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

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The T.S. Eliot Society (UK)

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• Promote the study and appreciation of T.S. Eliot's work

• Promote events celebrating Eliot's work

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• Produce a regular online newsletter, *Exchanges*

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• Present the Annual T.S. Eliot Lecture

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EDITORIAL

There is a fascinating transition in the poetry of T.S. Eliot between 'The Hollow Men' of 1925, and 'Journey of the Magi' (1927), with its strong Christian setting and imagery (albeit tossed off, allegedly, between Mattins and lunch with the aid of half a bottle of gin). So 1926 is a fascinating year of which to observe the centenary, even if no major poetry was published. It is of course the centenary of that extraordinary scene in St Peter's, Rome, when Eliot fell to his knees before Michelangelo's *Pietá*, to the bemusement of his Unitarian relatives.

I find myself reflecting on what an extraordinary time this is for Eliot studies. Not only do we have the admirable Ricks and McCue editions of the Poems, not only are the Emily Hale letters freely accessible at tseliot.com, but the *Complete Prose* is available electronically, together with the Letters up to and beyond the great poems. Those with access to an institutional library with the right subscriptions can search all these resources on-line at will for whatever wild idea or connection crosses the mind or heart. Only the Plays remain without an up-to-date electronic edition; there I still have recourse to the doorstop of a print concordance.[1]

This issue takes us in two different directions. Reflecting on *The Waste Land*, Raul Calvoz and Adil Khan implicitly celebrate the fragmentation for which the poem is famous. Calvoz does this by showing that the Notes Eliot added to the poem, sometimes taken as a guide to the interpretation of the poem's mysteries, should not be taken as in any way integral to the work. They should not, therefore, be allowed to dilute its intense and often baffling transitions. Adil Khan analyses the poem in Lacanian terms, insisting on the way 'images and voices repeatedly fail to settle into determinate reference, forcing the reader to confront meaning as a function of relation rather than representation'. I found this perspective very persuasive in relation to *The Waste Land*.

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[1] *A Concordance to the Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, ed. J.L. Dawson, P.D. Holland, and D.J. McKitterick (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

Whereas Sabrina Palmer, working from *Four Quartets*, wants to show that the journey on which Eliot takes the reader corresponds to a phenomenological pattern of universal scope. At the same time she acknowledges 'the fractured syntax, the obscurity, the resistance to linear reading', going on to claim that 'these are not aesthetic choices or deliberate obfuscation. They are methodological necessities.'

These hermeneutical choices seem appropriate both to the character of the respective poems, and also to Eliot's biography. The author of *The Waste Land* articulates 'a piece of rhythmical grumbling', hewn with Ezra Pound's help out of the chaos of his life with Vivien. Fragments are shored against psychological ruin. The author of *Four Quartets* is deeply committed to a Christian metanarrative within which all the diverse patterns of human experience may be fitted. Palmer finds a pattern to which those without any Christian affiliation can respond, hence, she claims, much of the poems' universality of appeal. But it is hard, I suggest, to imagine that Eliot would have fashioned such a pattern without his overall commitment to the ultimate coherence of reality around the ways of God with the world.

The ingredients of Eliot's biography in the transition between the two are all the more fascinating for this change. Richard Harries and Sara Fitzgerald explore two of these – Harries tackles Eliot's essay on Pascal, noting its heavy echoes of Eliot's own intellectual and spiritual aspirations; Fitzgerald, Emily Hale's biographer, thinks through the significance of the Cotswold base where Eliot and Emily had some of their most intimate moments of connection, and from which, famously, they walked to the garden at Burnt Norton.

In my two book reviews I engage first with a collection of essays that tackles the later Eliot from *The Rock* through to *The Elder Statesman*. The treatment of the plays (often in dialogue with *Four Quartets*) is a welcome addition to the corpus of Eliot criticism, as is the reflection on Eliot's social criticism. It is interesting to see agencies of the Spanish government, and of the EU, providing funding for such a project. The second review reflects

on the tenth volume of Eliot's letters, which sees the busy Faber editor and public persona find time through a huge range of commitments not only to finish 'Little Gidding' but to support many authors, academics and friends in a whole range of ways.

I take this opportunity to thank our peer reviewers for their generous but unsung input, which is essential to making the Journal what it is. There are two innovations in this issue. First, abstracts are provided for full-length articles, to enable browsers – perhaps taking advantage of the open-access character of the Journal – to decide whether to explore the article further. Second, I have published a short poem on the portrayals of Eliot at the National Portrait Gallery. As much as anything else this is to signal that I welcome contributions other than in strict academic prose, though they must of course contribute seriously to the vocation of the Journal in exploring Eliot's work, life and times.

As ever I very much welcome feedback on the issue, and also correspondence exploring possible future contributions. 2027 is the year of Eliot's nationalisation as a British citizen and his baptism and confirmation into the Anglican Church – these are particularly promising themes for future articles.

I am delighted to note that recent contributors to the Journal are producing books on Eliot. Paul Keers' *T.S. Eliot: A Lifetime of Old Age* will be published by Palgrave Macmillan. David Ashton's *The Moment in the Rose Garden: A new Reading of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets* is forthcoming from Lutterworth/James Clarke. At the same time, I am much saddened to record the death, while this issue was in proof, of Richard Harries. Among his very many distinctions was an important series of books at the interface between the arts, including poetry, and faith. I greatly hope his planned commentary on *Four Quartets*, which I had the privilege of seeing in draft, will still find its way into print.

And a reminder that 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).

The Poem Eliot Published: Authorial Intent and the Notes to *The Waste Land*

Raúl Rodríguez Calvoz

Abstract

This article re-examines the status of the Notes to *The Waste Land* by distinguishing between the poem Eliot authored and the material later appended to it. Against a critical tradition that treats the Notes as integral to the poem's meaning, the article argues that they do not form part of the work. The argument proceeds along three lines. First, the compositional record establishes an implicit account of authorial intention. *The Waste Land* was developed in close collaboration with Ezra Pound, whose editorial interventions shaped its structure, voice, and final form. That collaboration concluded before any evidence of the Notes appears, and the poem was subsequently circulated and first published—in *The Criterion* and *The Dial*—without them. These initial publications reflect the form in which Eliot completed and presented the work. Second, the publication history provides a practical explanation for the Notes' later inclusion. Negotiations involving *The Dial* and Boni & Liveright indicate that the Notes served specific publishing purposes. They expanded the poem to book length and differentiated the volume from its prior periodical appearances, thereby maximizing both Eliot's compensation and audience reach. Third, Eliot in retrospect explicitly disavows the Notes, describing them as 'bogus scholarship.' Taken together, these lines of evidence support a clear conclusion: the Notes are not part of the poem, but ancillary material associated with a particular mode of publication. Recognizing this distinction clarifies the boundaries of the work and reorients its interpretation toward the form Eliot intended and first presented to the public.

The Poem Eliot Published: Authorial Intent and the Notes to *The Waste Land*[1]

Introduction

In publishing Volume 1 of *The Criterion*, T.S. Eliot not only launched a literary journal, but staked a claim regarding authorial intent which arguably has received too little detailed critical attention. In that inaugural issue, released only in the U.K. in October 1922, Eliot first published *The Waste Land*—in a journal of his own creation and under his sole control. In November 1922, the poem was published in *The Dial* in the United States. And in December 1922, Boni & Liveright published the poem in book form. Of the three publications of the poem in 1922, only the last contained the Notes. Yet, many critics claim that the Notes to *The Waste Land* are 'part of' the poem and integral to its understanding.[2] Detailed review of the circumstances surrounding the poem's creation and publication tells a different story. These point inexorably to the conclusion that the Notes were used by Eliot as a negotiating tool to maximize the exposure of, and compensation for, his work: a practical, realpolitik purpose which was achieved at the time of publication by Boni & Liveright and, arguably, should have ended there.

By publishing *The Waste Land* in *The Criterion* without Notes, Eliot demonstrated his intent as to the poem's form, a structure that did not include Notes. He later affirmed that stance with his statement in 'The Frontiers of Criticism' that the Notes stimulated the 'wrong kind of interest' and were a 'remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship' added for

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1 T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 5. *He do the Police in Different Voices* was the working title of the poem that we now know as *The Waste Land*. To say that the Notes are a part of, or integral to, the poem would be to add an additional voice to those already present in the poem.

2 See Appendix 1 for a detailed list of scholars and their positions on the Notes.

publication length.[3] Yet many scholars treat the Notes as integral to *The Waste Land* without adequately accounting for this authorial disavowal. Cleanth Brooks, for instance, relies heavily on the Notes to argue for the poem's mythic unity and coherence, as if they were an essential key to interpretation, without addressing Eliot's dismissal.[4] Similarly, F.O. Matthiessen defends the Notes' role in supporting the poem's latent communication and deeper engagement, overlooking Eliot's pragmatic explanation and regret.[5] Later critics like Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley emphasize the Notes' hermeneutic value while ignoring Eliot's statements on their misleading nature.[6] Stanley Sultan reframes them as an 'additional allusive part' extending the poem's intertextual fabric, dismissing Eliot's 'bogus scholarship' label as 'inadequate' without fully grappling with Eliot's intent.[7] Jo Ellen Green Kaiser explicitly rejects Eliot's effort to 'unstick' the Notes, arguing they function as a deliberate structural device reinforcing unity against fragmentation.[8] These approaches illustrate a tendency in Eliot scholarship to privilege intertextual and formalist readings over the poet's expressed intent regarding the Notes. While these critics and others claim the Notes are integral to *The Waste Land*, many others conclude (as do I) that the Notes are superfluous to the poem. For the reader interested in exploring all of these scholars and their positions regarding the Notes further, I have included an Appendix at the end of this article listing the scholars who have addressed the issue and summarizing their positions.

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3 T.S. Eliot. 'The Frontiers of Criticism.' *The Sewanee Review* 64, no. 4 (1956): 534-35.

4 Cleanth Brooks, '*The Waste Land*: Critique of the Myth', in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 169.

5 F.O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), 50.

6 Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley. *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 4.

7 Stanley Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 173.

8 Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, 'Disciplining *The Waste Land*, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation', *Twentieth Century Literature* 44, no. 1 (1998): 83.

Whether the Notes are 'part of' *The Waste Land* is an issue of heightened importance given Eliot's own formalistic view of literature. As he stated, 'Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry.'[9] Reading his work as he would have intended and would have wished it to be appreciated, then, hinges upon clarity regarding what the true, intended content of that work includes. Eliot's own publication of *The Waste Land*, his version in *The Criterion* sans Notes, is the definitive version of the poem. The Notes were not a 'part of' *The Waste Land*; they are not functional; they add no new voice to the work. The Boni & Liveright version with Notes is at best an historical anachronism. Ironically, it is only by focusing on the poet (rather than the text, as Eliot would have wanted), and the circumstances surrounding his poem's publication, that we can come to this conclusion.

I will argue in support of this conclusion first by analysing the creation of the poem. Second, by addressing the issue of voice, and two of the better arguments in favour of the Notes forming a 'part of' the poem. And last, I will address the circumstances surrounding *The Waste Land's* publication, and present a practical scenario that explains why Eliot included the Notes with the Boni & Liveright publication of the poem and then later disowned them.

The creation of *The Waste Land*

T.S. Eliot is a giant in English literature. Yet it is easy to forget that when he began to write *The Waste Land* in 1919, he was not T.S. Eliot, Nobel Laureate. His work on *The Waste Land* began relatively early in his literary career, at a time when he was much more an aspiring poet than an established literary voice.

9 T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' *Perspecta* 19 (1982): 39.

In 1919, Eliot was a recent American transplant to England, and in many ways a fish out of water.[10] He was thirty-one years old. He had been married to Vivien Haigh-Wood for four years; though they were still relative newlyweds, they had been married long enough for Eliot to have discovered that Vivien was plagued by health issues which put an emotional and financial strain on the young couple. At that point, Eliot had been working for two years at a low paying job as a clerk in the Colonial and Foreign Department at Lloyds Bank.[11] He was living in relatively precarious circumstances, financially, maritally, and health-wise.[12]

It was in November of 1919 that Eliot first referred to *The Waste Land* as 'a poem that I have in mind.'[13] *The Waste Land* was written between 1919 and late 1921. This was a difficult period for Eliot as work stress, caring for his ailing wife, and his own self-imposed prose publication commitments[14] created a level of anxiety which led to him taking two leaves of absence from work, one spent in Margate and the other in Lausanne. During this time, he also undertook to launch the literary journal *The Criterion*, further adding to the pressure on him and constraining his time.

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10 Eliot felt himself to be an outsider, an American living in England, yet 'more a Frenchman than an American and more an Englishman than a Frenchman.' Herbert Read, 'T. S. E. – A Memoir,' *Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1 (1966): 35.

11 Bill Goldstein, *World Broke in Two: Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster and the Year That Changed Literature* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 31.

12 Such was Eliot's state that two friends made distinct attempts to raise funds to support him and Vivien so that he could dedicate his time fully to creative work. 'Ottoline would soon get Virginia Woolf to help her in what became the 'Eliot Fellowship Fund.' …Ezra Pound had a plan, too. He called his 'Bel Esprit.'' Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 28.

13 T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, *vol. I: 1898–1922*, Rev.ed., ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 344.

14 'Eliot published forty-nine reviews and essays in the *Times Literary Supplement* and elsewhere between 1919 and the end of 1921, and was in despair about his inability to concentrate on the creative work he knew he ought to be doing.' Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 34.

At this point in his career, he had published very few poems, his most important being *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915). *Prufrock* was published thanks in large part to Ezra Pound[15] to whom Eliot had shown the poem in draft form. After reading it, Pound praised Eliot as 'the last intelligent man I've found … worth watching,' and a relationship of mentor and protegé was formed.[16] *Prufrock* was published only after Pound harangued the publisher for six months, 'Do get on with that Eliot.'[17] After *Prufrock*, a collection of Eliot's work extant at the time was published in Harriet Weaver's literary magazine *The Egoist* at Pound's expense (unbeknownst to Eliot).[18] While *Prufrock* was Eliot's best work when he began work on *The Waste Land*, it was not well received initially by the public. It was much appreciated in literary circles, however, and earned Eliot status as a poet with the Bloomsbury set[19] and the anti-Bloomsburians as well.[20] He relied on that status in publishing critical articles and essays.

While working on *The Waste Land*, Eliot turned for support to his friend and mentor, Ezra Pound. We have access to the draft manuscripts of *The Waste Land* exchanged between the two which show that the poem was aggressively edited by Pound. These manuscripts make it clear that Eliot heavily relied on Pound and trusted his opinion as to the content of the poem. Based on Pound's edits, the poem was reduced to about half its original length.[21]

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15 The editor of the periodical *Poetry* had been reluctant to publish *Prufrock*, but Pound hounded her until she did. T. S. Matthews, *Great Tom: Notes towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 42.
16 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two*, 54.
17 Matthew Hollis, *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber and Faber, 2022), 23.
18 Hollis, *Biography of a Poem,* 23.
19 Leonard Woolf wrote to Eliot that he and Virginia 'both very much liked your book, Prufrock; and I wonder whether you would care to let us look at the poems with a view to printing them.' Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 28.
20 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 31-32.
21 'Ezra Pound,' *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse*, vol. 68, no. 6, Sept. 1946: 330, cited by Grover Smith, 'The Making of *The Waste Land'*, *Mosaic: A Journal for*

It is of note (I will come back to this later) that in the course of their editorial exchanges Pound comments on the use of voice in the poem. For example, in comments made to 'The Fire Sermon,' Pound recommends deletion of the word 'may' (emphasis mine) in the stanza:

> *She turns and looks a moment in the glass,*
> *Hardly aware of her departed lover;*
> *Across her brain one half-formed thought* ***may*** *pass:*
> *'Well now that's done, and I am glad it's over'.*

Pound's note on the deletion states:

> make up yr. mind
> you Tiresias
> if you know
> know damn well or else you don't[22]

Pound here is addressing the fact that it is Tiresias who is speaking at this point in the poem and is commenting on how his voice should read. That multiple voices speak in *The Waste Land* is widely accepted and was discussed between Pound and Eliot; in fact, the poem's working title (borrowed from Dickens) during much of their collaboration alludes to these multiple voices, 'He Do The Police In Different Voices.'[23]

Given the stage of Eliot's career when he was writing *The Waste Land,* that he wanted Pound to be an active participant in the creation of the work is understandable on multiple levels. Eliot was at that point a young and largely unproven poet. It was Pound who 'discovered' Eliot and thanks to whom *Prufrock* and others of his works were published. Pound was an active advocate of Eliot's in literary circles, with publishers, and with

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the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, vol. 6, no. 1 (1972) 127 citing *T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, x-xi.
22 Eliot, *Transcript of the Original Drafts*, 47.
23 Eliot, *Transcript of the Original Drafts*, 5.

critics. Eliot appreciated not only Pound's literary talent, but also his literary and publishing connections.

Pound's contribution to *The Waste Land* was acknowledged by Eliot repeatedly. He paid tribute to Pound's support by adding in a 1925 publication of the poem the dedication which has become permanent, 'For Ezra Pound *il miglior fabbro.*' Eliot was consistent in this regard, stating of the manuscripts they shared:

> I should like to think that the manuscript, with the suppressed passages, had disappeared irrecoverably: yet, on the other hand, I should wish the blue penciling on it to be preserved as irrefutable evidence of Pound's critical genius.[24]

The manuscripts were preserved, and review of them bears witness both to the extent of Pound's contribution and that Eliot accepted most of Pound's input.

Towards the end of their work on the poem, after convalescing in Lausanne in late 1921, Eliot passed through Paris and met with Pound. Two events of note took place at that point in Paris.

First, Eliot shared with Pound his most recent revisions to the poem. Of this last version, Pound stated, 'MUCH improved. The thing now runs from April … to shantih without a break.'[25] This comment has an air of finality to it—the poem runs well from start to finish. Notably, there was no further collaboration between Pound and Eliot on the text of the poem after this point.[26]

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24 Walter Sutton, ed., *Ezra Pound: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Twentieth Century Views Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), 18-19.
25 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two*, 55.
26 Stanley Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company*, 165.

Also, during this Paris visit, Pound invited Eliot to a dinner where he introduced him to an American book publisher, Horace Liveright. Here we have the second indication, beyond Pound's statement above, that the poem was indeed finished. Part of the discussion at dinner centred on Eliot: Pound proposed to Liveright that he should publish Eliot's new poem. Liveright indicated his interest in the poem but raised two concerns. The first, that the poem was too short to justify a book. The second, the possible publication of the poem in periodical form before the book. Pound and Eliot seemed to take for granted that *The Dial* (an American literary publication) would publish the poem in periodical form. While publication by *The Dial* would serve the poem well as far as credibility in literary circles, it raised questions for Liveright that a subsequent publication 'in book form might only be an afterthought.'[27]

Thus, it appears that by late 1921 the poem was finished. Eliot and Pound had completed their collaboration on *The Waste Land* by that point. And, in addition to Pound's remarks on the last version and the offer of the poem to Liveright in Paris, we find from that point forward further evidence that Eliot considered the poem complete. For example, on January 22, 1922, Wyndam Lewis wrote to Ottoline Morrell that he had seen Eliot, and that Eliot had 'written a particularly fine poem.' Eliot had begun to show the poem to others.[28] That same January, Eliot also advised Pound that he had written to Thayer at *The Dial* about publishing the poem.[29]

If at that point, then—Paris, late 1921—the poem was complete and being marketed for publication, what of the Notes? The first evidence of their existence—Eliot's claim to be working on the Notes—was six months later, in July 1922. But no one saw even a draft of the Notes until August 31,

27 Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company,* 96.
28 Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company,* 55.
29 Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 171.

1922.[30] 'There is no known manuscript or typescript of the Notes.'[31] There is no evidence that Pound saw, much less contributed to the creation or editing of the Notes.

In sum, the context surrounding the creation of the poem shows the following. Eliot relied heavily on Pound and his critical advice in editing the poem. This was a many months' long collaboration that is documented in writing—54 manuscript pages of it. And, at the conclusion of that collaboration, Pound blessed the completed work, and the two collaborators took up the task of finding a publisher. We also have evidence that Eliot began to show others the completed work. Yet the first mention that Eliot was working on 'notes' does not come until July of 1922, notes which Pound never edited nor contributed to. These facts point to the conclusion that the poem was a complete and completed work to Eliot's thinking before the Notes were written**.**

If this is the case, how then do we 'read' the Notes?

