, a woman's domestic life populated by dressmakers, milliners, manicurists and chiropodists.[88] 'I *must* have my freedom',[89] she says. Fanny resists Agatha's lifestyle and maintains that her only way of staying in Paris is to be a writer sojourning on five pounds a week. Vivien's wish of living like a left bank writer voiced by Fanny is left unfulfilled in life and writing. Despite the notice of '(To be continued)' at the end of Part II of the fictional diary,[90] Vivien never finished it.

The Unnamable

As early as February 1924, Vivien told Schiff that she was writing 'a series of sketches which could appear separately, but which do, when all is finished ... make up a whole'.[91] Would the book include all the sketches she published in *The Criterion*? After assigning different heteronyms for different sketches, what name would she use for the book had it been completed? There are examples of including various heteronymous writings in one volume. In *The Book of Disquiet* mentioned earlier, Pessoa deploys his semiheteronym Bernardo Soares and a heteronym in the narrow sense, Vicente Guedes, as co-authors of the book. In *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (1843) alone, Søren Kierkegaard adopts several

[87] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 566.
[88] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 567.
[89] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 567. Emphasis original.
[90] Vivien Eliot, 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II], 568. Italics in original.
[91] *Letters* 2, 311.

heteronyms:[92] Victor Eremita as the fictional editor of the book, 'A' as the fictional author of Part I which expresses an aesthetic view of life, and the Judge as the author of Part II providing an ethical response to A. Within Part I, 'The Seducer's Diary' is presented under the name of Johannes.

Vivien's potential book would maintain the distinction between and crossover of her various heteronymous writings. Some of Vivien's published sketches suggest a pattern of the ways she categorises her fictional selves and characters under different heteronyms. 'Feiron Morris' is used for third-person narratives featuring Sibylla's flapper lifestyle at eponymous venues such as a tea dance and a night club, 'whilst 'Fanny Marlow' for first-person narratives, such as 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche', centres on a struggling writer in Paris. 'F.M.' is used to sign off poetry, reviews and literary correspondence and thus differs from Vivien's other story-telling heteronyms. 'T. S. Eliot' is borrowed to publish a third-person narrative featuring Agatha, a housewife, and her family talking about politics at home.

Vivien envisaged that the book consisting of her *Criterion* contributions would be 'from the point of view of a very interested, and a very intimate, outsider. (Or not necessarily even an *outsider*, but of someone who does not actually appear in the sketches)'.[93] With primary sources and scholarship available, the contemporary reader is able to see how Vivien's life informs her writings. However, her contemporaneous readers and friends were unaware of her authorship until her poem 'Necesse est Perstare?', which namechecks 'Aldous Huxley–/Elizabeth Bibesco – Clive Bell –' at a lunch party,[94] made the Bloomsbury circle suspicious.[95] Vivien was thus successful in simultaneous self-creation and self-concealment. As with Pessoa, she wrote outside her personality, making herself an empty stage for imaginary authors and fictional characters.

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[92] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/or: A Fragment of Life*, abr. and trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 2004).
[93] *Letters* 2, 311.
[94] Vivien Eliot, 'Necesse est Perstare?', lines 6–7.
[95] Eliot replied to Ottoline Morrell on 1 May 1925: 'Yes, it is true that V. wrote that poem'. *Letters* 2, 648.

Along with its heteronymous features, Vivien's potential book may also take an approach akin to Eliot's making of Tiresias, using the personage as a narrative apparatus to merge different voices of all genders. The distinctions between Vivien's heteronymous writings became blurred in April and July 1925. She assumed 'Fanny Marlow' to publish a story about Sibylla attending a literary party from a third-person perspective. In the story entitled 'Fête Galante' which satirises a Bloomsbury party, Sibylla is in an elite literary and artistic circle rather than her usual domains. Agatha, the housewife in 'On the Eve', appears in Fanny Marlow's 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II]. Ultimately, her heteronyms collectively epitomise the complexity and fluidity of the authorial and narrative identities in Vivien's individual and collaborative writings.

The overlapping between Vivien's heteronymous writings coincides with the period when Eliot frequently published her writings in 1925. The April 1925 issue alone features several of Vivien's original works under different names such as the poem 'Necesse est Perstare?' by F.M., the story 'Night Club' by Feiron Morris and the sketch 'A Diary of the Rive Gauche' [II] by Fanny Marlow, as well as a book review of Woolf also by Feiron Morris. At the same time, Eliot revealed Vivien's secret of writing for *The Criterion* to various friends and colleagues. On 8 April 1925, Eliot wrote to Aldington: 'You are the only person, except two of her friends, who now knows of her writing. But I see no reason now for concealment'.[96] These two friends were Vivien's confidants, Sydney and Violet Schiff. Four days later, Eliot told Ada Leverson: 'I believe you must have guessed that all the contributions signed by F – M – are by Vivienne and although the secret is *not out* yet, I have no objection to *your* knowing – in confidence'.[97] Eliot's apparent indiscretion was a step towards his attempt to launch Vivien's literary career. Vivien '*must* come out and be known',[98] said Eliot to Violet Schiff on 17 April 1925. His plan for Vivien's 'come out' was to introduce her work to an American audience.

It is possible that Eliot vigorously promoted Vivien in April 1925 to help her expand her portfolio so that she could showcase her most recent

[96] *Letters* 2, 627. Emphasis original.
[97] *Letters* 2, 629. Emphasis original.
[98] *Letters* 2, 633. Emphasis original.

publications to the potential journal, *The Dial*. Eliot made his own literary debut in *The Dial* in 1915 and exchanged copies of *The Criterion* with *The Dial*'s editors. When Eliot submitted Vivien's story 'The Paralysed Woman' to *The Dial* on 17 May 1925, he directed the editor, Ellen Thayer, to 'Night Club' and 'Necesse est Perstare?'.[99] In the letter, Eliot proposed to publish Vivien's 'The Paralysed Woman' concurrently in *The Dial* (under her real name) and *The Criterion* (under the alias of Feiron Morris) in parallel with D. H. Lawrence's story 'The Woman who Rode Away'.[100] Eliot perhaps intended to leverage Vivien's chance as a new writer by drawing a parallel between her and Lawrence, who had contributed to *The Dial* since 1920. Despite their varying experiences and career stages, both Vivien and Lawrence first published their stories in *The Criterion* in October 1924 and were considered of equal importance by Eliot.

The intended American debut of Vivien did not proceed as planned. Marianne Moore, the then newly appointed editor of *The Dial* rejected 'The Paralysed Woman'. A single rejection of 'The Paralysed Woman' from *The Dial* was unlikely to terminate Vivien's writing career. Moore's predecessor at *The Dial*, Harriet Monroe, rejected Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Had not Pound persistently pressed Monroe to publish the poem, Eliot's literary career would have been different. However, it seems that Vivien received more than one rejection, as Eliot told Vivien's father on 12 July 1925 that 'She was bitterly disappointed that some of her stories were rejected'.[101] From the same letter and other correspondence, the apparently abrupt end of her writing career was more likely due to her deteriorating health condition resulting from psychiatric mistreatment and starvation, which was partly prescribed by one of her doctors and partly voluntary when she was 'feverishly writing'.[102] Her subsequent admissions to a nursing home made writing and even reading

[99] *Letters* 2, 656.
[100] *Letters* 2, 655-6.
[101] *Letters* 2, 703.
[102] *Letters* 2, 703.

difficult.[103] Partly following doctors' recommendations,[104] Eliot did not encourage her to write any more because of the excessive mental excitement.[105]

From Eliot's point of view, Vivien's writings are apparently 'quite good enough for the *Criterion*' and in line with his ambition of making the best literary review in England.[106] *The Criterion* is remembered today largely because of its publication of canonical writers who shaped modernism but Eliot was never obsessed with literary luminaries, an opinion he publicly and privately expressed.[107] As a journal editor, he valued originality and modernity, which he found in Vivien's writings.[108] The originality he perceived in Vivien's writings is not only her style, which he considered 'exceptional and individual',[109] but also her perspective. As he wrote to Schiff:

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[103] Some of Vivien's books were confiscated at the nursing home in Elmsleigh near Southampton in November 1925. She asked Eliot to send some books to her on 5 November 1925, 'Synge and all of E.P. [Pound]'s poems. *Letters* 2, 781. Eliot wrote to Pound on 27 December: 'It appears that … they had to remove your works as she would read em [*sic*] the whole time'. *Letters* 2, 808.

[104] Dr Reginald Miller wrote to Eliot on 16 February 1926: 'I think that far greater happiness would be reached if the wo circles [of your lives] overlapped to a much less extent. That your sphere should include much of your work outside her sphere and that she should have many activities, chiefly physical rather than intellectual, outside your sphere.' *Letters* 3, 78.

[105] Eliot consulted Leonard Woolf earlier that year because the latter was experienced in caring and supporting Virginia Woolf, who also had health conditions. See *Letters* 2, 646-47.

[106] *Letters* 2, 626.

[107] Eliot, 'The Idea of a Literary Review', in *The Criterion*, vol. 4, *January 1926-October 1926*, ed. T.S. Eliot, collected ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1967). On 11 October 1923, Eliot wrote to Ford Madox Ford, who was about to launch *The Transatlantic Review*, that 'a review is not measured by the number of stars and scoops that it gets. Good literature is produced by a few queer people in odd corners'. *Letters* 2, 252.

[108] Eliot has praised Vivien's writings to various correspondents such as his mother, Sydney Schiff, Richard Aldington, Ottoline Morrell and Bertrand Russell. See *Letters* 2, 368, 517, 626-27, 648, 652.

[109] *Letters* 2, 368.

> You will observe in this and in subsequent numbers, that I want to give an important place to younger writers, to writers who can really speak for a generation which is maturing but as yet almost inarticulate, and who, however little their practise may be, will not merely ape the elder age...This thing of Vivienne's may appear very slight, but it is an integral part of the whole book, and just as important in its place. It does I am convinced express a point of view which is original - and which is more than original - which is typical: typical of a very modern mentality which has not yet been expressed in literature, and of which Vivienne is the most conscious representative.[110]

'This thing' Eliot refers to in this letter is Vivien's story 'Thé Dansant' published in the October 1924 issue of *The Criterion*. I think the long quotation is useful here to illustrate Eliot's high regard for Vivien's writings. Although Vivien planned to collect her sketches in a book form as discussed earlier, Eliot's comments here on the single story in a newly published issue aligned with his own editorial objectives so well that it seems by 'the whole book' he means the volume of *The Criterion*.

Vivien's contributions to *The Criterion* flourished and vanished over a period when Eliot was in conversation with Faber about *The Criterion*. In addition to introducing Vivien to a transatlantic audience, Eliot's other agenda of publishing several Vivien's stories in April 1925 was perhaps to boost Faber's confidence in acquiring *The Criterion*. Hovering between 800 and 1,000 subscriptions, *The Criterion* never made a profit. Fiction was potentially the strongest selling point of this eclectic and scholarly literary review, which at times seemed too technical and specialist to have a general appeal. Bruce Richmond, the then editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* (*TLS*) wrote on 20 February 1925 to endorse *The Criterion* to Faber:

> Mr Eliot has shown particularly in his choice of fiction that his sympathy is wide: he has published stories which would be read with pleasure by the general public and has insisted only on a high level of workmanship as the necessary qualification for admission to *The Criterion*.[111]

[110] *Letters* 2, 517.
[111] *Letters* 2, 590.

Richmond's letter was dated after the January 1925 issue. By then, Eliot had published short stories in *The Criterion* from both established and new writers such as May Sinclair, Luigi Pirandello, Virginia Woolf, D H. Lawrence, Stephen Hudson (Sydney Schiff), Owen Barfield, Mark Wardle,[112] A. E. Coppard, B. M. Goold-Adams,[113] Felix Morrison (Irene Pearl Fassett) and G. A. Porterfield. The quarterly also printed excerpts from novels, forthcoming or in progress, by Wyndham Lewis, Marcel Proust, Hugh Walpole and James Joyce. Vivien's stories made a strong addition to *The Criterion*'s fiction category and by February 1925 had published more stories than any single *Criterion* contributor. Despite Richmond's praise, Geoffrey Faber wrote on 9 March 1925: 'On the whole my readings of the *Criterion* have left me with a somewhat unsatisfied feeling. There has been a tendency to shortness in the items of the collection, and some of the long ones have been very obscure'.[114] Faber wanted to strike a balance between criticism and literature in a literary review: 'There is a limit to the amount of criticism which one can read… But of the art itself which is the food of criticism one can never have enough, so long it is genuine and fresh',[115] to which Eliot apparently agreed. The April issue featuring Vivien's stories reflected Eliot's timely response to Faber's concerns.

In the final issue of the early *Criterion* (July 1925), Eliot published Vivien's story 'Fête Galante' alongside Lawrence's 'The Woman Who Rode Away' [I] and James Joyce's 'Fragment of an Unfinished Work', an excerpt from *Finnegans Wake*. Eliot chose 'Fête Galante' partly because its relative brevity suited his plan to produce a slim volume to conclude the 'old'

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[111] *Letters* 2, 590.
[112] Translator of Paul Valéry for *The Criterion*.
[113] Ezra Pound's lover. At the beginning of 1923, Pound recommended Goold-Adams's story to Eliot, who did not know their relationship at that time: 'Will you give me the correct title and address of Mrs, Miss or Mr Goold Adams…?' *Letters* 2, 50. Goold-Adams published one story 'Obsequies' in *The Criterion* (April 1923).
[114] *Letters* 2, 599.
[115] *Letters* 2, 599.

Criterion on a three-year contract with the publisher Richard Cobden-Sanderson. Eliot had planned to publish 'The Paralysed Woman', Vivien's longest short story, in October,[116] but he eventually decided to skip the issue and re-launch *The New Criterion* in January 1926. Eliot picked up the backlog of submissions for *The New Criterion,* but he did not publish 'The Paralysed Woman' or any work from Vivien. After joining Faber, Eliot made the journal a more austere critical review, increasingly drifting away from radical modernism and steering towards political and religious conservatism. Earlier on 31 July 1925, Eliot said the practical difficulties of merging the journal with Faber 'mark the end of an epoch – a period of awful changes. A great deal of structure seems to have collapsed'.[117] Vivien's literary career, so closely entwined with the journal, also ended with the epoch of *The Criterion* as a start-up. She was consulted for a new title for the journal,[118] but her role in *The Criterion* belonged to her own sitting room where the journal was incepted, not the office at 24 Russell Square.

'You must go on. I can't go on. I'll go on'.[119] Samuel Beckett's much quoted line from *The Unnamable* (1953) would resonate with the Eliots when they worked together for *The Criterion*. Undertaking two jobs at once, Eliot was already burnt out in March 1923 and confided to John Quinn: 'I am worn out, I cannot go on'. [120] For Vivien, she had more confidence in Schiff keeping the secret of her authorship than in her writing: 'I am sure you will not give me away, you do not need to persuade me that anonymity is vital; the more so as I have a strong feeling that this

[116] *Letters* 2, 666.
[117] *Letters* 2, 711.
[118] *Letters* 2, 719. Eliot thought he would run two journals concomitantly: one was an updated version of *The Criterion* to be published with Faber & Gwyer and the other was a more literary and artistical journal sponsored by Lady Rothermere for a year. Because Lady Rothermere was attached to the name, so *The Criterion* was reserved for the projected journal. Vivien suggested the title *The Metropolitan* for the new version of *The Criterion* published by Faber, but Eliot eventually only carried on with *The New Criterion* in 1926.
[119] Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 134.
[120] *Letters 2*, 72.

is a sort of flash in the pan – that it won't *go on*'.[121] 1925 was a turning point for both albeit in very different directions.

Conclusion

Placing Vivien amongst other literary wives (and mistresses), Kate Zambreno, in her critical memoir *Heroines* (2012), sees them as her antecedents and reclaims women's authorial agency beyond their connections with their husbands who were great writers. However, not every wife reappraised in *Heroines* was eclipsed by her husband — Virginia Woolf, for example, outfamed her husband Leonard. Vivien is of course no Virginia, and it would be unfair to compare the former's eighteen-month creative outbursts with the latter's lifelong literary commitment and achievements. Though Eliot tried to learn from Leonard Woolf about how to support an ill wife in writing, he ultimately prioritised his own literary career.

Primarily focusing on Vivien's contributions to *The Criterion* and the heteronymous strategies she deployed, my research presented in this article has reappraised a critically neglected literary partner. Vivien's identity as Eliot's first wife launched her brief writing career but her writing evades such an identity by assuming various *noms de plume* beginning with F.M. By adopting a range of heteronyms, that is, fully-fledged imaginary authorial identities rather than plain pseudonyms, Vivien contributed to *The Criterion* by writing fiction, poetry, book reviews, and hybrid texts infusing fictional and critical elements. She often drew inspiration from life to create original works featuring different versions of her self. The plethora of alternative selves Vivien created as both imaginary authors and fictional characters expand our understanding of genres, especially autobiografiction.

Vivien's writings met and advanced *The Criterion*'s aim of publishing modern and original writings. By publishing Vivien, Eliot also strengthened the fiction section of *The Criterion* in accordance with Faber's recommendations at its critical stage of merging with the latter's publishing firm, which enabled Eliot to leave the bank and work as a full-time editor.

[121] *Letters* 2, 350-1. Emphasis original.

This transition was critical to the literary eminence of Eliot who came to be known as 'the pope of Russell Square'.[122] Vivien's involvement in the early stage of Eliot's publishing enterprise as both an editor and a writer has largely been forgotten. Eliot no longer published Vivien as he turned over a new leaf, and the Eliots' literary partnership loosened as their marriage deteriorated and ended when they formally separated in 1932. In the preface of the collected edition of *The Criterion*, Eliot acknowledged the helping hands since the *Criterion*'s inception but omitted Vivien.[123] Perhaps it was impersonality at work in editing, an escape from emotion, when emotion was still raw after so many years.

[122] Mary Trevelyan nicknamed Eliot 'the Pope of Russell Square' and used the nickname to entitle her previously unpublished memoire, which is now included in Mary Trevelyan and Erica Wagner, *Mary & Mr Eliot: A Sort of Love Story* (London: Faber & Faber, 2022).
[123] Eliot, 'Preface', in *The Criterion*, vol. 1, *October 1922- July 1923*, ed. T.S. Eliot, collected ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), v.

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The problem with 'Hamlet and His Problems'

Liam Cooper

The meaning of a compound expression is a function of the meanings of its parts and of the way they are syntactically combined.

Barbara Partee

Things are therefore not in front of us simply as neutral objects which we would contemplate... the tastes of a man... can be read in the objects with which he surrounds himself.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

A cursory search of JSTOR shows over 5000 results related to 'objective correlative'. Another concept from New Criticism, 'autotelic text', receives less than half that amount and most of those results appear unrelated to literary analysis. Although coined by painter-poet Washington Allston over half a century earlier, T.S. Eliot's definition of the objective correlative received an especially attentive response from critical audiences.[1]

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[2]

This increased attention may have been because Eliot inverted a standard 'chain of events' in the hermeneutic procedure.[3] Typically, a reader engages with a text and this reading 'terminates' in an emotional response, while Eliot's objective correlative implies that an author can begin with an

[1] Nathalia Wright, 'Source for T. S. Eliot's 'Objective Correlative'?', *American Literature* 41, no. 4 (1970): 589–91.
[2] T.S. Eliot, 'Hamlet and His Problems', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 92.
[3] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 93.

emotion and fashion a text which evokes that intended response.[4] Eliot specifically deems *Hamlet* a failure due to Shakespeare's inability to find a writerly way of expressing the intended emotion 'which Shakespeare did not understand himself.'[5]

Rather than dismiss centuries of acclaim for *Hamlet* by critics and theatre goers, I find it more likely that Eliot was mistaken in his claim that *Hamlet* failed on an artistic level.[6] Instead, I find it more likely that Eliot's conception of the object correlative was misformulated, as opposed to Shakespeare's conception of *Hamlet*. Eliot's misformulation does not mean the essay was a failure, as discussion of Eliot's concept in literary circles for over a century suggests that hermeneutic inversions can be conducive for generating discourse. In three general parts, I use arguments based in the philosophy of language and semiotics (sections 2-4) as well as Eliot's own logic (section 5) to show the objective correlative as defined is no longer unassailable, then suggest a reconceptualization of a 'set correlative' in response to these critiques (section 6).

1. Thinking Things Over

It was interesting to trace the origination of the objective correlative through Eliot's writings during his 'apprentice years' in a series of graduate school assignments from 1913-15.[7] Eliot studied Kantian philosophy under Josiah Royce, which resulted in Eliot's sustained interest in objects as a topic of philosophy.[8] Reading Kant resulted in young Eliot formulating a 'theory of objects' which culminated in his doctoral dissertation on 'Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H.

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 94.
[6] Ibid., 93-94.
[7] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).
[8] Ibid., 116. Eliot remarks that 'the problem of interpretation was of great interest to that extraordinary philosopher Josiah Royce' who attempted to maintain Kant's critical idealism in the face of anti-theological attacks from Darwin.

Bradley'.[9] To paraphrase the philosophical position: Eliot claimed that the tradition from Plato to Kant held ideas to be the true nature of reality; physical reality emanated from metaphysical immateriality; unobservable essences were more fundamental than observable attributes; priority is placed on 'forms with which the world must comply to be a world at all.'[10]

Eliot's post-Kantian position is that our categorical understanding of abstract ideas must stem from our relationship with concrete things, so that noumenal forms do not have any existence outside our phenomenological experience, because 'if we grant them absolute validity, we are led into a dogmatic metaphysics, and out of epistemology.'[11] Philosophers never would have held any concepts or ideas whatsoever if not for their prior physical relationship with the world, so Eliot considered 'lower objects' to be of critical importance on a philosophical level.[12] This interest in objects did not end when Eliot finished his doctoral work, he simply transferred these theoretical ideas from philosophy to poetry. Rather than abstract ideas stemming from physical objects, Eliot's objective correlative claimed that a reader's emotional response stemmed from the 'set of objects' in a text.[13]

Fellow new critic Cleanth Brooks shared similar opinions and used the Keatsian metaphor of a 'well wrought urn' to argue that a poem was an object which should be analyzed as a thing-in-itself.[14] If objects lead one to higher abstract thoughts, and poems are objects, then poems can lead one

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[9] T.S. Eliot, *Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).
[10] T.S. Eliot, 'Report on the Kantian Categories', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition* vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 31.
[11] T.S. Eliot, 'Kantian Categories', 37.
[12] T.S. Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 167.
[13] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[14] Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949).

to higher abstract thoughts. Through its own presence as an object, a poem leads the reader to abstract thoughts of 'higher objects', i.e., artistic unity and identity in general. Eliot concisely connects several themes by comparing how lower objects lead to higher objects in the same way that words lead to meaning, in the same way that humans find existential meaning in their own lives:

> An object X is known in a point of view A…. The lower objects, those which are known to common sense and to science, are those from which the point of view may most easily be abstracted, and those in deference to which formal truth and error apply. With regard to the later formed higher objects, difficulties arise. The variations of meaning to which they are subject [are] far greater. Words get their meaning in use, and it is by the success or failure of their use in bringing about results that we gauge the identity. Human identity is closest at the bottom, where meanings lie closest to the similar physical constitution of different individuals.[15]

To paraphrase, we discover the identity of a common object by comparing it from one moment to the next (an apple is red and round one day, then brown and mushy then next). So, the momentary attributes of the lower object lead to the higher object, e.g., an idea or concept of unity or identity, namely, appleness or applehood. Eliot argues that words are similar in the way that they can appear to mean different things at different moments; the word 'bank' can mean a place to put money, or a place where rivers flow, depending on context. Finally, Eliot compares the way that words gain their semiotic meaning to the way that people find existential meaning, by arguing our identities arise from the 'similar physical constitution of different individuals.'[16]

This conclusion about how lower objects lead to higher objects is central to the objective correlative and shows how Eliot used techniques of modern poetry to answer classical philosophical questions by bringing art-as-objects to the forefront of his aesthetics. Eliot's process speaks greatly to his themes: he began with philosophical questions which served as

[15] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 167.
[16] Ibid.

theoretical foundations for his own poetry, resulting in Ezra Pound's observation that '[Eliot] has actually trained himself AND modernized himself on his own' in a letter to Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*.[17]

In a 1914 paper, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', Eliot writes:

> Now from the ordinary point of view, it is possible to handle lower objects without being aware of the higher, but not vice versa; it is possible only to handle the higher as the extension of the lower… the real world is built up upon the moment of perception, and it is understood that real and ideal, perception and cognition, are abstractions, legitimate enough, but relative and unsubstantial.[18]

This excerpt contains the crux of Eliot's philosophy, as well as poetry: perceptions of lower objects in daily life are what lead to the conception of higher objects in our minds. Throughout his philosophical assignments, Eliot strongly argues that relations of physical objects lead one to abstract thoughts, so that the higher thoughts were 'the extension of the lower'.[19] Philosophers consider metaphysical and ontological topics of being, difference, otherness, etc., after observing the physical world, not the other way around. Our subjective understanding, which consists of 'unsubstantial' ideas and concepts, is grounded in objective reality, which consists of substantive materials.[20] Rather than a dualistic split, Eliot strongly contends that the transition from object to subject is 'an infinite gradation of objects' which ends with the concept of God as the absolute immaterial idea.[21] For Eliot, this resolves the Kantian distinction between subject-object, as well as the Aristotelian categorical distinction between material-immaterial in a hylomorphic substance.[22]

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[17] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941* (New York: New Directions, 1971), 40.
[18] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 165-6.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] T.S. Eliot, 'The Ethics of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 51.