Voice in *The Waste Land*

The question of Eliot's intent—whether the Notes form an integral part of *The Waste Land*—is important for two reasons. First, much can be (and has been) made of the Notes and their meaning based on what they say and what they omit. If they are not an integral part of the poem (if this was not Eliot's intent), taking them as such adds another voice or voices that should not be considered in interpreting the work.

Eliot's own words regarding the Notes are instructive:

> The notes to *The Waste Land!* I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a

30 Hollis, *Biography of a Poem,* 375.
31 T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 1, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 569.

> view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism. Then, when it came time to print *The Waste Land* as a little book—for the poem on its first appearance in *The Dial* and in *The Criterion* had no notes whatever—it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter, with the result that they became the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view to-day. I have sometimes thought of getting rid of these notes; but now they can never be unstuck. They have had almost greater popularity than the poem itself—anyone who bought my book of poems and found that the notes to *The Waste Land* were not in it, would demand his money back.[32]

Despite this clear statement regarding the value of the Notes—not off the cuff remarks, but a statement made by Eliot in a prepared lecture decades after *The Waste Land* was published—many scholars insist that the Notes are integral to and form a 'part of' *The Waste Land*.[33]

As mentioned above, for some time Eliot called the poem 'He Do The Police In Different Voices' to stress 'the dramatic nature of the poem's comic narratives and individual voices.'[34] Throughout the poem, multiple characters or voices make an appearance: (1) Tiresias, (2) Marie, (3) hellfire preacher, (4) the chorus, (5) Madame Sosostris, (6) Crazy Prufrock, (7) the

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32 T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets,* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 109-10 (the passage is taken from the lecture 'The Frontiers of Criticism' which was given by Eliot in 1956, some thirty-four years after *The Waste Land* was published). Hollis in 'The Author's Notes' to *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* collects numerous statements from Eliot (and Pound) disowning the Notes. E.g. Eliot, 'my own preference would be to abolish the notes to *The Waste Land.*' Hollis, *Biography of a Poem,* 569-570.

33 See Appendix 1.

34 John Worthen, *T.S. Eliot: A Short Biography* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011) 46.

woman in the bar, (8) the barman, (9) the typist, and (10) the thunder.[35] Eliot and Pound discussed these voices and their function within the poem during its creation. The question of voice becomes problematic when one considers the Notes. What is the purpose of this additional voice? Are they an authorial voice? Only expository? Or something more?

At one extreme lies the argument that the Notes are functional, meaning that they are an integral part of the literary work, and are to be interpreted with the same rigour as the rest of the poem, both as to what they state and what they omit, and allusions they may contain. Stanley Sultan is one scholar who makes a strong argument for this position. However, he gives short shrift to a critical fact which represents a significant deviation from Eliot's prior practice with regards to *The Waste Land*.

As we have seen above, throughout the process of creating *The Waste Land*, Eliot worked hand in glove with Pound. And the two were keen on the fact that different voices were being used in the work to convey different meanings. If Eliot was in fact adding another voice, another layer, to the poem, why would he have suddenly stopped that collaboration?[36] Sultan answers this question with the claim that by January of 1922, 'The poet had become confident' and that he 'pried the poem away' from Pound.[37]

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35 In addition to literary analysis, fascinating work has been done with computer analysis of the poem using stylistic variables to identify voices. Cf. Julian Brooke, and others 'Distinguishing Voices in the Waste Land Using Computational Stylistics,' *Linguistic Issues in Language Technology,* vol. 12, 2015, https://doi.org/10.33011/lilt.v12i.1375.

36 It is important to recognize the amount of content added by the Notes. In the Boni & Liveright version, the poem begins on page 9 and ends on page 49 (41 pages). We then take up the notes on pages 53 through 64 (12 pages). If the notes indeed constitute poetic content and are 'part of' *The Waste Land*, this means that Eliot added 12 pages of single-spaced content to a 41 page double-spaced poem. *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1922). Sultan's claim is that Eliot added approximately 50% more content to the poem's word count without any input from Pound.

37 Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company*, 152-154.

Yet, we know that in late December of 1921, before traveling to Lausanne for treatment for nerves, Eliot wrote of the poem, '*Je ne sais pas si ça tient*.'[38] While in Switzerland, he received medical/psychological treatment and wrote more of the poem. He left Lausanne in good spirits, recovered in great part from his depression. Yet, after his visit to Paris and Pound's further revisions of the manuscript, 'there was a recrudescence of Eliot's depression.'[39] This is hardly consistent with 'poetic confidence' such that he would choose to end his collaboration with Pound and exclude Pound from the creation of the Notes. The contrary argument has in fact been made, and is equally if not more plausible than Sultan's, that Eliot's recurring depression was in fact due to his realization after the Paris visit that he had little idea of what he was aiming for in *The Waste Land*, and that he saw in Pound's insights evidence of his own (Eliot's) tone-deafness regarding what worked and what did not work in the poem.[40] The chain of events and timing is not consistent with Sultan's claim that Eliot evolved from doubting the quality of the poem in December to sufficient 'poetic confidence' that he would abandon Pound as mentor and collaborator in January.

Another scholar offers a more credible argument as to the Notes' function. Kaiser[41] does not go so far as to claim that the Notes are integral to the poem. Rather, she strikes a middle ground, arguing that the Notes served only one function, expository: to provide critics with a path to cohesion that is otherwise missing in the work. Stated differently, Kaiser claims that Eliot's Notes were intended to serve as a roadmap or framework for a poem which (intentionally) lacks structure and for which Eliot feared audiences were not prepared at the time it was published. She argues that Eliot used the Notes to provide direction—a scaffolding from which analysis of the

38 'I don't know if it will hold up.' Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 1: 1898–1922, 496.
39 John Harwood, *Eliot to Derrida: The Poverty of Interpretation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 67.
40 Harwood, *Eliot to Derrida*, 67.
41 Kaiser, 'Disciplining the Waste Land, or How to Lead Critics into Temptation'.

poem could begin—only to later regret having done so, as readers and critics put more stock in the Notes than Eliot would have liked. In short, she claims that Eliot provided critical direction out of an abundance of caution to ensure the poem's success (or probably more accurately stated—to avoid its rejection out of hand) only to later regret having over-steered his audience in a way he could not later retract.

This claim has the virtue of consistency with Eliot's own later appraisal of the Notes as 'bogus scholarship.' If the Notes' purpose was to lead critics down a path of cohesion, this approach to literary criticism has become less relevant over time (Kaiser so claims,[42] and also argues that Eliot would have lived to recognize this). And as the 'need' for structure dissipated, so did the need for the Notes. Kaiser argues that in a post-structuralist critical world, the value of the Notes is nil, as critics no longer feel compelled to force order on poetry in order to understand or critique it.[43] Yet, at the time the poem was published, literary criticism was not so evolved, hence Eliot's decision (per Kaiser) to include the Notes.

The argument is somewhat plausible. It does not suffer (as does Sultan's) from the issue of Pound's lack of involvement in the development of the Notes, as in Kaiser's theory there was only one purpose to the Notes, and they do not add another voice 'in' the poem. But Kaiser's argument suffers from a problem as to the scope of the Notes. There is no doubt that *The Waste Land* is a complex work. And Eliot understood the difficulties that a poem of its sort can present to the reader.[44] Kaiser persuasively points out that an early critic (Edmund Wilson, whose review later appeared in *The*

42 Kaiser, 'Disciplining the Waste Land,' 95.
43 Kaiser, 'Disciplining the Waste Land,' 87.
44 Eliot recognized the difficulty posed by some poetry due to 'the authors having left out something which the reader is used to finding; so that the reader bewildered, gropes about for what is absent, and puzzles his head for a kind of 'meaning' which is not there, and it's not meant to be there.' T. S. Eliot and Charles Whibley, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures for 1932-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 152.

Dial)[45] found no coherence to the work on first reading—finding it chaotic and fragmentary—but after re-reading it with the Notes was able to tap into the theme of 'starvation of civilization.'[46] This is anecdotal, but persuasive as to the effect of the Notes. Yet, I would argue that if Eliot's intention with the Notes was to provide breadcrumbs to 'meaning', his general note to the poem referencing Weston's work would have sufficed. Many of the other notes are completely superfluous to this task: e.g., notes 68, 199, 210 to name a few.[47]

Sultan's argument that the Notes are functional and integral to *The Waste Land* does not cohere with Eliot's collaboration with Pound on the work, especially given the importance of voice in the work. Kaiser's expository functional argument is more plausible. However, there is a simpler answer to the existence of the Notes, a scenario consistent with Pound's involvement in its creation and Eliot's view as to the unity of the poem and his desires as far as its publication.

A realpolitik answer to 'the Notes'

Eliot's treatment of the poem at the time of publication proves that he did not consider the Notes integral to the poem. And the manner in which the poem was published provides us with the answer as to why the Notes were included.

In writing to an anthologist who proposed publishing 'portions' of *The Waste Land*, Eliot stated, '*The Waste Land* is intended to form a whole, and

45 Edmund Wilson. 'The Poetry of Drouth.' *The Dial* 73 (December 1922): 611–16.

46 Kaiser, 'Disciplining the Waste Land,' 84.

47 Eliot echoes this thinking when he states of the Notes, 'It was just, no doubt, that I should pay tribute in my work to Miss Jessie Weston; but I regret having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail.' Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets,* 109-10.

I should not care to have anyone read parts of it…'[48] At no time did Eliot ever consent to publication of only portions of *The Waste Land.* When the poem was first published, it was, as noted, initially released in *The Criterion* magazine in the UK in October 1922, then in *The Dial* in the United States in November, and last in book form by Boni & Liveright in New York in December. Of these three, only the book form contained the Notes.

Eliot was the editor of *The Criterion*; the poem was published in its inaugural edition. True to his word and to his commitment to the unity of the poem, he opted to publish *The Waste Land* whole (in *The Criterion* and *The Dial*) without Notes. If the Notes are integral to the poem, why would he publish it twice without the 'integral Notes'? And why release it initially to the world—arguably the poem's signal moment, its birth—partially amputated: without the Notes?

The significance of the absence of the Notes in both periodicals vis-à-vis the question of their role in the poem is not to be understated, and is conceded by Sultan.[49] He attempts to argue the point away by claiming that, because the Notes did not appear in *The Dial* in America in order to preserve the value of the U.S. publication of the book, Eliot (though not obligated) chose to do the same in the U.K. because he was '…an honorable man.'[50]

'Honourable,' however, is not an adjective that comes to mind when we consider contemporaneous accounts of Eliot's character at the time that *The Waste Land* was written and published. One of the nicer descriptions of Eliot characterized him as 'an adept politician.'[51] The less charitable claimed that he was 'a completely artificial, or, rather, self-invented

48 Daniel H. Woodward, 'Notes on the Publishing History and Text of *The Waste Land*'. *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 58, no. 3 (1964): 254.
49 Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company,* 164.
50 Sultan, *Eliot, Joyce and Company,* 165.
51 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 36.

character,'[52] and even went so far as to allege that he arranged an affair between his wife Vivien and Bertrand Russell in order to obtain a loan from Russell and introductions to prominent Bloomsbury figures in exchange.[53] Virginia Woolf claimed that Eliot used makeup to make himself appear ill,[54] perhaps to garner sympathy. 'Many of those who knew Eliot well—and liked him or even loved him—did not trust him.'[55] The circumstances surrounding Eliot's hunt for publishers for *The Waste Land* provide insight as to the role and value of the Notes. Eliot's behaviour during those negotiations was many things; honourable is not the best adjective to describe them.

We left our chronology of the poem's development after Pound and Eliot's dinner in Paris with Horace Liveright, at which time publication of the poem in book form was discussed. Upon returning to London, Eliot had written to Thayer with regards to publication of the poem in *The Dial*. One additional character needs to be added to the story of the poem's publication: John Quinn, a New York attorney. Quinn had worked with Eliot previously in securing a contract for the publication of some of his other poems with Knopf.

When Eliot was in the process of completing *The Waste Land*, he was annoyed to learn that based on his existing contract, Knopf had the option to publish *The Waste Land* without his approval. This would ruin Eliot's possible publication of *The Waste Land* with Liveright as well as its publication in *The Dial*. What to do?

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52 Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton 1984), 199 (description of Eliot by critic Edmund Wilson upon first meeting the poet).
53 Caroline Seymour-Jones, *Painted Shadow: The Life of Vivienne Eliot* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002) 192-193 (Eliot 'knowingly colluded in order to further his career … and to gain financial advantage', 365.)
54 Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*: *Volume Two, 1920-1924*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 204.
55 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two*, 101.

Although Eliot communicated with Knopf in writing from Lausanne in December of 1921, and again in March 1922—at which time he was actively seeking other publishers for the poem—and although he knew that Knopf had the right to publish the poem, Eliot did not disclose to Knopf that *The Waste Land* existed.[56] One of his conditions to the other publishers regarding publication of *The Waste Land* was to be that it had to come out in the fall of 1922. Eliot knew that by delaying advising Knopf of the poem's existence, they would likely be unable to meet his publication deadline. This is precisely what happened. Eliot finally advised Knopf about the poem in April of 1922 and communicated his requirement that the poem must be released in the fall, only months later. Knopf replied that their catalogue for fall publications was full and gave him permission to proceed with other publishers.[57] This was the outcome that Eliot sought, and it freed him to publish the poem in *The Criterion*, *The Dial*, and with Liveright. His approach of hiding the existence of the poem from his existing option holder while shopping it to other publishers was hardly 'honourable.'

His negotiations with Thayer (*The Dial*) and Liveright were equally manipulative. Although Thayer made an offer to publish *The Waste Land*, sight unseen and consistent with his company's standard author fees, Eliot complained about the proposed fee, and repeatedly delayed providing a copy of the manuscript to Thayer. He also delayed in providing a manuscript to Liveright. He ignored their multiple requests for the manuscript, claiming lack of time to re-type it. Yet, Eliot was simultaneously working to launch *The Criterion* and had hired a typist two days a week. Even with access to a typist, he still did not send a copy of the manuscript to the United States until July.[58] What was Eliot up to?

In February, Eliot wrote to Maurice Firuski, another U.S. publisher, offering the poem and requesting a reply ''at the publisher's earliest convenience… because the other offers for it cannot be held in suspense

56 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 101.
57 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 182.
58 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 210.

very long.' This was a finessing of the truth.' [59] In May, Pound approached *Vanity Fair* on Eliot's behalf seeking publication.[60] Eliot also offered to send a copy to Cobden-Sanderson for their staff to read with an eye toward publication.[61] While delaying and putting off Thayer and Liveright, Eliot was shopping the poem around.

Due to his delays, when the time came to move forward with Thayer and Liveright, both were frustrated with Eliot. Eliot's attorney John Quinn stepped in to smooth things over and negotiate. Quinn, Liveright and a representative from *The Dial* met at Quinn's office to try to reach an agreement on publication.

From *The Dial*, Quinn obtained a commitment to publish the poem (for $260) as well as an additional commitment to award Eliot the *The Dial Award* for 1922 ($2,000) in connection with the poem.[62] Thus, Eliot effectively increased his fee from *The Dial* sevenfold. This was a win for Eliot financially and in terms of prestige (and marketing for the poem) as well, as *The Dial* was well-respected in literary circles.

Liveright, on the other hand, still had his two concerns regarding publication: the length of the poem and its publication in advance by *The Dial*. Quinn elegantly resolved both of these concerns with the Notes. The Notes would increase the size of the book from 50 to 64 pages. And they would provide additional content differentiating the book version from the periodical version. Quinn negotiated the agreement with *The Dial* such that they did not have the right to publish the Notes. *The Dial's* representative at the negotiation told Thayer of the Notes that they are 'exceedingly interesting and add much to the poem … but don't become interested in them because we simply cannot have them.'[63]

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59 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 101.
60 Woodward, 'Notes on the Publishing History,' 256.
61 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 210.
62 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 213.
63 Goldstein, *World Broke in Two,* 237.

By negotiating the publication of two versions of *The Waste Land*, one with and one without Notes, Eliot not only sold the poem twice in the United States' market (and landed himself the *Dial* prize money), but also maximized its potential audience reach through publication via two separate channels: periodical and book.

In the United Kingdom, Eliot did not face any publication constraints. There was no Liveright in the wings waiting to publish a book version of the poem after *The Criterion* came out. If the Notes are 'part of' the poem—and we know that Eliot was committed to the unity of the poem, and did not want it read in parts—why did Eliot not publish the Notes along with the poem in *The Criterion?* Because he was an honourable man? Or because they were a muddle of bogus scholarship, as he later stated, and not integral to *The Waste Land*.

Conclusion

Thirty-four years after the publication of *The Waste Land*, Eliot tells us to disregard the Notes as 'bogus scholarship.' He speaks to us of Notes to a poem that was the result of a collaboration, a poem he dedicated to his collaborator. He speaks to us of Notes that his collaborator did not review or edit. And he speaks of a poem that he published—releasing it to the world for the first time—as editor, in the inaugural issue of a literary magazine that he created, without those Notes. The Notes were never a 'part of' *The Waste Land*. They are not functional. They add no new voice to the work. The Notes were used by Quinn and Eliot as a negotiating tool to maximize the exposure of, and compensation for, the publication of *The Waste Land*. Perhaps, as Kaiser argues, in creating the Notes Eliot took the opportunity to steer his readers towards a cohesive meaning to the poem. If he did, he later regretted doing so, and has clearly asked us to ignore the Notes. We should.

APPENDIX 1

Scholars who have taken a position on whether the Notes to *The Waste Land* are
integral to the poem (Pro) or
superfluous to the poem (Con)

Scholar	Position	Key Argument	Source
Cleanth Brooks	Pro	Notes key to mythic unity; peritextual guide to coherence.	Brooks, Cleanth. '*The Waste Land*: Critique of the Myth.' In *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, 136-72. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939.
Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley	Pro	Notes limit interpretation with precision, e.g., Tiresias as substance.	Brooker, Jewel Spears, and Joseph Bentley. *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.
Ruth Alison Clemens	Pro	Notes contribute to paratextual complexity, revealing translational shifts.	Clemens, Ruth Alison. 'Bombast and Sesquipedalian Words: Translation, Mistranslation, and the Epigraph to *The Waste Land*.'

			Modernist Cultures 17, no. 1 (2022): 109-26.
Elizabeth Drew	Pro	Elucidative materials like notes integral to understanding, via psychological/symbolic design.	Drew, Elizabeth. *T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949.
T.S. Eliot	Con	Notes regretfully added, stimulate wrong source-hunting.	Eliot, T.S. 'The Frontiers of Criticism.' *The Sewanee Review* 64, no. 4 (1956): 525-43.
Gérard Genette	Mixed	Memorable peritext but bookish, pragmatic threshold.	Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Matthew Hollis	Con	Added for length; bogus scholarship misleading readers.	Hollis, Matthew. *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem*. London: Faber & Faber, 2022.
Jo Ellen Green Kaiser	Pro	Structural device for unity; paratextual reinforcement.	Kaiser, Jo Ellen Green. 'Disciplining *The Waste Land*, or How

			to Lead Critics into Temptation.' *Twentieth Century Literature* 44, no. 1 (1998): 82-99.
Hugh Kenner	Con	Red herring for hunters; added for printing.	Kenner, Hugh. *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1959.
F.R. Leavis	Con	Poem self-subsistent; notes suppressible.	Leavis, F.R. 'The Waste Land.' In *T.S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Hugh Kenner, 89-103. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962.
Jay Martin	Pro	Notes part of ordering chaotic modern world.	Martin, Jay. 'T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.' In *A Collection of Critical Essays on The Waste Land*, edited by Jay Martin, 5-20. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
F.O. Matthiessen	Pro	Support latent communication; peritextual aid.	Matthiessen, F.O. *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry*. Boston:

			Houghton Mifflin, 1935.
Christopher McVey	Pro	Amendments reflect cultural politics; integral paratext.	McVey, Christopher. 'Feeble Translations: Failure, Global Modernism, and *The Waste Land*.' *South Atlantic Review* 81, no. 2 (2016): 173-190.
Michael North	Con	Obstacle or hoax; establishing mysteries.	North, Michael. *Preface to The Waste Land, by T.S. Eliot*, ix-x. New York: Norton, 2001.

APPENDIX 1 ctd

Scholars who have taken a position on whether the Notes to *The Waste Land* are
integral to the poem (Pro) or
superfluous to the poem (Con)

Scholar	Position	Key Argument	Source
Jean-Michel Rabaté	Mixed	Contextual-izes in war/Europe ; notes aid but not focal.	Rabaté, Jean-Michel. 'The World Has Seen Strange Revolutions Since I Died: *The Waste Land* and the Great War.' In *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land*, edited by Gabrielle McIntire, 9-25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
Lawrence Rainey	Con	Dismiss as misleading post-composition.	Rainey, Lawrence. *Revisiting The Waste Land*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.
Pouneh Saeedi	Pro	Notes/allu-sions integral for reconciling opposites amid nationalisms.	Saeedi, Pouneh. 'Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Surging Nationalisms.' *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13,no.4(2011). https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss4/14.
Sandeep Kumar Sharma	Pro	Notes enrich as guides; integral rather than detracting.	Sharma, Sandeep Kumar. 'The Appropriation of Trauma in *The Waste Land*.' *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* 8, no. 5 (2023): 292-297.

Stanley Sultan	Pro	Additional allusive part; extends intertextual fabric.	Sultan, Stanley. *Eliot, Joyce and Company*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
Lewis Turco	Con	If essential, info would be in poem, not notes.	Turco, Lewis. '*The Waste Land* Reconsidered.' *The Sewanee Review* 80, no. 3 (1972): 557-568.
Helen Vendler	Mixed	Uses for analysis but effective without.	Vendler, Helen. '*The Waste Land* Revisited.' *The Yale Review*, December 16, 2022. https://yalereview.org/article/vendler-eliot-waste-land.
George William son	Con	Relies for structure but unnecessary for impact.	Williamson, George. 'The Structure of *The Waste Land*.' *Modern Philology* 47, no. 3 (1950): 191-206.

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‘Throbbing Between Two Lives’: Dissension at the Birth of *The Waste Land*

Adil Khan

Abstract

This article argues that the enduring lack of critical consensus surrounding T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* originates at the poem’s very *birth*, in the conditions of its composition and the linguistic dynamics that structure it. Using Jacques Lacan’s theory of the signifier in ‘The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious,’ the essay argues that the poem is marked by an irresistible tension between particularity and universality. This strife, reflected in Eliot’s own characterisation of personality and impersonality in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent,’ is manifested both in the poem’s compositional history and in its textual dynamics.

By using Eliot’s poetic theory in the ‘Tradition’ essay, and Ezra Pound’s editorial interventions, the article reveals how the impulses toward autobiographical specificity and impersonal abstraction are engraved into the very structure of the poem. Lacan’s account of metaphor and the differential production of meaning is used to show that *The Waste Land* resists interpretive closure because its signifiers operate relationally rather than referentially. As a result, meaning is continually deferred, and no unified interpretive standpoint can prevail. The poem’s critical indeterminacy is thus not incidental but structural, revealing poetry as a site where the interplay of signifiers sustains a permanent oscillation between the particular and the universal.

‘Throbbing Between Two Lives’: Dissension at the Birth of *The Waste Land*

After 100 years of *The Waste Land*, there is admittedly no stable common ground between its critics: the poem resists any unilateral or definitive interpretation. My article explains that this critical impasse originates at the poem’s very birth, in what Lacan calls the ‘play of the signifier.’[1] From its compositional history onward, *The Waste Land* is constituted by an irreducible tension between particularity and universality. In what follows, I use ‘particular’ to refer to historically, biographically, or situationally determinate content — Eliot’s personal experience, specific places, named figures. ‘Universal,’ by contrast, does not denote abstraction from experience but the transformation of such particulars into symbolic forms capable of circulating beyond their originating context. The tension between the two corresponds, in Eliot’s terms, to the paradox of personality and impersonality. Rather than resolving this tension, the poem embodies it. I therefore propose that the poem may helpfully be approached through the dynamics of the signifier as articulated by Lacan in ‘The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud.’ Lacan demonstrates — through the tree passage and poetic examples from Paul Valéry and Victor Hugo — that the signifier transforms the particular into a universal category of experience, while meaning itself emerges only from the differential relations between signifiers. In poetry, where signifiers relate metaphorically, this process prevents any final reconciliation between the particular and the universal. In *The Waste Land*, this metaphorical play blocks interpretive closure. Both Eliot’s poetic theory in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ and Ezra Pound’s interventions in the drafts imply that impersonality and individual subjectivity converge in a paradox of opposites within the work of art. Yet this paradox cannot be resolved, because the poem is an effect of relations between signifiers. Lacan’s train-

[1] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 392.

station example, in which two children disagree about their position in the world, illustrates this structural misalignment. Likewise, in poetic discourse, what Lacan calls the Other speaks through the poem, ensuring that no single, unified standpoint can prevail. The absence of common ground among critics is therefore not accidental but constitutive of *The Waste Land* itself.

I

I will, however, begin with what could be called the juxtapositional logic central to the poem. The juxtaposition is specifically between the particular and the universal. After a century of *The Waste Land* criticism, it is now sufficiently clear that certain sections of *The Waste Land* are about the author's 'personality' and this has formed the basis of arguments made by many critics including Lyndall Gordon, Ronald Schuchard and others. This line of enquiry was attested by Eliot himself when he affirmed that *The Waste Land* was born because of his 'personal grouse against life'.[2] The focus on personality runs contrary to Eliot's claim in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that poetry is an escape from 'personal' emotions and therefore is an act grounded in the 'impersonal'. Therefore, Eliot's own poetic theory can be understood as an assertion that *The Waste Land* cannot justifiably be considered what 'personal' reductionism gives us.

This highlights the crucial point that *The Waste Land* engages simultaneously with personality and impersonality. Critical appreciation concerning this contradiction was identified as soon as the poem was read/heard. Virginia Woolf, for example, in her diary had referred to Mary Hutch's interpretation of the poem as Eliot's autobiography, while also praising the 'great beauty' of the poem, emphasising its artistic quality.[3] An anonymous reviewer, on the other hand, had pointed attention to the 'two face' theory of life in *The Waste Land*:

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[2] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 1.
[3] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ed. Michael North (New York: Norton, 2001), 137.

> [The poem] is singularly complex and in all its labyrinths utterly sincere. It is the mystery of life that it shows two faces, and we know of no other modern poet who can more adequately and movingly reveal to us the inextricable tangle of the sordid and the beautiful that make up life. Life is neither hellish nor heavenly; it has a purgatorial quality. And since it is purgatory, deliverance is possible.[4]

This early reception already registers the poem's resistance to settling either as autobiography or as pure aesthetic construction. The personal side of the arguments has taken many turns — it is now credibly established that there are sections of the poem which refer to Eliot and Vivienne's and Eliot and Emily Hale's relationships. Rather than rehearse this literature, I draw attention to Jewel Spears Brooker's formulation that

> Eliot's [*The Waste Land*], like all great art, is personal in that it begins in what Yeats calls the 'foul rag and bone shop of the heart.' Moreover, it is personal in that his choice of mythic fragments was guided by desire, much of which must have been subconscious. In 1921, as he was writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot explained that the selection of a myth is not random, but, rather, directed by one's point of view, one's self-image, and one's desires. 'The myth that a man makes has transformations according as he sees himself as hero or villain . . . Man desires to see himself . . . as more admirable, more forceful, more villainous, more comical, more despicable...than he actually is.[5]

Brooker's comment can broadly be understood as an explanation of the poem's juxtapositional method. If the selection of myth in the poem is guided by desire, it creates a tension between personality and impersonality; and this can appropriately be considered the blurring point between the

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jewel Spears Brooker, 'Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in *The Waste Land'*, in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot*, ed. Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 133.

particular and the universal categories of experience. I phrase it so because the attachment of the emotion to the myth separates the myth from its factual basis and places it in a universal category where it is available for mediation for various forms of literary production involving personal experiences. This is indeed the primary method of *The Waste Land*. *The Waste Land* selects a certain emotion and then works to mediate it with a historical/literary/traditional occurrence.

The Tiresias episode provides a paradigmatic instance of how the poem converts a determinate modern scene (personal involvement) into a transhistorical structure of experience. This tension between the personal and the universal is in fact present in Eliot's own comment about Tiresias:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. […] so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.[6]

Just as Tiresias's personal, particular, objective existence meets the universality of the human, Eliot's Tiresias note suggests that *The Waste Land* is an instance of the particular uniting with the universal. *The Waste Land* often unites jarring phenomena this way: juxtaposing the traditional with the personal, the historical with the present, the mythical with the real, the dead with the living.

This doubly layered mechanism of the poem makes it difficult for us to rest our fingers on one formulated interpretation. But is it something quite inherent in poetry to speak of things which are beyond the category of personal/particular experiences? Here, Aristotle might give us an insight. Aristotle, distinguishing poetry from history and considering it the more philosophical of the two, asserts that 'poetry speaks […] of things that are universal', not particular.[7] By 'universals' Aristotle means 'that which is of

[6] North, *The Waste Land*, 23.
[7] Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006), 32.

such a nature as to be predicated of many subjects.'[8] Aristotle further argues that the universality of poetry lies in its dealing with 'things that might happen and possibilities that come from what is likely or necessary.'[9] This is a recognisable aspect of *The Waste Land* which treats historical events in such a way that those events go 'beyond their particularity as history' and enter in the modal categories of universal experiences. The blending of history (particular events according to Aristotle) and poetry (universal categories of probability and necessity) was perhaps recognised by James Longenbach in his consideration of *The Waste Land* as the 'culmination' of the modern 'poem including history.'[10] Aristotle thus provides an early philosophical vocabulary for the same tension that Eliot later reformulates as the paradox of personality and impersonality.

The historical sense of *The Waste Land* and poetry's universality in Aristotelian terms, therefore, suggest that Eliot not only unified history and poetry but also transformed historical events taking them beyond their particularity. Thus, *The Waste Land*'s many historical representations are not just representations of present and past events. Instead, they hold universal values. Tiresias, for example, speaks of the sexual encounter between the typist and the clerk in *The Waste Land*:

> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
> Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
> I too awaited the expected guest.
> He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
> […]
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once. (228-39)

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[8] *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001), section 17a40.
[9] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 32.
[10] James Longenbach, *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), x.

The encounter between two people from the modern metropolis reminds Tiresias of his own plight: 'I Tiresias have foresuffered all | Enacted on the same divan or bed' (243-44). In this sense, the meeting between the typist and the clerk is stripped of its particularity as an event happening at a given time and place and granted a universal value blending with Tiresias's experience (or indeed humanity's experience in general, given Eliot's own depiction of Tiresias as a universal figure uniting all others). Following this line of thinking, the poem's classicism dissolves into modernity, its traditional values (i.e., religious, sexual, mythological) present themselves in the understanding of modern times, thereby giving the poem its universality, which Aristotle considered the hallmark of poetry.

Aristotle himself implies that the universal and the particular are not in fact two distinct things; the universal is not a separate thing but only a 'possibility' or a likelihood of the particular. Following this, let us argue that the particular and the universal are, in a sense, conjoined and it is in the domain of language that such a unification exists. In theory, as Jacques Lacan suggests in *Seminar I,* language subsists in excess to things, and it is in the linguistic dimension that the category of the universal can be apprehended.[11] It is in the relationship between words (signifiers) that meaning insists instead of the relationship between words and things. I will argue that this tension between the objective (particular) and the universal was present at the 'birth' of *The Waste Land* when Eliot was outlining his famous poetic theory in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' and when Pound was entrusted with the task of editing it. The question needing answer, however, is: how can *The Waste Land* include both the particular and the universal at the same time?

[11] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1991), 242.

II

While both the theory and Pound's editing represent the tension between particularity and universality, it is in what Lacan calls the 'metaphoric spark' of the signifier that the question of particularity and universality can be raised. I will outline Lacan's linguistic theory and then map out the ways Eliot's poetic theory and Pound's editing create an original split resisting a common ground in the meaning of *The Waste Land.* Lacan is not introduced here to claim that *The Waste Land* is uniquely indeterminate — since, for Lacan, all language is — but to clarify how Eliot's poem makes this indeterminacy unusually explicit and historically visible, which in turn has contributed to the endlessly varied interpretations of the poem.

In 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious,' Lacan explains the issue in question in the so-called tree passage. This passage in Lacan's essay is key to his linguistic theory or what he calls 'how the signifier […] enters the signified.'[12] According to Lacan, there are two ways in which meaning is produced in language. Firstly, the signifier 'anticipates meaning by deploying its dimension in some sense before it' as seen at the level of a sentence whose meaning depends on its completion. According to Lacan, we cannot just say 'Still perhaps…' or 'I'll never…' but need to wait for the meaning to arrive as the signifiers are placed syntactically in a sentence.[13] Therefore, 'it is in the chain of the signifier that meaning *insists.*'[14] What Lacan means is that meaning in language does not come from a direct link between a word (signifier) and a fixed meaning (signified), but from how one signifier relates to and differs from other signifiers **i**n a chain. This is, however, not 'sufficient'. As the polyphony of poetry shows, 'all discourse is aligned along the several staves of a musical score.' What Lacan means is that, like the multiple staves in a musical score where different lines interact to produce harmony, discourse is structured by several simultaneous chains of signifiers, and meaning emerges from their relations rather than from any single word alone. He, therefore, argues

[12] *Écrits*, 417.
[13] Ibid., 419.
[14] Ibid.

that 'there is no signifying chain that does not sustain […] all attested contexts that are, so to speak, 'vertically' linked to that point.'[15] Lacan's point here is about the metaphoric nature of language.

It is here that Lacan has recourse to the so-called tree-passage in the essay, which for Gilbert Chaitin, is a 'significant example of the unwarranted intrusion by poetry into theoretical discourse.'[16] Quoting the passage in full will help to appreciate its effect on the understanding of poetic discourse.

> For broken down into the double specter of its vowels and consonants, [the word *arbre* (tree)] calls up—with the robur-oak [*robre*] and the plane tree [*platane*]—the significations of strength and majesty that it takes on in our flora. Tapping all the symbolic contexts in which it is used in the Hebrew of the Bible, it erects on a barren hill the shadow of the cross. Next it reduces to a capital Y, the sign of dichotomy—which, without the illustration that historiates armorials, would owe nothing to the tree, however genealogical it claims to be. Circulatory tree, arbor vitae of the cerebellum, lead tree or silver amalgam [*arbre de Diane*] crystals precipitated into a tree that conducts lightning, is it your countenance that traces our destiny for us in the fire-scorched tortoiseshell, or your flash that brings forth from an infinite night that slow change in being in the [*En Panta*] of language:
>
> > *No! says the Tree, it says No! in the scintillating*
> > *Of its superb head*
>
> verses that I consider to be as legitimately heard in the harmonics of the tree
> as their reverse:

[15] Ibid.
[16] Gilbert Chaitin, *Rhetoric and Culture in Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15.

Which the storm treats universally
As it does a blade of grass.

For this modern verse is organized according to the same law of the parallelism of the signifier, whose concert governs both primitive Slavic epic poetry and the most refined Chinese poetry.

This can be seen in the common mode of beings [*l'étant*] from which the tree and the blade of grass are chosen, so that the signs of contradiction—saying 'No!' and 'treat as'—can come into being here, and so that, through the categorical contrast between the particularity of 'superb' and the 'universally' of its reduction, the indiscernible scintillating of the eternal instant may be accomplished in the condensation of *tête* (head) and *tempête* (storm).[17]

I would first like to draw attention to the metaphorical complexity of the passage itself. The word *arbre,* if broken down into its vowels and consonants, in *robre* (oak tree) and *platane* (Plane tree) signify strength and majesty. Moreover, it can assume a religious signification such as standing as the symbol of crucifixion. It can also signify, represented in a branching Y, the divergent paths of vice and virtue. It can also be the tree of life, of cerebellum, or the trees of Diana and Saturn (alchemical names of metal lead and silver) that conduct electricity. The word tree can also come in the tree-shape cracks of the heated tortoise shells, a process usually practised in China, for prophesying one's destiny. When Lacan argues that 'your flash that brings forth from an infinite night that slow change in being in the [*En Panta*] of language', he is presumably referring to Heidegger's commentary on Heraclitus, in which for Heraclitus, according to Heidegger, Lightning, as an epithet of Zeus, 'abruptly lays before us in an instant everything present in the light of its presencing.'[18] Just as for Heraclitus, the lightning force of Zeus is the En Panta, (the All in One) of

[17] *Écrits*, 420.
[18] Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, transl. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 72.

being, for Lacan, this place is taken by Language. Language is the En Panta of being. What matters for my purposes is however not the universality of this linguistic condition, but the way poetic discourse foregrounds it by refusing stable reference. This linguistic tendency is foregrounded in *The Waste Land*, where images and voices repeatedly fail to settle into determinate reference, forcing the reader to confront meaning as a function of relation rather than representation. I will below argue how this tendency of *The Waste Land* resists uniform critical appreciation of the poem.

For Lacan, poetic language works through a logic of contradiction where signifiers relate to other signifiers through metaphor. Metaphor is substitution of one signifier for another. This contradictory logic becomes manifest in Lacan's choice of poetry from Victor Hugo's verse 'His sheaf was neither miserly nor hateful.' Lacan gives credit to modern poetry, along with surrealist painting, for 'showing that any conjunction of two signifiers […] constitute[s] a metaphor', if nothing else was required for the 'poetic spark' or the 'metaphoric creation to occur.'[19] He suggests that if poetry is to be understood in the creative process of the metaphor, it is a contradictory process since metaphor aims at the condensation of a universality into a particular instance. This can be seen in Booz's sheaf being described as generous: generosity becomes a universal quality attributed to the sheaf, independent of whether Booz himself might act generously or miserly. This is also true of Lacan's other example from Paul Valéry's poem 'To the Plane Tree', which similarly illustrates that the storm treats the tree's strong head as universally as it treats a blade of grass: regardless of their difference as individual objects.

What is, therefore, suggestive here is that poetry, not least *The Waste Land*, can be perceived to constitute a discourse which is both universal and particular, and therefore contradictory and problematic to the reader. Lacan, in fact, acknowledges this 'common mode of beings' by using the actual word 'contradiction' two times in his explication of the poetry lines. The contradiction is specifically between, for example, the 'particularity' of the

[19] *Écrits,* 422.

'superb head' of the tree and the 'universality' of its treatment by the storm. Metaphor in Eliot's poem thus does not reconcile universality and particularity but keeps them in productive suspension.

Along the above lines of enquiry, I will first go back to the poetic theory Eliot most probably had in mind in writing *The Waste Land*, and then to Pound's editing of the poem. My aim is to focus attention on the contradictory nature of the poetic discourse in *The Waste Land*. In such a discourse, the metaphor creates a space wide open which restricts resolution between the particular and the universal. Analysing the circumstances of *The Waste Land*'s birth is important since it is in those beginnings that we can perceive what is called the splitting of the signifier into its 'polar opposites' in Lacan's essay. I have chosen 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) because it is not only central to Eliot's poetic theory but also quite possibly a statement of the principles around which Eliot's modernist poem is based. Such statements as the poet should incorporate a 'historical sense' and do poetry both 'with his own generation in his bones' and 'with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order' align well with how *The Waste Land* is formed.[20]

III

'Tradition and the Individual Talent' may initially be thought to resist the notion that the poetic ego or autonomous individual talent can exist on its own. In drawing on the complex relationship between the Western literary tradition and the individual artist, Eliot stresses that in the individual artist a voice of an 'other' (tradition), must assert itself. The birth of an artistic work requires, as Eliot highlights in the 'Tradition' essay, an agency outside the work of the individual artist. This critical point leads Eliot to reject that a poet's recognition should be based upon the insistence of those 'aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the

[20] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard, Vol. 2 (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), 106. In later references *CP2* followed by page numbers.

peculiar essence of the man.'[21] Instead, for Eliot 'not only the best, but the most individual, parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.'[22] The individual poet is the effect of incorporating what Eliot calls the 'historical sense.'

Eliot, however, also stresses the role of the individual artist, highlighting a contradiction at the heart of his argument. On the one hand, the artist must continually surrender himself 'as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable' and progress through 'a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.'[23] He needs to validate this self-surrender through the expression of suffering in the process of creation.[24] Explaining this, Eliot famously wrote in the 'Tradition' essay: '[p]oetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.'[25] In other words, the artist must have a personality to be impersonal.

Let us first highlight the paradoxical nature of the claim. Eliot implies that personality is not eliminated in the work of the artist but presupposed; impersonality is achieved only through the presence of subjective experience. In other words, a perfect artist draws from his personal experience and is still able to exclude himself from his work. The remark just quoted suggests that the artist's personal experiences act as a requirement for the poetic discourse to happen, which then ends being essentially separate from those experiences. Eliot's claim that only those with personality can escape personality indicates that impersonality is not the absence of subjectivity. Personality becomes a precondition rather than a residue, something that must be there in order to highlight its own contrariety.