2. Objecting to the Objective Correlative

After his time as a graduate student Eliot was a tutor in an extended course for adult learners (including a 'very intelligent grocer').[23] 'For the third year of the course, Eliot's students requested Elizabethan literature' which led Eliot to reappraise the work of Shakespeare.[24] Eliot combined his philosophical interest in objects with his re-reading of 17th-century literature to formulate the objective correlative in his first work of literary criticism, so that his 'important essay collection, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), grew directly out of his three-year course Modern English Literature.'[25]

Through his promotion of the objective correlative, Eliot sought a re-association between the material *objet d'art* (the text) and immaterial artistic sensibilities.[26] Eliot claims the textual objects in *Hamlet* (characters, actions, setting, etc.) do not lead one to higher thoughts and emotions in a correlative manner, which is worthy of critique because Eliot believes texts are capable of doing exactly that as poetic objects.[27] Eliot claims that a text's 'artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*'.[28] Further,

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[22] T.S. Eliot, 'Thought and Reality in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, vol. 1, *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 217-18.

[23] Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan, *The Teaching Archive: A New History for Literary Study* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 47.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 3.

[26] T.S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 281–91. Eliot argued that poetry had become dissociated from the sensibilities in the 17th century. Unlike the goals of the 'New Sincerity' movement in contemporary fiction, Eliot's modern re-association did not involve returning to the author's emotions in a pre-17th-century manner. Instead, Eliot sought to re-invigorate the meaning of 'emotion' by focusing on the sensation of a text as an object with an associative phenomeno-aesthetic presence. In this manner, the important emotion being conveyed came from the artwork itself, not the artist.

[27] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 167.

Eliot points to Prince Hamlet's inexpressibility as a result of his emotions being 'in *excess* of the facts as they appear.'[29] Eliot maintains this inexpressibility is a reflection of Shakespeare's own indefiniteness about the play's dramatic integrity and artistic efficacy, representing 'a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem.'[30]

According to Eliot, *Hamlet* failed as an artistic work because it did not present an objective correlative to justify Prince Hamlet's behaviour and emotional responses.[31] This lack of justification was deemed an artistic failure on Shakespeare's part, because he had shown himself capable of this justification in works like *Macbeth*.[32] Eliot specified that Hamlet's emotions or behaviours themselves were not a problem, '[i]t is not merely the 'guilt of a mother' that cannot be handled', but that the lack of justification within the text itself was problematic overall.[33] A successful character could have the same feelings as Hamlet, so long as the text contained a proper objective correlative.[34] I suggest that 'Hamlet's problem' was not with *Hamlet*, but with Eliot's formulation of the objective correlative (according to post-war philosophy of language) and his own application of the objective correlative to *Hamlet* (according to Eliot's own definition).

3. Emotional Indeterminacy

Later sections will argue against the direction of polarity between text and emotion in the objective correlative, while this section argues against Eliot's conceptualization of emotion as a univocal response. As formulated in 'Hamlet and His Problems', the set of objects in a text have *an* emotional correspondence.[35] The corresponding emotion is from the overall

[28] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 94.
[32] Ibid., 92.
[33] Ibid., 91.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 92.

impression or concept of the work itself, which the author then transmits to the reader through text. To clarify, a text can have different emotions throughout, but the overall accumulation of these emotions results in a 'particular' emotion which needs to be justified in the text through a 'skillful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions'.[36]

This unipolarity of the objective correlative has been commented on before, with Rajan Balachandra writing:

> Eliot argues that there is a verbal formula for any given state of emotion that when found and used will evoke that state and no other. We are in fact being offered a decisively representational view of language in which an unmistakable relationship is claimed between the sign and the state…. The author is merely the agency through which the infallible sign comes into being. The critic's concern is with the sign and with the one right reading that the sign dictate rather than with the sign's sponsor or catalyst.[37]

All of the emotional ups and downs of a text accumulate to produce *the* emotion which correlates to a text, e.g. the singular feeling of *Hamlet*-ness. Eliot uses singular articles when he writes 'Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible'.[38] If this singularity was not the case, then Eliot would not have argued so strongly against *Hamlet*'s lack of objective correlative, because there would be a multiplicity of responses from every reader and it would be impossible for one writer to supply sufficient details for each interpretation.

The problem with fulfilling the objective correlative as it is formulated, is that we cannot make words correlate to objects, emotions, nor affects (at least not in the way that Eliot suggests). In Eliotian terms, a word is a lower object with a physical presence on the page, and its referential sense is a

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Rajan Balachandra, 'Eliot', in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2nd edition, 2005), 286.
[38] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 93.

higher object with immaterial presence in the mind.[39] The reason we cannot make objective words correlate to subjective emotions, as Eliot suggests, is because the signifier does not uniquely and precisely correspond to the signified, which results in a perpetual gap of communicative meaning: Gorgias asked the question of how one can 'communicate the idea of color by means of words since the ear does not hear colors but only sounds?';[40] in Alfred Korzybski's general semantics, this gap is referred to by the idiom, 'the map is not the territory';[41] in W.V. Quine's analytic philosophy of language, this gap is referred to by the phrase 'indeterminacy of translation';[42] while in the continental deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, this gap is referred to by the word 'différance'.[43]

3.1 On *Multivocity:* 'Words await another voice'[44]

I am deeply moved by occasional passages of poetry, and so, characteristically, I read little of it.

W.V. Quine, *The Time of My Life*

To borrow a term from the medieval scholasticism of John Duns Scotus, Eliot's formulation of the objective correlative is 'univocal'.[45] In Scotus, the 'univocity of being' is a concept that means that the significance of a word when applied to God is the same significance of the word when applied to Man.[46] The 'good' in 'God is good' has the same universal

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[39] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 167.
[40] Alexander Mourelatos, 'Gorgias on the Function of Language', *Philosophical Topics* 15 (1987): 135-170.
[41] Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (New York: International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1933), 58.
[42] W.V. Quine, preface to *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), ix.
[43] Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie, LXII* (1968): 73-101.
[44] T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1943), 35.
[45] Thomas Williams, 'John Duns Scotus: 2.3 Divine infinity and the doctrine of univocity'. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/duns-scotus/.
[46] Ibid.

quality, *quiddity*, of 'good'-ness as when one says 'Man is good'. It is a henological semiotics, as all meaning emanates directly from one divinity in a complete chain of semiosis: all signifiers applicable to humanity ultimately derive their meaning from their signified reference to a divine *unus mundus*. The lower objects derive from the higher objects.

Analogously, Eliot believes that all texts stem from the univocity of some signified feeling, the quintessence or *ipseity* of the text, that an author wants to communicate. The physical text then leads the reader up this semiotic chain back to the intended referential emotion, idea, or abstract 'higher object'.[47] Whether or not the final text corresponds to this univocal intention represents its 'inevitability' and subsequent artistic success.[48] One of Eliot's early essays criticized Kant's categorical imperative for its unanimity, for it describes 'the best act performable' if one were 'placed in exactly the same situation' as another, but because 'the same situation never recurs, one may say that the categorical imperative is always, or that it is never, operative.'[49] It seems the notion of a reader always receiving the same objective correlative from a rhetorical situation which never recurs is likewise impossible.

Eliot has a static vision of univocity because the lower objects lead to the same higher objects.[50] It is clear from Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Russian novels, however, that texts are often multivocal insofar as they contain a *polyphony* of voices in a *heteroglossia* of registers, resulting in a 'vitality of nonequivalence'.[51] Oddly enough, 'Hamlet's problem' for Eliot, and 'Dostoevsky's problems' for Bakhtin, are one and the same: they are problematic texts because their interpretations are indeterminate due to inherent multivocity. Hermeneutician Paul Ricoeur maintained that the 'deepest wish' of hermeneutics was to help individuals gain existential

[47] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 165-6.
[48] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[49] Eliot, 'Kantian Categories', 54.
[50] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 166.
[51] Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxxii.

meaning through symbolic language.[52] So, while Eliot says *Hamlet* is a failure because different emotional responses conflict or are lacking, Bakhtin finds Dostoyevsky's writing to be a success because it affords the reader an opportunity to create their own interpretations which engenders this sense of existential discovery as well as 'a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices.'[53]

Eliot's position that the author's univocal intention took precedence was the general consensus of scholars and critics for most of literary history. Authors were seen as the preeminent authority on the text's meaning. To determine the definitive meaning of the text, literary critics debated what this original intention had been. Only in 1967, upon publication of Roland Barthes' essay, 'The Death of the Author', was the notion of authority seriously reconsidered in scholarly discourse.[54] In the wake of Barthes' essay, authors no longer existed in the traditional sense, let alone held total control over the text's meaning. Instead, the meaning of a text became a result of interpretation, not production. As Barthes says, 'the death of the author is the birth of the reader.'[55]

According to Barthes, meaning is created by the reader, so the author can never fashion an adequate objective correlative, because textual meaning was never in the author's control. In their reterritorialization of the term 'ontological univocity', Deleuze and Guattari posited 'the magic formula we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM'.[56] By substituting Eliot's monistic and univocal sense of a text with the pluralistic and open sense as proposed by continental thinkers such as Bakhtin, Barthes, Deleuze & Guattari, and Umberto Eco, it could be said that there are a 'multivocity-of-beings' which inhabit every text.[57] A univocal objective correlative thus

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[52] Paul Ricœur, 'Existence and Hermeneutics', in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 11.
[53] Bakhtin, *Problems*, 9.
[54] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen*, no. 5-6 (1967).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 2.
[57] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*

eludes the fragmented and refractory qualities of multivocal language – the medium of writers. To this end, Samuel Beckett was often asked who or what Godot represented and once responded that 'if I knew, I would have put it in the play.'[58]

3.2 Comparing T.S. Eliot and W.V. Quine

Despite both Harvard alumni having a predilection for forename initials and discussing the relationship between words and objects, it appears that few scholarly comparisons have been made between the work of Eliot and Quine.[59] The two major concepts that will be compared are Eliot's 'objective correlative' and Quine's 'indeterminacy of translation'.[60] *Oxford Reference* defines the objective correlative as '[a]n image, or 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events' calculated to evoke a particular mood or emotion';[61] while it defines the inscrutability of reference as '[t]he doctrine due to Quine that no empirical evidence relevant to interpreting a speaker's utterances can decide among alternative and incompatible ways of assigning referents to the words used; hence there is no fact that the words have one reference or another.'[62] Set in contrast, this present section seeks to show how these concepts are mutually exclusive.

(Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[58] Samuel Beckett, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Vol. 1: Waiting for Godot,* ed. Dougald McMillan and James Knowlson (New York: Grove Press, 1993), xvi.

[59] Andrew Foust, 'The Rabbit's Revenge: A Melodrama' in 'Nullity's Shadow: T. S. Eliot's Unreal in Theory, Drama, and the work of Henry James', UC Irvine Doctoral Dissertation (2019), 82-105. Contains a section that compares Quine and Eliot through the theoretical lens of the 'unreal' from Eliot's own dissertation, also discusses the concepts of fictitious objects in phenomenology and the preverbal dissemination of Derrida, but the text does not mention the objective correlative and I could find no other sustained comparisons between the two writers.

[60] Quine, *Word and Object*, 125.

[61] *Oxford Reference*, s.v. 'Objective Correlative', https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100243589

[62] *Oxford Reference*, s.v. 'Inscrutability of Reference', https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100004731

According to Quine, 'meaning, supposedly, is what a sentence shares with its translation; and translation at the present stage turns solely on correlations with non-verbal stimulation.' [63] Quine's argument about the 'vagaries' or 'indeterminacy of reference' means that a reader can never be certain if they have completely understood the 'net effect' of an utterance.[64] Similar to the polyphony of voices inherent in a literary text, the 'indeterminacy of radical translation' means a variety of different interpretations could be regarded as equally valid, so we cannot know whether the words we use are in accordance with a direct and unique sense.[65] To paraphrase Quine's 'gavagai' thought experiment: an anthropologist is studying a tribe with language, L. Upon seeing a rabbit, one of the tribe members says 'Gavagai!'. The anthropologist records this as 'Rabbit'. The anthropologist then realizes that the word could mean 'food!' or 'let's hunt!'. Thus, what the word 'gavagai' refers to is deemed indeterminate.[66]

Translation, however, does not end with rabbits.[67] To extend the analogy, Eliot would be the anthropologist, Shakespeare would be the tribe member, the play would be the rabbit, and the script would be 'gavagai'. Eliot sees the play *Hamlet* and reads the script, then assumes he understands the significance Shakespeare intended with the play, but Quine argues that all language suffers from the indeterminacy of reference. One replaces rabbits with *Hamlet* and it becomes clear that these two doctrines are mutually

[63] Quine, *Word and Object*, 50.
[64] Quine, *Word and Object*, 71.
[65] Quine, *Word and Object*, 91.
[66] Quine, *Word and Object,* 29.
[67] Roman Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben Arthur Bower, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 232-239. Jakobson argues there are three types of translation: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic. Lingual translations involves replacing signs (metaphrase), while intersemiotic involves translating meaning (paraphrase). All three types bring various 'deficiencies' related to the grammar of the languages involved.

exclusive: Eliot believes a set of lower objects (words in a text) can lead a reader in a continuous semiotic chain to higher objects (a correlative emotion), while Quine contends that lower objects (words) and higher objects (their references) will always have a discontinuous gap in semiotic referentiality.

The objective correlative requires readers to understand and respond to the net effect of a text in a way that the author singularly intended. In Bakhtin, multiple voices or significances can sound at once in a layered superimposition.[68] In *Barthes*, authorial intentions are nonexistent or irrelevant.[69] For Derrida, 'the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced', so the notion of translating an emotion through signs is untenable because semiotics suffers from a perpetual discontinuity.[70] In Quine, a text's referentiality is indeterminable by the reader due to infinite regress (to define gavagai, one needs to use more words, which require more definitions, each suffering the same inscrutability as gavagai).[71] From the Quinean perspective, Eliot could never be sure that he had correctly interpreted *Hamlet*, and thus could not pass judgment on whether it had upheld its univocal intent. Hence, I argue that Eliot's objective correlative is incompatible with several widely held theories in literary criticism and the philosophy of language.

3.3 On Correlative Singularity

In semiotic terms, the objective correlative is a series of concrete signs which invoke the abstract signified. The indeterminacy of reference is the exact opposite and describes how there will always be some breakdown between the sign and what is signified. The text has some meaning which has yet to be put into words (the signified), and the writer is the amanuensis for the text through their concrescence of signs. The success of the text rests on whether or not the author provides an adequate amount of objective elements to warrant the intended subjective effect. A text contains one

[68] Bakhtin, *Problems*.
[69] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'.
[70] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 23.
[71] Quine, *Word and Object*, 30.

objective correlative, and that objective correlative is how the elements in a text lead the reader to a single higher thought (even if this single thought or emotion is the feeling of uncertainty or ambiguity).

It should be noted that this univocity of mood or emotion results from the text, not the author. It is not the author's mood being conveyed, but the mood of the text itself as an object. If one writes a tragedy, then one conveys a tragic mood, rather than whatever emotional state one may be in at the time of writing. According to Eliot's concept of 'depersonalization', the author is in 'a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable';[72] namely, the author seeks an 'emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet.'[73] The author 'surrenders' themself to the will of the text, as it were, acting maieutically to provide enough objective elements in the text to justify the text's import.

Eliot believes *Hamlet*, and literature in general, to be univocal; a single 'net effect' of the text could be reducible and transmitted from author to reader through text.[74] As supporting evidence, Eliot states that '[w]e find Shakespeare's *Hamlet* not in the action, not in any quotations that we might select, so much as in an unmistakable tone' which binds the entirety of the text.[75] From reading Eliot's 'depersonalization theory' in 'Tradition and Individual Talent', also from *The Sacred Wood*, it seems there is a throughline in Eliot's early criticism: a poet acts as a catalyst for converting emotion into art. This catalyzing effect is not necessarily converting their personal emotion into artistic expression, but somehow encapsulating the feeling of the text itself as a phenomenal object so that it can be appreciated on its own as a well wrought urn and lead audiences to higher noumenal thoughts.[76]

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[72] T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 47.
[73] Eliot, 'Tradition', 53.
[74] Quine, *Word and Object*, 71.
[75] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[76] Eliot, 'Tradition', 47.

To say there is no objective correlative means that there are not enough lower objects in a text to warrant the higher objects which the text expounds. Clarifying that an unclear objective correlative was a specific problem with *Hamlet*, and not Shakespeare in general, Eliot suggests that *Macbeth* provides a perfectly adequate objective correlative in respect of Lady Macbeth.[77] Pound's ideogrammic method for imagism also uses a similar method, beginning with a selection of concrete objects (flamingo, cherry, rust, rose) to signify an abstract object (the color red).[78] If one only said 'cherry and rose' it would be an indeterminate paradigm, because these two objects could also signify 'plants' or 'types of wood'. The more concrete objects there are, the clearer the abstract objective correlative becomes.

According to his philosophical work, Eliot believes lower objects (things) result in higher objects (thoughts).[79] A successful objective correlative moves one up this chain in a continuous manner. For Eliot, the purpose of art is for an artist to begin with a higher object in mind, an emotion or 'an unmistakable tone', and then fashion a text which provides enough lower objects, characters or actions in the text, to produce that correlative response.[80] Following Quine, Eliot is both right and wrong. Eliot was right to say there is no objective correlative in *Hamlet*, but wrong to suggest this was an artistic failure or deficiency on the part of the text. Yes, there is an insufficient objective correlative in *Hamlet*, but that is because all references are indeterminate, so one can never have a fully compensatory objective correlative as formulated.

To make an analogy, the abstract concept 'gavagai' could be ideogrammatically represented by the concrete objects of a rabbit, or multiple rabbits, or clarifications from speakers of the L language, but there will always be some gap due to what Quine calls 'holophrastic indeterminacy'.[81] Quine's argument was so revolutionary because the

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: George Routledge Limited, 1934), 22.
[79] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 165-66.
[80] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[81] W.V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

'functional equivalence' of translated texts had been taken for granted by thinkers during and prior to Eliot and Pound's era.[82] The process of translation was considered difficult, philologically speaking, but not philosophically impossible. Instead, texts were assumed to have some determinable meaning which was capable of being translated.

I argue this concept of determinability is unnecessary and detrimental to the creation of certain types of art and that unfinalizability (viz. Bakhtin) is a defining feature of most dramas. Coleridge labelled Shakespeare's work as artistic 'genius' specifically due to its 'organic' indeterminability.[83] Doubt, which may make *Hamlet* an artistic failure by Eliot's standards, is part of what makes it a dramatic success. In fact, by Eliot's own admission, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* did produce a 'puzzling, and disquieting' tone in the critical reader, so I do not see why it was labeled an artistic failure, if the goal is to produce a specific emotion.[84]

3.4 Alchemical Unity

Eliot explains in his essay that: 'The analogy was that of the catalyst... to transmute the passions which are its material', so the objective correlative is the result of an artist synthesizing all their emotions about a text into an alchemical unity.[85] This original objective correlative must be present, or

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1990), 50. For Quine, this holophrastic indeterminacy is his 'most serious' and 'strong[est]' argument regarding the indeterminacy of translation, because it relates to *a priori* discussion on analytic/synthetic split in Carnap. For Quine, radical translation between two totally unknown language was rare, because there will always be bilingual speakers who can make increasingly more concise translations in a chain of increasingly more determinate referentiality, but holophrastic indeterminacy is fundamental and *a priori*: one cannot determine whether the import of a sentence was gained through excursive (synthetic) or incursive (analytic) means, so there could be no clear split and would only be a series of gradations (similar to Eliot's spectrum from physical to metaphysical).

[82] Eugene Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation, With Special Reference to Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 200.

[83] Samuel Coleridge, 'Shakspeare' s Judgment equal to his Genius' in *Coleridge's Essays & Lectures on Shakespeare* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1914), 46-47.

[84] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

[85] Ibid., 48.

else the work is an artistic failure, as it is the artist's job to transmute emotions into a singular work. So, different readers will have different interpretations over time, but they will all be interpretive reactions to the same objective correlative from the original author. For Eliot, this objective correlative could be multifaceted or ambiguous, but those effects would need proper support from the text itself in accordance with the author's intentions, to be considered artistically successful.[86]

In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Eliot is quite clear that new works alter future interpretations. The audience's understanding of a text will change over time in relation to other texts so that '[n]o poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.'[87] This position may seem to contradict everything previously said regarding Eliot's univocity. So, it is important to note that these readerly responses to the art and the artist change, but the original objective correlative embedded in the text does not. The idea that one author would have one emotional intent in mind which they try to transmit to a reader through a text would be the general consensus at the time of Eliot's writing, however, as noted, it seems to disintegrate in the light of later advancements in philosophy of language and literary criticism.

4. Emotional Polarities

The previous sections attempted to show that the objective correlative could not be singular, contrary to Eliot's position. This section seeks to show how the directionality of the objective correlative is inverted and in contradiction of his own previous philosophical discussion of objects. So, because they propose contradictory claims, either Eliot's philosophical or his poetical theory must be incorrect, and I argue it is the latter.

Eliot is quite insistent that lower objects lead to higher objects. A lower object would be something like a rock or an apple, a higher object would be something like an idea or emotion. The chain moves from lower to higher. However, Eliot's objective correlative claims that Shakespeare

[86] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[87] Eliot, 'Tradition', 44.

failed to produce an artistic object when faced with a certain 'intractable' emotion which the idea of the text itself invoked.[88] The conception of *Hamlet* as a play produced an emotional effect which Shakespeare was incapable of transmitting into language. This poetic criticism implies that Shakespeare should have taken the emotion which the idea of *Hamlet* produced while still a nascent concept, and then organized a set of objects in textual form so as to evoke that intended response in the reader.

Eliot likely thought this coincided with his philosophy, because he is saying that the artistic object *Hamlet* leads the audience to a higher abstract idea of *Hamlet*-ness (the feeling or emotion trying to be evoked). However, upon closer inspection, it appears that he overlooked the fact that Shakespeare himself would be the first reader, or the first audience. Tracing the order of events would be something like: Shakespeare reads about the story Prince Hamlet in an ur-text;[89] this reading invokes a certain emotion in Shakespeare which he wants to then transmit in an artistic work; Shakespeare then fashions a text, *Hamlet*, which attempts to evoke the feeling he previously received while reading the ur-texts. According to Eliot, Shakespeare failed to supply an adequate set of objects in the text to evoke the intended emotion.[90]

The point where Eliot's argument breaks down is when Shakespeare goes from having read the ur-texts, to fashioning his own play. As Eliot insists in his philosophic work, the higher objects only stem from the lower objects.[91] Just because Shakespeare received a higher concept from the ur-text does not mean he himself can fashion a text which also leads to that emotion. For an emotion to lead to a text would be a higher object leading to a lower object, which is contrary to Eliot's philosophical position that 'it is possible only to handle the higher as the extension of the lower'.[92]

Just because each text immediately evokes an emotional response does not mean that one can begin with a specific emotional response in mind (of the

[88] Ibid., 90.
[89] Ibid., 89.
[90] Ibid., 90.
[91] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 167.
[92] Ibid., 165.

artist's own emotion, or of a depersonalized emotion of the work itself) and design a text which commutatively returns that response through a matrix of writing. By saying Shakespeare failed in supplying an objective correlative implies that he could have succeeded; to say Shakespeare could fail or succeed in supplying an objective correlative implies that supplying the objective correlative was within Shakespeare's control; this control implies that a writer should supply a set of objects which evokes the emotion which they previously received or perceived. This final point implies that the ur-emotion leads one to a text (which Shakespeare failed to achieve), but Eliot himself already argued that higher objects (like an emotion) do not and cannot lead to lower objects (like a text).

Eliot himself maintained that Western philosophy was misguided in thinking that objects stemmed from ideas, yet he unintentionally maintained this very notion by claiming Shakespeare had failed in *Hamlet* by not producing a text which correlated to a higher sensory experience. In a way, Eliot had made the logical error of affirming the consequent. If there is a set of objects, then I have an emotion; thus if there is an emotion, then I have a set of objects. This conclusion is formally incorrect as well as contradicted by Eliot's own philosophical position during his graduate years, which emphatically argued that higher abstract ideas stem from observations of interrelationships between concrete objects, not the other way around.[93]

5. 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet'[94]

'Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.'[95]

The previous sections disputed the formulation of the objective correlative, while this section accepts Eliot's premises, but contends that *Hamlet* contains the objective correlative as described. Eliot notes the play results in an unstable tone.[96] The audience feels as if everything is not adding up,

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[93] Ibid., 167.

[94] T.S. Eliot, 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock', in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (London: The Egoist, 1917), 15.

[95] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* in *The Warwick Shakespeare* (London: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1930), 66.

[96] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

which is precisely Hamlet's emotion. Therefore, if the emotion of the audience and characters correlate, then I do not see how a work could be labeled an 'artistic failure' by Eliotian standards.[97] Additionally, I do not agree with other critical objections made in Eliot's essay: that there are emotions in Prince Hamlet which are inexpressible because they are too severe or 'intractable';[98] that Hamlet's actions do not have any corresponding 'chain of events';[99] that *Hamlet* somehow fails because it is not well-put together with 'superfluous and inconsistent scenes which even hasty revision should have noticed', specifically
between Polonius, Laertes, and Reynaldo.[100]

Prince Hamlet encounters the ghost of his father, who describes 'most foul, strange, and unnatural' murder, which signifies lingering revenge.[101] The most logical place to look is the recently wed Claudius and Gertrude. Further, Polonius is quite literally depicted as being a Machiavellian *eminence gris* who hides behind curtains, eavesdropping.[102] In response to these machinations, Hamlet sets up a metatheatrical 'Mouse-trap' of his own.[103] Hamlet as proto-detective successfully engineers the objective correlative he wanted of Gertrude and Claudius – an emotional response to the chain of events which directly signify their guilt.[104] Hence *Hamlet* contains not one, but two (if not multiple) set correlatives, if set correlative is defined as a reader's correlating response to the text as a set of linguistic objects.

The ability for a text to have multiple set correlatives embedded in its narrative also severely undermines Eliot's univocal notion of the objective correlative. Some may counter that this is not what Eliot meant by the objective correlative: 'That is not what I meant at all; / That is not it, at

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 93.
[100] Ibid., 90.
[101] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, 50.
[102] Ibid., 96.
[103] Ibid., 75.
[104] Ibid., 91.

all.'[105] Yet, by using New Criticism to immanently critique the New Critics, I can only go by what was in the text.[106] Eliot claims Shakespeare did have an emotion in mind, he just did not accomplish it satisfactorily; so, *Hamlet* was an artistic failure because its chain of events did not produce a sympathetic readerly response in the audience.[107] Yet *Hamlet* contains several instances where a series of events terminates in a correlative emotional response from the characters, so the notion that the play lacks a univocal objective correlative seems incorrect on two accounts: rather than lacking a singular objective correlative, the play contains multiple examples.

5.1 'Grave thoughts' & Ciceronian Responsion

'Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest…' [108]

Perhaps Eliot's reading perceived areas where Prince Hamlet expresses some emotion which is not objectively correlated in the play, but most tête-à-têtes and soliloquies seem to be quite clearly related to his experiences with fatal duplicity in the Danish royal court; Eliot fails to consider whether Shakespeare intentionally voided the object correlative to create the 'disquieting tone'.[109] Eliot also 'Shakespeherian rags'[110] on Hamlet's levity, stating '[i]n the character Hamlet it is the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action; in the dramatist it is the buffoonery of an emotion which he cannot express in art.'[111] So, it would appear that Eliot specifically believes Prince Hamlet's joking 'buffoonery' is not commensurate with the objective correlative, a discrepancy which results in inexpressibility.[112] In objection to this claim, I believe the text does provide enough narrative objects to warrant Hamlet's behaviour, and that

[105] Eliot, 'Prufrock', 14.
[106] Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, 176-95.
[107] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.
[108] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, 132.
[109] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.
[110] T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' in *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 65.
[111] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 93.
[112] Ibid.

his ‘levity’ and ‘buffoonery’ are well within the bounds of classical theories of rhetorical humour.

Writing on ancient theories of comedy, Eco maintains that ‘[t]he comic is the perception of the opposite; humour is the feeling of it.’[113] Similarly, Cicero emphasized *ambigua* in his theory of comedy: the incongruities of words which could result in humour. Cicero also emphasized how the rhetorical power of humour could be used to expose truth and that jokes could be weaponized. In *De Oratore*, he writes ‘[t]hose smart sayings which spring from some ambiguity are thought extremely ingenious; but they are not always employed to express jests, but often even grave thoughts.’[114] Due to other commonalities with Cicero’s discussion of humour, and because Cicero is referenced in Shakespeare’s neoclassical plays, it is not impossible that Shakespeare knew of this discussion of humour in *De Oratore* (although Shakespeare drew on Plutarch, and does not quote Cicero directly).[115]

Hamlet is uncertain and disempowered, so all his buffoonery is due to the recognition that he is in a no-win situation. Hamlet engages with everyone in an equally estranging manner. He soliloquizes and plays battles of wits with whomever, because he does not know who is guilty (although he has suspicions). Sardonicism is laughing in the face of death, which is the precise theme of Hamlet’s soliloquy on Yorick.[116] Hamlet’s literal ‘grave thoughts’ are sparked by a jester’s demise (likely inspired by the death of famous Elizabethan clown, Richard Tarlton).[117] As a prop which gives rise to thoughts on death, Yorick’s skull is perhaps the best pure representation of an objective correlative in popular drama.

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[113] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 287.
[114] Cicero, *De Oratore*, Book II, trans. by J.S. Watson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 250.
[115] E.A.J. Honigmann, ‘Shakespeare's Plutarch’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1959): 25-33.
[116] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, 132.
[117] Katherine Duncan-Jones, ‘The Life, Death and Afterlife of Richard Tarlton’, *The Review of English Studies* 65, no. 268 (February 2014), 18-32.

The merging of death (tragic) and humour (comedic) produces a tragi-comic style which has been noted in Shakespeare's late work, the so-called 'problem plays' which do not fit into any easily categorizable genre.[118] Like many young men of his age, Hamlet is something of a gallows humourist in an 'inky cloak'.[119] The only person Hamlet expresses his sincere feelings to is Horatio. Horatio is also one of the few people to see the King's Ghost in the opening and he is the lone survivor at the end, which raises the question of whether he was the mastermind all along?

6. The *Objective Correlative* Reconsidered

This final section will attempt to reconfigure the objective correlative in light of the critiques made in previous sections. I always found Eliot's term 'objective correlative' misleading, as it connotes authorial intentions or objectives, and sometimes even singular objects, as the focal point of a text.[120] Although there are some concrete examples of object-oriented writing, such as haikus, imagism, objectivism, and the works of William Carlos Williams, e.g. 'no ideas but in things', this connotation has resulted in an over-emphasis on sometimes trivial details simply because they are objects in the text.[121] Rather than objects for object's sakes, Eliot's interest was always how these objects 'terminate' in higher objects, especially abstract thoughts and emotions.[122]

Further, 'objective correlative' makes it sound as if there are indeed authorial objectives, which is not necessarily the case. I do not think Mallarmé's poem 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' ('A throw of the dice does not abolish chance') could have had a singular authorial intent, beyond that of producing multiple interpretations via its inherent ambiguity. William Empson, fellow new critic, clarifies that '[t]he

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[118] Frederick Boas, 'The Problem Plays', in *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (New York: C. Scribner's & Sons, 1904), 344-408.
[119] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, 35.
[120] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.
[121] William Carlos Williams, author's note in *Paterson* (New York: Penguin, 1946), ii.
[122] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry.'[123] Empson even highlights T.S. Eliot as a poet who employs ambiguity 'in which two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved in one.'[124] In like manner, every text becomes 'un coup de dés' in regards to how it will be interpreted.[125] Yes, each throw has its own final outcome, every text will have a determined interpretation by every reader upon each reading, but this 'n'abolira le hasard' from its place in the overall system.[126]

Instead, it is more productive to think about a 'set correlative'. This new terminology is not much of a departure from the original denotation of the 'objective correlative', which already included quasi-mathematical discussion of 'sets of objects, situations, or events' as well as 'formula'. Eliot makes a connection between mathematics and poetry as a 'highly organized form of intellectual activity' in his essay 'The Perfect Critic', also from *The Sacred Wood* collection: 'we believe that the mathematician deals with objects — if he will permit us to call them objects — which directly affect his sensibility.'[127] Ezra Pound likewise stated that 'poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics which gives us equations... for the human emotions.'[128] This new phrasing of 'set correlative', simply draws attention to the so-called 'algebra of the set' or the 'compositionality' of a text;[129] how the semiotic operators of a text correspond to each other.

6.1 Toward a Set Correlative

It is more accurate to say that every set of objects (a word can be an object) correlates to an immediate emotional response. Given any set of letters, words, images, sounds, etc., a reader will have some correlative response,

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[123] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 1947), 3.
[124] Ibid., x.
[125] Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1914).
[126] Ibid.
[127] Eliot, 'The Perfect Critic', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 7-8.
[128] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1910).
[129] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

even if that response is indifference, boredom, or confusion. The sensory experience (from a set of objects either seen, heard, or felt) produces a behavioural response in the reader. Surely, a writer can have an intended emotional response in mind which they aim to achieve, and some writers accomplish this objective with high felicity, but there will always be a slightly different interpretative outcome from each subjective reader. The range of interpretations from individual readers is often (if not always) context dependent. Eliot makes it sound inevitable that a writer could somehow puppeteer readers into thinking or feeling what the writer authoritatively designed regardless of surrounding pragmatic context.[130]

Describing a 'set correlative' makes it clearer that we are talking about the outcomes which correlate with a reader's response to a certain set of objects (words, images, sounds, etc.). Each text exists as an object and, regardless of authorial intent, each text has a response from the reader. The 'set correlative' is a response to this text. Writers compose a chain of operators (a text), which functions on readers to produce different outputs (the range of responses). Even if one reads a brief snippet of a text, or fragment of its title, it leaves an impression on the mind. The set correlative is the sum total of all the successive semiotic operations which a text has performed on a reader at any given moment (which is a function of time and how much of the text they have read).

6.2 'Between the idea / And the reality'[131]

This new conceptualization also shows that there is no such thing as a text having *no* objective correlative. For Eliot, *Hamlet* is missing an objective correlative because the reader does not have enough information to sympathize with its characters.[132] The objective correlative is a part of the text, allegedly under the control of the author, but whether it is present or not is indicated by the emotional response of readers as a form of litmus test. If the audience can sympathize, then the objective correlative was a success.

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[130] Compare with 'The Engineering of Consent' in Edward Bernays' theory of communication.

[131] T.S. Eliot, 'The Hollow Men', in *Poems 1909-1925* (London: Faber and Faber, 1925), 127.

[132] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

Yet, every set of objects will have some range of emotional response from the audience, even if it is indifferent, confused, or ambivalent. Thus, it is meaningless to say a text has 'no' objective correlative or 'objective equivalent to… feelings'.[133] It would be equally meaningless to say that Hamlet's behaviour is unwarranted by the set of objects in the text because any character will always have whatever emotion results from their response to what objects are in the play. Rather than saying there is no objective correlative, it would be more accurate to say that the emotional response of the audience does not seem to be what the text intends, which creates an incongruous objective correlative.

Following Quine's indeterminacy of reference, however, Eliot cannot know whether or not he rightfully assesses the emotion which Hamlet is expressing.[134] Quine argues it is impossible to determine the intended reference, no matter how many linguistic objects one supplies.[135] So, it is impossible to say that *Hamlet* does not contain adequate elements to warrant the emotion it expresses, because no reader can ever be sure that they correctly understood the intended reference. If a character says 'I am sad' but there are no textual artefacts which seem to indicate their sadness, Eliot would say there is no object correlative; but Quine would contend that what the character refers to by 'sad' is indeterminable, and so we cannot know whether the previous elements in the play correlate and that there are a ramifying number of equally valid interpretations.

7. Conclusions: 'the end of all our exploring'[136]

> The world does not speak. Only we do.
>
> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*

While Eliot notes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was written in a dialectic of Hamletian ur-texts, New Criticism emphasized the final text as a

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[133] Ibid., 92.
[134] W.V. Quine, 'Ontological Relativity', in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 26-68.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Eliot, 'Little Gidding', 39.

compendium of signifiers and eschewed the resonances which stem from its context in history.[137] For Eliot, a text contains a singular objective correlative which is the emotional response an author intends to invoke through the meaning of the words in their original context.[138] Because the set of words which a writer chooses is limited by time and space, however, no signified can ever be fully vectorized by a single signifier.

Nevertheless, by inverting a hermeneutic process, Eliot opened up new discursive avenues which have been explored by writers and critics for over a century. The unintended result of Eliot describing a reversed hermeneutic situation demonstrates how approaching things in an unfamiliar manner can be a useful tool for finding new dialogic paths, akin to Quine's notion of 'the strange way home' through a philosophical *dérive*.[139] By reading more discourses backwards or inverted, we may find new grammatical symmetries as well as new ways of making semiotic meaning which could potentially lead to a more emancipatory language faculty.

The New Critics tried to bracket a text from context and simply analyze what a set of words caused on a phenomenological level in a suspended state of *epoché*.[140] However, no singular prescriptive definition can ever be achieved between the text and its object correlative, although a seemingly infinite multiplicity of set correlatives can be described. There is no way, systematic nor otherwise, to concretize the abstract objective correlative. Eliot claims *Hamlet* is an artistic failure because it does not provide a satisfying objective correlative.[141] The inefficacy of a lower object (*Hamlet* as a play) led Eliot to a higher object (the concept of an objective correlative); ironically, this means *Hamlet* does possess some form of objective correlative, even if the correlating emotion is the feeling that there is no objective correlative.

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[137] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 88.
[138] Ibid., 90.
[139] *In Conversation: W.V. Quine*, Part 1, directed by Rudolf Fara, Philosophy International, aired 1994, video.
[140] Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, 176-96.
[141] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 90.

Ultimately, Eliot's post-Kantian philosophical insight was correct: 'it is possible only to handle the higher as the extension of the lower'.[142] That does not mean, however, that one can reverse engineer a lower object from a higher object. One cannot fashion a well wrought poetic text from an 'unmistakable tone' and intentionally guide, Virgil-like, the audience's response in a singular direction.[143] Eliot proposes that Shakespeare failed in writing a play which correlated to the intended emotion indicated by the text.[144] However, no such project could ever take place, as the indeterminacy of translation means there will be a referential gap in the semiotic chain for any and all texts.[145] By suggesting an artist could manufacture a complete and continuous objective correlative from lower to higher thoughts, Eliot was proposing an impossibility – like measuring out a life with coffee spoons.[146]

[142] Eliot, 'Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence', 165.
[143] Eliot, 'Hamlet', 92.
[144] Ibid., 90.
[145] Quine, *Word and Object*, 91.
[146] Eliot, 'Prufrock', 12.

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Experiences and meanings: the staging of T.S. Eliot-related events

Paul Keers

The allusive, transcultural and often multivocal nature of much of Eliot's poetry, *The Waste Land* in particular, lends itself to multidisciplinary events, which pair the poetry with dramatic presentation, music, dance, art and other creative media. Concerns which Eliot voiced about interpretations of his work have constrained such events; but an increasing number have been authorised in recent years. This essay examines the emerging nature of 'events', which now present Eliot's poetry alongside other creative disciplines. It explores the path from the traditional poet's 'readings' of Eliot's lifetime, to contemporary 'performances' of his poetry by actors and others, and towards those multidisciplinary 'events'. And it will consider whether such 'events' breach Eliot's own proscriptions against settings of, or illustrations to, his poetry, and threaten to impose the interpretations upon his text that Eliot himself feared.

Events – a definition

What defines or characterises an 'event'? For the purposes of this essay, an event involves an audience which is physically present together, as opposed to the scattered individual recipients of a publication or broadcast. It is time-limited, occuring either on or between particular dates and subsequently unavailable. And in the context of this consideration, it involves Eliot's poetry, which may range from the reading or presenting of entire texts down to the use of and association with titles alone. (Eliot's dramatic works, specifically written for live performance, with their inherently varied casts, venues, staging, direction etc, are not considered here; nor are 'events' which are primarily discursive, such as conferences and lectures, which do not significantly involve other creative media.)

Significantly, an event is 'live'. Whether a reading or performance, a presentation, a multi-disciplinary event or an exhibition, an event is presented to its audience, experienced by them, and then ceases to exist. Although it is becoming increasingly difficult to restrict the recording and dissemination of material in the digital environment, an event is an experience. Indeed in many cases, the nature of an event is such that a recording could not capture its

essence. As we shall see, such aspects as location, juxtaposition of elements, performers and audience may determine the nature and experience of an event, and these cannot be preserved. A recording, whether visual, auditory or photographic, of any event, is always a distinct entity from an event itself.

The appeal of such events is manifold. While the experience of poetry on the printed page is an essentially solo activity, events move that experience into the public and social realms. Utilising well-chosen locations, present-day performers and/or a juxtaposition with contemporary arts and media, they can reposition historic works in a contemporary context. And they suggest connections, perhaps previously unconsidered, between the poetry and other arts. Through all of those routes, events seek to develop and enhance the public's understanding and enjoyment, not only of the poetry, but also of the other arts with which it may be presented.

Eliot and events

During his lifetime there were many approaches to Eliot requesting his permission to incorporate or adapt his poetry for various performances and events. From his responses it is clear that his overriding concern was to avoid interposing any interpretation, as he saw it, between his poems and the public.

So in 1944 Eliot replied to a request to create a ballet of *The Waste Land*: 'I am anxious always that it should be clear that I do not associate myself with any *particular interpretation* [Eliot's emphasis] of the poem, and that I took no part in the transformation… I take the same view about *illustrations* [Eliot's emphasis] to my poems; while I consider any artist free to interpret the poems into his visual art, and to publish the illustrations if he can, I will not allow any illustrated edition of the text, or express particular approval of one interpretation rather than another.'[1]

Eliot did consent to some musical settings of his poetry. In 1969, Eliot's bibliographer, Donald Gallup, listed 23 such settings, by composers including

[1] T.S. Eliot, *The Poems of T.S. Eliot, Volume I, Collected and Uncollected Poems*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), xvi, hereafter *P1*.

Rawsthorne and Stravinsky, composed before his death;[2] and after his death his widow Valerie Eliot permitted several settings by Benjamin Britten. Yet in 1962, in a letter to the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and Francis Turner, Eliot wrote: 'I will not allow any of my poems to be set to music unless they seem to me to be lyrics in the proper sense of being suitable for singing… the music also is a particular interpretation which is interposed between the reader and the author. I want my readers to get their impression from the words alone and from nothing else.'[3]

This clear proscription – 'I want my readers to get their impression from the words alone and from nothing else' – dictated the way in which his widow Valerie Eliot, who managed his literary estate, responded to requests to work with Eliot's poetry after his death. The T.S. Eliot Estate, to which control of the copyrights passed after her death, consequently inherited the responsibility to consider, grant or refuse permission for his works to be used. In a statement issued in March 2021, relating to the centenary of *The Waste Land*, the Eliot Estate declared that 'The trustees have always attempted to strike a balance between, on the one hand, remaining faithful to the poet's wish that his work should not be staged or set to music (with the notable exception of the children's verse of *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*) and, on the other, acknowledging the merits of creative adaptations of his work into other forms or media.'

It is illuminating in this context to consider an occasion on which Eliot specifically wrote text for an event. *The Rock*, a 'pageant play', was written for performance at Sadler's Wells Theatre between 28 May and 9 June 1934. With separate credits for music and staging, it might be seen as a collaborative event of its time – but Eliot was at pains to distinguish his text from its staging. Faber's First Edition of the text was described on its cover as a 'book of words by T.S. Eliot'.[4] And in its 'prefatory note', Eliot stated: 'I cannot consider myself the

[2] Donald Gallup, 'E4 Musical Settings', *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 353.
[3] *P1,* xvi.
[4] T.S. Eliot, *The Rock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

author of the 'play' [Eliot's quotation marks], but only of the words which are printed here"'.[5] Eliot makes a clear distinction in this case between his text, and the necessarily interpretative staging of that text. He declares responsibility for the words but, unlike his later plays, distances himself from an event in which the interpretation of those words may be affected by direction, staging or other aspects of its performance.

Readings – words, after speech

Nevertheless, live readings of Eliot's poetry took place throughout his lifetime, the poems being read either by himself or by leading actors such as Alec Guinness. We should view public readings as events, because there are many ways in which the experience, presentation and hence interpretation of the poetry is affected by its 'uttering'.

That term was used by Professor Sir Christopher Ricks, in order to distinguish between a poem being 'read' to oneself, and a poem being 'read' aloud.

Ricks observed of poetry readings that 'The key question always for any uttering of a poem is whether the utterer is putting something in that was *not* really there, or drawing something out that *was* really there. So that again and again I think our relationship has to be: is this supplying something that was, I'm afraid, lacking in the poem, or is it educing something which it was empty of me not to have registered?'[6]

A distinction was similarly drawn by Eliot himself, in a letter to BBC producer Christopher Salmon in 1941, between a printed work and its 'uttering'. With reference to poetry readings, Eliot wrote: 'But a reading is not merely a poem: it is a combination of the poem, the reader's understanding of it, and his particular voice; a reading is a different work of art from the poem-in-itself.'[7]

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[5] Ibid, 5.

[6] Christopher Ricks, 'Eliot's Auditory Imagination', Harvard University lecture, delivered 14th November 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhkcrQ09YdU at approx 3:52 (accessed 28th July 2022).

[7] *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, Volume 9: 1939-1941*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber & Faber, 2021), 835 (hereafter *L9*).

Written in the context of broadcasting and recording, the elements which Eliot and later Ricks consider are concerned with vocal elements of the 'uttering', such as emphasis, pronunciation, accent etc. These all undoubtedly impose a particular interpretation, and even introduce considerations such as class and gender, upon the printed words. Ricks is concerned primarily with readings by Eliot himself, although his observations also apply to readings by others, and their effect upon interpretation; Eliot is concerned with readings by others.

These concerns also focus on the reading of an isolated poem. A reading as a live event will almost certainly present a combination and sequence of poems. In a printed collection, while the poet may have chosen a particular order, the reader can choose to read poems individually or not at all, in or out of their chosen sequence. In a live event, the sequence is pre-determined and linear, out of the audience's control, and often chosen to reveal or illuminate a particular chosen aspect of the works. This may highlight elements or connections in the works of which the audience might not be aware when reading them in isolation. And while all of these factors offer ample opportunities to impose interpretation on a text, they may be added to yet further in live events by the additional influential effects of a title or stated objective of an event; of a juxtaposition with other disciplines such as dramatic presentation, dance or music; and of physical location.

Theatre studies have explored the impact which the physical location of a performance has upon a play. 'Site-specific' theatre practices acknowledge the ways 'in which the material presence and the historically accrued meanings of the performance space make meaning of and intrude upon the text.'[8] The notion that space is productive of meaning is equally relevant to live readings of poetry – meaning will necessarily vary as to whether a reading event is staged in a library, a theatre, a church or, as is often the case with events, at a site of relevance to the poem.

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[8] Bridget Escolme, 'Shakespeare, Rehearsal and the Site-Specific', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 30, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 505-522.

In 2017, at Little Gidding's annual T.S. Eliot Festival, Jeremy Irons read *Little Gidding* to an audience from the entrance to the church of Little Gidding itself. In his prefatory introduction, he said: 'I think the place where we are sitting today is incredibly important, and I feel hugely privileged to be reading this work which came out of this place here, in that place.' During the reading, he gestured towards aspects of the location mentioned in the poem; 'the route you would be likely to take', 'the pig-sty', the 'dull façade' and 'the tombstone', and even moved towards the church's small graveyard to indicate where 'We die with the dying:/See, they depart'. Such connections of the performance space to the poem's content intensify the links for the audience to the poet's inspiration, present an association between words and meanings, and potentially alter an audience's experience of the work.

Similarly, in a 1997 event, a reading of *The Waste Land* by the actor Fiona Shaw was staged in the decayed London music hall, Wilton's. The mood of the poem was reflected in the neglected building; the structure was dangerous, the hall unheated and lit by a single lightbulb. When the staging was later reprised, a *Guardian* review described the event as 'a perfect meeting of performance and architecture'.[9] It is significant that the Fiona Shaw event was described not as a reading, but as a 'performance'. This transition, in terms of both the description and the nature of such events, has been gradual over the years.

Actors as readers

Although their vocal training makes actors potentially ideal readers, a certain nervousness about their delivery was once evident. In 1940, Alec Guinness wrote to Eliot, seeking permission to read some of his work in aid of charity. 'Actors,' he wrote, 'are held in very low esteem by poets, I'm told, because we *dramatise* [Guinness's emphasis].'[10]

The term 'dramatise' used by Guinness might concern any poet, with its suggestion of turning a poem into a piece of theatre. It could be argued that

[9] Lyn Gardner, 'The Waste Land'*, The Guardian* 6th January 2010.
[10] *L9*, 493.

while Jeremy Irons' gestures towards physical entities mentioned in *Little Gidding* during his reading there illuminate Eliot's inspiration, at the same time they emphasise a purely literal interpretation of the text. Add even minimal physical gestures, movements or facial expressions to vocal delivery – let alone reflecting perceived changes in mood, or even distinguishing varied characters within a multivoice work such as *The Waste Land* – and an actor could clearly be said to be 'performing' the text as they would a theatrical script. In which case, of course, they would necessarily be 'interpreting' the words.

Historically, therefore, the Eliot Estate has worked to control this. In 2002, director John Sackville sought permission to stage a multivoice performance of *The Waste Land* during an RSC Fringe Festival. 'A hopeful letter was sent to the Eliot Estate to see if the rights would be granted. Not straightforward. With good reason, the writer had been highly protective of his work being thrust into the realm of interpretation…The response from the Estate, in effect, was that as long as we didn't learn it and move about the stage that would be fine. Despite this being fairly counter-intuitive for an actor, I didn't care. It was a generous offer. I had the chance to do a reading, to do our own kind of Police in Different Voices.' The actors subsequently stood on pedestals, and read from the printed page.[11]

Clearly, by the time of Fiona Shaw's celebrated 1997 'performance' of the poem, such strictures had been relaxed. However, one important element was retained; although Shaw did not read from the printed page (she had memorised the work), and did move on the stage, she remained a single actor reading the poem, even where other characters might be said to inhabit the text. This was similarly the case in 2021, with a 'performance' of *Four Quartets* by Ralph Fiennes, authorised by the Eliot Estate, which was staged in several provincial theatres and the London West End (and subsequently filmed for television broadcast). Fiennes did learn and utter the work by heart, and did move, expressively, upon a dramatically designed and lit stage. But as with Shaw, his was the only voice uttering the poetry.