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[21] *CP2,* 105.
[22] *CP2,* 105-6.
[23] *CP2*, 108.
[24] *CP2*, 109.
[25] *CP2,* 111.

There are, moreover, other sets of contradictory requirements. An individual artist needs to handle both 'his own generation in his bones' and also the 'feeling that the whole literature of Europe' and 'within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.' Moreover, Eliot argues that the artist must also be aware of both the timeless and the temporal as separate entities and 'of the timeless and of the temporal together' as a single entity.[26]

It is seemingly difficult to come to terms with these clear contradictions. If a writer is aware of and influenced by Eliot's poetic theory, which is surely Eliot himself in *The Waste Land*, it is interesting to see in what ways he will control this in the actual poetry. He would be inclined to write poetry where both the individualist characteristics of the work of art are conjoined with the traditional in a way that one could not be actualised without the other. This process should go on seamlessly and not be apprehensible in the first glance. However, if the critic needs to unravel the mystery of this subtle relationship, he or she will need to look closely to see how such a mechanism can be produced assimilating the personal and the impersonal, the past and the present. The critic may notice that the elements of both the contradictory pairs are present in the poetic discourse. This is the easiest stage of the enquiry, as a poem such as *The Waste Land* quite clearly manifests the presence of both personal and historical, temporal and timeless elements, which were recognised by attentive critics as soon as the poem was published. What is indeed at issue is how this contradiction is resolved through a seamless unification of the two.

From a Lacanian perspective, this unification is not achieved by reconciling opposites into a stable synthesis but by allowing contradiction to remain operative within language itself. As Lacan insists, poetic meaning does not arise from a signifier's correspondence to a fixed reality but from its differential relation to other signifiers through metaphor. Eliot's poetic method can thus be understood as staging this very logic: the individual

[26] *CP2,* 106.

voice emerges only through its insertion into a pre-existing chain of signifiers — tradition — while tradition itself is retroactively reconfigured by each new poetic articulation. The poet's 'extinction of personality' may also mirror Lacan's barred subject, constituted by language rather than sovereign over it. In *The Waste Land*, the poetic ego therefore is not the origin of meaning but an effect of signifying operations in which fragments of past texts, voices, and images are substituted and displaced. The poem's discourse signifies '*something altogether different* from what it says (original emphasis),'[27] not by transcending language, but by intensifying its internal play of differences.

What, therefore, appears in Eliot as a paradox, the necessity of possessing a personality in order to escape it, or of being historical in order to achieve timelessness, finds its theoretical ground in Lacan's account of metaphor as the condensation of universality into a singular instance. Like Valéry's tree or Hugo's sheaf, Eliot's poetic signifiers oscillate between the particular and the universal without resolving the tension between them. *The Waste Land* thus exemplifies a discourse that is simultaneously personal and impersonal, temporal and timeless, because its meaning is generated within the contradictory structure of the symbolic (linguistic) order itself. The poem does not reconcile these oppositions; rather, it performs them. In doing so, it exposes poetry as a site where the primacy of the signifier governs meaning, and where the subject—poet and reader alike — is caught in a chain of signification that resists closure, uniform interpretation, or final mastery. For the past one hundred years, this ghosting mechanism of the poem has blown the critics hither and thither, sometimes even in a wayward direction (to put it in a Russellian fashion), trying to come to terms with the poem.

IV

While the 'Tradition' essay builds the foundations of *The Waste Land*'s wildness, Ezra Pound, whose contribution to Eliot's modernist masterpiece should not be underestimated, is the 'other' person to whom credit goes for

[27] *Écrits*, 421.

The Waste Land as we have it. There is no denying that Pound's role in the creation of the poem is significant,[28] but how exactly is he related to the poem's logic of contradiction? In Lacanian terminology, he is someone strange to the poem, a universalising voice, a metaphor for the Other. [29] He is inside the poem only in the sense that he stands excluded with a dedication — he is both inside and outside. He is exterior to the poem proper, yet the poem anchors its coming into being on that exteriority whereby setting up an intimate relation to the *il miglior fabbro* but without an acknowledgment of his authorial position. However, it is at the level of fundamental difference of approach between Pound and Eliot that *The Waste Land* authorises an internal war within itself, something spreading out into the critical establishment. Jewel Spears Brooker has summarised this difference in these terms:

> Eliot's focus was inductive, moving from life to art, from 'living material' to form, from the 'what' to the 'how,' from the existential to the theoretical. Pound's focus, on the other hand, was deductive, moving from art to life, from poetics to content, from the 'how' to the 'what,' from movements and 'isms' to poets and poems. Eliot projected the collapsing mind of Europe by focusing on his own mental breakdown, and Vivien's, whereas Pound thought of the

[28] Eliot acknowledged Pound's significant contribution by dedicating the poem to him and considering him as '*il miglior fabbro'*, translated from Italian as 'the better craftsman.' When Eliot received the *The Dial* Prize for the poem, he acknowledged, in a letter accompanying the manuscripts of the poem to John Quinn, that if any prize was due for the poem, 'it should [not] come to me before it has been given to Pound.'(*The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, Vol. 1(1898–1922), ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 748.) Pound's 'better' hand has been acknowledged in the final version of the poem, so much so that *The Norton Anthology* had suggested that the poem should be considered authored jointly by Eliot and Pound. (Cameron MacKenzie, 'The Poem as Situation: Eliot's Meaning and Pound's Truth in *The Waste Land*', in The Waste Land *At 90: A Retrospective,* ed. Joe Moffett (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 51.

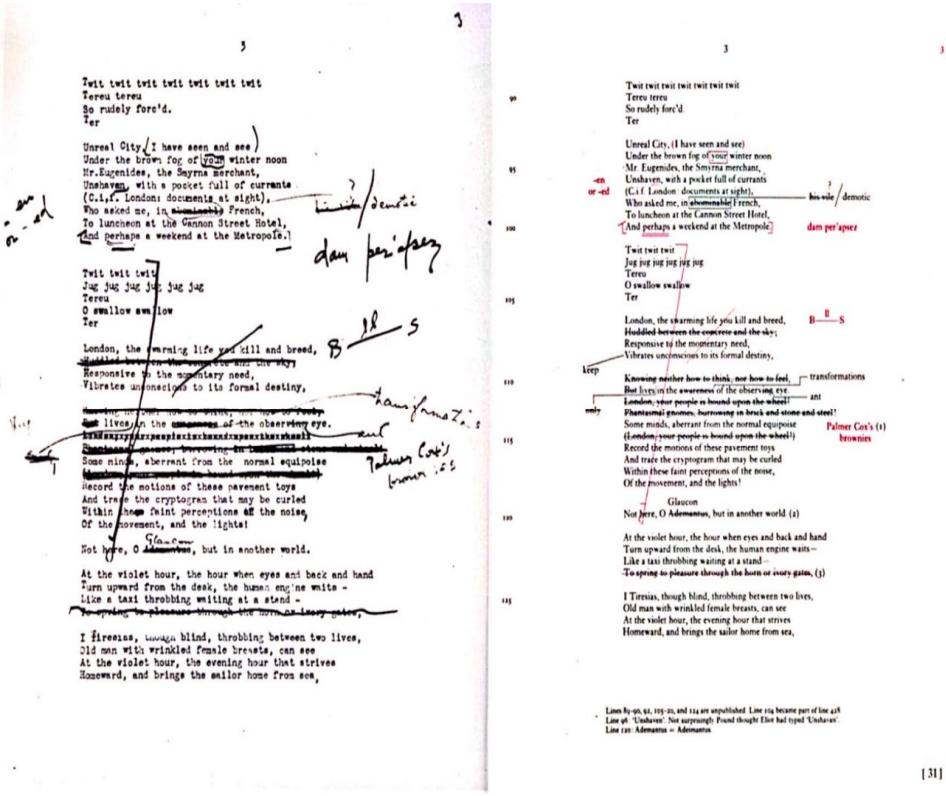
[29] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII: Ethics of the Psychoanalysis* (1959-60), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton & Company, 1997), 71.

> modernist movement as Renaissance II. This contrast in focus – also a contrast in temperament – was useful in that it facilitated a process in which Eliot internalized polarities and then, in a dialectical loop, transcended them in the making of the poem.[30]

It is suggestive from Brooker's statement that Pound was interested in a poetic mode of abstraction and universalisation, and Eliot was given to specification and delimitation — two contradictory forces of universality and particularity. In other words, the collaboration between the Eliots and Pound proved to be an instance of wrestling between the Eliots' attentiveness to the 'personal grouse' and Pound's insistence on impersonality.

Here are some of the changes which demonstrate the difference of approach between the Eliots and Pound. The following changes which Pound recommends on *The Waste Land* drafts suggest that he was against Eliot's inclination to specificity.

[30] Jewel Spears Brooker, 'Dialectical Collaboration: Editing *The Waste Land*', in *The Cambridge Companion to* The Waste Land, ed. Gabrielle McIntire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 112.



Twit twit twit twit twit twit twit
Tereu tereu
So rudely forc'd.
Ter

Unreal City, (I have seen and see)
Under the brown fog of your winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant,
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
(C.i.f. London: documents at sight),
Who asked me, in abominable French,
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel,
And perhaps a weekend at the Metropole.

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
Tereu
O swallow swallow
Ter

London, the swarming life you kill and breed,
Huddled between the concrete and the sky;
Responsive to the momentary need,
Vibrates unconscious to its formal destiny,

Knowing neither how to think, nor how to feel,
But lives in the awareness of the observing eye.
London, your people is bound upon the wheel!
Phantasmal gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel!
Some minds, aberrant from the normal equipoise
(London, your people is bound upon the wheel!)
Record the motions of these pavement toys
And trace the cryptogram that may be curled
Within these faint perceptions of the noise,
Of the movement, and the lights!

Glaucon
Not here, O Ademantus, but in another world. (a)

At the violet hour, the hour when eyes and back and hand
Turn upward from the desk, the human engine waits—
Like a taxi throbbing waiting at a stand—
To spring to pleasure through the horn or ivory gates, (y)

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

Lines 89–90, 92, 105–20, and 124 are unpublished. Line 124 became part of line 428
Line 96 'Unshaven'. Not surprisingly Pound thought Eliot had typed 'Unshaven'.
Line 120 Ademantus = Ademantus

[31]

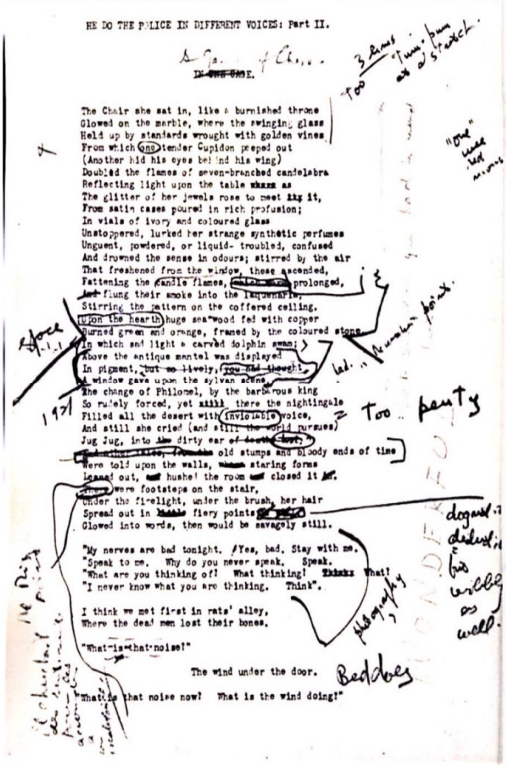
On page thirty-one of the *Facsimile of the Original Drafts* given above, for example, Pound encircles the 'your' in the line 'Under the brown fog of your winter noon' and then goes on to strike through a couple of whole paragraphs which contain a definite address to London and its 'swarming life'.[31] These stanzas contain such explicit statements as 'London, the swarming life you kill and breed,' and twice the line 'London, your people is bound upon the wheel!' Pound, in fact cuts them twice, by writing,

[31] Eliot, *Facsimile*, 31.

perhaps angrily ‘vocative’.[32] What Pound is against, which seems logical to his overall aim, is the poem’s ability to objectify and make definite. As made clear by Pound’s other revisions, he would not allow a point of fixity and clear reference. In the section ‘A Game of Chess’, for example, he changes ‘one’ with ‘a’ in line ‘From which one tender Cupidon peeped out.’[33] Pound’s cut is meaningful in its attempt to displace meaning and try to stop Eliot’s poem from referring to a specific unique, central object, trying to focus a sense of abstraction and dislocation. As part of this aim, Pound cuts ‘inviolable’ as a description of voice and ‘little’ as a description of ‘fiery’. ‘Will’ is also not allowed with ‘points’ as it inflicts a form of reduction to the meaning of ‘points’.[34]

What Pound tries to achieve, I would argue, is the creation of a potent signifier, with a universalising tendency to stand against the tendency of the signifier to represent Eliot’s own ‘personal grouse.’ But the so called ‘personality’ indeed makes its way in the poem. Vivienne’s appreciation of the scenes resonating with autobiographical detail leaves us in no doubt that the poem explicitly refers to scenes in Eliot’s life:

[32] Ibid., 43.
[33] Ibid., 11.
[34] Ibid.


HE DO THE POLICE IN DIFFERENT VOICES: Part II.

IN THE CAGE.

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne
Glowed on the marble, where the swinging glass
Held up by standards wrought with golden vines
From which one tender Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of seven-branched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes
Unguent, powdered, or liquid– troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
Fattening the candle flames, which were prolonged,
And flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Upon the hearth huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
In pigment, but so lively, you had thought
A window gave upon the sylvan scene;
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced, yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice,
And still she cried (and still the world pursues)
Jug Jug, into the dirty ear of death, lust.
Were told upon the walls, staring forms
Leaned out, and hushed the room and closed it in.
There were footsteps on the stair,
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

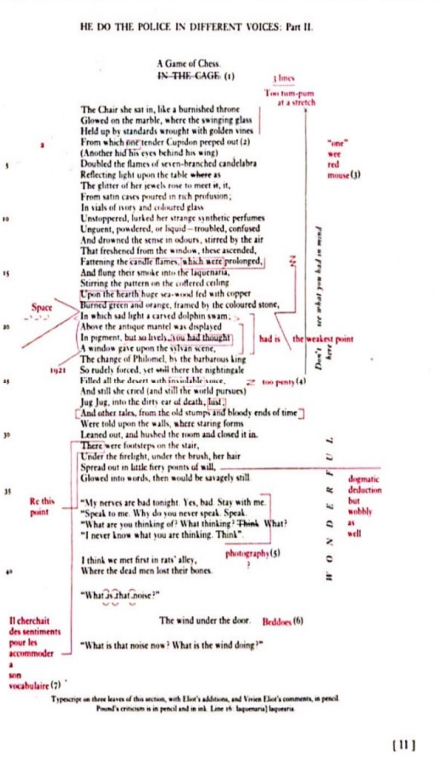
"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think".

I think we met first in rats' alley,
Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"


HE DO THE POLICE IN DIFFERENT VOICES: Part II.

A Game of Chess.
IN THE CAGE (1)

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne
Glowed on the marble, where the swinging glass
Held up by standards wrought with golden vines
From which one tender Cupidon peeped out (2)
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of seven-branched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table where as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstopped, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes
Unguent, powdered, or liquid – troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours, stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended,
Fattening the candle flames, which were prolonged,
And flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling
Upon the hearth huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
In pigment, but so lively, you had thought
A window gave upon the sylvan scene;
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced, yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice,
And still she cried (and still the world pursues)
Jug Jug, into the dirty ear of death, lust.
And other tales, from the old stumps and bloody ends of time
Were told upon the walls, where staring forms
Leaned out, and hushed the room and closed it in.
There were footsteps on the stair,
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in little fiery points of will,
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? Think. What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think".

I think we met first in rats' alley,
Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door. Beddoes (6)

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Typescript on three leaves of this section, with Eliot's additions, and Vivien Eliot's comments, in pencil. Pound's criticism is in pencil and in ink. Line 18: laquearia] laqueata.

[11]

As the above page from the *Facsimile* edition of *The Waste Land* shows, Vivienne, for example, believes that the 'A Game of Chess' section, in Pound's words, is a 'photography' of their life together. With regard to the section describing the woman sitting in a chair 'like a burnished throne', she writes 'don't see what you had in mind here.'[35] However, she likes the lines starting from 'There were footsteps on the stair' and the subsequent conversation between the couple beginning with 'My nerves are bad tonight' and ending with the actual mention of the game of chess.[36] Against

[35] *Facsimile*, 11.
[36] Ibid., 11-13.

these lines three times she writes 'wonderful' followed by a 'yes'.[37] Vivienne's responses register recognition rather than abstraction: moments where lived affect survives editorial erasure. Together, Pound and Vivienne inscribe competing imperatives into the poem's genesis.

In the above sense, the making of *The Waste Land* can be understood as the product of a structural tension between two opposing poetic drives: Pound's impulse toward abstraction and impersonality, and Eliot's pull toward the concrete residues of lived experience. Pound's editorial interventions attempt to elevate the poem into a field of mobile, universal signifiers, stripping away vocatives, autobiographical markers, and points of reference that might anchor meaning too firmly in the particular. Yet the persistence of Vivienne's recognitions demonstrates that the poem continually resists this purification. The autobiographical fragment, the nervous dialogue, and the intimate domestic scene return as traces that refuse complete subsuming under Pound's universalising poetics. Consequently, the poem's celebrated fragmentation emerges not merely as a stylistic feature but as the visible outcome of this conflict between universality and particularity.

V

In recapitulation, it could be suggested that the editing of the poem involved, on the one hand, an impersonal/universal voice and, on the other, a voice full of praise for the personal/particular. Thus, we could either say that *The Waste Land,* to use Eliot's own criteria, is an impersonal poem written by someone who has a 'personality' or that it is a personal poem written by someone who has a historical sense. In either case, this double-layered mechanism of the poem stands for the discontinuity and differentiation of its signifiers. The signifier is logical as far as it recognises its place in relation to other signifiers. In other words, the Eliot poem qua signifier continuously eludes the possibility of fixation, and rests on a dynamic of the interplay between signifiers. In these dynamics what is left is the poem taking shape in the relationship between different signifiers without ever reducing to a formulated signified. Such a mechanism reminds

[37] Ibid.

us of the poem's impossibility of reduction to either personality or impersonality, contemporary culture or literary tradition. Indeed, the early reviewers were quick to note that the poem was both historical and contemporary, impersonal and personal, fragmented and coherent.

We can here identify why the signifier has to operate in anticipation of a differential logic. Lacan's analogy of a concept such as *elephant* and *thing* will help us to reach some clarification. Since, as Lacan posits, speech (more so the poetic speech) is 'instituted with the structure of the semantic world', it 'never has one meaning, nor the word one single use.'[38] This means that speech encompasses a beyond, sustaining itself in various functions and several meanings.[39] Since the meaning speech gives is inexhaustible, we could say that it has a 'creative function' and that it 'brings into being the very thing, which is none other than the concept.'[40] Building on Hegelian thinking, Lacan argues that *'The concept is the time of the thing,'* the word 'thing' is not the actual thing — the thing is in fact not present when it is uttered in language. This means that 'the concept is always where the thing isn't.'[41] If language has a constitutive role, as Lacan's turn of phrase suggests as he likens the utterance of the word *elephant* to serve as a presenting function — 'the elephant that I brought into the room the other day by means of the word *elephant*' — but it becomes problematic once we speak the word 'thing', 'what is it that can be there? Neither its form, nor its reality, since, in the actual state of affairs, all the seats are taken.'[42] For Lacan, the relation of a concept and a thing is 'identity in difference'. What follows from this is that a poem structured by such a logic of signification cannot be reduced to a single, stable meaning. If the concept is always 'where the thing isn't,' and if speech continuously exceeds itself by generating new relations among signifiers, then poetic language necessarily opens onto a field of semantic indeterminacy. Meaning in the poem is not something to be uncovered once and for all but

[38] Lacan, *Seminar I,* 242.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 243.

something that is perpetually deferred and reconstituted in the movement of language itself. The poem thus resists any final interpretative closure: it exists, like Lacan's 'thing,' only in and through difference, compelling the reader to confront not a unified message but a play of meanings that can never be fully exhausted or mastered.