[11] John Sackville, *1922: The Waste Land*, interview posted by the Jermyn Street Theatre on 18th July 2022 https://www.jermynstreettheatre.co.uk/2022/07/1922-the-waste-land/ (accessed 28th July 2022).

These events might best be described as dramatic enhancements of solo readings. But the term ‘performance’ is one which is understood by the general public, particularly in association with celebrated actors, and is more commercially attractive than the suggestion of a static ‘reading’ from a printed page and lectern. (Indeed, ‘performance poetry’ has become a genre of its own, defining poetry written primarily for live events and only secondarily for publication.) Whether appropriate or not, ‘performance’ is increasingly being used to describe even the most traditional of ‘readings’ by an actor.

Multi-disciplinary events

These events intersperse readings from Eliot’s work with other artistic disciplines such as music, song, dance etc. Initially, such events maintained a clear separation between the poetry and the other disciplines; as we shall see, this stricture was to be gradually relaxed.

Such multi-disciplinary events began within six months of Eliot’s death, with an *Homage to T.S. Eliot*, staged at the Globe Theatre, London on June 13 1965. The *New Yorker* magazine summarised it thus:

> The Globe Theatre was the scene for a program of diverse talents gathered like a mixed bouquet under the title *Homage to T.S. Eliot*, to honor the poet and to benefit the London Library, of which he was president. It began with Igor Stravinsky's solemn requiem from the Mass for the Dead. Next the choir of Westminster Abbey sang Stravinsky's *Introitus*. Then came the main body of the program, the reading by some of the theatre's most celebrated male voices, of poems chosen for the occasion by W.H. Auden. Paul Scofield read or spoke parts of *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday*. Laurence Olivier read a section of *Little Gidding* and Peter O'Toole gave Prufrock's lament. The hit of the evening was Groucho Marx, who appeared conservatively dressed, speaking in the mild, cultured tones of a university professor. The other high spot of the evening was a production of *Sweeney Agonistes*, directed by Peter Wood and acted against a projection screen on which a luminous disc of brilliant spots & other optical razzle-dazzle, designed by Bridget Riley, constantly changed color. Nicol

> Williamson was excellent as Sweeney. Musical score composed by bandleader Johnny Dankworth & played by his band.[12]

It appears that this event, despite combining readings, music, lightshow and performance in its 'mixed bouquet', did, indeed, adhere to Eliot's proscriptions, 'remaining faithful' as his trustees later defined it, 'to the poet's wish that his work should not be staged or set to music'.[13] The music which opened the event was separated from his work, which performers separately 'read or spoke'. The only element combining multiple disciplines simultaneously (which might be interpreted as a 'setting') was the 'production' of *Sweeney Agonistes*, but that was a work which had been described on publication by Eliot as a 'melodrama'.[14]

In September 1988, elements of that *Homage* event were echoed in *How Pleasant To Meet Mr Eliot*, 'A Celebration of the Centenary of the Birth of T.S. Eliot', at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. The music and poetry had become somewhat more combined some 23 years later. In accustomed manner, Harold Pinter and Suzanne Bertish read from Eliot's poetry at the event; and the Spectrum ensemble performed the John Dankworth setting of *Sweeney Agonistes* in its first public performance since the 1965 *Homage* event. But this 'birthday celebration of poetry and music' included performances, by the English Chamber Choir and musicians of the Park Lane Group, of pieces by composers including Britten, who had been permitted since the poet's death to set some of Eliot's works to music. And along with readings from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, 'vibrant choruses' were sung from 'Andrew Lloyd-Webber's dynamic musical' *Cats*, based upon the poems, which had opened in 1981.[15]

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[12] Mollie Panter-Downes, *Letter from London*, The New Yorker, June 26th, 1965: 82.
[13] Faber editor, *T. S. Eliot estate welcomes responses to The Waste Land during centenary year,* https://www.faber.co.uk/journal/t-s-eliot-estate-welcomes-creative-responses-to-the-waste-land-during-centenary-year/ posted 15th March 2021 (accessed 28th July 2022).
[14] T.S. Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932).
[15] 'How pleasant to meet Mr Eliot', 26th September 1988 at at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, programme accessed at T.S. Eliot estate archive, 20th April 2022.

These events were staged in order to illustrate and celebrate the breadth of Eliot's work. However, selections of multi-discipline components have also been assembled, and titled, in order to create events which demonstrate or draw attention to particular aspects of his work.

Such an approach was typified by *T.S. Eliot and Decadence*, a 2017 event in London subtitled 'A live event featuring a glittering line-up of speakers, poetry readings and live music, which will transport you back to Paris in 1910 and to the amazing cultural scene which so decisively influenced the work of T. S. Eliot. The programme claimed that 'This special event will show how French cultural influences played a profound part in forging the mature work of T. S. Eliot as a poet, writer and critic.'[16]

There could be no clearer statement of the object of an event, and it demonstrates the way in which, using the title, stated objective and content of an event, an audience's focus can be concentrated on a particular aspect of the poet's work and life. The multi-disciplinary nature of this event – readings by a celebrated actor (Simon Callow), performances of music from the period, and talks by relevant experts on the culture of the time – guided the audience to a recognition of aspects of Eliot's early poetry of which they might not have been previously aware.

A similar concept lay behind *Marie, Marie, Hold On Tight*, an event staged in April 2022, marking the coincident centenary of both the publication of *The Waste Land*, and the death of music hall artiste Marie Lloyd. 'There is a deep and surprising relationship between Marie Lloyd, T. S. Eliot and Eliot's poetry,' stated the promotional material for the event. 'Eliot loved popular song and music-hall in particular – his brand of modernism aspired to the collaborative quality of the music-hall; his poetic imagination and ear were haunted by its rhythms and the slipperiness of its disguised meanings and double entendres.'[17]

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[16] 'T.S. Eliot and Decadence', Tues 21st February 2017 at Kings Place, London https://tseliot.com/foundation/t-s-eliot-and-decadence/ (accessed 28th July 2022)
[17] 'Marie, Marie, Hold on Tight! - T. S. Eliot, Marie Lloyd and the making of Modernism', 11/12th April 2022 at Wilton's Music Hall, London https://wiltons.org.uk/web/whatson/711-dead-poets-live- (accessed 28th July 2022)

There are quotes from, and allusions to, music hall in *The Waste Land* and other Eliot poems, as well as an essay on Marie Lloyd written by Eliot after her death, and this material was drawn upon in the event, together with performances of Lloyd's own songs, in the appropriate and evocative setting of the (by then restored) Wilton's Music Hall in London.

In those multi-disciplinary events, separation was maintained between the poetry and the music. However, in 2018, an 'unprecedented collaborative performance' of Eliot's *Four Quartets* took place in New York and later in London, 'the first to be authorised by the TS Eliot Estate'.[18] The event combined original choreography, music and costumes, and a stage design featuring contemporary art, all simultaneous with a reading of the poetry.

The Estate's authorisation of an event involving dance might seem unlikely, given Eliot's own response to a similar request in a letter of March 1947: 'But as for a sort of ballet, which I imagine is what you mean by a choreographic setting of *The Dry Salvages*, it simply makes my stomach turn over…I cannot possibly conceive any such ballet having any relation to the poem except the title. Please do anything else you like but don't do this.'[19]

An article in the *New York Times*, when the 2018 event was premiered, explained how the Estate's approval was obtained. 'When [artistic director] Mr. Lester approached Clare Reihill, the trustee of the Eliot Estate, for permission to set the poem to dance, she was immediately intrigued. 'I honestly couldn't see anything that would prevent me from saying yes,' she said. 'Even though it's a kind of unified event, the poem emerges in its own right.''[20] Once again, a sense of the separation of the poetry from the other disciplines, a reassurance that 'the poem emerges in its own right', has been key to the event receiving assent.

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[18] 'Four Quartets', programme description, Barbican Theatre, London, 22nd-25th May 2019 https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/event/four-quartets (accessed 28th July 2022)

[19] *P1*, xvi.

[20] Gia Kourlas, 'A Choreographer Unafraid of Masterpieces Takes on T.S. Eliot', *New York Times*, 3rd July 2018.

And the language used in describing the event's relationship to the poetry is similarly removed from any suggestion of either interpretation or representation of the text. When the event was staged at the Barbican in London in May 2019, the announcement stated that the choreographer '*taps into* [my emphasis] Eliot's four-part poem'; the narrator is 'capturing the dynamic and kinetic language of *Four Quartets*'; and the stage design is 'making connections' to the geographical locations of the poems.[21] In each case, any suggestion that the disciplines are interpreting, representing or explaining the text has been carefully avoided.

Words and Music

Eliot's proscription against setting his poems to music has been scrupulously observed. Typically, when a setting of *The Waste Land* was authorised in 2015 from jazz composer Nick Roth, it was reported that 'the Eliot Estate stipulated that the music could not play simultaneously with the readings but only in the breaks between the various sections.'[22] However, separating music and poetry is not necessarily a hindrance. One particular event has consistently succeeded in pairing Eliot's poetry with a stand-alone musical performance, yet illuminating the verse. It has been staged on many occasions in different locations, including in the UK Christ Church, Spitalfields (2007), the Donmar Warehouse, London (2009), Castle Howard (2016), and the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford (2020). That event is a reading of Eliot's *Four Quartets* together with a performance of Beethoven's Quartet in A Minor Op 132. 'East Coker' was paired with the same Beethoven Quartet in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the interment of Eliot's ashes at St Michael's, East Coker in 2015.

The pairing was explained for one such event, Words Move/Music Moves, a US-based touring programme pairing the two works. 'Beethoven's *A Minor Quartet* and Eliot's *Four Quartets* represent efforts by each man to address the

[21] *Four Quartets*, programme description, Barbican Theatre.

[22] Ian Patterson, 'T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land With Nick Roth Quintet at Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival 2015'*, All About Jazz*, 21st August 2015 https://www.allaboutjazz.com/ts-eliots-the-waste-land-with-nick-roth-quintet-at-happy-days-enniskillen-international-beckett-festival-2015-by-ian-patterson (accessed 28th July 2022).

most fundamental questions of human existence. Presented together they reflect upon and amplify one another in an infinitely stimulating artistic dynamic.'[23] But in addition to such abstraction, there are overt connections, both biographical and structural, between the two works to justify their juxtaposition.

'I am delighted to hear that you have been at the late Beethoven', Eliot wrote in March 1931 to Stephen Spender. 'I have the A minor Quartet on the gramophone, and find it quite inexhaustible to study. There is a sort of heavenly or at least more than human gaiety about some of his later things which one imagines might come to oneself as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering; I should like to get something of that into verse once before I die.'[24]

When Edwin Muir reviewed 'Little Gidding' in the *New Statesman*, Eliot wrote thanking him, and added, 'You are quite right in supposing that the Beethoven late quartets were present in the background.'[25] It is rare to encounter such a personal and specific confirmation of a connection between Eliot's poetry and its inspiration from another medium.

From its title onwards, there are also clear connections between *Four Quartets* and the compositional structure of string quartets. The A Minor Quartet is the only one of Beethoven's late quartets which has five movements, the structure echoed in Eliot's *Quartets*. But, as Dame Helen Gardner wrote in *The Art of T.S. Eliot*, 'The more familiar we become with *Four Quartets*, however, the more we realise that the analogy with music goes much deeper than a comparison of the sections with the movements of a quartet, or than an identification of the four elements as 'thematic material'. One is constantly reminded of music by the treatment of images, which recur with constant modifications, from their context, or from their combination with other recurring images, as a phrase recurs with modifications in music.'[26]

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[23] 'Words Move/Music Moves', programme description, https://www.fourquartets.org/words-move-music-moves (accessed 28th July 2022)
[24] *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, Volume 5: 1930-1931*, ed Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 528.
[25] *P1*, 895.
[26] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), 48.

It is significant that this pairing presents the two works separately and in their entirety, retaining their individual integrity. Nevertheless, their juxtaposition within a single event is intended not only to highlight both structural and biographical connections between the two works, but to achieve an experience greater than that of encountering them independently. As the programme for the Words Move/Music Moves event states, 'Beyond illuminating the musical dimension of *Four Quartets* and the philosophical dimension of the late string quartets, the juxtaposition of Beethoven's music and Eliot's poetry reveals a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts…'[27]

The juxtaposition of works in a single event therefore offers a potential illumination, both of the poetry and of the work(s) with which it is presented. Such an event may serve to introduce audiences more familiar with one work to those with which it is juxtaposed, so that Beethoven enthusiasts experience the Eliot work and *vice versa*. It places music which was significant to Eliot into the consciousness of the Eliot-reading audience. And while it is clearly possible to both read and listen to the separate works at home, the live event also involves the commitment of time, the focussed intensity of live performance, the space and/or architecture of the event venue and a communal audience presence, all of which can enhance the aesthetic experience, and bring connections between the works to the surface.

Such juxtapositions demand a significant relationship between the works concerned. As soon as Eliot's poetry is juxtaposed with other works within an event, evidence of some kind of association between the two is required, in order to explain that juxtaposition, and give the event a credibility and purpose. That association justifies the use of Eliot's name and work, and will attract an audience of Eliot enthusiasts. But some events employ terms such as 'response to', 'inspired by' and 'celebration of', in order to achieve an association with Eliot or his work, without employing Eliot's actual text, or requiring permission for the use thereof. Are such terms sufficient to justify the use of Eliot's name in order to stage an event?

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[27] 'Words Move/Music Moves'.

I Fagiolini are a British solo-voice ensemble, who have created and performed on several occasions an event entitled *Re-Wilding The Waste Land*, a programme of vocal music from the 16th to 21st century, 'mixing music for voices with the poem'[28] The music is not performed behind the poetry, but the event 'intersperses readings from it with Renaissance music, choral works from Eliot's time and new commissions.'[29] There is no specific connection to the text of Eliot's poem; instead, their Director explains their musical programme as 'I Fagiolini's *creative response* [my emphasis]'[30] to *The Waste Land*; a description which effectively exonerates an event from any responsibility to the text.

Because a 'response' is filtered through the consciousness and creativity of a third party, no objective connection to the text needs to be presented. Essentially, *any* artistic creation or performance can be a 'response' to (or be 'inspired by') an Eliot poem; its validity is a matter for critical debate. The Estate can sometimes police such events, ultimately by withholding permission for the use of its copyright material. But it is not even necessary to incorporate the poetry itself into events which are described in such amorphous terms as 'responses'. The methods by which such events are organised, assembled and presented, and the explanations of association which they offer, may lead to accusations that the poetry or its author are being misinterpreted or misrepresented.

Art – visual responses

As we have seen, Eliot specifically proscribed illustration of his poetry. In one converse situation, however, he wrote text to accompany visual material, in a public event. His concerns about the relationship between visuals and text are relevant to later events which sought to present visual 'responses' to his poetry.

Britain at War was an exhibition of British war photographs arranged by E. McKnight Kauffer for the British Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1940. Eliot was asked for a text to accompany the photographs, and explained

[28] Robert Hollingworth, Director, I Fagiolini, *Re-Wilding The Waste Land*, programme description, https://www.ifagiolini.com/rewilding (accessed 28th July 2022).
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

in a letter to John Hayward of 11 June 1940 the precise manner in which his text was to be experienced: 'You walk around in a determined order, so that you only see one clause at a time, and necessarily in that order.' [31]

The following year, the exhibition was mounted at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and a book, *Britain at War*, was published to accompany it.[32] Within the book, which reproduced the exhibition's photographs, Eliot's text, titled *Defense of the Islands*, was printed in isolation, as the first item in the contents, with no attempt to link it to the photography. The volume's Acknowledgments declared that 'Grateful acknowledgment is also extended to T.S. Eliot for contributing his poem, *Defense of the Islands*'.[33]

Eliot was very concerned about the way in which the isolated text would be considered. He wrote to John Hayward on 14 July 1941, 'I had always supposed that the screed I wrote…was prose. Ted [McKnight Kauffer] had cabled briefly to ask permission to print it in some volume, which I gathered was of a propaganda kind: but I was disconcerted to find it featured as a *poem*. [Eliot's emphasis] And I fear that without the photos scattered in between…it will not look very coherent.' [34]

His concern persisted. In 1949, he wrote to Walter McElroy 'I am glad you mentioned *Defence* (sic) *of the Islands* because I was rather distressed when I found that people regarded it as a poem. I had no idea of writing a poem and I do not wish to reprint it. These words were written for a particular purpose in 1940 to accompany an exhibition of photographs…Each one of the sentences was meant to apply to and to appear in large letters on the wall together with an appropriate group of photographs, and to my way of thinking the words themselves lose a great deal of their meaning without the photographs they were designed to accompany.'[35]

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[31] *L9*, 559.
[32] *Britain at War*, ed. Monroe Wheeler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941)
[33] *ibid*, 6.
[34] *L9*, 865.
[35] *P1*, 1046.

Some years later, when he was finally sent a copy of his text, he commented that 'I still think of the piece rather as a collection of captions than as a poem.'[36] Eliot did include the text in his 1963 *Collected Poems*, but in a section headed 'Occasional Verses' – a description distinguishing not only between 'poems' and 'verses', but also between work written for itself, and works commissioned for particular occasions or events.

Defence of the Islands was clearly composed for display, as part of an event, juxtaposed with other works, and not to be read in isolation. Eliot's comments underline his own awareness of the relationship between a text and an event; the way in which the two interact; and the impact upon perception of disincorporating a text from its intended display – or, by inference, incorporating a text *into* an event or display for which it was *not* intended.

These issues came to the fore with a visual event in 2018. Supported by ten sponsors, including the Arts Council England and the T.S. Eliot Foundation, *Journeys With 'The Waste Land'* was a major exhibition at the Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate, presenting almost 100 objects and the work of over 60 artists. The title '*Journeys With…*' already hints at a parallel engagement, travelling alongside or utilising the text; and the exhibition was subtitled 'A visual response to T.S. Eliot's poem', employing that liquid term 'response'.[37]

In addition, the event's promotional material listed 33 other events around Margate, including talks, walks, exhibitions and performances, 'inspired' by the exhibition, a similarly flexible term. Indeed, several of these events offered only tenuous connections with the poem, eg free yoga sessions titled *Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*.[38]

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[36] *P1*, 1047.

[37] 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land'', Turner Contemporary, Margate, 3rd February-7th May 2018, exhibition description. https://turnercontemporary.org/whats-on/journeys-with-the-wasteland/ (accessed 28th July 2022).

[38] 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land', Turner Contemporary, exhibition programme leaflet.

The *Journeys With 'The Waste Land'* exhibition itself was, according to its material, 'the culmination of a three year project designed to develop a pioneering approach to curating.' As Rachel Campbell-Johnston summarised it in *The Times*, 'It is an unusual exhibition in that it has been curated by a group of local people who, responding to an open call from the gallery, have spent several months discussing personal feelings and mulling over the connections between art, poetry and life. It sounds dangerously like a recipe for sprawling self-indulgence and disaster.'[39]

The explanations of links with the poetry became, in this exhibition, captions explaining the associations that group members themselves felt existed between an artwork and the poem. So a Berenice Abbot photograph of a woman working on a 1940s computer was captioned by a contributing member of the Group thus: 'We're connected, but disconnected. I think Eliot was probing a not dissimilar conundrum in *The Waste Land*, just in a different era.' Similarly, *Abstract Design* by Wyndham Lewis was present because, according to a contributor, 'It's a visual distortion of reality, in the same way that *The Waste Land* is a literary distortion of reality.'[40] These associations were not justified by presenting any specific connections to the text itself. So, for example, there was no explanation of the manner in which *The Waste Land* might be described as 'a literary distortion of reality'. Indeed, a contemporary video work by John Smith, featuring the artist's visit to a pub lavatory, shown over his slurred reading from the poem, was captioned by a contributor thus: 'The fact that John Smith connects the poem to the interior of a pub toilet also reinforces that it's ok to connect the poem to anything. For me all interpretations are valid.'[41]

However, as the *Financial Times* observed, 'Modernist work may look chaotic, accidental, close to collapse, but it is invariably controlled by a master — Eliot is the supreme example — of formal technique and conceptual rigour. And so it is with curating: anything goes doesn't work.'[42]

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[39] Rachel Campbell-Johnston, 'Review: Journeys with The Waste Land at Turner Contemporary, Margate', *The Times*, 2nd February 2018.
[40] 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land', Turner Contemporary, wall captions.
[41] 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land', Turner Contemporary, wall caption.
[42] Jackie Wullschlager, 'On Margate sands: Turner gallery honours The Waste Land's impact', *Financial Times*, 2nd February 2018.

The ‘innovative approach’ to curation meant that while the exhibits may have held personal significance for the contributors, few displayed any significant connection to the text. (It could of course be argued that, were such an exhibition to *achieve* significant connection to the text, it would then fall foul of Eliot’s own proscription against ‘illustrating’ his work.) An event ostensibly connected to *The Waste Land* therefore failed to illuminate the poem, instead exhibiting what *The Times* described as ‘a jumble of disparate works’.[43]

The event may have achieved objectives in terms of engaging local residents with art. But Jonathan Jones in *The Guardian* argued that the prioritising of the event’s democratic curation over any disciplined reflection of the text actually led to a misrepresentation of the poem. ‘*The Waste Land* is a stupendous work of art,’ he wrote, ‘one of the supreme creations of modernism, a multifaceted crystal of beautiful images. One thing it is not, and has no wish to be, is an accessible – let alone loveable – pop anthem in which we can all find ourselves and celebrate our community…This exhibition ends up drawing attention to the profound gap between the disdainful seriousness of high modernism in 1922, and our own desire for culture to be sharable and democratic. It ends up conveying – to use the words of Eliot – nothing with nothing.’[44]

***Multicultural, multimedia – The Waste Land* centenary**

As the centenary of the 1922 publication of *The Waste Land* approached, the Estate took an unprecedented step to encourage celebratory events. In May 2021 they issued the previously quoted statement through Faber & Faber, Eliot’s publisher, in which they also declared that: ‘To mark *The Waste Land*’s centenary, the Eliot Estate would like to invite theatre-makers, dramatists, choreographers, video artists, composers and artists to respond to the poem. The Estate cannot in good conscience waive performance-rights-fees in their entirety but, throughout 2022, it would be delighted to help facilitate some projects, adaptations or use of *The Waste Land* that might ordinarily be judged

[43] Campbell-Johnston, ‘Review’.

[44] Jonathan Jones, ‘Journeys With The Waste Land review – 'If only they'd picked Cats instead!'’, *The Guardian*, 2nd February 2018.

to be too counter to Eliot's proscriptions.'[45] One of the first and most creative of the events to take place as a consequence was *f r a g m e n t s*, an 'experiential festival' taking place over an extended weekend, intended as 'the largest celebration to mark 100 years of T.S. Eliot's five part poem'.[46]

Commissioned by the T.S. Eliot Estate, this was an event whose multicultural and multimedia nature was specifically conceived as a 'response' to Eliot's poem. 'Following the methodology of Eliot's writing,' the festival's press release explained, '*f r a g m e n t s* has been devised to combine a plurality of different voices, different spiritual cultures, popular culture as well as high art. Just as Eliot brought a diversity of styles, influences and tastes into his writing so the curators have done the same to reflect the defining elements of *The Waste Land*.'[47]

More than 50 'fragments' were staged over the five days of the festival, the majority just 15 minutes long and staged within churches in the City of London. Audiences moved between the different venues in order to take in several events during a chosen time-slot, and experience many of the locations specifically mentioned in the poem. Both the locations and the performances therefore provided experiences which illuminated aspects of the poem.

Given contemporary interest in inclusivity and diversity in the arts, the festival provided a valuable platform for staging a wide range of performances, creations and events. It could even be argued that, at a time when Eliot himself

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[45] Faber editor, 'T. S. Eliot estate welcomes responses to The Waste Land during centenary year', https://www.faber.co.uk/journal/t-s-eliot-estate-welcomes-creative-responses-to-the-waste-land-during-centenary-year/ posted 15th March 2021 (accessed 28th July 2022).

[46] f r a g m e n t s festival website, https://thewasteland2022.com/) (accessed 1st August 2022).

[47] Press release, f r a g m e n t s: A six day celebration of the 100th anniversary of TS Eliot's The Waste Land https://www.balletcoforum.com/topic/25257-press-release-f-r-a-g-m-e-n-t-s-a-six-day-celebration-of-the-100th-anniversary-of-ts-eliot%E2%80%99s-the-waste-land/ (accessed 29th July 2022).

suffers accusations of political unacceptability, such performances connected to his name and poetry presented a rehabilitative demonstration of the cultural diversity of Eliot's work and influences.

But there are different justifications at play when presenting the audience with, for example, music that has an actual presence in *The Waste Land*, performances of which may illuminate passages in the work, such as ragtime or Wagner; the music of cultures which have a presence in the poem, like Indian culture, although their music does not; and the music of cultures which have no presence at all within the poem, as either culture or music, such as flamenco and fado. And this laid the event open to the accusation, voiced in *The Telegraph*, that 'at its worst, it felt as if Eliot was here little more than a façade for art that had not even attempted to engage with his own'.[48]

Indeed, the relationship between some of the events and the text of the poem were difficult to discern; as *The Telegraph* reported, 'no spurious link to Eliot was left unmade...Playing in St Mary Abchurch was a film celebrating 'the nature of our brain activity'. The link to Eliot was beyond tenuous: the fact that *The Waste Land* is a poem that 'stretches our brains'.'[49] (Similarly, performances by a disc jockey, playing various recordings, were accompanied by the explanation, 'This performance evokes the line in the poem, '*And puts a record on the gramophone*''.[50])

Response to some of the *f r a g m e n t s* festival may alert subsequent event organisers to the danger of stretching the connection to Eliot's work too far. It was the two most direct and complete performances of *The Waste Land* itself in the festival – an 'electro-acoustic music installation' by Pierre-Yves Macé, and a 'filmed reading installation' featuring the heads of five actors – which were repeated at subsequent events (such as the Enniskillen International Beckett Festival in July 2022).