Pound's revisions to the poem can be read as analogous to replacing the 'elephant' with a 'thing': they interrupt those links through which Eliot's lines might have anchored themselves in particularity. Where Eliot, for instance, effectively 'said elephant' by inserting a possessive address in 'Under the brown fog of *your* winter noon,' or by invoking a determinate city in 'London, the swarming life you kill and breed,' Pound, to continue Lacan's analogy, replaces these gestures with a 'thing' by excising or substituting them. What is produced in these altered lines is a heightened metaphorical quality, one that can acquire semantic force only through what Lacan calls an 'identity in difference.' The poem is thereby displaced from reference toward relation: meaning no longer resides in a named object or address but in the differential play among signifiers. Following this line of argument, whether the poem is to be viewed as personal or impersonal becomes a useless question and the critical eye becomes fixed on the intersection of possibilities of meaning.

Lacan's so-called train-station example will further elucidate this point. In the 'Instance of the Letter' essay, Lacan notes a train stopping at a station:

> A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated across from each other in a compartment next to the outside window that provides a view of the station platform buildings going by as the train comes to a stop. 'Look,' says the brother, 'we're at Ladies!' 'Imbecile!' replies his sister, 'Don't you see we're at Gentlemen.' [43]

[43] Ibid., 417.

Lacan's unique concept of the signifier, where what is important is not, in Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's words, 'the other side of the sign in relation to the signified,' but an 'order of spacing, according to which the law is inscribed and marked as difference.'[44] The two train children will never agree with each other whether they are at Ladies or Gentlemen. On a similar note, the logic of the 'personal' and 'impersonal' in *The Waste Land* is only correct to the degree that the poem is neither about personality nor about impersonality at a given time, but a constant reminder to each other that one is already implied when the other tries to assert itself. Hence, 'personality' and 'impersonality', to quote Lacan again, 'will henceforth be two homelands' […] regarding which it will be impossible for [the poem] to reach an agreement' because 'neither can give ground regarding the one's unsurpassed excellence without detracting from the other's glory.' Such a binary nature, with all its subtleties, of *The Waste Land* restricts us from putting the poem in one camp of interpretations and not the other. Doing otherwise is not likely to be a successful venture. This is because language as a signifying mechanism does not allow a fixation of the signifier and the signified. These signifiers represent the poem to other signifiers *ad infinitum*.

This aspect of *The Waste Land* brings with it the continuous deferral of meaning as an agent of splitting. In *Seminar II,* Lacan mentions the joke of Gribouille:

> He goes to a funeral, and says - *Many happy returns*! He gets himself in a mess, gets his hair pulled, goes back home - *Come now, you don't say 'Many happy returns' at a funeral. you say - May God rest his soul*! He goes back out, comes upon a wedding - *May God rest his soul*! And he still gets into trouble.[45]

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[44] Nancy, Jean-Luc and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Title of the Letter: A Reading of Lacan*, transl. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 46.

[45] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1991), 85.

The Waste Land cannot avoid the 'intrusion of the past into the present,' because '[i]t is always the learning of someone who will do better next time' continuously.[46] The nature of metaphoricity of the poem proclaims that we will never finish our task of deciding the issue of particularity and universality. Since we can never resolve the binary logic of the signifier, our relationship with the poem unfolds in what is called the Zeigarnik Affect, after Lithuanian-Soviet psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik, who postulated that we remember unfinished tasks better than the ones finished. Lacan interprets this as: '[t]he more abject the failure, the better the subject remembers it.'[47] Should we say, our limitation to grasp the poem fully reminds us to come back to it repeatedly? One hundred years of *The Waste Land* criticism does not teach us otherwise.

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 86.

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A Note on Eliot's Pascal

Richard Harries

Anyone writing about another person will put much of themselves into the portrait they paint, both in the selection of the material and their attitude to it. It is this empathetic quality which makes good biography possible, the fact that something in the life of the other person resonates within their biographer. This is startlingly true in the case of Eliot writing on Pascal.[1] Every time I re-read his introduction to the *Pensées* it comes across as a deeply felt personal credo. In short, if one wants to understand Eliot's faith, and more particularly how he came to it, what he wrote about Pascal tells us almost everything we need to know. The following features stand out.

First, the way Eliot describes how Pascal's mature faith was arrived at. Eliot contrasts two ways of coming to faith. One, the way of Descartes, is by logical argument, the other, the way of Pascal, begins by looking at the world as it is and trying to find a view of life which fits the facts. Although Eliot in his essay on Pascal does not refer to his own journey into faith, it accords with what we learn from his letters about his own searching before his conversion in 1927. He was looking for something which would hold his own wretched, broken life together but also which would heal the clashing nations of Europe. He did not think that morality or politics by themselves were enough, and he believed that morality had to be grounded in religion. It was in taking a hardheaded looking at life in all its misery, as well as with its signs of moral beauty, and eliminating various alternatives, that the mind comes to a conclusion and commitment. It was this movement of the whole person by what Eliot refers to as Newman's 'powerful and concurrent' reasons that led both he himself and Pascal to

[1] All references not otherwise indicated are from 'The Pensées of Pascal', T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).

be ‘inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation’. The key word here is Incarnation. The great turning point for Eliot, with his Unitarian New England background, was the unique disclosure of God in Christ. Not long before his conversion his travelling companions in Rome were astonished to see Eliot kneel before Michaelangelo’s *Pietá*. As Eliot put it in ‘The Dry Salvages’:

> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.

Second, Pascal’s depiction of the misery of the world without God. Eliot too thought that life was for the most part a wretched business. He had no illusions about human beings and the mess we make of life. Eliot writes that no writer is more to be commended than Pascal ‘to those who doubt, but who have the mind to conceive, and the sensibility to feel, the disorder, the futility, the meaninglessness, the mystery of life and suffering, and who can only find peace through a satisfaction of the whole being’. In those words he is writing about himself as much as Pascal.

Third, and linked to the previous point, there is Pascal’s unsparing analysis of human motivation. Eliot writes, in relation to Pascal, that someone of great intellectual powers ‘cannot avoid seeing through human beings and observing the vanity of their thoughts and of their avocations, their dishonesty and self-deception, the insincerity of their emotions, their cowardice, the pettiness of their real ambitions.’ For Eliot this was rooted in an unsparing awareness of his own motivation, no doubt helped by his regular practice of confession. When he was converted and friends wrote to him accusing him of doing so for all kinds of unworthy reasons Eliot wrote back:

> You may be right. Most of these criticisms I had anticipated or made myself. Thrice armed is he who knows what a humbug he is. My progress, if I ever make any, will be by purging myself of a large number of impure motives.[2]

[2] T.S. Eliot, *The Letters of T.S. Eliot,* Vol. 4, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (Faber and Faber, 2013), p. 572. See also p. 567.

This attempt to be honest with himself is memorably expressed in 'Little Gidding' in 'the gifts reserved for old age' and in his hope for a 'purification of the motive in the ground of our beseeching.'

Fourth, and again linked to the previous two points, there was Eliot's sceptical frame of mind, so close to that of Pascal's. This made him so question his own motivation and that of others that it took him to the edge of total cynicism. He thought that all human relationships were liable to turn out a delusion and a cheat. Indeed, he said it was only his religious faith that saved him from this, for 'the love of God takes the place of the cynicism which otherwise is inevitable to every rational person.'[3] A true sceptic, we might say, is one who is sceptical not only about other people but their own scepticism, including their motivation for it. In this sense Eliot, unlike so many others was a true sceptic, that is, a consistent and thoroughgoing one. This scepticism including facing honestly all the arguments against religious belief.

The nature of this scepticism comes across particularly in Eliot's discussion of the relationship of Montaigne to Pascal. Eliot describes Montaigne's views as 'a fog, a gas, a fluid, an insidious element'. The first feature of a fog is that you cannot actually grasp it. This image is hardly surprising for as Montaigne wrote:

> Many's the time I have taken an opinion contrary to my own and (as I am fond of doing) tried to defend it for the fun of the exercise: then, once my mind has really applied itself to the other side, I get so firmly attached to it that I forget why I held the first opinion and give it up.[4]

[3] *The Letters of T.S. Eliot,* Vol. 3, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (Faber and Faber, 2012), pp.71-73

[4] Michel de Montaigne, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, transl. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1987), p.145.

Montaigne is a highly interesting and attractive writer and it is not surprising therefore than he gets under the skin of the reader, or as Eliot puts it about Pascal, is infected by him. Like fog it gets everywhere. So it is that a number of the *Pensées* are in fact lifted from Montaigne.

In *An Apology for Raymond Seborg* Montaigne's scepticism knows no limits. He rejoices in showing through scores of vivid examples that animals are far superior to the human beings who so pride themselves. He examines every possible philosophy and reveals the relativity of all human judgements. And he does all this in an amused laid back style. Although even today Montaigne is quoted as the quintessential sceptical believer in fact he was an observant Catholic. As the great Montaigne scholar Michael Screech puts it 'he was a practising Christian whose devotion was as superstitious as Newman's'[5]. But his faith was rooted in a conviction that you should follow the tradition of your country and do the best with life as it is. Whatever may have gone on in the depths of his mind he gives no indication in his writing of existential angst, of wrestling with despair or being uplifted in adoration of God. He is indeed an *Honnête homme*, the cultivated and cultured gentleman who can talk languidly about serious things. Now this may indeed be deceptive, a deliberate persiflage to hide a deep seriousness, as is the case with many of the best comedians, but to certain kind of mind it can be very irritating, as it was for Pascal.

Eliot, on the other hand, although he was much closer to Pascal than Montaigne in temperament, is able to admire Montaigne without being troubled by his insouciance. But as he wrote, Montaigne:

> succeeded in giving expression to the scepticism of *every* human being. For every man who thinks and lives by thought must have his own scepticism, that which stops at the question, that which ends in denial, or that which leads to faith and which is somehow integrated into the faith which transcends it.

[5] Ibid. p. xxxi.

The emphasis on *every* is clearly meant to include himself as well as Pascal. This raises the question of how that scepticism was 'integrated' into Eliot's faith. The answer seems to be that doubt has to be lived with as part of faith. For Eliot, describing Pascal as someone who combines a passionate temperament with a powerful and regulated mind, says that he writes 'facing unflinchingly the demon of doubt which is inseparable from the spirit of belief'. Again he is writing as much about himself as about Pascal.

Fifth, there is a shared awareness that the journey into faith may include a scepticism that borders on despair. Eliot is scathing about what most people think of as a sceptical attitude, regarding it as an unwillingness to think seriously about life. Pascal's disillusionment, he argues, was not personal, it was simply the result of facing life as it is. Eliot suggests that this despair in a diseased soul can lead to works like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* but with Pascal it was 'the analogue of the drought, the dark night, which is an essential stage in the progress of the Christian mystic.' Here we have an anticipation of Section III of 'East Coker'.

Sixth, there is Eliot's reading of Pascal's religious experiences. Eliot wrote:

> Now, Pascal was not a mystic, and his works are not to be classified amongst mystical writings; but what can only be called mystical experience happens to many men who do not become mystics.

This essay was published in 1931, and therefore before the mystical experience that he had when visiting Burnt Norton with Emily Hale in 1935 at the empty pool. However, whilst a graduate student at Harvard and also later in Paris he had mystical experiences, though he did not interpret them in Christian terms at the time. Like Pascal Eliot was not a mystic but he had mystical experiences.

Seventh, there is the deeply serious commitment to the faith shared by Pascal and Eliot. Montaigne asked 'What do I know?' whereas for Pascal, the question was 'What must I do?' So it was for Eliot. Like Pascal he had a personality that drove him to be fully committed to what he had come to

believe in. In the case of Pascal it was this which attracted him to the Jansenists at Port-Royal, which Eliot describes as kind of Puritan renewal movement. Eliot inherited the demanding super-ego of his New England forebears and this drove him, when he became a Christian, to be utterly serious about his practice of the faith, for example going to confession more or less weekly. There may be moments of illumination as he wrote in 'The Dry Salvages 'but 'the rest/ Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action'; and becoming a saint involves 'a lifetime's death in love.'

Then, eighth, both Pascal and Eliot were laypeople whose main occupation in life had nothing to do with religion, the one as a mathematician and scientist, the other as a poet, critic and publisher. They both moved with ease and authority in what today we would call the sophisticated secular world. But inwardly both were driven by an inner discipline. Eliot writes that 'Pascal is a man of the world among ascetics, and an ascetic among men of the world; he had a knowledge of worldliness and the passion of asceticism, and in him the two are fused into an individual whole.' This precisely describes Eliot himself with his love of good food, his knowledge of wines and cheeses and the ease with which he moved in the culturally advanced circles of his time. At the same time he was someone who rose early on weekday mornings to go to Holy Communion.

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Emily Hale at Chipping Campden

Sara Fitzgerald

Abstract

Burnt Norton, outside Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, has long been acknowledged as the inspiration for the poem that became the first of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The poem, Eliot told Emily Hale, his longtime American muse, was his 'love poem' to her. But what did Hale make of the place? In this essay, Hale biographer Sara Fitzgerald gathers her subject's impressions of her summers in Chipping Campden in the 1930s and what is known of her unhappy visit there in 1957, after Eliot had remarried.

Emily Hale at Chipping Campden

Burnt Norton, a once abandoned manor house in the Cotswolds, has long been acknowledged as the inspiration for the first of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets.* Eliot himself acknowledged that, while observing, 'The poetry—if any—is in the poem and not in the house. It is a perfectly third-rate manor house built on the site of an older one which had been destroyed by fire. I merely happened upon it one day when it was unoccupied; I think there was someone living in the lodge but I wandered through the grounds quite freely and it provided the suggestion for a deserted house.'[1]

But what about the woman who took a walk there with Eliot one late summer day in the mid-1930s? What did Emily Hale make of that place and nearby Chipping Campden, where she vacationed with her aunt and uncle for several summers at the height of her relationship with Eliot? This essay explores what is known about Hale's own impressions of the deserted manor house and the times she spent in the Cotswolds, first in the 1930s and again, after Eliot remarried in 1957. Hale, it seems, had fond memories of the Gloucestershire town, if not necessarily the manor house itself. But the place also harboured painful memories, and after one final visit in the autumn after Eliot's second marriage, it appears she never returned to England.

In the summer of 1930, as Eliot's extended correspondence with the love of his youth was about to begin, Hale and her family members stayed in Burford in Oxfordshire, about a half-hour away. Emily's aunt, Edith Perkins, fashioned herself as a gardening expert, and her trips to England always included visits to its most notable gardens. Years later Eliot presented her slides of those gardens to the Royal Horticultural Society.

[1]T.S. Eliot, *The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 1, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 903.

But in their next visit, in the summer of 1934, the family chose a different place. Hale's uncle, the Revd John Carroll Perkins, wrote Eliot that his wife had 'found a house near the north end' of High Street, 'that fascinating street' in Chipping Campden, a home that 'appealed greatly to her, especially as there was a beautiful and intelligently planned garden.'[2] Eliot responded, 'Chipping Campden is only a name to me, but I know its reputation; the Cotswolds I only know from the motor route between Oxford and Hereford.'[3] He wrote Hale that the town 'seems to be a devil of a place to get to—no railway station—not mentioned in the local bus routes.' Eliot said he had finally tracked it down in a guide and concluded that 'it seems to be two miles from any road to anywhere.'[4] Despite those transportation issues, Eliot would travel there regularly over the next six summers.

The Perkinses leased Stamford House for three months, beginning on July 15, 1934. Its owner, Alice Maud Mary Sunderland-Taylor, a retired schoolmistress, rented out her home while she spent summers in Yugoslavia. Hale and Eliot had last been together over the 1932-33 Christmas holidays, when he had visited her at Scripps College in California during his year at Harvard. Eighteen months later, Hale resigned her job, citing the advice of a physician who said her health could 'only be safely and fully restored by a year of complete rest.'[5]

It's possible that Hale was plagued by recurring bouts of 'neuritis' and arthritis as she left Scripps. But she was healthy enough to mount a major production of Milton's *Comus* at the end of the academic year. And accompanying two aging relatives on a trans-Atlantic trip might not be exactly what the doctor had ordered. Eliot was anxious that visiting old

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[2] T.S. Eliot, *The Letters of T.S.* Eliot, Vol. 7, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2017), 238n.
[3] Eliot, *Letters* 7, 238.
[4] Emily Hale Letters, 24 July 1934, available at tseliot.com.
[5] Emily Hale to President Jaqua, 19 February 1934, Emily Hale Personnel File, Scripps College Archives, Denison Library, Scripps College, Claremont, California.

friends in Boston might exhaust her en route to England.[6] But she made it to Chipping Campden by July, arriving a few weeks after her relatives took up residence there.
Eliot soon arrived for a weekend visit, but it turned out to be a difficult one. He worried that it had drained Hale: 'Both in going without sleep by getting up early, and in taking walks, and getting wet, and nervously.' But he told Hale that his feelings for her 'were stronger and more intense than ever before...'[7]

Scholars long thought that Eliot and Hale first made a walk to Burnt Norton in the summer of 1934. When Eliot's letters to Hale were opened in January 2020, readers noted that a letter dated September 10, 1935, provided Eliot's first specific reference to the manor house. But since then, Eliot scholar Ron Schuchard has made a persuasive case that the couple made two trips; the first, he argues, took place the first weekend Eliot visited Hale in the summer of 1934, the second, in 1935. Schuchard links the thunderstorm images in 'Burnt Norton' to the reference to 'taking walks, and getting wet,' in the letter Eliot sent Hale after his first visit to Chipping Campden. It was, in Eliot's recounting, 'a memorable experience—and something which marks a stage.' But Schuchard suggests that Eliot didn't refer to the place by its name because he and Hale didn't know it yet.[8]

(After Eliot's death, Hale wrote a short memoir to accompany the letters she donated to Princeton. In this document, she wrote, 'On one of his visits, we walked to nearby 'Burnt Norton' …,' suggesting they made only one trip, or at least only one that made an impression on her. But Hale wrote the document when she was seventy-three, and without access to the letters Eliot had written her, made a few factual errors.)[9]

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[6] Emily Hale Letters, 8 June 1934 (1).
[7] Emily Hale Letters, 30 July 1934.
[8] Ronald Schuchard, 'Eliot's Double World and the Way of Suffering and Contemplation to *Burnt Norton*,' *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual,* Vol. 7 (2025): 1-38.
[9] Emily Hale Statement, March-May 1965, Emily Hale Letters, Princeton University, https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/C0686_c96.

Hale's memories of Burnt Norton were less distinct than Eliot's and her first summers in Chipping Campden more conflicted. She later noted, for the benefit of scholars and biographers, that Eliot had told her the first section of *Four Quartets* was his 'love poem' to her.[10] But in 1943, when they had been separated for nearly four years by World War II, she asked Eliot why he had never written a poem about their time together in the Cotswolds. Eliot was astonished. 'What else, please, is 'Burnt Norton',' he asked her.[11]

If Eliot began to revel in his visits to Chipping Campden, Hale's first summers there were filled with tensions. She had given up her job at Scripps and was dealing with some health issues. Seeing Eliot face-to-face after more than a year's absence, she was trying to navigate the boundaries of a relationship with a married man who was unwilling to seek a divorce. Their reunions were undoubtedly not helped by the presence of Hale's older relatives, who were eager to interact with Eliot, and the arrival of still more friends and relatives.