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[48] Francesca Peacock, 'This elaborate TS Eliot tribute is a slightly wasted opportunity', *The Telegraph* 10th April 2022.
[49] Ibid.
[50] 'Unreal City 1-5', f r a g m e n t s festival, 9th April 2022 https://thewasteland2022.com/fragment/fragment-5-8-unreal-city-3-london/ (accessed 29th July 2022).

Along with books, broadcasts, documentaries and discussions, the centenary year of *The Waste Land* proceeded with an unprecedented number of live events. Readings (or 'performances') were the most common, from those by leading actors such as Benedict Cumberbatch, Simon Callow, Dame Eileen Atkins and Roger Allam, down to local reading groups and arts societies. In one innovative event, three leading poets published by Faber (two of whom were winners of the T.S. Eliot Prize for poetry) read *The Waste Land* at Margate's literary festival.[51] Later in the year, three other Faber poets – two shortlisted and one winner of the T.S. Eliot Prize – were to reprise the event at St Mary Woolnoth Church.[52] Both events therefore presented a combination of readers with poetic (rather than dramatic) status; a publishing prize connected to Eliot; and locations relevant to both the poem and its author.

Nick Roth's jazz setting of the poem, mentioned earlier, was performed at the Hay Festival in June 2022.[53] A London theatre staged *He Do The Police In Different Voices: How The Waste Land was made*, a show intended to 'explore the fascinating process of alteration and refinement' of the poem by Ezra Pound and Vivien Eliot.[54] And twenty years after its conception, the multi-voice dramatisation conceived by John Sackville was staged twice in one night at the Jermyn Street Theatre, London in July 2022.[55] (While the performers did

[51] 'Margate Bookie 2022 Closing Event at Turner Contemporary', Margate, 5th June 2022 https://turnercontemporary.org/whats-on/margate-bookie-2022-closing-event/ (accessed 29th July 2022).
[52] 'Faber Poets read The Waste Land', 12th October 2022, St Mary Woolnoth Church, London https://www.faber.co.uk/product/faber-poets-read-the-waste-land/ (accessed 29th July 2022).
[53] 'The Waste Land', event 346 at Hay Festival, Hay-on-Wye, 4th June 2022 https://www.hayfestival.com/p-19050-the-waste-land.aspx (accessed 29th July 2022).
[54] 'He Do The Police In Different Voices: How The Waste Land was made', Dead Poets Live, at the Coronet Theatre, London 20th-22nd October 2022 https://www.thecoronettheatre.com/whats-on/dead-poets-live-the-waste-land/ (accessed 29th July 2022).
[55] '1922: The Waste Land', at Jermyn Street Theatre, London on 24th July 2022 https://www.jermynstreettheatre.co.uk/show/1922-the-waste-land/ (accessed 29th July 2022).

deliver their lines from memory, whether by direction or constraint they still did not move.)

Calculating the future

It is possible that the many events of *The Waste Land* centenary year, together with the performances of *Four Quartets*, will engender a newly creative approach to Eliot events in the future. The Estate's statement with regard to facilitating responses referred specifically to *The Waste Land*, and only to events 'throughout 2022'. But the success of the events in promoting Eliot's name and work, widening the poetry's appeal, presenting new artistic juxtapositions, and providing new routes of access to the poetry, might encourage a continuation of openness in the future.

The issues of imposing interpretation upon the poetry will, however, remain. As we have seen, from the simplest solo 'uttering' of a poem, to the juxtaposition with other artistic disciplines, live events necessarily impose interpretation upon a text which was written to be read by individuals upon a printed page. Whether that interpretation is 'justified' is a matter for critical judgment, much as we judge interpretations of a drama script, but such experiences will clearly influence the way in which audiences engage with the poetry.

If adhered to scrupulously, Eliot's own proscription – 'I want my readers to get their impression from the words alone and from nothing else' – would prohibit *all* events other than straightforward readings of the poems. But the best can illuminate or enhance the poetry, and we surely gain from the knowledge derived from such experiences.

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The Contrasting Transmedia Influences of Visual Artists Wyndham Lewis and R.B. Kitaj on T.S. Eliot's Legacy

Jaron Murphy

In *T.S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (2003), David E. Chinitz presents 'a new narrative of Eliot's career'[1] which challenges the dominant image of Eliot in 20th-century literary history as 'the hero or antihero of a losing battle to defend a pristine and sacralized high art from the threatening pollution of 'lower levels' of culture'.[2] He traces instead a 'culturally elastic'[3] Eliot whose 'actual relations with popular culture were far more nuanced and showed a far greater receptivity'[4] than previously acknowledged. Ultimately, Chinitz suggests that critical recognition of a transgressive Eliot who 'liked a good show, a good thriller, a good tune, as well as a 'great' poem'[5] is necessary to sustain Eliot's legacy into the 21st century: 'This Eliot is needed today… if Eliot is to matter at all.'[6] Relatedly, in his Preface to *The Edinburgh Companion to T.S. Eliot and the Arts* (2016), Ronald Schuchard hails 'a significant new turn to the arts in the work of T.S. Eliot' which avails itself of much-anticipated editions [of the Letters] commissioned by Valerie Eliot, builds upon Chinitz's thesis, and expands 'the range and depth of the Asian, Renaissance, Victorian, and modern art forms with which Eliot enriches the cultural texture of his oeuvre'.[7] However, while plentiful evidence from Eliot's life and work of his engagement with the visual arts is highlighted to advance understanding of 'the significant inter[-]art dimension of a foremost exemplar of

[1] David E. Chinitz, *T.S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 13.
[2] Ibid., 5.
[3] Ibid., 6.
[4] Ibid., 4.
[5] Ibid., 18.
[6] Ibid., 189.
[7] Ronald Schuchard, 'Preface', in *The Edinburgh Companion to T.S. Eliot and the Arts*, ed. Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), xi.

modernism',[8] consideration of the relation between Eliot, the visual arts and his legacy has not been – but should be, this article argues – extended to the reverse: visual arts engagement with Eliot.

As this article will show, prominent and enduring association of Eliot with the visual arts into the 21st century, and the striking kinds of images we can receive of him across media in our digital age, owe much to positive and negative portrayals of Eliot through works by Wyndham Lewis and R.B. Kitaj respectively. This article will foreground several powerful and contrasting representations of Eliot by Lewis and Kitaj, who were both highly controversial visual artists and writers. These representations have not received due recognition as remarkable generators of impressions and shapers of perceptions of Eliot in the increasingly complex multimedia environment of the 21st century, to which they have been so readily adaptable. This article will also argue that these representations of Eliot, which can be encountered across canvas, print and online (including websites and social media), are major driving forces of Eliot's transmedia visibility, and therefore of continued and even increased public attention to him as a world-renowned literary figure. It is hoped this article will stimulate further scholarship on visual artists' creative responses to Eliot and their importance to his legacy in the digital age.

Critical attention to the arts in Eliot's work is, of course, essential and nothing new. In *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (1949), for instance, Helen Gardner reflects on the signposted debt Eliot 'owes to the art of music'[9] in *Four Quartets* (1943) and how his 'experiments in drama are closely related'[10] to his poetic development. The novelty of the 'new turn' lies, rather, in its explicit concentration on the arts at a time of reinvigorated scholarship and re-evaluation of Eliot's legacy into the 21st century. As acknowledged in the *Companion*, various general studies since the 1970s have broadly illuminated Eliot's engagement with the visual arts: from Gertrude Patterson's *T.S. Eliot: Poems in the Making* (1971) to Charles Altieri's 'Visual Art' in *T.S. Eliot in Context* (2011). This has made it possible for

[8] Ibid., ix.
[9] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (1949; London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 36.
[10] Ibid., 129.

'more focused studies' on Eliot to be undertaken concerning 'individual movements and artists'.[11] Whereas Altieri's chapter appears midway in 'Part Two: Forms'[12] before chapters on dance, drama, music and radio, attention to these same forms is collectively scaled up in the *Companion*. It situates Eliot's engagement with the visual arts – through a clutch of chapters upfront on topics such as Asian and African art in Paris and London museums, Italian painting, and Matisse – within Eliot's multifaceted, lifelong interest in the wider arts 'in both popular and high culture'[13] which is further explored in multi-chapter sections on performance arts and media.

Such direct and intensive scrutiny of Eliot's relation to the visual arts, effectively fleshing out Chinitz's conception of a more relatable and relevant Eliot who was a 'culturally elastic' connoisseur of the arts, becomes even more compelling when viewed against the backdrop of biographies which, understandably, trace other important aspects of Eliot's development. For instance, in *Young Eliot: From St Louis to The Waste Land* (2016), Robert Crawford's narrative 'attends to Eliot's graduate student interests in philosophy' and 'intellectual brilliance' while counteracting what he describes as excessive treatment of Eliot 'over the last two decades… as a thinker more than a poet'.[14] The dichotomy of poet and thinker is also evident in Lyndall Gordon's revised *The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot* (2012) where, in her coverage of Eliot's sojourn in Paris in 1910/11, she writes that he 'came to Paris to be a poet; he left a philosophy student'[15] – an intellectual departure, as it were, which is rebalanced within

[11] Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern, eds. 'Introduction', *The Edinburgh Companion to T.S. Eliot and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 3.
[12] Jason Harding, ed., 'Contents', *T.S. Eliot in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), viii.
[13] Schuchard, 'Preface', xi.
[14] Robert Crawford, *Young Eliot: From St Louis to The Waste Land* (London: Vintage, 2016), 7.
[15] Lyndall Gordon, *The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot* (1998; London: Virago, 2012), 62.

her overall account of Eliot's poetry as a 'coherent form of spiritual autobiography'.[16]

Refreshingly, the 'new turn' provides biographers and critics with an abundance of detail on Eliot's engagement with the visual arts, not least at pivotal stages of his early development, which might bring further nuance to narratives concerning his artistic sensibility. A wide range of correspondences between the life and work are highlighted, which somewhat offset the ascendancy of philosophy when he left Paris, such as his studies as a Harvard student of Italian Renaissance artists and his visits to museums in Paris, Italy and London. Drawing attention to Eliot's commencement of writing 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1917) in 1910/11, with its lines 'In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo',[17] Schuchard speculates that Eliot may have had in mind Fenway Court 'just as memories of Okakura and the Titian Room may have inspired the presence of 'Hakagawa among the Titians' in 'Gerontion' [1920]'.[18] Significantly, the *Companion* conveys that from 'his first publications, Eliot's poetry invited comparison with modern art movements that he first encountered in Paris and subsequently in London, including Fauvism, German Expressionism, Futurism, Vorticism, and most prominently Cubism'.[19] The accumulation of these sorts of connections, both the definitive and speculative, increasingly illustrates how important Eliot's lived experience as a knowledgeable seeker and admirer of, and creative borrower from, the visual arts is to appreciation of his oeuvre.

The 'new turn' Eliot who emerges in the *Companion*, then, along the trajectory set by Chinitz, is more biographically grounded in his work in relation to the visual arts and, through the later chapters, wider arts. His 'inter[-]art dimension' shows him to be 'far removed from tired allegations of cultural elitism, continuously educating himself not only in literary but in visual and performance traditions, seeking friendships in artistic circles,

[16] Ibid., 11.
[17] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems & Plays* (1969; London: Faber and Faber, 2004), 13.
[18] Schuchard, 'Preface', xii.
[19] Dickey and Morgenstern, eds., 'Introduction', *The Edinburgh Companion*, 4.

and vigorously defending the arts from censorship',[20] as in the case of D.H. Lawrence. Rather than high-mindedly aloof, the 'new turn' Eliot is keenly interested and involved in the arts scene. The quite forensic tracking throughout the *Companion* of his visual arts-related studies and activities makes for interesting comparison with Altieri's general sense that Eliot's 'own actual relation to the visual arts seems to be an outgrowth of his wariness before all visual experience, because that experience seemed so insistently bound to objective surfaces that it could not display the density of relations that, for Eliot, constituted a livable [sic] reality'.[21] As Altieri also observes, it is 'clear from Eliot's letters that what most interested him in the visual arts were images of St Sebastian'[22]; and in the *Companion*, Anne Stillman finds in her examination of Eliot's engagement with Italian painting in 'The Love Song of St. Sebastian' and *Poems* (1920) an ekphrastic imagination: his myriad 'allusions to Italian Renaissance artists and works throughout the mid to late 1910s register an awareness of his own mimesis in 'reproducing' these paintings in poetry'.[23]

However, while the *Companion* can be understood as an elaboration of Chinitz's 'culturally elastic' and more relatable Eliot who 'is needed today… if Eliot is to matter at all', a fuller picture of Eliot's legacy into the 21st century can be gained by widening the critical lens from what Eliot made of the visual arts to what the visual arts have made of Eliot. Schuchard duly reports that Eliot's first poems to be published abroad, 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', appeared in the avant-garde arts periodical *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* (July 1915) among 'numerous Vorticist and Cubist prints and a photograph of Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpted 'Head of Ezra Pound''; and he notes that Eliot 'would remain a lifelong friend of [Wyndham] Lewis and [Jacob] Epstein, both of whom made him the subject of their separate arts'.[24] That Eliot does indeed continue to attract attention and be recognised as a cultural phenomenon is, of course,

[20] Schuchard, 'Preface', xi.
[21] Charles Altieri, 'Visual Art', in *T.S. Eliot in Context,* ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 105.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Dickey and Morgenstern, eds., 'Introduction', *The Edinburgh Companion*, 5.
[24] Schuchard, 'Preface', xiii.

not just owing to his literary achievements but also his associations with other well-known writers and artists, not least those who left records or representations of him which we can read or view to this day. As a central figure of works by outstanding visual artists like Lewis and Epstein, Eliot was clearly not the sole contributor to his legacy, which must be considered, too, through the prism of memorable artistic interpretations and portrayals of him. Eliot's collaboration with Lewis, in particular, constitutes *the* prime example of his 'translation' into visual arts form for posterity. As we will see, Lewis's brilliant yet controversial 1938 portrait of Eliot – which met with Eliot's approval as a potential influence on how he might be remembered – has become a positive and powerful embodiment, so to speak, of not only his connectedness to the visual arts but also its capacity, through transmedia adaptation, to revitalise public consciousness of his cultural stature in the digital age.

Lewis's portrait can be compared with the vastly different approach to the depiction of Eliot by Kitaj in his striking and controversial 'Killer-Critic' in 1997, at the dawn of use of the Internet becoming widespread internationally. This painting, too, along with references to Eliot in his free-verse *Second Diasporist Manifesto* (2007), constitutes a key example of the importance of the visual arts to sustaining Eliot's cultural profile and relevance, and to impacting how he is perceived by audiences not only via canvas and print but also online. In combination, Kitaj's painting and writing amount to extremely hard-hitting criticism of Eliot. They might easily upset admirers of Eliot, unlike Lewis's portrait which encapsulates and perpetuates Eliot's modernist and poetical mystique. As an American-born Jewish artist who lived for many years in the UK, Kitaj emphatically rejects Eliot's theory of impersonality and the anti-Semitism evident in some of Eliot's verse – though he accepts indebtedness to Eliot's early influence as a foremost exemplar of modernism. His spurning of Eliot's cultural authority, however, is fuel for his own art. For Kitaj, Eliot is a species of malevolent Muse. His animus towards Eliot is that of a fiercely individual artist seeking to claim and proclaim for himself a new 'Jewish

Diaspora Art'[25] tradition. This is in stark contrast to Lewis's overall approbation of Eliot, and the fittingly Cubist inspiration Lewis drew from their friendship (and rivalry) for the creation of his portrait. Taken together, these contrary representations of Eliot by Lewis and Kitaj illustrate in part his complex assimilation into the visual arts and indeed his permanent inseparability from the visual arts as a famous literary subject – significant factors, then, for his legacy into the 21st century. Extending across media in the digital age, these versions of Eliot are more widely accessible than ever before.

Wyndham Lewis

Lewis submitted the portrait, rather mischievously, for a decision by the Selection Committee on whether to include it in the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition in 1938. As Paul Edwards describes it: 'In his smart suit, Eliot sits slightly hunched, avoiding our gaze… His haunted expression seems to chime with Eliot's own later belief that he had paid too high a price in personal happiness for being a poet.'[26] The hullabaloo that followed its rejection, including Augustus John's protest resignation and front-page newspaper headlines, has been repeatedly recounted in Lewis scholarship. Although the Academy 'claimed to object to the elaborate 'scrolls' in the background'[27] which contained phallic symbolism, Lewis had 'always disdained the Academy', so his submission 'seemed a move calculated to fail and affirm the 56-year-old artist's continued status as a rebel'. [28] These dramatic events, the portrait's new lease of life post-rejection in Durban, South Africa, and Eliot's remarkable encounter with it there in 1954 have all been covered previously in *The Journal of the T.S. Eliot Society*. Readers who are not familiar with Lewis's unique portrait, which proved to be a lasting boon to Eliot's celebrity, are encouraged to

[25] R.B. Kitaj, *Second Diasporist Manifesto (A New Kind of Long Poem in 615 Free Verses)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). There are no page numbers in Kitaj's book. Hereafter, verse numbers are provided in-text.
[26] Paul Edwards (with Richard Humphreys), *Wyndham Lewis Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2008), 68.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Richard Slocombe, *Wyndham Lewis: Life, Art, War* (London: IWM, 2017), 74.

learn more about its fascinating backstory by consulting the article entitled ‘‘Mr. Eliot has Re-Discovered a Portrait of Himself’: Reframing Lewis’s Rejected Masterpiece in the 21st Century’, which was published in the 2018 edition of the Journal (see pp69-94). While that backstory remains pertinent, attention to Lewis’s portrait in this section serves expressly to form a basis for comparative reflection on the transmedia influences of Lewis and Kitaj on Eliot’s legacy. Here, and in the next section which concludes this article, special attention will be paid to the proliferation online of their respective representations of Eliot as further evidence of their key roles in raising his cultural visibility and impacting his reputation in the digital age.

The prominent treatment in print of Lewis’s masterpiece, which is ‘now considered one of the finest British portraits of the twentieth century’,[29] can be ascertained in part from its reproduction in the catalogue for the ‘Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957)’ exhibition at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid in 2010, as well as its appearance on the cover of, and within, the catalogue for the ‘Wyndham Lewis Portraits’ exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2008. The latter confirms this as Lewis’s ‘most famous portrait’,[30] which is highly impressive given the array of acclaimed literary subjects such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Rebecca West, Edith Sitwell and Ezra Pound. It was inevitable, however, in our increasingly digital age that the standard encounter with Eliot, as it were, at art exhibitions through the original oil-on-canvas portrait, augmented by reproductions and textual information in print, would be elevated to a multimedia experience. A good example of this was the ‘packaged’ display of the portrait at the major retrospective ‘Wyndham Lewis: Life, Art, War’ at the Imperial War Museums North in Manchester in 2017. In conventional fashion, the print catalogue features a reproduction of the portrait on the opposite page to several contextual paragraphs on Lewis’s ‘most controversial painting’.[31] To encourage public engagement, the exhibition experience was enhanced by supplementary material on the

[29] Fundación Juan March (with Paul Edwards and Richard Humphreys et al.), *Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957)* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2010), 238.
[30] Paul Edwards (with Richard Humphreys), *Portraits*, 68.
[31] Richard Slocombe (Preface by Paul Edwards), *Life, Art, War*, 74.

IWM website. This included audio commentary on the portrait, available at that time to anyone with online access but which ceased to be available post-exhibition.

Notably, too, the portrait appeared online multiple times in relation to this exhibition – a glimpse into how the advent of the Internet has further spread, across media, what is arguably *the* iconic image of Eliot internationally, and therefore added a new dimension to reflection on his legacy. A still-accessible article on *The Guardian* newspaper website, for instance, singles out the portrait from the overall exhibition collection. Vignettes on its significance follow a cropped reproduction foregrounding Eliot's head and upper body as well as the 'scrolls'.[32] The article includes observations that Eliot 'looks serious and far from comfortable', with his face 'a jigsaw puzzle of shadowy half-moons and sharp planes' while his hands 'droop from the oversized suit, suggesting the subtle creepiness of a limp handshake'.[33] A link to this article is provided alongside an image of the portrait within a news item, about its presence at the exhibition, dated July 2017 on the T.S. Eliot Society (UK) website. The item has since been archived and is therefore still accessible.[34] There is also the bonus of a link to the newsreel clip, on *YouTube*, of Lewis responding to a journalist's questions following the rejection of the portrait, next to which he is standing. Links to both the newsreel clip and *Guardian* article have since become more readily accessible within the 'Portraits' section of the 'Images of TS Eliot' page which can be visited via the 'Resources' tab.[35] As this links-laden page indicates, images of Eliot – such as photographs, portraits, illustrations, caricatures, film footage and even a US postage stamp – can be found all over the Internet. However, the dissemination online of news and/or images of Lewis's portrait not only confirms its

[32] See https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jul/07/wyndham-lewis-ts-eliot-jigsaw-puzzle-rebellion-radicalism. [Accessed 5 August 2024.]
[33] See https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jul/07/wyndham-lewis-ts-eliot-jigsaw-puzzle-rebellion-radicalism. [Accessed 5 August 2024.]
[34] See http://s699163057.websitehome.co.uk/news-archive-2017. [Accessed 5 August 2024.]
[35] See http://s699163057.websitehome.co.uk/tseliot-images. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]

special importance in heightening Eliot's cultural profile but also illustrates its transmedia adaptability in the digital age.

As the newsreel clip shows, Lewis revelled in the media frenzy after the portrait's rejection; and as the *Guardian* article also indicates, journalism has been a significant conduit for generating public awareness of the portrait via prominent treatment in print and online news coverage of art exhibitions where the portrait has been on display. Other examples of articles featuring the portrait include coverage of the 2008 'Wyndham Lewis Portraits' exhibition by *The Independent* ('Banned TS Eliot portrait goes on show'[36]) and *The Spectator* ('Shifting truths'[37]); coverage of the 2017 'Wyndham Lewis: Life, Art, War' exhibition by *The Art Newspaper* ('Manchester gets first comprehensive retrospective of Wyndham Lewis in 40 years'[38]); and coverage of the 2018 'The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition' by *The Sunday Times* ('Royal Academy shows portrait of TS Eliot after 80 years in wasteland'[39]). The considerable reach of such journalism encompasses online and corresponding print publication (the latter article, for instance, also appears on p16 of the print edition of *The Sunday Times* on the same date, 10 June 2018) as well as online sharing functionality via email and social media such as Twitter (now X) and Meta-owned Facebook and WhatsApp.[40] The appearance of the portrait within journalism is not limited to coverage of art exhibitions. For instance, a photo of Lewis with the portrait, drawn from *Getty Images*, accompanies a 2019 review by *The Telegraph* of Volume 8

[36] See https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/banned-ts-eliot-portrait-goes-on-show-859095.html. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[37] See https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/shifting-truths/. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[38] See https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2017/06/19/manchester-gets-first-comprehensive-retrospective-of-wyndham-lewis-in-40-years. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[39] See https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/royal-academy-shows-portrait-of-ts-eliot-after-80-years-in-wasteland-c6xvrn7m6. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[40] Of course, such journalism is not always 'open access'. It can be subject to online paywalls and print copy prices.

of *The Letters of T.S. Eliot* which asks in the headline, 'is all this really necessary?'.[41]

Beyond journalism, the portrait's transmedia intertwinement with Eliot's legacy can also be seen in resources associated with places immortalised in 'Four Quartets'. On the *Friends of Little Gidding* website, for instance, the 'TS Eliot' tab leads to the cropped portrait alongside an explanation of Eliot's visit in May 1936 and the birth in 2006 of the annual Eliot Festival as well as the T.S. Eliot Society (UK).[42] Albeit at a small size, the portrait also adorns the entry on Eliot on the *Poets' Graves* website, which provides information on his final resting place at St Michael's parish church, East Coker.[43] Print books featuring the portrait on their covers, such as Lewis's volume of essays *Wyndham Lewis the Artist: From 'Blast' to Burlington House* (1939) and Peter Ackroyd's biography *T.S. Eliot* (1984), can be located on Google Books.[44] There is also a Wikipedia entry on the portrait, where it appears in the customary top-right image slot.[45] The portrait has also been incorporated into snippets and blogs, such as a 2009 *flickr.com* entry on Lewis on *Pinterest*;[46] a 2010 'scrapbook' entry on 'The Hollow Men' on *Tribal Interloper* (where the portrait is situated downpage and, at the top, Eliot's cropped head briefly appears in an embedded *YouTube* video with an audio reading of the poem);[47] a 2018 entry on 'Wyndham

[41] See https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/letters-ts-eliot-vol-8-review-really-necessary/. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[42] See https://littlegidding.org.uk/t-s-eliot-and-little-gidding/. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[43] See https://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm. [Accessed 6 August 2024.]
[44] To view these book covers, Google the titles and click Images. Ackroyd's book cover can also be seen within this blog review: https://scottjpearson.com/t-s-eliot-a-life-by-peter-ackroyd/. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[45] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_T._S._Eliot. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[46] See https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/lewis-wyndham-1882-1957-portrait-of-ts-eliot--230316968416845051/. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[47] See https://rudhro.wordpress.com/2010/10/16/audio-this-is-the-way-the-world-ends-this-is-the-way-the-world-ends-this-is-the-way-the-world-ends-not-with-a-bang-but-a-whimper-the-hollow-men-by-t-s-eliot-poetry-reading/. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]

Lewis and the Royal Academy' on the *London Historians' Blog*;[48] and a 2023 entry on 'Ted Hughes' Memorializing Tribute to his Mentor T.S. Eliot' on *The Examined Life.*[49] The *Getty* photo of Lewis with the portrait also arises within a 2016 article on *Blast 1* (1914) on *Flashbak.*[50] A sense of the magnitude of social media posts of images of the portrait can be gained by searching for Eliot, for instance, via Media on Twitter (now X) and scrolling down the results timeline. This is all merely a snapshot of what is out there online.