After Eliot's first visit, Hale wrote him about her conflicted feelings. He responded, 'I feel profoundly wretched, on your account.' Perhaps, he said, he should not have come. 'I, too, had been under the impression that you had 'laid the ghosts' ' and that he had been determined to play his part accordingly. But now he considered himself a 'blood-sucker'. He told her that he would give his eyesight to be able to marry her, and concluded, 'We have got to find some way of coming to an *agreement* as to what is the right thing…'[12]

The Perkinses had gotten to know Eliot during his year at Harvard and repeatedly invited him to come back. At the end of August, Eliot decided

[10] Statement by Emily Hale, https://tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/the-statements.
[11] Emily Hale Letters, 11 May 1943.
[12] Emily Hale Letters, 2 August 1934.

to accept their invitation, even though Hale had said nothing about it.[13] He then wrote her, 'But is there anything strange about wanting to see a person and yet dreading it, or being terribly happy to see them and yet terribly exhausted by it?'[14]

By the end of August, however, Hale seemed happier, at least about her new home. She wrote the president of Scripps a long, friendly letter, providing her own vivid impressions of the Cotswold town. If he and his wife came for tea, she wrote, they would walk

> …up the long curving street of Chipping Campden, which is the one street the town has, and on which stands houses dating as far back as the early 15th century, almost all of any succeeding period as well, made from the beautiful Cotswold stone, for which this region of the Cotswold hills is as famous as its once far famed sheep and wool markets. There is even today a gradual return of the wooltrade [sic] of some promise, and on the last Wednesday of each month a sheep market is held near the fine old market which was the gift of a wool merchant in the late fourteenth century. We live and keep house in quite a modern building, 1705 being the date over the door, and a fine type of dignified domestic architecture which represented the house of the well to do [sic] farmer at that time. The house has been most comfortably and charmingly 'restored' by the owner—an ex-headmistress of a girls' school, who, like some other teachers we know, enjoys and appreciates the comforts of living, as well as its charm and historical value. Back of the house lay originally the farmyard and outbuildings—these are transformed into a very lovely garden and garden sheds respectively, the garden rising in three terraces—on one of which I now sit, looking thru' a superb old pear tree, over the *stone tiled* roof of such warmth of grey, to the famous church

[13] Emily Hale Letters, 13 August 1934.
[14] Emily Hale Letters, 17 August 1934.

> town [sic] which rises in its glory at the *top* end of the street—a landmark for miles around.

She added that they lived 'a very quiet—to some a too quiet life perhaps—as the residents in a town of 2,000 citizens, whose daily tasks in home and shop and community furnish their self respecting livelihood, and source of diversion. All marketing purchases are delivered by hand, the bread comes out of a large basket on the arm of a man too small to carry it, or the milkman stands like a reincarnated Roman charioteer, in his two-wheeled cart, driving his gay sage pony, who knows at just which house door he shall wait, or the quiet voiced butcher hands you a leg or a shoulder in a quite callous manner!'

Hale noted that there were 'several very well known artists who make Campden both their home and the center of a craftman's guild—and among them is a very charming sculptor, Mr. Alec Miller, one of whose recent pieces of work—an exquisite 'Atalanta' done in wood, I wish very much I could bring to the attention of the Los Angeles Art Museum, or even Mrs. Balch herself.' (Born in Scotland in 1879, Miller later taught and lived in Campden; Janet Jacks Balch was an art collector who was then a trustee of Scripps and became a major donor to the college.)[15]

Hale reported that she walked 'two or three times a week to some spot of interest or charm not too far away, and any stroll along these Cotswold woods or over thewolds [sic] is its own reward.'[16]

Hale recaptured some of the same impressions in a story she wrote, possibly two years later, about an encounter with an elderly piper in the town. She described how she 'stood for the one hundredth time trying to etch the details of this familiar setting upon my memory,' when his music broke the stillness.

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[15] https://artuk.org/discover/artists/miller-alec-18791961;
https://www.mayohayeslibrary.org/janet-jacks.html;
https://www.scrippscollege.edu/about/timeline/1929.
[16] Emily Hale to Dr. Jaqua, 27 August 1934, Emily Hale Personnel File.

> in the deepening light of the late summer afternoon, the beauty and peacefulness of our Cotswold town are seen and felt at their best. The long curving street flanked by the weathered houses of the warm grey-yellow Cotswold stone that stand in unbroken line from end to end of the town, is deserted at the tea hour--, smoke rising from the chimneys, a quiet murmur of voices within low rooms, the glow of the fire that warms the tea-pot, the hushing of even the children's voices and laughter, are witness to the changeless hour of rest and friendliness that binds the British Empire together by this simple act, more strongly, more sincerely than many a government program. Sunshine and shade play over the old market, or touch in their patterns, moss covered stone tiled roof, an ancient Tudor window, or the beautiful church tower, that rises like a presence over the quiet parish below it.

John Haffenden believes that Hale sent Eliot the story, titled 'They flash upon the inward eye,' in July 1936, the one summer in the late 1930s when Hale did not travel to England.[17]

Hale and her relatives invited many acquaintances to join them in Chipping Campden. They included Willard and Margaret Thorp, the friends of Hale who were responsible for securing the gift of her Eliot letters for Princeton University, where Willard was a longtime faculty member. Willard later recalled that he and his wife had visited Hale in the Cotswolds around 1934, when Eliot was also visiting. 'Emily, Tom and I took one long walk (a whole afternoon I recall),' he reported. 'Good talk all the way.'[18] Emily

[17] The story was first published in *Campden & District Historical & Archaeological Society: Notes and Queries* 5, no. 4 (Spr. 2007),:47-8. John Haffenden dates the letter in his notes to the story in 'Writings by Emily Hale' at www.tseliot.com, referencing Eliot's 10 July 1936 letter to Hale.

[18] Willard Thorp to 'Tom' (T. S. Matthews), 19 November 1971, T. S. Matthews Papers (C1131), Series 3: Correspondence, Box 37, Folder 6, Willard Thorpe

Brown, a member of the English faculty at Milwaukee-Downer College, where Hale had taught in the 1920s, visited for five days in June 1935.[19] Sally Foss, daughter of one of Hale's closest school friends, recalled that she and her mother visited Hale several times in Chipping Campden, but never when Eliot was there.[20] Hale issued broad invitations to former students and colleagues to stop by if they were in Europe.[21] She also offered to host Eliot's sister and niece during their visit to England in the summer of 1934, but Eliot declined the invitation.[22]

Throughout her lifetime Hale retained mostly positive memories of her summers in the Cotswolds, but the arrival of certain guests appeared to create tensions within the household. One was Jeanette McPherrin, a younger friend from Hale's days at Scripps College. McPherrin had won a fellowship to study in Paris and covered her travel expenses by chaperoning a wealthy younger student to Europe. But that put her in England two and a half months before her fellowship began. Hale persuaded her aunt to rent McPherrin a room in their house when she arrived in late August 1934. Eliot worried about expressing his feelings to Hale in 'the presence of a new and possibly keenly observant person,' but he quickly befriended McPherrin and professed to enjoy her company.

McPherrin later wrote that Edith 'invited' her to move out when some 'Brahmin' friends from Boston arrived in town. 'Because Emily had qualms of conscience about my eviction, I was still invited to meals quite

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[sic], Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

[19] Emily Hale to Mary (Spicuzza), 2 July 1935, Emily Hale Letters (1926-1935), Milwaukee-Downer College Records, Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis.

[20] Susan Stewart and Joshua Kotin, 'A Conversation with Sally Foss about Emily Hale,' *Time Present: The Newsletter of the International T. S. Eliot Society,* no. 100 (Spring 2020): 2.

[21] Hale to Spicuzza; Hale to 'Dear Friends,' undated letter, Emily Hale Papers, Smith College Archives, CA-MS-00344, Box 841, Correspondence Folder.

[22] Emily Hale Letters, 17 August, 1934.

frequently at Stamford House, . . .' she recalled. She said she was 'included in excursions,' and 'asked to help entertain walkers,' including Eliot.[23]

At the end of that summer, Hale traveled to France and Italy with her relatives and McPherrin. They returned the following summer, as *Murder in the Cathedral* was premiering at the Canterbury Festival. But a new visitor brought even more tensions to the household: Emily's aunt, Irene Hale, who had recently lost her husband, Philip Hale, Boston's preeminent music and theater critic. While Eliot remained gracious to his hostess, he complained to McPherrin about Hale's older relatives.

> Mrs H. is rather terrible. When we sat down to lunch she looked at me piercingly and remarked that I looked like her deceased husband; and before I got over that, she added that very likely he was in the room with us now… I am afraid that [Emily] will be worn out between the *marteau* and the *enclume*—between being fatigued by Mrs P[erkins] and being fatigued trying to save Mrs P. from Mrs H., though I think Mrs P. is much better able to stand it than E. . . . Mrs H. is a rather pathetic fool, and she is not a powerful personality. Besides, E. is able to regard her with a good deal of detachment, whereas she seems haunted by the feeling that she ought to be a great deal happier with Mrs P. than she actually is. Mrs P. is a type of stupid woman that I have come across before, and I know that the only way to save oneself from them in the long run is to run away. She is terrifically powerful; her husband is only a pawn in her hands. This type has a gentle relentlessness that no one can stand up to.'[24]

McPherrin shared Eliot's opinions, later writing Valerie Eliot that 'The Perkins[es] aggravated [Emily's] problems. They were people with whom

[23] Eliot, *Letters* 7: 414n.
[24] Eliot, *Letters* 7: 647-8.

nobody could have had a real human relationship, and she kept feeling that she should be loving them!'[25]

Nevertheless, that summer was still filled with romantic memories. Eliot wrote Hale, 'Our being in the rose garden at Burnt Norton is one of the permanent moments for me. and [sic] for the moment in the garden at Stamford House in the evening, and all such moments, I can never express my gratitude.' But in the same letter, Eliot sensed that Hale was depressed and annoyed—both with him and some larger 'domestic trouble.' Eliot observed that Edith Perkins 'wants to be something to you that she cannot be—it was a very pathetic aspect. I mean, she wants to take the place of a mother. . . .' McPherrin may have sparked another conflict. Eliot wrote, 'It must be made clear, surely, between you and your aunt, that the fact that you have a dear friend whom your aunt does not like is regrettable, but that such situations are common enough, that for there to be a strong feeling on the subject is just silly …' Eliot and Hale had a private conversation about the matter 'in the field,' he recalled, 'As I said then, I am sure that you would always be perfectly loyal to Jean, or to any friend; what is in question is your loyalty to yourself. and [sic] *I* know how hard that can be.'[26] For her part, McPherrin later wrote Valerie Eliot appreciatively about the times she had spent with Eliot in Chipping Campden, including 'talks about literature on walks to Willersey and Broadway.' Those summers, she recalled, 'in a household presided over by Emily's mean old aunt and her lecherous old uncle, would have been a misery without his visits.'[27]

The summer was capped by a birthday celebration for both Eliot and Mrs. Perkins. Eliot told her that he had felt more 'at home' in Campden than he had felt since he had first left Boston.[28] But he told McPherrin that he

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[25] Eliot, *Letters* 7: 415n.
[26] Emily Hale Letters, 10 September 1935.
[27] Emily Hale Letters, Biographical Register, Jeanette McPherrin, citing her 26 September 1988 letter to Valerie Eliot. This is the only such description of the Revd Perkins, but may suggest the cause of some of the tensions in the household.
[28] Eliot, *Letters* 7: 781

thought 'some place like Campden' was an ideal place for Hale's relatives—'a place with an olde worlde atmosphere stinking of death.'[29] Still, he recognized that Hale liked the place. As the family moved to London at the end of their summer, he wrote her, 'It was lovely to see how many friends you had made in Campden, and how beloved you had made yourself.'[30] Eight years later, during their wartime separation, Eliot told Hale that he preferred to think of her, not directing dramatic productions at a 'girls' college,' but rather 'as directing and meddling in all the affairs of a village (preferably of course as the lady of the Manor) and taking that kind and helpful interest in everybody's affairs (especially the lame ducks) which you exercise so beautifully at Campden.'[31]

Hale and her family returned to Boston at the start of 1936—the Revd Perkins was involved with events marking the 250th anniversary of Boston's King's Chapel, the 'mother church' of Unitarianism, where he had previously served as senior pastor. But in the summer of 1937, the family went back to Chipping Campden. By then, 'Burnt Norton' had been published. As she read the poem, Hale apparently told Eliot—cautiously—that she thought his images were 'obscure.' He responded, ''Burnt Norton' is no doubt obscure. Partly it will be obscure to other people in a way in which it is not obscure to you; and it will also be obscure to them in the same way in which it is obscure to you.' In this letter, Eliot tried to explain the poem to Hale and, specifically, his image 'garlic and sapphires in the mud.'[32]

But by then, Eliot was struggling to write the most personal of his plays, *The Family Reunion,* and Hale was more comfortable providing theatrical advice. In one of the short memoirs she wrote to accompany the gift of her letters, she said she believed that the five summers they spent in Chipping Campden were 'the most truly happy. . . of his life. . . . In the beautiful garden at the rear of the house, where he and I spent many hours, he

[29] Eliot, *Letters* 7: 791.
[30] Emily Hale Letters, 3 October 1935.
[31] Emily Hale Letters, 10 January 1943.
[32] Emily Hale Letters, 19 March 1936.

proofread 'The Family Reunion,' and worked on a set of Shakespearean lectures.'[33]

However, the clouds of a threatening war hung over those final summers, and Hale and her relatives were vacationing in Chipping Campden when Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939. Over a frenzied weekend, Eliot joined them to help their landlord prepare her home for the blackouts. As they sailed back to the States, Eliot recalled his last evening in the garden there, 'looking out on the moonlight and the yew tree shadow more beautiful than ever before—those last minutes at the window are pictured in my mind with an intensity that can never disappear. . .'[34] The following week, he wrote Hale, 'I feel that we have somehow made a mark on Campden, as Campden on us.'[35]

Three years later, Miss Sunderland-Taylor died. Eliot told Hale he had 'clung to the thought of a return to Campden,' but now the Stamford House garden had become 'a garden enclosed with us outside it.'[36] Eight months later, after an auction was held to dispose of the house's furnishings, he regretted that he had not tried to purchase something for each of them to remember the place. He felt 'very sad' to think of 'the desolation of the house and garden.' [37] Eliot wrote a mutual friend that he felt Hale and her relatives had also 'clung to the hope of returning to Campden,' but he correctly predicted that the Perkinses would not be healthy enough to make the trip when the war finally ended.[38]

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[33] Frances Dickey and Sara Fitzgerald, 'In Her Own Words: Emily Hale's Introduction to Eliot's Letters,' *Time Present,* the Newsletter of the International T. S. Eliot Society, Fall 2020, https://tseliot.sites.luc.edu/newsletter/102%20fall%2020.pdf.
[34] Emily Hale Letters, 4 September 1939.
[35] Emily Hale Letters, 13 September 1939.
[36] Emily Hale Letters, 7 December 1942 (1).
[37] Emily Hale Letters, 30 August 1943.
[38] T.S. Eliot, *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 10, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2025), 312.

In fact, Hale did not return to Chipping Campden for nearly two decades after the outbreak of the war. In the mean time, after the death of his first wife in 1947, Eliot decided he no longer wished to marry Hale. But their correspondence continued until January 1957, when Eliot shocked all of his closest friends by marrying his secretary, Valerie Fletcher.

Six months later, Hale reached the mandatory retirement age at the private girls' school where she was then teaching. A tribute published in the October 1957 *Abbot Academy Bulletin* said she planned to 'live for a time in Chipping Campden.'[39] As she packed up her teaching life, she wrote a short memoir to accompany the letters she had donated to Princeton the previous fall. She described 'the charming 18th century house with beautiful gardens' where she and Eliot had visited together in Chipping Campden. 'The charm of the town, the country's beauty, the comfort of living' under her aunt's housekeeping all contributed to the wonderful times they had enjoyed together.[40]

Eliot's *On Poetry and Poets* was published that September, and he sent Hale a copy. In response, she wrote that she had decided it was time for her to pursue her 'next chapter' and would be sailing that week from Montreal to Liverpool. She advised Eliot where she planned to stay in Gloucestershire, and said she hoped the time had come for her to meet his new wife.[41] In his response, Eliot questioned the wisdom of visiting the Cotswolds at that time of year and held off setting a date for them to meet in London, saying he was recovering from a mild attack of Asian flu.[42]

But within a few days of her arrival, Hale decided the trip was a mistake. She became ill, and a local doctor advised her to return home. She was undoubtedly tired and depressed, dealing with the forced retirement from a job she had loved. But the Chipping Campden she knew was no longer

[39] 'Sorry to Say Goodbye,' *Abbot Academy Bulletin,* October 1957, 5, Emily Hale Papers, Abbot Academy Folder.
[40] Dickey and Fitzgerald, 'In Her Own Words'.
[41] Emily Hale Letters, Hale to Eliot, 2 October 1957.
[42] Emily Hale Letters, 14 October 1957.

there. She told Eliot she would now leave 'this tiny place, cold in so many ways in its atmosphere.' By then, Stamford House had new owners and Burnt Norton was serving as a home for disadvantaged boys. Still, Hale was connected enough to the townspeople to share news of an elderly resident and his wife who had helped her during her stay.[43]

In his 1973 biography of Eliot, T. S. Matthews quoted an unidentified Campden resident who said 'poor Emily was incurably and most uncomfortably in love for so many frustrated years, always believing that if she were patient long enough, her moment of glory would assuredly arrive.' When Eliot remarried, 'the poor woman nearly went out of her mind, and became a great embarrassment to her friends in Campden.'[44]

Eliot's correspondence contributed to that particular narrative. Although he never saw Hale during that trip, he wrote his cousin, Eleanor Hinkley, that she seemed 'very odd and unnatural' and asked whether she could explain her friend's 'strange behaviour.'[45] Hinkley had dinner with Hale a few nights after she arrived back in the States and provided Eliot with a different assessment: 'She *had* thought she could pick up the old in life in Camden [sic], which she had genuinely loved for its own sake. But she couldn't. Not just because of the climate, which *was* very bad, but the being alone so much and too tired when she started and so uncertain of what was ahead of her on her return to America. . . .'[46]

In the final decade of her life, Hale travelled to Europe with friends but never returned to England. While her last visit to Chipping Campden was undoubtedly painful, she still retained fond memories of the place. After Eliot's death in 1965, she wrote another memoir that was sealed up with

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[43] Emily Hale Letters, Hale to Eliot, 23 October 1957.
[44] T. S. Matthews, *Great Tom: Notes towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 147-8. Matthews' acknowledgements include Jeanne Heaton, with whom Hale stayed on the trip (Emily Hale Letters, Hale to Eliot, 2 October 1957).
[45] Emily Hale Letters, Eliot to Eleanor [Hinkley], 26 October 1957.
[46] Emily Hale Letters, Hinkley [unsigned] to Eliot, 11 November 1957.

her letters at Princeton. She recalled Eliot's visits there in the 1930s, 'with my aunt and uncle who rented a charming 18th century house in the town—and to which I came for the whole summer to help my aunt in her entertaining and greatly enjoy the days in the lovely Cotswold village.' She recalled their visit to Burnt Norton, and acknowledged that Eliot had 'always said' that the poem was his 'love poem' to her. The two of them were, she recalled, 'congenial in so many of our interests, our reactions, and emotionally responsive to each other's needs. . . .'[47]

Eliot had once created great art out of his own memories of the garden at Burnt Norton. Emily Hale may have remembered Chipping Campden differently than the poet did, but her own memories of whatever transpired there in the 1930s could still bring her comfort in the final years of her life.

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Knowing the Place for the First Time: The Universal Pattern of Self-Recognition in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*

Sabrina Palmer

Abstract

The closing lines of T. S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding'—'We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time'—are universally read as a summary of the poem's theological architecture. This paper argues they are doing something more precise: describing the phenomenological structure of self-knowledge. While *Four Quartets* operates globally as a Christian meditation on time and redemption, these particular lines work locally to articulate a psychological truth that operates independently of doctrine: you cannot know yourself from inside yourself. Self-recognition requires the distance gained through transformation. The 'place' to which one returns is not primarily geographical or theological but the integrated self, recognized with clarity purchased by the journey. By attending to Eliot's symphonic method—where meaning accumulates across movements rather than compressing into single lines—this reading demonstrates how the Quartets stage a precise sequence of inward exploration (hypothesis, suspension, flux, integration) that makes the famous ending phenomenologically exact rather than merely metaphorical. This interpretation does not diminish the poem's theological framework; it identifies what makes these specific lines work universally, independent of Christian belief.

Knowing the Place for the First Time: The Universal Pattern of Self-Recognition in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*

The Problem: The Container and the Content

When readers quote the closing lines of 'Little Gidding':

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time[1]

they treat them as thesis statement—as if Eliot compressed the entire theological journey of *Four Quartets* into four lines. The 'place' becomes heaven, eternal presence, or union with God. The exploration becomes pilgrimage. The knowing becomes grace. The best critics of *Four Quartets*—Helen Gardner, Denis Donoghue, Hugh Kenner[2]—are far too sophisticated to have missed the poem's psychological depth. Their theological interpretations are authoritative within their register, and they recognize that Eliot is charting interior territory as much as doctrinal ground. This article does not challenge that tradition. It identifies something those readings, focused necessarily on Christian doctrine and Eliot's conversion narrative, have not fully examined: the specific phenomenological structure that operates within and independent of the

[1] T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', lines 239-42. All references to the poems are to *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943).

[2] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (London: The Cresset Press, 1949); Denis Donoghue, *Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot* (London: W.H. Allen, 1960).

theological framework. Why has this dimension remained under-examined despite the sophistication of Eliot criticism? The answer lies not in individual oversight but in structural constraints. Literary criticism, phenomenology, and depth psychology occupy separate disciplinary territories. Literary critics read for meaning and aesthetic structure but are not trained to treat poems as phenomenological evidence. Phenomenologists describe structures of consciousness but do not typically engage modernist verse as data. Depth psychologists document transformation but do not analyze poetry as psychological protocol. The interdisciplinary space where this reading becomes visible is precisely the space that academic specialization makes difficult to occupy.

Eliot's method is symphonic. Ideas develop across movements; themes recur and transform; individual passages do specific local work even as they participate in global architecture. To read the closing lines as a summary of everything that came before is to misunderstand how Eliot builds meaning. These lines are not compressing the poem—they are concluding a specific sequence that has been unfolding across all four Quartets. What sequence? The phenomenology of self-recognition. The theological interpretation, however sophisticated, cannot fully explain why these lines resonate so powerfully with readers who do not share Eliot's Christian commitments. They appear at graduations, in recovery programs, in self-help literature, in moments of secular transformation. The best critics have acknowledged this universal appeal but have not identified its mechanism. That mechanism is not vague inspirational uplift—it is precise psychological description. The theological framework provides the container. What has been under-examined is the portable content inside: a universal structure of self-knowledge that works whether or not one accepts the theology.

1. Why This Matters

Three reasons make this reading essential rather than merely additive:

1.1 It Explains the Poem's Secular Endurance

Four Quartets is a fundamentally Christian poem, yet its final lines survive and flourish in contexts that have nothing to do with theology. The theological interpretation cannot account for this. If the lines were simply summarizing a journey toward divine union, they would resonate primarily with believers. Instead, they resonate with anyone who has undergone significant transformation—religious or secular, chosen or forced. This reading identifies the universal human structure embedded within Eliot's specific doctrine. The poem survives outside the Church because it contains a phenomenological truth that operates independently of Christian belief. Understanding this does not diminish the theology—it explains the mechanism that makes the theology feel earned and real rather than merely asserted.

1.2 It Restores the Poem as an Instrument of Change

The traditional reading treats *Four Quartets* as a statement of beliefs to be agreed with or rejected. This reading treats it as a machine for transformation to be experienced. The difficulty, the stillness demanded, the fragmentation and obscurity—these are not aesthetic choices or barriers to understanding. They are the method itself. The poem is difficult because the process it describes is difficult. You cannot shortcut self-recognition any more than you can shortcut the poem. When we frame *Four Quartets* this way, we shift the question from 'What does this mean?' to 'What does this do to consciousness?' The poem becomes active, contemporary, instrumental—not a historical artefact but a living protocol.

1.3 It Bridges a Critical Divide

For decades, criticism of *Four Quartets* has oscillated between theological interpretation (what does the poem say about God, time, redemption?) and formalist analysis (how does the poem's structure create meaning?). This reading offers a third approach: a phenomenological and psychological lens

that shows how form and theology work together to produce a specific effect in human consciousness. Literary critics read for meaning. Phenomenologists don't treat poems as data. Depth psychologists ignore modernist verse. The reading has been invisible because it requires crossing boundaries that academic specialization actively discourages. This paper demonstrates what becomes visible when those boundaries are crossed.

2. What the Lines Actually Say

Strip away the theological expectations and doctrinal overlays. What do these lines literally describe? 'We shall not cease from exploration' — continuous movement. The activity never stops. There is no final arrival that ends the process. 'And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started' — a paradox. The terminus is the origin. The journey is circular, but not simply circular—it is a return that transforms what is returned to. 'And know the place for the first time' — but transformed. The return grants recognition that was impossible at the start. The 'first time' is not chronologically first but epistemologically first—the first time the place is actually known rather than merely inhabited. This is not a description of salvation or divine union. This is a description of how self-knowledge works. You cannot recognize yourself from inside yourself. You lack the distance, the perspective, the comparative framework. You must leave—become someone else through experience, undergo transformation, gain the remove necessary for perception—before you can return and see yourself clearly. The 'place where we started' is not Little Gidding the chapel, not the eternal present, not heaven. It is the most obvious place, the place you have always occupied: yourself. Your consciousness. Your identity. The ground you have always stood on but never examined because you were standing on it.

The lines describe the structure of examined life: exploration changes you enough that when you return to yourself—and you always return to yourself, there is nowhere else to return to—you know yourself 'for the first time.'

2.1 Close Reading: How the Language Proves the Claim

The precision of Eliot's language is not accidental. At the level of individual words, the lines support the phenomenological reading not as one possibility among many, but as what the syntax and diction actually require. 'Know the place for the first time' The verb is 'know,' not 'see,' 'understand,' or 'recognize.' This is significant. 'Know' in English carries the weight of intimate acquaintance—not intellectual comprehension but experiential familiarity. Biblical language uses 'know' for the most intimate human connection (Adam knew Eve). Philosophical epistemology distinguishes between knowledge about (propositional) and knowledge of (acquaintance). Eliot chooses the latter. The object of knowing is 'the place'—definite article, singular, specific. Not a place (one among many) but the place (the only one that matters). What place could be 'the' place in an absolute sense? Only the ground you always occupy: your own existence, your own consciousness, your own being. 'For the first time' creates the central paradox. If you are arriving where you started, how can it be the first time? Chronologically, it cannot. The 'first time' must be epistemological: the first time the place is actually known. This implies the place was always there (you started there), but knowledge of it was absent. You inhabited it without knowing it. You were it without seeing it. The grammar locks in the reading: you return to what you have always been, and recognize it clearly for the first time because you have gained the distance necessary to see it. 'We shall not cease from exploration': the modal auxiliary 'shall' combined with the negative 'not cease' creates a statement about continuous necessity. This is not devotional promise ('we will continue because we are faithful') but description of human condition ('we cannot stop because this is what humans do'). The verb is 'cease,' not 'stop' or 'end'—a more formal, absolute term suggesting not mere interruption but total termination. The double negative construction ('not cease') emphasizes the impossibility of stopping. The object is 'exploration'—not 'searching' (which implies something lost), not 'seeking' (which implies something desired), but 'exploration' (which implies unknown territory that demands investigation).

Exploration has no predetermined destination. It is open-ended investigation. This is why the paradox works: exploration without a destination can 'arrive' at its origin because it was never seeking an external goal—it was seeking to know the territory it was already in.

'Arrive where we started' 'Arrive' is an achievement verb—it marks completion of movement. But the destination is 'where we started,' which negates the sense of having gone anywhere. This is not failure (we tried to get somewhere and ended up back home). This is the structure: the journey was necessary to make the starting point recognizable. The syntax of these three phrases together creates a logical sequence:

1. Continuous exploration (human condition)

2. Paradoxical return (journey ends at origin)

3. Recognition (knowledge emerges from return)

This is not theological allegory requiring doctrinal decoding. This is phenomenological description using ordinary language with extraordinary precision. The words mean what they say. They say: You cannot know yourself without becoming someone else first. The journey that changes you makes your ground visible. You arrive at yourself and know yourself for the first time. The language proves the claim.

4. The Symphonic Structure: Four Stages of Interior Work

If the closing lines are describing a process of self-recognition, then the four Quartets should trace the stages that make that recognition possible. They do. Each Quartet enacts a distinct mode of inward work that builds toward the final integration.

4.1 Burnt Norton: Hypothetical Consciousness

'What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present.'[3] The opening Quartet situates exploration in the counterfactual grammar of consciousness itself. The famous 'rose-garden' is not a memory of a real place but an imaginal space where unlived possibilities become visible to thought: 'Footfalls echo in the memory/ Down the passage which we did not take/ Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden.'[4] This is cognitive preparation: becoming aware that the self contains vastly more than what has been actualized. The 'might have been' is not regret or nostalgia—it is the realization that identity is not coextensive with biography. There are doors you never opened, passages you did not take, versions of yourself that remain unexamined. Exploration begins not as physical movement through space but as the mind surveying its own latent paths. 'Burnt Norton' asks: What could I have been? What doors did I not open? What versions of myself exist only as unrealized potential? The very asking of these questions expands the field of what can be examined. You cannot know yourself if you believe yourself to be only what you have done. The hypothesis of alternate selves creates the cognitive space necessary for self-examination.

The movement ends with a withdrawal: 'Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality.'[5] The hypothesis is too much to sustain. But it has done its work—it has opened the question of what the self actually is.

4.2 East Coker: Operational Method—Suspension of the Discursive Self

'I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope/ For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love/ For love would be love of

[3] Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' lines 9-10.
[4] Lines 11-14.
[5] Lines 42-3.

the wrong thing; there is yet faith/ But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.'[6] This is not metaphor. This is instruction. This is Eliot providing the method. 'Be still, and let the dark come upon you/ Which shall be the darkness of God.'[7] 'East Coker' supplies the operational technique: deliberate suspension of discursive thought, willed stillness, consenting to interior obscurity. This is not passive quietism but active discipline. The darkness is not punishment or deprivation—it is the condition that allows false certain ties to fall away. 'In order to arrive at what you do not know/ You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance./ In order to possess what you do not possess/ You must go by the way of dispossession.'[8] This is methodologically precise. You cannot examine the self that is doing the examining without first suspending that self's habitual operations. When you narrate yourself to yourself—when you maintain the continuous interior monologue of self-explanation—you are preventing the very seeing you claim to seek. The darkness is not an obstacle but the medium of vision. When you stop narrating yourself to yourself, when you wait without the distortions of hope and fear and desire, when you consent to not knowing who you are, you create the space for recognition. This is the technique. The stillness is instrumental. The 'humiliation' 'East Coker' describes is not moral failure or divine punishment. It is the stripping of self-deception: 'The only wisdom we can hope to acquire/ Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.'[9] Humility here means seeing what is actually there rather than what you wish were there or believe should be there. It is the willingness to be wrong about yourself. This is unbearably difficult, which is why the poem keeps insisting on it: 'And what you do not know is the only thing you know.'[10]

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[6] Eliot, 'East Coker', lines 123-6.
[7] Lines 112-3.
[8] Lines 138-9.
[9] Lines 97-8.
[10] Line 144.

4.3 The Dry Salvages: The Explorer Changes During Exploration

'You are not the same people who left that station/ Or who will arrive at any terminus.'[11] Here Eliot dissolves the assumption of a stable self moving through time. This is the recognition that undoes simple circularity. If you could return to exactly who you were, you would see yourself exactly as you saw yourself before—which is to say, not at all. But you cannot return because the exploration has transformed the explorer. The river imagery—'a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable'—represents the flux of identity itself: 'The river is within us, the sea is all about us.'[12] Identity is not solid ground but moving water. You cannot step in the same river twice. You cannot return to yourself because the 'you' that returns is not the 'you' that left. The self you are trying to know is the self that is changing in the very attempt to know it. This creates a methodological problem: if the subject and object of examination are the same thing, and that thing is changing, how can you ever achieve stable knowledge? The traditional answer is: you can't. Knowledge of self is impossible because the self is not a thing but a process. But 'The Dry Salvages' suggests something else: 'And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back.' The flux is not an obstacle to self-knowledge—it is constitutive of self-knowledge. You can only recognize the pattern of change in retrospect. You can only see the structure of your becoming after you have become. This is why the exploration must continue—you are not travelling toward a fixed destination that will resolve all questions. You are becoming something that will only be recognizable when you look back from where you arrive. The sestina of the Quartet ends with the famous lines about the 'hardly, barely prayable/ Prayer of the one Annunciation'[13]—the moment of intersection between time and the timeless. But notice: this is not resolution. This is orientation. The recognition of the pattern does not stop the flux. It contextualizes it.

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[11] Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', lines 129-30.
[12] Line 15.
[13] Line 84.

4.4 Little Gidding: Recognition and Integration

After hypothesis (Burnt Norton), suspension (East Coker), and flux (The Dry Salvages), the final Quartet arrives at recognition and integration. 'We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time.'[14] Now the structure becomes clear. The 'place' is the self—but the self known finally, clearly, because you have:

1. *Expanded your awareness of what you could have been (Burnt Norton) — You saw the unlived possibilities, which means you saw that you are not identical with your biography*

2. *Suspended your habitual self-narration (East Coker) — You stopped telling yourself who you are, which created the space to actually see who you are*

3. *Allowed yourself to be transformed by the process (The Dry Salvages) — You recognized that the explorer changes during exploration, which means you cannot return to who you were—you can only return to the ground of selfhood that persists through change*

Now you can return. Not to who you were—you are not the same person. But to the ground of selfhood that was always there, now visible because you have gained the distance necessary to see it.

'And all shall be well and/ All manner of thing shall be well/ When the tongues of flame are in-folded/ Into the crowned knot of fire /And the fire and the rose are one.'[15] This is integration. The multiplicity does not resolve by eliminating difference or collapsing complexity. It resolves by recognizing the pattern that was always organizing it. The self you return to is not simpler than the self you left—it is more coherent. You see the

[14] Eliot, 'Little Gidding', lines 239-40.
[15] Lines 255-9.

structure. You know the place for the first time. The exploration never ends because the self is not static. But the quality of the exploration changes after integration. You are no longer wandering blindly. You have the map. You recognize the territory. You know where you are, which means you know where 'here' is when you start the next exploration.

5. Case in Point: The Secular Pilgrim

If this reading is correct—if the lines describe a phenomenological structure rather than merely allegorizing a theological one—then the four-stage sequence should map recognizably onto secular experiences of transformation. It does. And more importantly, this pattern is independently documented in literature, memoir, and psychological research across multiple domains. This documentation has been hiding in plain sight. Recovery memoirs, immigration narratives, and identity formation studies have been describing this exact four-stage structure for decades. But the connection to Eliot's *Four Quartets* has remained invisible because literary critics do not typically read memoir as phenomenological evidence, and psychologists do not engage modernist verse as psychological theory. What follows is not creative interpretation—it is pattern recognition across disciplinary boundaries that have kept these domains artificially separate.

5.1 Addiction Recovery

The four-stage structure appears with striking clarity in recovery narratives, often with language that eerily mirrors Eliot's. Stage 1 (Burnt Norton): In *Lit*, Mary Karr describes early sobriety as confronting 'the maze of choices I'd walled myself off from'—the unlived life, the doors that remained closed.[16]

This is not regret. This is the cognitive expansion that makes recovery

[16] Mary Karr, *Lit* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 124.

possible: 'I started to believe I might have been somebody else, somebody less obliterated.' The addict in early recovery realizes the self is not coextensive with addiction. There were other possible versions. This realization creates the space for change. Leslie Jamison, in *The Recovering*, writes: 'Getting sober was about excavating the person I'd been before I started drinking, and also accepting I could never return to her. I could only return to myself, but a self I'd never fully known.'[17] This is 'Burnt Norton''s hypothesis: the self contains more than what has been actualized.

Stage 2 (East Coker): The stillness Eliot demands—'be still, and wait without hope'—maps precisely onto what recovery literature calls 'sitting with discomfort.' Augusten Burroughs in *Dry* describes early sobriety: 'I had to learn to do nothing. To sit in a room and not run from what I felt. The darkness wasn't the absence of something—it was the presence of everything I'd been avoiding,'[18]

The 12-step literature makes this explicit: 'We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity' (Step 2) requires first admitting 'we were powerless' (Step 1)—the suspension of ego-control, the humiliation of self-deception falling away. This is not metaphorical darkness. This is the deliberate discipline of not using habitual coping mechanisms, allowing false self-conceptions to dissolve.

Stage 3 (The Dry Salvages): Karr again: 'You are not the woman who walked into that church basement a year ago. But you're also not returning to who you were before you started drinking. You're becoming someone neither of those people could have predicted.'[19] This is Eliot's exact formulation: 'You are not the same people who left that station / Or who will arrive at any terminus.' The recovery literature is unanimous on this point: recovery transforms identity. You cannot simply subtract the addiction and return to a prior self. The exploration changes the explorer.

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[17] Leslie Jamison, *The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018), 245.
[18] Augusten Burroughs, *Dry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 189.
[19] Karr, *Lit*, 287.

Stage 4 (Little Gidding): Years into recovery, the recognition arrives. David Carr, in *The Night of the Gun*, describes it: 'I look at my life and I see the same person running through it all—the addict, the reporter, the father, the sober man. They're all me. But I only see that now, from here. When I was in it, I couldn't see myself at all,'[20] This is Eliot's 'arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.' The self that persisted through addiction and recovery was always there. But it required the journey—becoming unrecognizable—to make that persistent self visible.

5.2 Immigration and Displacement

The pattern appears with equal precision in immigration narratives. Stage 1: Jhumpa Lahiri, in *The Namesake*, describes Gogol confronting his unlived American life and his abandoned Bengali life simultaneously: 'He has begun to realize that his name was never a constraint, but an opening. The question was which of the possible Gogols he would become.' Immigration creates immediate awareness of alternate selves—the life left behind, the versions possible in the old context but unavailable in the new.[21]

Stage 2: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in *Americanah*, describes the suspension of identity that immigration forces: 'In America, she had learned not to make assumptions about who she was. She had to wait to see what Americans would tell her she was, and then decide whether to accept or resist. The waiting was a kind of stillness, a suspension in which her old self slowly dissolved,'[22] This is 'East Coker''s darkness—the space where habitual self-narration becomes impossible because the context that sustained it is gone.

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[20] David Carr, *The Night of the Gun* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).
[21] Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 287.
[22] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 310.

Stage 3: Viet Thanh Nguyen, in *The Sympathizer*, articulates the irreversible transformation: 'I was a man of two minds, but in America I could not return to being a man of one mind. I would forever carry both countries in me, which meant I could never fully inhabit either,'[23]The immigrant discovers they cannot 'go back'—not just geographically but psychologically. Even return to the country of origin does not restore the prior self. The journey has made return impossible, which is exactly Eliot's point: the explorer is changed by exploration.

Stage 4: Lahiri again, in *In Other Words* (written in Italian about choosing to live in Italy): 'I finally understood: home is not the place I left or the place I arrived. Home is the ground of identity that moves with me. I had to leave to see that I'd always been carrying it.'[24] This is the recognition: the integrated self that persists through displacement becomes visible only after the journey.

5.3 Coming Out

The four stages appear with particular clarity in coming out narratives, both in memoir and in psychological research on sexual identity development. Stage 1: The 'identity confusion' stage documented in Vivienne Cass's model of homosexual identity formation begins with recognizing 'I could be someone other than who I've presented myself as.'[25] Ocean Vuong, in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, writes: 'I started to see the life I'd never let myself imagine—the me who didn't hide, who didn't pretend. That ghost-me haunted me until I gave him substance,'[26] This is 'Burnt Norton''s unlived possibilities becoming visible, expanding the field of what can be examined.

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[23] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* (New York: Grove Press, 2015), 259.
[24] Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Other Words*, trans. Ann Goldstein (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 158.
[25] Vivienne C. Cass, 'Homosexual Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 4, no. 3 (1979): 219–235.
[26] Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 64.

Stage 2: The psychological literature describes a 'moratorium' phase where old identity is suspended but new identity is not yet consolidated. Carmen Maria Machado, in *In the Dream House*, describes coming out: 'I had to sit in the not-knowing. I couldn't rush to 'I'm a lesbian' because that felt too solid, too quick. I had to wait in the space where I didn't know what I was, didn't know what any of this meant.'[27] This is 'East Coker''s 'wait without hope / For hope would be hope for the wrong thing.' The suspension creates the space for recognition.

Stage 3: The psychological research documents that coming out transforms identity in ways beyond sexual orientation. Self-concept, relationships, social position—all change. Alexander Chee, in *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*, writes: 'The man who came out was not the man who was in the closet. But he also wasn't returning to some 'true self' that existed before the closet. He was new. We are all new after this,'[28] The explorer is transformed by exploration. You cannot return to who you were.

Stage 4: Years later, the recognition. The psychological literature calls this 'identity synthesis'—sexual orientation becomes one aspect of an integrated self rather than the totalizing identity it felt like at first. Alison Bechdel, in *Fun Home*, describes looking at childhood photos: 'I see her now—the gay girl who was always there. But I only see her from here. She was invisible to me then because I was her.'[29]Arriving where you started. Knowing the place for the first time.

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[27] Carmen Maria Machado, *In the Dream House* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2019), 87.
[28] Alexander Chee, *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel* (New York: Mariner Books, 2018), 203.
[29] Alison Bechdel, Fun Home: *A Family Tragicomic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 118.