Suffice to say that the portrait and the photo of Lewis with the portrait have become widely noticeable on websites and social media, in a digital age that has transformed how we can encounter Eliot into expanded transmedia possibilities. Even further expansion can be expected as Artificial Intelligence becomes more widely utilised, following the launch of ChatGPT in 2022. While other portraits and photos of Eliot are also available online, it is Lewis's portrait that continues to stand out for its frequent and prominent use as the representation *par excellence* of Eliot for posterity.[51] This does not mean, however, that the portrait's positive and important contribution to perpetuating Eliot's legacy as a celebrated literary figure, manifestly connected to the visual arts, is not beset with thorny issues. As the survey above of art exhibitions and reproductions in print and online shows, there has tended to be brief, repetitive and ultimately reductive treatment of the portrait as an object of controversy sparked by Lewis. Use of the portrait on websites and social media often comes across as decorative rather than substantive.

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[48] See https://londonhistorians.wordpress.com/2018/06/21/wyndham-lewis-and-the-royal-academy/. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[49] See https://theexaminedlife.org/library/ted-hughes-memorializing-tributes-to-his-mentor-t-s-eliot. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[50] See https://flashbak.com/wyndham-lewis-blast-1-the-daddy-of-the-modern-aesthetic-manifesto-51448/. [Accessed 7 August 2024.]
[51] Lewis's conventional 1949 portrait of Eliot, which appears on the cover of *T.S. Eliot: The Man and His Work* ([1966] 1971), edited by Allen Tate, is not nearly so prolific online.

Eliot's legacy would benefit, therefore, from improved contextualisation across media of his strategic and active, rather than passive and minor, involvement in the creation of the portrait and controversy. That Eliot, by then a famous writer who had been overseeing a golden period for poetry at Faber and Faber, lent himself as a long-time friend and ally to Lewis's agitation against the perceived orthodoxy of the Royal Academy is testament to their mutually beneficial collaboration. Eliot's cultural elasticity here, in solidarity with Lewis as an exponent of innovative modernist painting, helps to explain in part why he continues to be so culturally visible and appealing. Amid widespread circulation of images of the portrait online, Eliot as the sitter deserves more credit for both supporting Lewis and appreciating the likely relevance of the portrait's fortunes to his own cultural profile in the long term. In a letter to Lewis dated 21 April 1938, Eliot expresses his approval of the portrait and recognises its potential role in shaping his legacy. He judges it 'a very good portrait, and one by which I am quite willing that posterity should know me, if it takes any interest in me at all.' [52]

Moreover, improved contextualisation in direct relation to Eliot is sorely needed concerning the portrait's new lease of life post-rejection in South Africa, where it has stayed ever since, except for loans to exhibitions internationally. While displays, and reproductions in print and online, have generally tended to credit the Durban Art Gallery as the portrait's custodian, there has also tended to be a lack of explanation of why and how the portrait came to be rehomed in Durban in late 1939, and a lack of acknowledgement of Eliot's remarkable encounter with the portrait in Durban while on holiday en route to Cape Town in 1954, amid the bigger political picture of apartheid being forcibly entrenched. A photo of Eliot admiring and pointing to the portrait in Durban appeared in local newspaper *The Natal Mercury* and was later published in W.K. Rose's edited *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (1963). Problematically, the portrait has continued to be 'dehistoricised' in these respects even as it has been multiplied extensively online.

[52] W.K. Rose, ed., *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), 251.

R.B. Kitaj

Another powerful representation of Eliot – which could not be more different from Lewis's portrait – forms part of a centrepiece painting within a mixed-media installation by Kitaj that 'electrified'[53] the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition in 1997. Entitled 'The Killer-Critic Assassinated by his Widower, Even', this painting also proved to be highly controversial and merits attention for its repudiation of Eliot's theory of impersonality. Combined with Kitaj's hostility to Eliot in his writing, as a Jewish artist who viewed Eliot as anti-Semitic, this painting poses a significant challenge to Eliot's cultural stature in the multimedia environment of the 21st century, while Kitaj's own reputation – as a contemporary of illustrious figures like David Hockney and Lucian Freud – continues to develop posthumously. Both Kitaj's painting and Lewis's portrait were on display, in different rooms, among the artworks included in the commemorative event entitled 'The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition' in London in 2018. Eliot's encounter with the portrait in Durban in 1954 was not registered in the hefty print catalogue nor in the glass display case (which contained Augustus John's resignation letter) a few steps from where the portrait was positioned; and curiously, too, although Eliot's name is impossible to miss on close inspection of Kitaj's painting, this detail was not highlighted in the catalogue nor addressed in a display area. Nevertheless, as with Lewis's portrait, Kitaj's painting was reproduced in the catalogue with an explanation of its turbulent past.

Again, journalism is an important part of the story. After receiving 'unusually vicious press reviews' for his major retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1994, and blaming these reviews in part for his wife and fellow painter Sandra Fisher's death from a brain aneurysm soon afterwards, Kitaj produced a series of artworks dealing with these traumatic events: 'Sandra One' (1996), 'Sandra Two' (1996) and 'Sandra Three' (1997), which 'served as an unfolding pictorial memorial to his dead wife and as an extended instrument of artistic revenge'. As the catalogue elucidates, the centrepiece painting within 'Sandra Three' 'alludes in its title to Marcel

[53] Mark Hallett and Sarah Victoria Turner, *The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition* (London: RA, 2018), 147.

Duchamp's famous early twentieth-century art work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*' and 'also revises the iconography and narratives of Edouard Manet's nineteenth-century painting *The Execution of Maximilian*, a photograph of which Kitaj included as part of his overall installation'. Kitaj's painting 'shouted out from the Academy's muted green walls with its lurid red palette and shocking imagery', with Kitaj placing himself among 'a group of figures firing at point-blank range into the monstrous, multi-eyed and blood-bespattered head of the eponymous 'Killer-Critic''.[54]

There is obviously far more going on in this complex painting than its explicit reference to Eliot. However, the significance of the incorporation of Eliot to 'correct' him cannot be underestimated, particularly when Kitaj's animosity towards Eliot in his writing is taken into account. Stretched horizontally to the right, near the top of the painting, is a thin band which is largely red and contains, in cursive, the words 'art is the escape from personality'. This is a paraphrase of Eliot's theory in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) of poetry being 'not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality'.[55] Kitaj subversively crosses out Eliot's name to which the words are ascribed, crosses out the 'from' and adds 'to' instead, and inserts his own name to which the revised statement is therefore attributed. Applied to art, Kitaj effectively reverses the meaning of the original statement. This might seem merely a rejection of Eliot's critical position in the essay, based on Kitaj's demonstration of artistic practice, but in the bottom-left corner of the painting there is also a row of books which includes a Penguin edition of *An Enemy of the People: Antisemitism* (1945) by James Parkes. An American-born artist of Jewish heritage, Kitaj had been a prominent figure in the British art world since the 1960s. He was elected as an Academician in 1991. Conducting in the painting a 'raging and embittered attack on the kinds of art critics who had long rounded on the Summer Exhibition itself',[56] Kitaj seems to be indicating that anti-Semitism and his Jewish

[54] Ibid., 148.
[55] T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920; London: Methuen, 1940), 58.
[56] Mark Hallett and Sarah Victoria Turner, *The Great Spectacle*, 147.

background are part of the potent mix which has triggered such a violent artistic response from him. Certainly, in his writing, he scorns Eliot for producing lines of anti-Semitic poetry.

In verse 52 of his *Second Diasporist Manifesto* (2007), Kitaj advocates painting that is contrary to anti-Semitism and quotes from Eliot's 'Burbank with a Baedecker: Bleistein with a Cigar' (1920): 'PAINT THE OPPOSITE OF ANTI-SEMITISM: 'The rats are underneath the piles, the jew is underneath the lot.' – T.S. Eliot'. Kitaj personally addresses Eliot, with enmity and an expletive: 'Hi, Tom. Fuck you in my art each day.' In the painting, as described, Kitaj turns Eliot's theory of impersonality into the opposite. While the reversal is enacted on canvas for posterity, it is evidently not a once-off disagreement with Eliot on a purely theoretical level. Kitaj's writing illuminates, retrospectively, his attitude and approach to Eliot who is clearly an abiding presence and motivation for Kitaj – as a Jewish artist – in undertaking his creative work with intellectual and emotional intensity. Notably, Kitaj's approval of personality – and thus his disapproval of Eliot's theory – appears to derive in part from his esteem for Franz Kafka to whom he dedicates the book as the 'Greatest Jewish Artist'. In verse 444, Kitaj quotes Kafka: 'Art is always a matter of the entire personality. For that reason it is fundamentally tragic.' Kitaj agrees that painting 'is a personality game' and imagines that Kafka taunts him from the Other Side 'to dare a tragic sense of Jewish Art' before he crosses over himself.

Notably, too, his approval of personality also appears to be derived in part from Susan Sontag. In verse 228, he writes that she 'used 'to assume fully the privilege of the personal'' when under attack. He adds: 'That's one of my favorite sayings when I'm attacked for my questionable personal-ity.' Moreover, the 'correction' of Eliot within the painting to assert the opposite, or personality, evidently stems from Kitaj's understanding and application of traditional Jewish practice. In verse 58, he extols the Talmud and recalls that '50 yrs ago I was the first to introduce my own written Commentary on to the surfaces of my paintings' and ever since he has 'done Commentaries about some of my pictures, an ancient Jewish visual form on each page of Talmud'. He reiterates the licence for this practice in

verse 313: ‘THE OPPOSITE OF ANTI-SEMITISM… Jews may write into their pictures as well, like a Talmud page.’ Similarly, in verse 604, he reflects: ‘Commentary about art. How Jewish can you get?’

Kitaj’s overall engagement with Eliot is more complicated, however, than might be gleaned from his negativity towards Eliot in his painting and writing. For instance, in one of the diary entries on the sitting sessions for Kitaj’s portrait *The Architects* (1979-1981), Colin St John Wilson recalls drawing a comparison between Kitaj’s reluctance to meet new people as it ‘gets more difficult as you grow older’ and an anecdote about Eliot saying ‘the older you get…. the more difficult it is to write’. He recalls: ‘RB picks down *Little Gidding* from the shelf and slowly spat out the passage ‘Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age… the cold friction of expiring sense… the conscious impotence of rage… the rending pain of re-enactment... the shame of motives late revealed…’ That made us feel better and so he painted away at my face.’[57] The word ‘spat’ is telling but so too is Kitaj’s knowledge of ‘Little Gidding’ and reading out loud from Eliot’s poetry to his friend.

A sense of esteem for, and indebtedness to, Eliot also arises in the *Second Diasporist Manifesto* when Kitaj returns to what he calls ‘My Commentaries’ in verse 83. He repeats that as a young artist he ‘sometimes put commentaries right on the pictures themselves, in writing. I believe I was the first painter to do that (see 58)’. He reflects that three ‘inspirations excited me in those days: Eliot’s notes to his Waste Land; the Warburg tradition of iconographic commentary to pictures; some Surrealistic practice… Never stop writing onto some few pictures’. In addition to the ‘correction’ of Eliot ‘on’ or ‘onto’ the painting being a sign of both Kitaj’s conception of Jewish practice and his study of ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, the influence of *The Waste Land* (1922) on Kitaj’s work can also be traced in several directions. As *Dídac Llorens-Cubedo* writes: ‘Eliot's ‘Notes’ to the poem were a model for Kitaj's ‘prefaces,’ short texts supplementing many of his paintings’; the ‘external and imaginative structure [of *The Waste Land*] inspired the composition of Kitaj's *Tarot*

[57] Colin St John Wilson and M.J. Long, *Kitaj: The Architects* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 36.

Variations (1958)'; and Kitaj's *If Not, Not* (1975-1976)[58] 'memorialises the Shoah, also drawing on *The Waste Land* – the definitive text as well as its drafts and critical reception'.[59]

Furthermore, verse 371 is reminiscent of the 'correction' of Eliot: 'You will have noticed by now my constant use of quotations… the real scholar (or Rebbe) speaks and I utter a kind of Responsum.' The importance to Kitaj of modernism can be discerned in verse 391: 'Jewish Art is a different sort of discourse altogether… its salient features are bound to and with what is called Modernism, and its aftermath.' Generally, too, Kitaj's highly intellectual and allusive work can be seen to be, in part, influenced by Eliot's poetry. In 2011, *The Paris Review* reprinted poet John Ashbery's appraisal of Kitaj in 1981. Ashbery argues that if Kitaj's 'pictures could, in some cases, be illustrations for Eliot's poetry, the poetry itself often sounds like an approximation of Kitaj's brushwork'.[60] During what Kitaj called his 'Tate War' (in verses 166 and 176), he was even disparagingly likened to Eliot. *The Independent*'s Andrew Graham-Dixon described him as an 'inveterate name-dropper… The Wandering Jew, the TS Eliot of painting?', concluding mockingly that Kitaj was 'the Wizard of Oz: a small man with a megaphone held to his lips'.[61]

Continuing the 'ballistic' attitude laid bare in the *Killer-Critic*, Kitaj's *Second Diasporist Manifesto* is a lengthy riposte to these kinds of

[58] Kitaj's painting *If Not, Not* is discussed later in this article. It formed part of the *Journeys With The Waste Land* exhibition at Turner Contemporary, Margate, as well as Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, in 2018. Lewis's portrait of Ezra Pound was also included.

[59] Dídac Llorens-Cubedo, 'T.S. Eliot in the Art of R.B. Kitaj: Anatomy of an Influence', *The Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies,* 41, no. 2 (December 2019), 123-142.

[60] See John Ashbery, 'R.B. Kitaj', *The Paris Review* (7 March 2011): https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2011/03/07/r-b-kitaj/. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]

[61] See https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/art-the-kitaj-myth-the-man-who-would-leapfrog-his-way-into-history-on-the-backs-of-giants-stands-exposed-andrew-grahamdixon-on-kitaj-at-the-tate-1425629.html. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]

statements from his critics. In verse 473, he highlights that 'Jewish Commentary by me, about my own pictures, is unacceptable to half the art people'. In verse 56, he encourages himself to 'PAINT THE OPPOSITE OF ANTI-SEMITISM – as James Joyce did… Joyce's Bloom is always alive in me and my art'. In verse 168, he rails against how 'Nazi enemies accused the Jews of 'overestimation of the intellect,' which is a favorite accusation thrown at me and my bookish Jewish pictures. So be it'. His painting and writing are rooted in his powerful sense of Jewish identity, as an American-born artist who had long been prominent – yet an 'outsider' – on the arts scene in the UK. He expresses his sense of identity in verse 492: 'So may my easel-painting waver between image and commentary, both Jewish.' In verse 523, he affirms: 'I belong to 3 tribes: Jewish, American, painter, and this unrhymed poem is a tribal Manifesto like Ginsberg's HOWL or Whitman's Leaves of Grass, but less accomplished.'

Significantly, on the page opposite verse 337, there is a reproduction showing the book title *The Jews (Are They Human?)* which formed part of Kitaj's 'How to Reach 67 in Jewish Art: 100 Pictures' exhibition in Manhattan in 2000. A *New York Times* reviewer of this exhibition notes Kitaj's 'very allusive mind', which might also help to explain his affinity with – rather than merely enmity towards – the allusive Eliot. The reviewer also observes that Kitaj 'simply exhibits an opened book, maybe from the 1920's, laid face down to display that title on its spine'.[62] However, while the reviewer does not venture to name or speculate about the author, this sounds more like Lewis's book of that title published in 1939. Lewis's reputation, as David Bradshaw reports, 'has been irrevocably damaged both by his treatment of Jews in *The Apes* [*of God*, 1930]… and the openly laudatory *Hitler* (1931)' despite 'the publication of both *The Hitler Cult* and *The Jews, Are they Human?* in 1939, in which he renounces his previous enthusiasm for the German leader and his politics'.[63]

[62] See https://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/24/arts/art-in-review-r-b-kitaj.html. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[63] David Bradshaw, 'The Apes of God', in *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide*, ed. Andrzej Gasiorek and Nathan Waddell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 104.

Lewis's rejected portrait of Eliot was acquired by the Durban Art Gallery in December 1939, escaping the threat of bombs in London following the declaration of war on Germany in September. Eliot's creation of some anti-Semitic poetry is not part of the picture, as it were, in the portrait (and scholarly commentaries) even as its enduring power into the 21st century to draw admirers internationally via exhibitions, print publications and online platforms rests in crucial part on Eliot's literary fame. In this light, Kitaj's targeting of Eliot in his painting and writing exerts a formidable bearing on Eliot's legacy in several ways.

Firstly, Kitaj's negative representations of, but nuanced overall relation to, Eliot rival Lewis's positive but not altogether flattering portrayal of Eliot in the portrait (with their friendship further expressed through their letters). Both Lewis and Kitaj are well-known names in the visual arts internationally so their contrasting versions of Eliot will continue to attract audiences in the multimedia environment of the 21st century. As we have seen, beyond canvas and print, Lewis's portrait has readily adapted to circulation online – not least via journalism. So too has Kitaj's 'Killer-Critic', with journalism again providing impetus. The painting appears, for instance, at the top of a 2013 article on *The Guardian*'s website, with the headline 'RB Kitaj: an obsession with revenge'[64], which is shareable via Facebook, Twitter (now X) and email. The article is about the first UK retrospective of Kitaj's work since his suicide in 2007, jointly hosted by The Jewish Museum in London and Pallant House Gallery in Chichester. The painting also appears at the top of a piece containing extracts from memoirs and diaries on the *Prospect* magazine website ('The way we were: bitterness');[65] and at the top of a 2011 round-up piece on the independent arts journalism site *Hyperallergic*[66] which also refers to Ashbery's appraisal. Beyond journalism, the painting can be found on museum and

[64] See https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/feb/10/rb-kitaj-obsessions-tate-war. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[65] See https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/culture/46854/the-way-we-were-bitterness. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[66] See https://hyperallergic.com/20710/required-reading-7/. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]

arts sites, including the *R.B. Kitaj Studio Project*[67] where its place in the Astrup Fearnley Collection in Oslo is acknowledged. The *Second Diasporist Manifesto* can also be accessed at multiple locations online, including *Google Books*[68] and the *Internet Archive*.[69]

Secondly, by strongly associating Eliot with anti-Semitism, Kitaj invites a level of attention in the art world akin to the critical storm in the literary world caused by Anthony Julius's exploration of the issue in *TS Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* (1995), which had been prompted in part by Julius noting there was only brief reference to Eliot in the chapter 'Anti-Semites' in Bernard Lewis's *Semites and Anti-Semites* (1986). Connecting art and literature, Kitaj's powerful expressions of opposition to Eliot's theory (evidently seen as antithetical to the importance of personality in Jewish art) and anti-Semitic lines in 'Burbank' (which had also been quoted in *Semites and Anti-Semites*) are potentially further damaging to Eliot's legacy, especially in having come from a passionately Jewish artist of international standing. In 2003, when a new edition of Julius's book was released, he argued in a piece in *The Guardian* (which is still accessible online[70]) that the issue was 'now even more relevant'. Defending his book, Julius discloses that it 'did not occur to me that there might still be serious disagreement about the anti-semitic nature of parts' of Eliot's work and it was 'not my intention to damage his reputation'. In Julius's estimation, 'by as early as 1922, anti-semitism had ceased to be a resource for Eliot's poetic imagination' although Eliot 'continued to draw on anti-semitic themes in his critical prose'. Having identified five poems as anti-Semitic – namely 'Burbank', 'Gerontion', 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', 'A Cooking Egg' and the posthumously published 'Dirge' – Julius ultimately proposes

[67] See http://rbkitaj.org/the-killer-critic-assassinated-by-his-widower-even. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[68] See Second Diasporist Manifesto: (a New Kind of Long Poem in 615 Free Verses) - R. B. Kitaj - Google Books. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[69] See Second diasporist manifesto : (a new kind of long poem in 615 free verses) : Kitaj, R. B : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive. [Accessed 8 August 2024.]
[70]See https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/07/poetry.thomasstearnseliot. [Accessed 9 August 2024.]

that readers adopt an 'adversarial stance' whereby 'we must contest that poetry, with strategies that acknowledge both its value and its menace' rather than ban, ignore or submit to the poetry. Having also posed the rhetorical question that 'if one is addressed as a Jew, isn't it reasonable to respond as one?', Julius concludes: 'Refusing either to acquiesce in, or to rail at, Eliot's contempt for Jews, one strives to do justice to the many injustices Eliot does to Jews. This is what adversarial reading allows.'[71]

The extent to which Kitaj's intense and combative rather than measured and dispassionate responses to Eliot are compatible with Julius's conception of an 'adversarial stance' is debatable. However, Kitaj's readings of Eliot's theory and lines from 'Burbank' are fundamentally adversarial. Moreover, and thirdly, his expressions of opposition are striking not only for targeting Eliot so specifically and vehemently but also in the context of the persistence of widespread anti-Semitism into the 21st century. As Julius observes, anti-Semitism has not in fact 'dwindled to a marginal, limited phenomenon' since the Second World War and Holocaust. On the contrary, 'anti-semitic propaganda is in global circulation, both on the internet and in printed form'. This profusion of anti-Semitic content, especially online, suggests that the relevance of Kitaj's painting and writing – which invite, in their transmedia forms, renewed attention in the digital age to Eliot's anti-Semitism – will not be diminishing any time soon. Kitaj's own developing posthumous reputation rests to a degree on whether, and to what extent, his works will, in time, destabilize and discredit Eliot's cultural authority as he intended.

Fourthly, in comparison with Julius, Kitaj is extremely provocative by associating Eliot, visually, with the Holocaust. Julius defends himself against claims that 'by describing Eliot as an anti-semite I was implicating him in projects of terror and murder'. He clarifies that to 'describe a person as anti-semitic is not to imply that he endorses the crimes of the Nazis, still less is it to imply that he would be capable of committing them himself. It is to imply, however, that he is careless about the consequences of anti-semitic positions held by others, and that he lacks the imagination to grasp

[71] Ibid.

where Jew hatred may lead'. Significantly, Kitaj's negative representations of Eliot are not so clear-cut. They could potentially compel audiences to see Eliot in not only an ugly but also a culpable anti-Semitic light – perhaps even when viewing Lewis's portrait, which was completed shortly before the Second World War and Holocaust.

Indeed, in 'If Not, Not' (1975-1976), Kitaj had already gone so far as to place Eliot, hard of hearing and in the arms of a naked woman, within a surreal and dismal scene featuring the gatehouse to Auschwitz. As the National Galleries of Scotland website describes 'probably Kitaj's best-known and most complex work':

> the poet is depicted at the bottom left, wearing a hearing aid. The building in the top left corner is the gatehouse to Auschwitz. Below it lies a scene of cultural disintegration and moral collapse. The stagnant water, the dead and blackened trees, and the books scattered about the landscape, speak of death and destruction... The small figure of the man in bed, holding a baby, is a self-portrait.[72]

The exceeding complexity of Kitaj's indebtedness to, yet denouncement of, Eliot which boils over in later works like the 'Killer-Critic' and *Second Diasporist Manifesto* appears to have long since manifested in 'If Not, Not'. Reflective of Kitaj's fascination with *The Waste Land* and linkage of Eliot with anti-Semitism, here encapsulated at its most horrific extreme by the dreadful gatehouse to Auschwitz, 'If Not, Not' confronts us with a hellish vision of a cultural wasteland to which Eliot, deaf and distracted, with his eyes fixed on the naked woman and his back turned, is apparently connected and for which he seems to bear some responsibility.

Repeatedly singling out Eliot in his work, however, is more revealing of Kitaj's obsession with his modernist exemplar than it is about the extent of anti-Semitism among leading literary figures historically. Although Julius describes Eliot as being 'not a typical' but 'instead an extraordinary anti-semite', and argues that Eliot 'did not reflect the anti-semitism of his times, he contributed to it, even enlarged it', Eliot is not an isolated case. As

[72] See https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/644/if-not-not. [Accessed 9 August 2024.]

George Orwell observed in 1944, anti-Semitism 'flourishes especially among literary men… I can think of passages in Villon, Shakespeare, Smollett, Thackeray, H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, T.S. Eliot and many another which would be called anti-Semitic if they had been written since Hitler came to power'. He concluded it was 'partly the fear of finding out how widespread anti-Semitism is' that prevented it 'from being seriously investigated'.[73] Such a roll call continues to deeply trouble posterity. With Eliot's enduring cultural cachet and relevance confirmed in different ways by the artistic representations of him by Lewis and Kitaj which have achieved widespread transmedia circulation in the digital age, reflection on his legacy will have to reckon, ultimately, with this perplexing wider context.

[73] George Orwell, 'As I Please 11', in *Orwell in Tribune: 'As I Please' and Other Writings 1943-47,* ed. Paul Anderson (2006; London: Methuen, 2008), 97.

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Life in the Metaxy – Voegelin, Eliot and *Four Quartets*

David Ashton

In his Journal of 1843, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard tells us that the problem with life is that it has to be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards.[1] In other words, meaning is retrospective. This insight could hardly be more apt for a discussion of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, given that its central claim is that through moments of 'intersection' with timeless reality, past experiences can be retrieved, re-interpreted or 'redeemed' and understood in the context of the present.[2] Furthermore, taken together, such 'intersection' moments reveal a pattern of meaning through which human existence is disclosed as participating in divine reality.[3]

Throughout his life and as expressed in his work, T.S. Eliot was deeply preoccupied with what we may call *transcendent* experiences, i.e. fleeting apprehension of a timeless, divine reality at what he variously refers to as 'The point of intersection with the timeless', the 'still point', the 'timeless moment' or 'intersection time'. For Eliot, these fugitive transcendent moments of epiphanic illumination, lift us – just for a moment - out of our enchainment to the temporal and allow a glimpse of the eternal. Eliot's first experience of this came in the Spring of 1910, at the age of twenty-one, when walking one day on Boston Common. Whilst the full import of this may not have been apparent to him at the time, it was to prove the defining experience of his life.[4]

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection* (Penguin Classics,1996).
[2] Anna J. Nickerson. 'T. S. Eliot and the Point of Intersection'. *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 47, no. 4 (December 2018): 343-59, https://doi.org/10.1093/camqtly/bfy017; Kenneth P. Kramer. *Redeeming Time. T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets* (Cowley Publications. 2007), 51.
[3] Glenn Hughes, *Transcendence and History* (University of Missouri Press, 2003), 24.
[4] Lyndall Gordon. *The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot* (Virago, 2012), 49.

Although the word 'intersection' is used just three times in the 913 lines of *Four Quartets (DS V, LG I & II),* its importance cannot be overstated; it is the locus around which the entire poetic sequence evolves.[5] Put simply, it is the point of the poem. Yet, since by definition, the transcendent lies beyond human understanding, it escapes reason and cannot be made fully intelligible in language – even the language of a poetic genius.

In this essay I will discuss Eliot's thinking about the meaning of transcendence through the work of the philosopher Eric Voegelin (1901-1985) whose interpretation of Eliot's poetic vision in *Four Quartets* I have found to be extraordinarily helpful in my own understanding of this masterpiece. In this context I am greatly indebted to the late Glenn Hughes, poet, philosopher and Voegelin scholar, who first introduced me to Voegelin and who strongly influenced my thinking about *Four Quartets*.[6]

Eric Voegelin was a German-American political scientist and scholar, best known for his studies of modern political thought and for his efforts to create a comprehensive philosophy of man, society, and history. Although little known outside specialist academic circles, Voegelin's meditative philosophical analysis of existence and history is not merely compatible with but, as we shall see, serves to illuminate Eliot's own poetic vision of human existence. Whilst Eliot probably never read Voegelin, we know that Voegelin greatly admired the *Four Quartets*. In a 1944 typescript about eight pages long entitled '*Notes on T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets'*, Voegelin provides a profoundly perceptive meditation on the poems which not only reveals his admiration for the work but also, as we shall see, the deep

[5] In T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (1969. Faber & Faber, 2002). References to quotations from *Four Quartets* are given by the abbreviation, following by a Roman numeral for the movement in which it is found, e.g. a line in the second movement of Burnt Norton would be *BN II*, or the fifth movement of East Coker, *EC V.*

[6] Glenn Arthur "Chip" Hughes (1951-2024) was a philosopher, poet, and musician who was Professor Emeritus of Catholic Philosophy at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, specializing in the philosophy of Eric Voegelin and Bernard Lonergan.

synergy between his own philosophical outlook and Eliot's.[7] In addition, in his 1967 essay *'Immortality: Experience and Symbol'*, Voegelin makes reference to several quotations from the poem which, he says, 'excellently symbolized' his own view of human existence as intermediate between time and timelessness.[8]

The Metaxy

The first common theme of overriding importance is that for both Voegelin and Eliot human consciousness is the meeting place of time and timelessness. Consciousness is not merely human; it is simultaneously human and divine. As creatures rooted in the temporal, we move along in the flow of time that we characterise as a line leading from the past, through the present, into the future. At the same time, however, Voegelin states that 'we are not moving only on this temporal line, but in openness toward divine reality, so that every point of presence is, as T.S. Eliot formulated it, a point of intersection of time with the timeless.'

In other words, we are suspended between two poles, time (the temporal) and the time*less*, i.e. an eternal, 'divine' or transcendent reality beyond space and time. Borrowing a term from Plato, Voegelin calls this *in-between*, the *metaxy* (μεταξύ).[9] In Plato's philosophy, the metaxy is an intermediary state that connects opposites and facilitates interaction between different levels of reality. Importantly, according to Voegelin, life in the metaxy embodies a fundamental tension; opposites are never resolved but coexist productively. Thus, we not only exist between the poles, but we also *participate* in each pole; we are *pulled* toward each pole

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[7] Voegelin, E. 'Immortality: Experience and Symbol', *Harvard Theological Review*, 60, no. 3, (1967): 235-79.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S001781600000376X

[8] Eric Voegelin, 'Notes on T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*' in Eric Voegelin, *The Drama of Humanity and Other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939-1985*, ed. William Petropulos and Gilbert Weiss, vol. 33 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 33-40.

[9] Plato, *Symposium.* Trans. Paul Woodruff and Alexander Nehamas (Hackett, 1989), 47. Here, Diotima defines Eros as 'a great daimon', adding that 'the whole of the daimonic is between [*metaxy*] god and mortal'.

- what he refers to as 'living in the tension of the metaxy'.[10] Transcendence, then, is the experience of the divine, the ultimate transcendent reality or 'beyond' in which we participate. Access to this reality cannot be gained through ordinary sense perception or through other forms of experience such as introspection. A transcendent reality is known directly only through certain extraordinary states of consciousness, including what may be called 'mystical' experiences, in which a person gains special access to information outside the realm of ordinary experience. This is Eliot's 'intersection' moment, between time and the timeless, which we explore in detail later.

Thus, for both Voegelin and Eliot, to be humanly conscious is to exist always in the tension of the metaxy, i.e. to be simultaneously temporal and eternal - human and divine – yet fixed in neither. Eliot himself could not be more explicit about this:

> In every moment of time you live where two worlds cross,
> In every moment you live at a point of intersection.
> Remember, living in time, you must live also now in Eternity.
>
> (*The Rock*)[11]

Of course, talk of transcendence or the divine in today's secular, scientistic and time-obsessed world may seem anachronistic, even bizarre. Most of us spend our lives completely oblivious to any higher reality, 'getting and spending' with only an occasional nod towards the eternal. But when Eliot and Voegelin state that divine presence is 'co-constitutive' of human consciousness, they mean *universally* whether or not this is noticed, acknowledged or accepted by a person. In other words, our participation in the timeless is not a matter of choice. For both writers, divine presence is simply a fact about human consciousness and existence, independently of whether we realise it or not.

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[10] Dural. J. *The Role of Metaxy in the Political Philosophy of Eric Voegelin*. Peter Lang, 2021.

[11] T. S. Eliot, *The Rock* (Faber and Faber, 1934) Part II, 52. https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.3608/page/n53/mode/2up?view=theater

It is helpful here to distinguish between moments of transcendence or 'intersection' in which – momentarily lifted from the temporal - we glimpse a timeless reality and what, on the other hand, human consciousness by its nature always is - its ontological status. Why does Voegelin insist on this ontological dimension of our existence in the metaxy?

The explanation is complex, but in essence both Eliot and Voegelin agree that if we pay close attention to our experiences of temporality, we find that the 'present' or a 'present moment' can only be explained in terms of *duration* (that which only passes) and that which cuts across duration, i.e. the timeless, allowing us to be aware of a 'now'.

Furthermore, the illumination of meaning in the 'now' can only occur because of constancy of the meanings we grasp in our interactions with the world. For example, our basic idea of a 'dog' or 'tree' isn't going to change for us in a few seconds or ever at all, though of course details about individual dogs or trees will change (this is the basis of Plato's Forms). Another way to put this is to say that human thinking grasps the chang*eless* in the chang*ing* as its basic mode of apprehension or knowing. Furthermore, our participation in a timeless realm of meaning is what unites all human beings in the common enterprise that we call 'history'. There could be no common enterprise, no drama of universal humanity, without human participation in a dimension of meaning that transcends all biological, cultural, geographical and linguistic particularities. Only participation in timeless reality binds the meaning of an individual's life, to the meaning of all.

If this is ontologically the case, then it is clear why it is possible to have 'encounters' with the timeless, moments in which the temporal and eternal coincide. In such experiences, we become focally aware of this dimension of our conscious experience (Eliot's 'intersection' moments) and recognise – just for a moment - that we are always already participating in a timeless and eternal reality. We get a glimpse of a realm of meaning that transcends the material and the perishable.

Metaxic paradoxes

The *Quartets* are permeated by Eliot's explorations of what we might call the logical paradoxes of our existence in the metaxy. Our ontological structure means that we are always situated in a some*where* and at some *time*, but our simultaneous existence in a transcendent reality, beyond space and time, means that we are at the same time no-*where* and never (i.e. outside time and therefore at *no* time). There are numerous examples of this insight in *Four Quartets*.

In *Burnt Norton*, we hear that *'To be conscious is not to be in time' (BN II)* because each moment of conscious awareness is a moment in which mere time, mere duration, is transcended through the *simultaneous* participation of consciousness in the being of timelessness. And, as we have seen, *sometimes*, we become focally aware of this dimension of our conscious experience, which is always there. This is why Voegelin can say we are always an 'openness towards divine reality' because human consciousness can only make sense intelligently of anything, by participating in meanings that don't alter moment to moment. Earlier in the same section of the poem, we have these extraordinary lines:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
> nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
>
> (*BN* II)

To exist at the 'still point' which is a moment of timelessness in time, is to be both temporal and eternal, i.e. to exist in the tension of the metaxy, is to be neither entirely flesh (temporal) nor fleshless (eternal). In that moment, we are beyond human, yet we are not fully spirit. And since the still point is beyond space and time, there can be no *movement* since movement requires *both* space and time. Furthermore, concepts such as 'from' and 'towards', 'ascent' and 'decline', all of which depend upon points in *space* - are similarly inoperative. Moreover, since the still point is timeless, all

events are present at once, hence past and future are 'gathered' and indistinguishable.

In *The Dry Salvages* we find perhaps the most concise formulation of conscious existence in the metaxy, as:

'The point of intersection of the timeless / With time' (*DS* V)

And finally, in *Little Gidding*, where we find 'intersection' is used in such a way as to emphasise that an encounter with divine presence, is always experienced concretely by an individual consciousness i.e. by a person, in a specific place and time. Eliot's own pilgrimage to Little Gidding was, along with his moment in the garden at Burnt Norton, one of the key moments in his life and of his experience there, he says:

> Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere. Never and always. (*LG* I)

This moment of intersection is both situated in the flux of duration, i.e. here in England, but is simultaneously beyond time and space and therefore no-*where*. It is both never i.e. at no particular time and always, because, as we have seen previously:

> In every moment you live at a point of intersection
> Remember, living in time, you must live also now in Eternity.

It is not up to us to impose a when or a where on 'the intersection of the timeless moment'.

Tension and homelessness

As we have seen, to be in the metaxy is also to be in a *tension* between a transcendent reality and our temporal, time-enchained existence. For Voegelin, we are not merely open to divine reality, we are *pulled* or drawn towards it. From man's experience of life in between the limits of birth and death, there arises the question about the ultimate source of all reality – including his own. Our response to this question, to the mystery of existence, persists in the form of a questioning of our own. For Voegelin, any person's active seeking for meaning and purpose in life is, from the first and always, a simultaneous 'being drawn' by the divine ground. In other words, restless human questioning is, *de facto*, evidence that we are

already participating in divine presence or, as Pascal put it *'You would not be seeking me if you had not already found me'.*

As human beings, our experience of the world is necessarily fragmentary; we can never grasp the whole of reality. We can only come to the whole through the parts and yet the parts can only be fully intelligible in the context of the whole. As a result, we live in a perpetual state of incompleteness, yet it is intrinsic to our nature to long for fulfilment – to be a whole. The very fact that we experience this longing suggests there is something beyond our immediate experiences, something that we are connected to but have yet to fully comprehend or attain. For Voegelin, our longing for fulfilment is itself an intimation of the fulfilment we long for.

At the same time, this longing marks the awareness of a conspicuous absence - a sort of *homesickness* - for a home not yet known. In being drawn towards divine transcendence, we glimpse a dwelling place, a fuller, deeper meaning for our existence. In this spirit, the German poet and philosopher Novalis (1772-1801) once described philosophy as "*nothing but a longing to get home'.* What Novalis is suggesting is that our natural state is one of 'homelessness' – or alienation - and that we have to make a determined effort to overcome it; to find a place to dwell. For Voegelin, as with Novalis, 'homelessness' refers to a profound spiritual and existential disorientation, signifying a loss of connection to a larger order of meaning and a sense of being uprooted from one's true 'home' within the cosmos, partly consequent upon a decline in traditional religious affiliations and practices. This is not just about lacking a physical shelter, but rather a deep sense of alienation from one's own being and the world around one.

Four Quartets is Eliot's attempt to find a way home, a journey which for him eventually converged on the Christian hope of redemption in the eternal. Both Voegelin and Eliot would agree that we have a natural desire to become one with the eternal realm in which (whether we know it or not), we are already participating. This idea is hardly novel; most of the world's higher religions are all, more or less, accounts of how to engage upon the

spiritual journey that leads to such union, after shaking off this mortal coil. This being drawn towards the divine, is specifically referred in *Four Quartets* in Eliot's quotation from the *Cloud of Unknowing:*

> With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling (*LG* V)

What is the divine reality?

What then for Voegelin *is* the 'divine' reality or transcendent – the *towards-which* of transcend*ence*? Firstly, it is important to understand what it is not.

For Voegelin, terms such as God, the Tao, Brahman, the 'divine', the 'transcendent' etc. are no more than *symbols* representing the mysterious origin of things, i.e. a single, transcendent and timeless reality, which is humanly unknowable but which is nevertheless our ultimate origin. They do not refer to anything outside ourselves, i.e. any sort of supernatural entity with whom we might have a relationship. Neither do they point towards 'heaven', i.e. some sort of paradise out beyond the stars which might be our final destination after death and resurrection.[12] The radical 'beyond' of transcendence is neither physical, nor spatial; it is not any-*thing* or any-*where* that we could in any sense experience directly. We see animals, trees, clouds and rivers, but Nature *itself* is not an object we can encounter. In the same way, while the 'divine' timeless reality suffuses everything, it can never be an object of sense perception for us; it is not something that exists outside our own consciousness. On the contrary, our conscious horizon extends beyond what we can know into an unknown, which we recognise as a mystery and which we can grasp only through symbols. For Voegelin, symbols testify to a reality beyond the range of finite things. They do not point towards a place or a person, but a realm, an eternal dimension of *meaning* that constitutes answers to our deepest questions about ultimate reality.[13] Human consciousness is that *through*

[12] Hughes, *Transcendence and History*, 24.

[13] Note that the words 'realm' and 'dimension' are metaphors. As humans we inevitably think in spatial terms - something we can form a visual or tactile image of. The key here is to focus on the term's meaning not on the spatial metaphors typically used to refer to the divine or the eternal.

which this reality unfolds – becomes luminous – transforming our understanding and the inner quality of our conscious experience. Crucially, and to varying degrees, man becomes conscious that his own consciousness is part of the structure of reality and that *through* his consciousness he participates in the 'divine mystery'. Thus Voegelin's 'God' is perhaps more akin to the Platonic *Agathon*, i.e., a point of orientation toward the good.[14]

For Eliot, however, it seems that moments of transcendence, or 'intersection', are both located in consciousness *and* related to an external reality, in the sense that the experience may be mediated by a recognisable entity – a landscape, painting, a sunset or a piece of music. As to the ultimate nature of divine reality, however, he is non-committal and unlike Voegelin, he nowhere uses the word 'divine' to describe it; indeed, the word appears nowhere in the whole of *Four Quartets*. However, although Eliot did not elaborate a metaphysics in the way that Voegelin did, given the fact that there is such close affinity between their understanding of time and the metaxy, it is not inconceivable that Eliot's views on the ultimate nature of the 'divine' would have resonated with those of Voegelin.

Whilst emphasising the importance of transcendent reality and experiences, Voegelin was not a Christian in the conventional sense. He was brought up as a Catholic and his philosophy reflects a deep engagement with Christian thought, but his views on religion were complex and he was notoriously reluctant to be labelled as having any particular religious identity.[15] This reluctance was born of his belief that such categorisation was also an impoverishment, simply because it may limit our understanding and engagement with deeper spiritual experiences which transcend specific

[14] Eugene Webb, 'The Question of Eric Vogelin's Faith (or Atheism?): A Comment on Maben Poirier's Critique', *Voegelin View*, October 16th, 2018. https://voegelinview.com/the-question-of-eric-vogelins-faith-or-atheism-a-comment-on-maben-poiriers

[15] Maben Walter Poirier. 'Eric Voegelin's Immanentism: A Man at Odds with the Transcendent?' *Voegelin View*, October 15th, 2018. https://voegelinview.com/eric-voegelins-immanentism-a-man-at-odds-with-the-transcendent/

religious traditions. Instead, he argued for a more inclusive view of human spirituality, which reflected the multiplicity of ways in which human beings seek meaning and consolation. Here he is fully aligned with Eliot's approach in *Four Quartets*, which explores profound spiritual truths common to multiple faiths and traditions. Indeed, what is so remarkable about the work is its capacity to evoke introspection and meditation on the mysteries of time and existence in readers from all walks of life and faith traditions. Certainly, *Four Quartets* is not an exclusively Christian poem.

'Intersection' moment

As was said earlier, most of us have no sense whatever that we exist in the metaxy and are constantly participating in a timeless reality. Instead, our lives are rooted in the ordinary activities of our everyday existence – work, children, shopping etc. Moreover, much in contemporary culture pushes us in the direction of the view that the physical world as described by science is all there is, with nothing beyond. And yet there are, as we have seen, moments in which our participation in 'divine' reality – whatever that is – suddenly strikes us. These are Eliot's 'intersection moments' to which we now turn.

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot returns repeatedly to the theme of despair in modern life, the sense of profound spiritual emptiness which pervades our time-bound existence in the metaxy. In the tug-of-war between the temporal and the divine, it is the temporal that wins out. Nevertheless, simply because consciousness is what it is, there are *moments* in everyone's experience, where we are caught by surprise, when we are – quite suddenly – aware of our participation in the timeless. This is Eliot's 'still point' or '*intersection'* moment – which is perceived in a fleeting instant in which we transcend the limits of our earthly existence, to glimpse the realm of the eternal, a moment where the known touches the unknown. Such fleeting moments are *in* time, but not *of* time (they are outside time). Or put more succinctly, the still point is a moment of timelessness within time. The work of the poet, Eliot suggests, is to take us to the 'point of intersection' of time (the temporal) with the timeless (eternal), at the frontier between what we know and that which is, in some sense, beyond us.[16]

[16] Nickerson, 'T. S. Eliot and the Point of Intersection', 343-59.

Eliot's experience on Boston Common in 1910, referred to earlier, never left him. Amidst the surrounding hustle and bustle, he was suddenly overwhelmed by an indescribable feeling of peace, which he would try for the rest of his life to recapture. He even wrote a poem about it called 'Silence', which was never published in his lifetime. And the poet experienced other such moments, perhaps the best-known being in 1935 during a visit to Burnt Norton, then a deserted 17th century manor house in Gloucestershire, England.[17] Here in the garden, in the presence of his American friend Emily Hale, Eliot experienced a moment of illumination in which empty, dry pools, suddenly - and miraculously - appeared full of water. Eliot gives sublime poetic expression to this experience, in the opening movement of *Burnt Norton:*

> Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light,' (*BN* I)

Eliot has a variety of different names and expressions for these moments of revelation, which include, 'On the doorstep of the Absolute'; 'the unattended/ Moment'; 'looking into the heart of light'; 'the moment in and out of time'; 'the Still Point'; 'incarnation'; 'intersection time' and others. The whole of *Four Quartets* can be understood as a testament to such moments and the sense of dislocation and bewilderment they produce. Once the moment passes it leaves us, if we are attentive, with questions about the meaning of our existence, mortality and ultimate reality.[18]

Most of us have had them, those little *epiphanies* when we suddenly apprehend something extraordinary – a sense of wholeness, grandeur, or majesty - and then they are gone. Maybe listening to a piece of music, seeing a panoramic vista in nature, a photograph, a flower, watching a great

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[17] Ashton D. 'The moment in the rose garden'. *The Journal of the T.S. Eliot Society*, 2024, 133-5.

[18] Dominic Griffiths, 'Looking into the Heart of Light: Considering the Poetic Event in the work of T.S. Eliot and Martin Heidegger'. *Philosophy and Literature*, 38, no. 2 (2014): 350-67.

ship coming into dock, or looking at a great artwork, whatever the context – just for an instant - we have sensed that these were somehow *different* moments.

Eliot says they are only 'hints' and 'guesses' – glimpses into another realm, and that we often miss them entirely; *'we had the experience but missed the meaning*' *(DS II).* In the following extract, a good friend of mine – a philosopher – provides as clear an account of a moment of 'intersection' or transcendence as one could imagine.

> Spring arrives late in New England, and it was only yesterday, a day in early April, that the sun shone brightly and warmly for a change. The cloudless sky was a brilliant blue. Pale green and red buds dotted the trees and bushes. The grass was soft from the winter thaw, and sleepy it seemed, not quite yet in the mood to grow. There was hardly an insect to be seen or heard, and only an occasional bird and an occasional chirp or warble. All the juices of Spring were still pent up and not yet flowing and overflowing. I carried a chair out onto the grass in the garden and began reading. But soon I had to put the book down and simply quiet my mind. I closed my eyes; I'm not sure for how long. Then from out of the quiet, I heard the low rumbling of a small propeller plane passing overhead. This sound - yes, this commonplace sound! - moved into me, deeper and deeper it went, until I felt it move all the way through me and out of me and into the very depth of everything. The sound encompassed the whole cosmos. For a few lingering moments, I experienced "I" and "not-I" as One. The sound filled my very being, it filled all being, it was all being.[19]

This is key. The whole of *Four Quartets* is about our enchainment to time as the inescapable – *unredeemable* - ground of human reality. Yet in instants of what Kramer has called '*graced consciousness'* we can be momentarily redeemed, i.e. lifted from our temporal existence in the

[19] Richard Capobianco. Extract (with permission) from '*In Heidegger's Vineyard – Reflections and Mystical Vignettes',* (Angelico Press, 2024): 5-6.

metaxy and glimpse, albeit fleetingly, the transcendent reality in which we already participate.[20] These momentary encounters - *'hints and guesses' (DS V)* - Eliot tells us, are pretty much all we receive from our conscious participation in divine transcendence. But this is enough to go on, he asserts, if we wish to gain freedom from the false assumption that the temporal and material world is all there is and recover a sense of our existence in the metaxy. In any case, as ordinary mortals, we could not tolerate more than a glimpse of the divine; it is the province of *saints* to have revealed the mystery of our participation in divine presence most fully. As Eliot says:

> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time is an occupation for the saint (*DS* V)

Eliot himself, however, was no mystic and never claimed to be. In a letter to a contemporary in 1958, he wrote 'You must not think of me as a mystic or a contemplative. I have had a few flashes during my life, though there must be many people whose experience has taken them further.'[21]

We may not be able to be saints, but we can still be human beings and for Voegelin, that is our task. We must keep what he calls the 'balance of consciousness', where we neither allow the timeless dimension of meaning to be forgotten, nor let our awareness of timeless reality so fascinate us that we diminish or disregard the significance of our own concrete biographical circumstances.[22] Sainthood, for Voegelin, is neither a practical nor desirable objective. As he remarks in his 'Notes' on the *Quartets*, a 'spiritual autobiography is the history of a spirit joined to body, and the body lives in the here and now of a definite locale'.

It is essential to understand that these moments of 'graced consciousness' cannot be summoned, predicted or planned for. They are always unexpected

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[20] Kramer, *Redeeming Time,* xiii.
[21] Simon Critchley. *On Mysticism. The experience of ecstasy* (Profile Books, 2024), 232.
[22] Glenn Hughes. 'A pattern of Timeless Moments. Existence and History in T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets' *The Voegelin View*, 2012. https://voegelinview.com/a-pattern-of-timeless-moments-pt-1/

(as in the case of the propellor plane earlier). We might say they are *gifts* of illumination. And for Eliot in *Four Quartets*, it seems that these timeless moments shine through especially in the context of physical landscapes, i.e., Burnt Norton, East Coker, The Dry Salvages and Little Gidding. One of his great gifts as a poet is that he can alight upon specific features in a landscape, which act as metaphors for inner states that are essentially inexpressible. In some mysterious way the poet – or we – enter into a direct, personal relationship with what is encountered (e.g., in the garden at Burnt Norton) through which some sort of indwelling presence suffuses our temporal existence; what Kramer has called '*redeeming reciprocities'*.[23] Note, however, that notwithstanding the claims of some religious commentators Eliot, in keeping with Voegelin, nowhere suggests that these intersection moments involve God or any other supernatural entity. Neither is there a sense in which the different 'reality' is any kind of paradise or 'heaven'. On the contrary, Eliot is consistently non-committal on the nature of ultimacy.

Nevertheless, both Eliot and Voegelin are drawing us towards an acknowledgement that we are part of something greater than ourselves, which we do not and cannot understand. And we can say that this 'something' is *itself* the 'still point' which – in the second part of *Burnt Norton* - the poet symbolises as the immovable centre of the axle of a wheel; the wheel moves around that point, but the centre is itself unmoving. Despite this, the centre of the axle is not inactive ('*and do not call it fixity'*) since without it – as with any wheel - no movement could take place. And it is around this point that the world revolves, and the 'dance' - the divine choreography manifest throughout the cosmos – takes place. We saw earlier that the still point *is a moment of timelessness within time* but we may also think of it as symbolising Voegelin's 'divine reality', i.e. the unmoving ground or centre of all things and the spiritual centre of all creation.

Thus, for Eliot, the still point is an unexpected moment of illumination, in which we become aware – however fleetingly - of the dual nature of our life

[23] Kramer, *Redeeming* Time, xiii.

in the metaxy, of participating in a timeless reality in which we are simultaneously past, present and future, at rest and moving. Importantly, through the use of memory, such redemptive moments can be retrieved, re-interpreted – *transfigured* – and understood in the context of the *present*. In this way, we may be liberated - at least in a measure - from the temporal realm and also from ourselves, into a different, timeless reality.

Our history in the metaxy

There is more. If, as Helen Gardner suggests, *Four Quartets* is essentially 'a series of meditations upon existence in time', they are simultaneously meditations on history.[24] Although we tend to see our personal history as a gradual accumulation of knowledge and experience on a linear timeline, from childhood through to old age, Voegelin offers us a different perspective through the image of a 'web of meaning'. History is not primarily the linear recording of events – just a list of dates and times – but rather the accumulation of self-interpretations on the part of both individuals and societies, as lines or patterns of meaning extending from the past into the future.[25] Put simply, history is a web of *meanings* not events.

And for Eliot, it is precisely the meanings accrued from moments of illumination in the metaxy, which are the most crucial to understanding life's ultimate meaning. As he says:

> A people without history
> Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
> Of timeless moments. (*LG* V)

Eliot is saying that existence is not primarily a matter of temporal milestones, but a journey towards 'fulfilment' in a deeper reality. With this in mind, we also recognise that we are never, whatever our stage in life, other than in 'the middle' of existence, i.e. in the in-between of the metaxy.

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[24] H. Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (Faber & Faber, 1978), 44.

[25] Eric Voegelin. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 17: Order and History, Volume IV, The Ecumenic Age*, ed. Michael Franz (University of Missouri Press, 2000), 106. https://archive.org/details/OrderAndHistoryVol.IVTheEcumenicAge/page/n115/mode/2up?view=theater

Eliot declares that we are:

> In the middle, not only in the middle of the way
> But all the way (*EC* II)

This is a truth which is easy to ignore or forget in today's world which constantly diverts us from the transcendent. Life is a journey 'all the way' through a dark forest where we are caught up in the 'brambles' of distraction – personal ambitions or the craving for material possessions, or as the poet puts it:

> Distracted from distraction by distraction (*BN* III).

Incarnation

Part of the idea of the intersection in *Four Quartets* is 'Incarnation'. But what does intersection have to do with 'Incarnation'? The answer is everything.

In *Burnt Norton,* Eliot alerts us to something, without telling us what that is:

> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end which is always present (*BN* I).

It is not until the last movement of 'The Dry Salvages' that what '*the one end which is always present'* actually means, is revealed to us: *incarnation*.

> 'The hint half-guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation'
> (*DS* V)

Notice that Eliot does not call it '*The* Incarnation' which, in the Christian tradition, is understood as the moment in which the God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Instead, he omits the definite article and simply calls it 'Incarnation'. This is not an accidental omission; the poet wants to broaden this thought to include other possibilities of transcending our temporal realm, whether through art, literature, music, nature etc. Thus, whilst the idea of incarnation includes the Christian doctrine, because Eliot has defined Incarnation not in any theological sense, but as the intersection of the timeless with time, it clearly does not exclude those who are not of a

Christian persuasion.[26] It is the Christian ideal, surely, but not exclusively so. Moments of intersection, incarnation, can and do occur in those who do not have any overtly Christian – or religious – commitments**.** But what then *is* incarnation in this broader sense?

'Incarnation' is to be understood as the *experience* of the divine, or the eternal, at the moment of intersection in the metaxy, when our participation in the eternal becomes apparent. As an example, consider a leaf, an ordinary leaf. I have handled leaves on countless occasions but, for whatever reason, today I experience it in a different way. I see its familiar structure, the shape, the symmetry, the venation, but quite suddenly I feel moved by it – a sense in which it is something *more* than a leaf. For a moment, I glimpse the leaf as part of a cosmic pattern, the origin of which is a mystery. This revelation is an intersection moment, when the eternal reaches into the temporal *through* the leaf and in that moment, the leaf is transfigured into an *Incarnation* – an embodiment of the eternal.

In other words, the leaf becomes a conduit through which the divine reaches into the temporal, a moment in which I both glimpse the divine and am looked upon by it.

To be clear: the leaf is not itself 'Incarnation'; rather 'Incarnation' is my transcendent *experience* of the leaf at the moment of its transfiguration into the divine.

The source of 'Incarnation'

Given that the intersection moment and incarnation are the centre around which the entire sequence of *Four Quartets* revolves*,* we can legitimately ask what precisely it *is* that makes such experiences possible? Is Eliot seriously suggesting that through poetry, we can be led through the point of intersection, where we may glimpse an unknown, timeless world beyond ours? That we can gain an apprehension of that which is otherwise inapprehensible? This seems to be what he is claiming when he wrote that

[26] Tom Brous, *Why Read Four Quartets?* (Resource Publications 2017).

the *'poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist.'*[27] If so, what does it mean to live within a world haunted by the possibility of another, unknown and timeless world beyond this one? And what *is* this world we are entering across the frontiers of consciousness? For Eliot, it seems there are two possibilities.

On the one hand, perhaps there is actually a timeless, eternal (or divine) realm – not necessarily a *place* - but a state of being in an ultimate union with God, a realm where the known touches the unknown. This belief, and variations of it, would be consistent with the Christian view. On the other, it might be that what we experience arises as the result of a new consciousness, an expansion of the mind, in and through which the world appears in a different light. Many people who have no religious commitments report such experiences, moments in which they feel awe and an overwhelming sense of connectedness or oneness. It seems that feelings of transcendence are universally accessible. On this view, our experience of the timeless or the 'whole' is nothing more than a purely *mental* phenomenon, which has no 'reality' other than in the mind of the subject. This, as noted previously, was probably the view of Eric Voegelin, though he believed that there was a divine reality *behind* this event in consciousness.

Eliot himself seems unsure. Referring to Blaise Pascal's mystical vision in 1654, Eliot wrote *'You may call it communion with the divine, or you may call it temporary crystallization of the mind'* and one can assume he had the same view about his own experiences.[28] But of course, even a temporary crystallisation of the mind (whatever that may be), could itself be initiated by a divine being of some kind. On every occasion on which these visionary experiences occurred, it seemed to Eliot that he had been in *receipt* of an understanding, from a transcendent source, that disperses ordinary reality.[29]

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[27] T.S. Eliot. '*The Music of Poetry'*, in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (Harcourt Brace, 1942), 107.
[28] T.S. Eliot, *Pascal's Pensées*, 'Introduction by T.S. Eliot', *The Project Gutenberg E: Book of Pascal's* Pensées. 2006. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm
[29] Gordon. *The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot*, 49.

We must also recall that intersection moments are not summoned by us; we do not simply decide that we are in the mood for a glimpse of the beyond. The moment – if it comes at all – arrives unbidden, which suggests that we are claimed by a reality we cannot comprehend. For that reason, I am quite sure that Eliot thought of this as something beyond our temporal realm, something transcendent and eternal and, importantly, independent of human consciousness. Consciousness is simply the means by which we participate in the timeless.

This idea of participation has some support from modern theories deriving from physics and philosophy, which suggest that rather than originating in the brain, consciousness is – like gravity and electromagnetism – a fundamental aspect of reality, a *universal* consciousness (*panpsychism*) in which we participate.[30] On this view, the brain is not the originator of consciousness, but a receiver, in just the same way the ear or the eye receive and interpret sound or light waves. There is a hierarchy of consciousness; a person is embodied consciousness at the human level, a cat less sophisticated at the cat level, then plants and trees, bacteria etc. all the way down to fundamental particles, such as electrons.

Then all the way up from the human, to the highest levels of consciousness which spiritual traditions call God, the One, or 'divine reality'. The highest level of consciousness is not normally accessible to humans, but perhaps in intersection moments, we are given a glimpse of that higher reality. This account would, of course, fit perfectly with the idea of the metaxy. The 'divine reality' of which Voegelin speaks is actually a universal consciousness which is always present and in which we are thus always participating - at the *human* level. However, in 'intersection' moments, we glimpse the transcendent reality which lies beyond.

Is this transcendent reality supernatural i.e. utterly beyond the confines and laws of the natural world, or is it *supra*natural – i.e. a natural phenomenon

[30] Michel Brooks. 'Is the universe conscious? It seems impossible until you do the maths', *New Scientist,* Issue 3280, 2nd May 2020. https://www.newscientist.com/issue/3280/

which obeys fundamental laws which we have yet to understand? All of this is, of course, pure speculation. We simply don't know and we cannot know.

On the other hand, I do not think Eliot conceived of this transcendent reality as the Christian idea of heaven, i.e. as a spatiotemporal location, a *place* we 'go to'. Rather, both for Eliot and Voegelin, the 'beyond' of transcendence is a timeless realm of meaning in which, in moments of intersection, we participate. As we have seen, Eliot uses a variety of words to symbolise what he is pointing towards (the still point, the Absolute etc.), but as to what it actually *is* – universal consciousness, a supernatural being, 'God', Voegelin's 'divine reality' or some other kind of '*ultimate*' – he does not say. We should not be surprised by this. Eliot, I think, is sharply aware that where mystery reigns, we would be better to say nothing. As Wittgenstein put it in the concluding sentence of the *Tractatus*, '*whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent.*'[31] In *Four Quartets*, Eliot takes us to the doorstep of the Absolute, but no further.

Conclusion

As human beings, our home is in the tension of the metaxy, i.e. the in-between of the temporal and the transcendent, and to realise that fact is be aware of the fundamental paradoxes that characterise human existence. Because we experience only fragments of reality, we long for wholeness and are *drawn* towards the transcendent. However, in today's materialistic, time-obsessed society, we have forgotten the eternal. Nevertheless, in rare moments of intersection, at the still point, we are lifted from the temporal to glimpse the timeless, and the catalyst for that moment – landscape, music, Christ etc. – is incarnation. For Eliot and Voegelin, such moments out of time can be retrieved in time and can connect us to a deeper truth, in a way which illuminates and gives meaning to our temporal sojourn. The ultimate nature of transcendent reality – God, 'universal consciousness', the Absolute – is unknown and unknowable.

[31] Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Routledge, 1981.

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A Note on a phrase at the end of *Four Quartets*

Richard Harries

Quick now, here, now, always –
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything).

Eliot owned a copy of *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman O.S.B*, first published in 1935. Chapman was much influenced by *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Jean-Pierre de Caussade, first published in English in 1933, whose whole emphasis is on accepting the present moment as the will of God, which he termed the sacrament of the present moment. This involves an abandonment to the will of God in that particular moment and every moment. Chapman has the phrase '*oraison de simple remise*',[1] a prayer of simple handing over, which sheds light on Eliot's words about a complete simplicity which costs not less than everything.

[1] *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman O.S.B*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1935. Giving an example of contemplative prayer Chapman writes 'I am occupied in simply *giving* myself to God; *oraison de simple reprise.*' (p60) He has been reading de Caussade 'It is extremely good. But like St John of the Cross, it makes one realise that a simple *remise á Dieu* is not so simple. It is as easy as jumping into a fire, which you have not seen, and has the same effect.' (p62) I think it is highly likely that Eliot himself would have read de Caussade as well as Chapman.

Book Reviews

Christopher Southgate

Eliot Now edited by Megan Quigley and David E. Chinitz. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Hard cover, xi + 274pp. 978-1-350-17392-7. £85.00.

This is a quite surprising book. I expected something along the lines of the Cambridge Companions to Eliot, or a sequel to the excellent Blackwell Companion edited by Chinitz and published in 2009. What emerges in these twenty-some essays (accompanied by a useful bibliography of recent critical work) is something subtly but significantly different.

In his essay on the *Complete Prose* for this volume, Anthony Cuda remarks that '"Eliot now" is becoming profoundly different from Eliot a decade ago. We are on the cusp of something quite rich and strange'. (23) Well, if this is right, there are two complementary factors driving it. The first is the access to new data, with the voluminous two-volume *Poems of T.S. Eliot* edited by Ricks and McCue, the on-line *Complete Prose*, and vitally importantly the poet's letters to Emily Hale from 1930 onwards, edited by John Haffenden and also available on-line. The second of course is fashion in critical lenses, of which the feminist, post-colonial and racism-attuned are the most marked. And it is the latter that dominates this content.

The first section of the book covers the new published material – the *Poems*, the *Complete Prose*, and the biography in the light of the Hale letters. The second relates Eliot to 'theory', broadly understood, and the third to prospects for the future. In the opening section I particularly enjoyed the essay of Frances Dickey, summarising what we now know of Eliot's relationships with Vivienne Haigh-Wood and Emily Hale.

Elyse Graham and Michelle A. Taylor, in their ingenious essay on Eliot and 'fandom' – pointing out that TSE wrote as a fan (of such figures as Dante), and that this may in turn contribute to his acquiring an on-line

fandom of his own – offer this comment: 'As a writer, Eliot exerts a tremendous force of gravity, almost planetary in scale' (127). This is a very significant observation. These essays are not, by and large, contributions to the evolving critical evaluation of the work of a reasonably contemporary poet. The treatments of the poems more resemble essays on Shakespeare. A writer of 'planetary scale' of influence is reappropriated in ways that serve our present concerns. This is 'Eliot Now', rich and strange. But there opens up an interesting disjunct between this treatment of the poems, effectively as unquestionable canon, though open to a very wide range of re-reading, and consideration of Eliot's prose as critic and public Christian intellectual. The latter treatment is much more troubled by the issue of whether this material is usable at all.

Three essays in the theory section will illustrate the deployment of contemporary fashions in critical lenses. Julia E. Daniel's '"No Empty Bottles': Eliot's Ambivalent Anthropocene' explores possibilities for 'greening' Eliot. A sign of the topicality and fleetingness of the 'Now' of the volume's overall title is that even as the book came out the 'Anthropocene' was being rejected as an authentic title for a geological era. But Eliot's 'green investments' remain a fascinating area of focus. Daniel concludes that they are 'more tangled than we might like them to be' (67). Eliot writes eloquently (almost one might say lovingly) of pollution and detritus, having been a child in a heavily polluted industrial city (St Louis). And as Daniel points out, the clean Thames of the opening of 'The Fire Sermon' is only possible because human recreation and delight have departed. Eliot's ecological vision, she concludes, 'is largely diagnostic: he offers critique but infrequently gestures towards alternatives' (72). But she does draw on his interest in village-based organic permaculture, in ways whose time may yet be coming. This is a vein of Eliot's prose that may after all turn out to be usable.

Turning from there to the one essay with a title including *Four Quartets*, I encountered Ann Marie Jakubowski's essay on whiteness. She seizes upon the intriguing word 'valid'. 'Where prayer has been valid' in 'Little Gidding' is in the tradition of the Church of England that Eliot lauded and joined. For Jakubowski Eliot is 'doing race' when he converts to

Anglicanism, 'accessing a supposedly more coherent form of whiteness by restoring genealogical continuity defined in both national and religious terms' (99). The locational progression through the places in the titles of the *Quartets* 'maps an allegorical quest for white racial identity onto its pursuit of ever-deeper theological enlightenment' (100).

Well, Christian faith is notorious for a 'scandal of particularity' – the claim in orthodox formulations that God's engagement with humanity is revealed, sanctified and transformed by a particular incarnation in a particular dark-skinned Middle-Eastern Jewish man in a particular time and place. The claim that that divine act affects all people at all times and places is a difficult and disturbing one. But given that incarnation was at the heart of Eliot's spirituality, it has to be prominent in reflections on same.

I come to think, however, that there is another scandal of particularity in the history of Christianity, which is that the religion has taken particular and distinct forms in particular places and times, while making all the while a claim to universality (a claim later parallelled of course in Islam). That claim was more innocent when small groups in Hellenistic cities, meeting in homes and going regularly to synagogue, committed themselves to the radical equality of all persons, slave or free. Someone reflecting from our own time on this history will however note that the claim became tangled with empire, and later with colonial monarchies, in ways that led to a blasphemous travesty of that early vision of equality.

Jakubowski comes at the end of her essay to a sense that 'The racial anxieties baked into the two previous appearances [of the concept of validity] have fallen away' (102) by the moment when Eliot concludes that 'You are here to kneel where prayer has been valid'. But I would have welcomed a more theologically attuned exploration of 'whiteness' that at least acknowledged the paradoxes inherent in the first scandal noted above.

I loved however the quotation Jakubowski offers from Jed Esty, speaking of Eliot's conversion and naturalization as 'indicative of Eliot's lust for roots: they make it tempting to think of the poet in these years as an ancient, grim and determined salmon, swimming upstream against the currents of modernity and diaspora in order to find his beginnings' (quoted on 99).

The next essay in the theory section was by Emma Heaney on Tiresias, in the light of contemporary trans experience and that of trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) who claim that 'trans women pose a threat to all women's spaces… and a conceptual impediment to feminist investigation of women's social position and embodied experiences' (108). Drawing on 'The Fire Sermon' in *The Waste Land*, Heaney claims that 'The body of Tiresias represents the agony of the typist... the object on which another has enacted his personhood. Eliot's famous poem is one of the key texts in which the trans feminine fills the void for a stable eternal symbolic referent' (112) She is clearly shocked by some of the writing of TERFs, claiming that 'Their writing proffers grotesquely violent descriptions of trans people's bodies and trans healthcare contrasted with proprietary claims to the naturalness of the cis woman's embodiment.' (114). TERFs 'engage trans people and trans life only in relation to cis life and people.' (115) Instead, 'We must imagine that a trans feminine reader of Eliot's poem, then and now, is possible… We can teach Eliot alongside the texts of trans feminine life that were contemporary to his poetry.' (116-7) Consideration of these issues has a particular charge, and importance, given a recent Supreme Court judgment in the UK, and political developments in the US.

These last two essays were new and chastening pathways of thought for this rather old-fashioned reviewer. That said, most of this book is, for the academically inclined general reader, a rattling good read. The essays are short, vigorously written, and not overencumbered with notes. Ironically it was one of the more traditional approaches, Paul Franz's consideration of the early poetry in relation to lyric theory, that had me reaching several times for the Oxford English Dictionary. By and large the essayists showed great depth of familiarity with the Eliot corpus but wore it lightly.

I was particularly struck by Megan Quigley's essay on 'Eliot's Fictions', which again picks up the theme of fandom (and I suppose all readers of this journal are in a sense fans, however unwilling we might be to admit this). Among those prose writers of the preceding generation, Eliot's greatest 'crush' was on Henry James. He admires James' extraordinary intelligence and concentration on his art; he borrows his descriptions, he steals the names of James's characters. Eliot's statement for posterity, written for

release to coincide with the Hale letters, complains of Emily's preoccupation with the importance of their correspondence. That note – so damaging to Eliot's standing at least with this fan – speaks of '*The Aspern Papers* in reverse'. Quigley plays artfully with the possibilities here. Does Eliot picture himself as Aspern, the author of the coveted papers? Or does he rather think of himself as the victim of idolatrous desire to secure the papers – the character with the courage to burn them? Quigley is also persuasive that Eliot's 'celebrated impersonality may have been his own greatest fiction'. (216)

This is followed by an Afterword from Urmila Seshagiri, playing with 'Prufrock' in ways that bring out both the difficulty and the opportunities in appropriating Eliot's writings in the 2020s. His track record of myopic antisemitism speaks all too disastrously for itself. As she so tellingly notes: 'As scholars and students of literature, we live in the postwar house that T.S. Eliot built, and to reexamine the foundations of our house is inevitably to discover where it has been inhospitable.' (229) But she also notes the fresh resonances generated by the poems in the age of pandemic, when we are starting '[t]o learn to live again after practicing not-dying' (226). And she concludes that the poems still have, as Virginia Woolf wrote after first seeing *The Waste Land*, 'great beauty and force of phrase'.

It is very odd, and somewhat infelicitous, that after the Afterword comes a patchwork of responses by poets to the Waste Land centenary. I could not really see the point of these, or understand why they were tacked on at the end, though this may perhaps be explained by the desire to commemorate James Longenbach, who died while the volume was in train.

One can only regret such a vigorous and topical collection appears at present only at the hardback price. But I would urge readers of this journal to watch for the paperback and hope for a handy book token to buy it with.

Vincent Strudwick, *Eliot's Transitions: T.S. Eliot's Search for Identity and the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham Hall.* Fairacres: SLG Press, 2024. Paperback, 79pp. 978-0-7283-0409-3. £9.50.

This little book is written out of a deep affection for the community gathered at Kelham Hall in the 1930 and 40s, especially the key figures H.H. Kelly, George Every, and Gabriel Hebert. Kelly founded the Society of the Sacred Mission to enable those in the mission field to learn to think for themselves. Every was a historian and a poet, a pupil of the influential historian Christopher Dawson. Hebert is perhaps best known for his book *Liturgy and Society* (1935), which brought the Liturgical Movement in the Roman Catholic Church into English Anglicanism.

Strudwick himself (b. 1932) seems to have been deeply influenced by his contacts with Kelham and with key figures such as Every. I pay tribute to his determination to bring this book to fruition when already in his nineties. It is full of his respect and affection for Kelham and its prime movers in the period in focus. And he proposes two key insights into the unfolding of Eliot's biography in the 1930s in particular.

First, that Eliot's visit to Little Gidding in the spring of 1936 was of great spiritual significance to him. Second, that Eliot's frequent private visits to Kelham between 1933 and 1939, augmented by his friendship and correspondence with Every in particular, reinforced his spiritual path, as well as informing work such as *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939). The argument of the lectures that became *Idea* was presented first at Kelham before transferring to Cambridge.

Well, there is a significant element of conjecture attaching to these proposals. These visits to Kelham were indeed private. The speculation that Eliot used Hebert as an external confessor is presented without evidence. Eliot at Little Gidding 'may have been gripped by the place' and was 'very likely overwhelmed by a sense of the presence of God' (46). These are (to quote Eliot himself), 'hints followed by guesses' ('The Dry Salvages' V).

And there are inaccuracies, perhaps understandable. We now know Eliot's visit to Burnt Norton with Emily Hale was in 1935, not 1934. 'Burnt Norton' reached its final form more quickly than Strudwick acknowledges. And it is not true that the four poems that became *Four Quartets* 'were under constant revision until their publication as a set in 1943' (21). Rather

the first three had already been in published form for some time. And Hale 'believed the poem to be a love letter to her' (21) only because Eliot had told her so in his letter of January 13, 1936.

But for what it is worth I am persuaded by the general contours of Strudwick's narrative. The poetics of 'Burnt Norton' did develop under the influence both of Emily Hale, and of John Hayward, and of Eliot's spiritual companions. And the tensions in that crucible of influence were played out also in the correspondence with Hale. The ecstatic pronouncements and endearments after their parting in December 1935 become tempered by discussions of the impossibility of divorce, and begin to take a more spiritualising tone. That was, perhaps, under the 'more discreet' influence that Strudwick sees coming from Eliot's 'Kelham friends'. The May '36 visit to Little Gidding, from which Eliot went on to Kelham for Whitsun, 'knowing he had choices to make' (47), may indeed have been formative. It was already known from Helen Gardner's work that a visit to Kelham in the summer of 1935 had been the source of Eliot's experience of 'kingfisher', 'yew', and 'clematis' in 'Burnt Norton' IV.

Strudwick also makes a very interesting identification of Eliot not with Prospero (as per Hannah Sullivan) but with Caliban, who vows at the end of *The Tempest* to be 'wise hereafter and seek for grace' (63). Those whose sympathies lie with Emily Hale will feel less affinity with this book than those for whom Eliot is a spiritual exemplar. But everyone interested in Eliot will gain from the discussion of his dialogue with George Every on verse drama, and on societal Christianity, and from Strudwick's sense that Eliot's Anglicanism was not narrow, but radical, informed by the Society of Sacred Mission and by Kelly's vision which underpinned it.

In my other review in this issue, of the essay collection *Eliot Now*, I write of the way I perceive Eliot fading out of the contemporary period into the remote past, from which we reappropriate his work to meet our current concerns. It is all the more important and helpful that Father Strudwick has published personal recollections of someone, George Every, who was in close and formative conversation with the Eliot of the 1930s. So devotees of Eliot should be very grateful for this thoughtful and accessible little book.

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