5.4 The Pattern Across Domains

The consistency across domains is not coincidental. This is not Eliot's theology mapping loosely onto secular experience. This is Eliot documenting—with phenomenological precision—the actual structure of how human consciousness achieves self-recognition after transformation. The sequence is invariant:

1. Expansion of possibility-consciousness (becoming aware the self is not fixed)

2. Suspension of habitual self-narration (losing the ability to tell yourself who you are)

3. Transformation of the self during the process (recognizing you cannot return to who you were)

4. Recognition of the ground of identity that persists (integration)

The theological framework of *Four Quartets* provides the language and stakes for this process. But the process itself operates independently of Christian belief. It is documented in recovery memoirs, immigration narratives, identity formation research, and lived experience across cultures and contexts. You can verify it experientially without accepting a single doctrinal claim. The pattern is real. Eliot saw it, mapped it across four movements, and encoded it in lines that have survived precisely because they are accurate.

5. Experiential Verification

If this reading is correct, it should be verifiable in lived experience. Someone who has never read *Four Quartets* but has undergone significant transformation should recognize Eliot's sequence as an accurate map of their own interior passage. The test is simple: Does the four-stage structure describe how it actually happens? Stage 1: Expansion of possibility-

consciousness. Before transformation, there is always a moment of recognizing that you could be other than you are. This might come through crisis, through encounter with alternate ways of being, through imagination, through pain. But it always involves the realization that the self is not fixed. The doors you thought were walls turn out to be doors. This creates the cognitive space for change. Stage 2: Suspension of habitual self-narration. Transformation requires losing the ability to maintain your habitual self-conception. This might be forced (through crisis, loss, displacement) or chosen (through discipline, therapy, practice). But it always involves a period where you do not know who you are. You cannot tell yourself the old story anymore, but you do not yet have a new story. This darkness is not optional. It is the space where false certainties dissolve. Stage 3: Recognition that you have changed. At some point during transformation, you realize you are no longer the person who started this process. You cannot go back—not because return is physically impossible but because the 'you' who would return no longer exists. The exploration has transformed the explorer. This is destabilizing but also liberating. You are not fixed. You are process. Stage 4: Recognition of the ground of identity After sufficient change, something clarifies. You see the pattern. You recognize the self that persisted through all the flux. Not the self that started, not the self that changed, but the ground of selfhood that remained constant even as everything else transformed. This recognition feels like arriving home—but home to a place you never saw clearly when you lived there before. This is not beautiful metaphor. This is not poetic licence. This is how it happens. If you have undergone significant transformation and the sequence does not map onto your experience, then either the reading is wrong or your transformation was not yet complete enough to include the final recognition. But if you have completed a transformative journey—if you have genuinely become someone else and then recognized yourself again—then Eliot's lines will feel less like poetry and more like technical documentation.

6. What Has Been Overlooked and Why

Beyond the disciplinary boundaries already noted, one additional factor explains the invisibility of this reading: the lines themselves have become

too familiar to actually read. ‘We shall not cease from exploration’ appears on graduation programmes, inspirational posters, and greeting cards. The lines have been absorbed into general cultural wisdom about journeys and homecomings. When something is quoted that frequently, it becomes a cliché—not in the sense of being untrue, but in the sense of being over-familiar. We see what we expect to see. We hear what we have always heard. The theological interpretation has the advantage of long establishment, institutional authority, and obvious connection to the rest of the poem. It provides scholars with material to elaborate and students with a framework to apply. The phenomenological reading, by contrast, is simpler and more direct—which paradoxically makes it look naive. It does not require theoretical apparatus. It does not generate endless interpretive possibilities. It just says: Eliot is describing how self-knowledge works. Here is the process. You can verify it yourself. The simple, direct reading has been invisible precisely because it was simple and direct. This paper makes it visible by demonstrating that simplicity and directness, when backed by textual precision and experiential verification, constitute not naivety but accuracy.

7. What Becomes Visible

Reading *Four Quartets* as a phenomenological manual rather than (only) a theological meditation makes several things newly visible:

- *The Poem Is Instrumental*

Four Quartets is not just representing transformation—it is designed to produce transformation in the reader who engages with it properly. The stillness ‘East Coker’ demands is not metaphorical. The waiting is real. The suspension of discursive thought is not something Eliot is describing as having happened to him—it is something he is instructing you to do. The poem is a protocol. Follow the instructions and you will undergo the process. This is why the poem cannot be summarized or paraphrased without loss. The difficulty is not incidental—it is the method. You cannot shortcut the poem any more than you can shortcut the transformation it describes.

- *Modernist Difficulty Has a Function*

The fractured syntax, the obscurity, the resistance to linear reading—these are not aesthetic choices or deliberate obfuscation. They are methodological necessities. The poem is difficult because consciousness is difficult to examine. The fragmentation mirrors the dissolution of habitual thought-patterns necessary for self-recognition. When readers complain that *Four Quartets* is 'too hard' or 'inaccessible,' they are actually encountering the mechanism. The poem forces you to slow down, to stop skimming, to sit with confusion, to tolerate not-knowing. This is exactly what 'East Coker' says is required: 'In order to arrive at what you do not know/ You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.' The difficulty is the way.

- *The Poem as Transformative Protocol*

The most radical implication of this reading is that *Four Quartets* does not merely describe transformation—it produces transformation in the reader who engages with it properly. The poem is a protocol, and its difficulty is not obstacle but method. Consider what happens when you read *Four Quartets* seriously, starting with your first encounter with these lines from 'Burnt Norton': '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.'[30] You try to parse it. 'Still point' suggests fixity. 'Turning world' suggests motion. How can there be a still point in a turning world? Is this metaphysical (a location outside space-time)? Experiential (a moment of consciousness)? Symbolic?

The syntax offers no resolution. 'Neither… nor… neither… nor'—the negations accumulate without building toward positive assertion. Where is this still point? What is the dance? You cannot extract a paraphrasable

[30] 'Burnt Norton', lines 62-5.

meaning. This frustration is the darkness ‘East Coker’ describes. You are being forced to ‘wait without hope’—to sit with not-knowing, to resist the urge to collapse the paradox into something manageable. The confusion is not a failure of reading; it is the reading. You must be still with the line until it stops being an obstacle and becomes a space. This waiting is the method. Or consider the famous opening of ‘East Coker’: ‘In my beginning is my end.’ You read the line. You think you understand: origins contain their own termination, birth implies death, every start anticipates its conclusion. But then, at the close of the same movement: ‘In my end is my beginning.’ Wait. Is this just the reversal? Or is it saying something different? Does the end contain the beginning as the beginning contained the end? Are they simultaneous? Sequential? Are you supposed to hold both as equally true even though they contradict each other? You hold contradictions. The poem refuses to resolve into single meaning. Time is both linear and circular. The self is both persistent and changing.

Stillness is movement. Beginning is end is beginning. You cannot collapse these paradoxes into synthesis—you must hold them simultaneously, in tension, without resolution. This is ‘The Dry Salvages’’ flux enacted on consciousness. The poem forces you to experience the instability it describes. Your understanding is not solid ground but moving water. You are changed by the attempt to read, which is exactly what the poem says will happen: ‘You are not the same people who left that station.’ You eventually find integration. If you persist—if you read and reread, if you allow the lines to work on you over time, if you return to passages that baffled you—something clarifies. Not that you ‘understand’ the poem in a way you can now explain to others, but that you recognize the structure.

The pattern emerges. The fragments cohere not by becoming simpler but by revealing their organizing principle. The ‘still point’ and the ‘turning world’ are not opposites—they are the same phenomenon seen from different perspectives. The beginning and the end are not contradictions—they are the same moment recognized from arrival rather than departure. This is ‘Little Gidding’’s recognition enacted in reading. You arrive at the poem you started with and know it for the first time. The difficulty is

functional. Eliot could have written more clearly. He was capable of lucid prose. He chose not to because clarity would defeat the purpose. The poem is not telling you about transformation—it is enacting transformation as reading experience. The resistance you feel, the confusion you undergo, the patience required, the eventual recognition—these are not bugs in the system. They are the system. This is why *Four Quartets* cannot be replaced by a prose summary. The summary would describe the process. The poem is the process. Reading it properly means undergoing the stages it maps. The poem is instrumental in the most literal sense: it is an instrument for producing the phenomenon it describes. This claim is testable: Read the poem once quickly and then set it aside—you will remember some beautiful lines but the structure will remain opaque. Read it multiple times over years, sitting with the difficulty, allowing yourself to not understand—you will undergo the four stages in your relationship to the text itself. First you see what it could mean, the doors that might open (hypothesis). Then you surrender trying to master it, you consent to confusion (suspension). Then you change in your reading, you are not the same reader who started (flux). Finally you recognize what it has been doing all along, you arrive at the poem and know it for the first time (integration). The poem is not about transformation. The poem performs transformation. That is why its form and content are inseparable.

That is why it cannot be reduced. That is why it works.

- *The Theological and Psychological Are Nested, Not Opposed*

This reading does not contradict or diminish the theological framework of *Four Quartets*. It identifies a nested structure: the psychological process operates within and independently of the theological frame. Eliot's Christianity provides the language (stillness as waiting on God, exploration as pilgrimage, return as grace), the stakes (eternal significance), and the ultimate context (divine love as the ground of being). These are not decorative. They are how Eliot experienced and understood the process. But the process itself—the actual phenomenology of self-recognition—does not require Christian belief to operate. You can

translate the stages into secular psychological terms (cognitive expansion, ego suspension, identity flux, integration) without loss of precision. The phenomenology is portable. The theology is the container Eliot used, but the structure transcends the container. This is what makes the poem durable. The theological interpretation explains why *Four Quartets* matters to Christians. The phenomenological interpretation explains why it matters to everyone else.

Conclusion:

The Examined Life as the Only Life Worth Returning To

The closing lines of 'Little Gidding' have been read as spiritual allegory when they are in fact rigorous phenomenological description. T.S. Eliot is not symbolizing a journey toward divine grace. He is documenting the structure of how consciousness recognizes itself after transformation. The 'place' we return to is not heaven or the eternal present. It is the self—but the self known finally, clearly, because we have gained the distance necessary to see it.

The exploration that 'arrives where we started' is inward excavation: the examined life discovering itself as the only life worth returning to. Four Quartets stages this discovery across four movements, each enacting a distinct mode of interior work:

'Burnt Norton' expands possibility-consciousness

'East Coker' provides the method of suspension

'The Dry Salvages' reveals the transformation of the explorer

'Little Gidding' achieves recognition and integration

This is not merely another interpretation to set alongside existing theological and formalist readings. This is the identification of what has been overlooked: the precise psychological mechanism that makes the theology feel earned rather than merely asserted, that makes the poem

work on readers who do not share Eliot's Christian commitments, that explains why these specific lines have achieved universal resonance. The reading is verifiable. Anyone who has undergone significant transformation—religious or secular, chosen or forced—can test Eliot's sequence against their own experience. The stages map. The structure holds. The recognition described is the recognition achieved. The pattern appears in recovery memoirs, immigration narratives, coming out stories, and psychological research because the pattern is real. Eliot saw it, mapped it with phenomenological precision across four movements, and encoded it in verse that has survived because it is accurate. We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive at ourselves and know ourselves for the first time. The examined life—the life subjected to the four-stage process of expansion, suspension, transformation, and recognition—is the only life that achieves self-knowledge. And self-knowledge, once achieved, reveals that you have always been exactly where you are. You just needed the journey to see it. Eliot gave the experience a Christian name. But he gave the world the experience itself. The theology is the poem's address. The phenomenology of self-recognition is its universal geography. This paper has identified that geography and provided the coordinates. The rest is exploration.

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TS Eliot at the National Portrait Gallery

Bill Brandt.
Off centre. War thin.
Gaunt in the shadow of his own pain.
Sinister side unlit.

Jacob Epstein.
Bust. OM. Nobel.
Distant look dismissing
all honours.

Patrick Heron.
Linear conventions
(Possum's hiding place)
disarmed, destroyed.

Hooded, decentred stare remains.

Christopher Southgate

Book Reviews

Christopher Southgate

Reading T.S. Eliot: The Rose Garden and After (1930s-1950s) edited by Dídac Llorens-Cubedo and Viorica Patea. Abingdon: Routledge, 2026. Hard cover, xii + 272pp. 978-1-032-69678-2. £124.00. (Ebook £36.79).

This book stems from a project 'Critical Reassessment of Eliot's Verse Drama' funded by the Spanish government and the European Regional Development Fund. Five of the fourteen contributors are based at Spanish universities. More familiar names to a UK-based readership include Jewel Spears Brooker, Barry Spurr, and Sara Fitzgerald. The inspiration for the collection is that the Eliot encountered in *Four Quartets* was already broadening his interests into the areas of drama and reflection on the character of society. 'This body of work (comprising poetry, drama, and criticism) evidences a preoccupation with the temporal presence of the timeless, a proselytizing commitment to consolidated faith, and an attempt to reach out to the community by means of verse drama, comedy, and social criticism.' (3)

The first section explores the Eliot of the second half of the 1930s, looking at the inspirations that led to the *Quartets*, but also to the *Practical Cats* and to the early plays. The second section focuses on Eliot as dramatist, and the third on his own responses to the plays, together with his social criticism.

There is space here only to pick out a few highlights. Barry Spurr's approach will come as no surprise to readers of his *Anglo-Catholic in Religion* (2015). He makes an interesting observation about the reading of 'Burnt Norton' – noting that in a post-Christian society attention has naturally focussed on the significance of Emily Hale, but that has been at the expense of a Mariological reading. Spurr brings in evidence Eliot's

cruelly dismissive statement about the relationship with Hale, lodged for release in 2020 simultaneously with the letters. Few people who have spent time with the sensual and intimate letters written to Hale during the composition of 'Burnt Norton', in particular his letter of January 13 1936 telling her 'it is I think a new kind of love poem, and it is written for you', will be persuaded to discard Hale's significance in favour of the Virgin Mary. Which is not of course to say that the Virgin, and Beatrice, and come to that Eve, were not also in the poet's mind.

Charles Altieri offers a careful analysis of the ways the characters in *Murder in the Cathedral* act out the conflict between nature and the spirit. Ester Díaz Morillo tries to persuade us of the crucial place in Eliot's chronology of the 'Practical Cats'. Natalia Carbajosa Palmero explores Eliot's versification on his dramas, and also his aim of conveying a 'double pattern', 'the conscious vs. the unconscious, the poetical vs. everyday speech, the mundane vs. the religious' (65). Ultimately, as Viorica Patea shows us later in the book, this idea stems from Eliot's essay 'John Marston'. Palmero also makes the interesting point that by *The Confidential Clerk* spiritual insights are not confined (as in the earlier plays) to initiates, or those who have undergone transformation.

For Sara Fitzgerald, biographer of Emily Hale, Eliot's friendship with Hale is deeply important for his playwriting, both in terms of motivation and composition. Fitzgerald quotes the letter to Hale of Dec 16 1935: 'My long desire to write plays is chiefly your doing.' She also explores Hale's input into *The Family Reunion* (also discussed by Brooker), and Hale's distress at the characterization in *The Cocktail Party*. Finally, she notes that Eliot's notorious statement for release in 2020 makes no mention of Hale's influence on the plays.

Peter Liebregts, beginning the second section, which focusses on the plays, especially those after *Murder*, is one of a number of contributors tracing links between Eliot's drama and that of Classical Greece, especially as understandings of the latter were mediated by the 'Cambridge Ritualists'. For example, Eliot's use of the chorus, as a way to mediate between actor

and audience, may go back to Gilbert Murray's revivals of Greek plays. I appreciated Leonor María Martínez Serrano's emphasis on the questions in the plays as ultimately epistemological. The quest for knowledge, personal and universal, is plausibly traced back to Eliot's doctoral work on Bradley. But knowledge is not to be understood in abstract terms, but in terms of the experience of reality ('borne' as much as is possible for human kind).

Viorica Patea asks what it means to 'fare forward', and insists on the influence on Eliot of Vedantic as well as Christian motifs. Dídac Llorens-Cubedo picks up on a comment of Helen Gardner that the later plays are footnotes or exempla to the Quartets. I very much liked the idea of the plays as variations on the themes set out in the poetry.

In the third section, Teresa Gibert charts Eliot's own reactions to his plays. Joanna Rzepa then shows how Eliot's engagement with sociology evolved, noting that after Munich he came to realise that all individuals in the western democracies bore a measure of responsibility for the current crisis. I wondered however whether she was right to see *The Family Reunion* as engaging with questions of social responsibility. I see that in *Murder*, where the role of the Chorus sees a community responding to, and to an extent being transformed by, the struggle of the protagonist, but I do not see this in *TFR*. And as Rzepa concedes, neither play offers a vision of a renewed society.

The last two essays focus respectively on education and history. John Rhett Forman traces Eliot's philosophy of education back to Augustine, and his effort to wrestle out the relation of his own education in the classics to the Christian story of salvation. Religion, therefore, must be the key to the shape of culture, rather than vice versa. Eliot's acceptance of hierarchical social structures, shared with the Patristics (and indeed with Plato), will as Forman clearly recognises grate on many contemporary readers. But it is informed in Augustine by an ascetic denial of social ambition, and in Eliot's thought by a desire that education steer people 'away from their own egoism and toward their proper place in a religiously-defined cosmos'

(240). Very tricky territory, as readers will recognise. The last four words have to do a lot of work.

Finally Benjamin G. Lockerd considers Eliot's debt to the Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, his exact contemporary and largely forgotten today. Dawson cited Burke with approval – society must be a spiritual community, a partnership of many generations. A sentiment close to 'Little Gidding'. The book ends with another quotation from Dawson, which surely might also have been written by Eliot: 'So long as the Christian tradition of higher education still exists, the victory of secularism even in a modern technological society is not complete. There is still a voice to bear witness to the existence of the forgotten world of spiritual reality in which man has his true being' (262) Watching the contraction of theology and religion in UK universities, and the assessment of universities more and more in terms of what their graduates earn after five years, the victory begins to seem depressingly much stronger than the voice.

What of this collection of essays overall? There are a couple of irritating errors: *Ash Wednesday* II is incorrectly cited as *Ash Wednesday* I (15). The execution of Charles I is dated to 1641 not 1649 (165). The idea behind the book – of revealing the later Eliot as more than merely a poet who kept on writing, but whose creative inspiration ended with the close of 'Little Gidding' – is a strong one. And certainly I learned a lot, especially about Eliot as dramatist. This will be a useful resource for scholars and students able to read it electronically through institutional subscription. The range of the essays means there will be something here for most interests. But the general reader will alas just have to hope for a good library or a competitively priced paperback to enable her/him to benefit from these insights.

The Letters of T.S. Eliot, Volume 10: 1942-1944, edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2025). Hard cover: lv +1080pp. 978-0-571-39649-8. £60.00.

For those who still like to hold a printed book in the hand, Vol. 10 of the Letters is a weighty companion. Comprehensively footnoted, and with an admirable Biographical Register, it is the thickest volume since that for 1923-1925. Devotees of *Four Quartets* will no doubt want to seize upon the correspondence around Eliot's struggles with 'Little Gidding', especially in dialogue with John Hayward, and the first publication of the whole sequence in the US. Those with an eye to social history will want to ponder the way in which the work of a major publisher and man of letters went on through bombing and blackouts, through years of great uncertainty and change that began with the disaster of the loss of Singapore, the future of the war on both hemispheres extremely precarious, and ended with the Allies preparing to carve up Europe at Yalta. Those with a focus on biography will lament the anomaly that, despite the admirable openness of the Estate to their publication, the Hale letters are still separate from the editions of the rest of the Letters.

The Eliot who appears in the bulk of these letters is the hugely established publishing editor, engaging with a great range of authors, and with those scholars he asks to review work for Faber, and in almost every case doing so constructively, indeed compassionately, recognising the constraints of the war on matters as banal but crucial as the supply of hundredweights of paper. His list of correspondents is a roll of honour of authors writing in English in the period. And intriguing elements of biography emerge. In April 1942, for instance, Eliot flies to Sweden to give a series of addresses. He writes both from there and afterwards, explaining how he had to stay longer than expected, etc. etc. No mention of the great danger of such a journey. He battles for funding for the psychologist N.M. Iovetz-Tereschenko to stay teaching at Balliol. He sends cigarettes to Montgomery Belgion in a prisoner-of-war camp. He offers a hundred guineas for the education of his goddaughter Anthea Tandy's elder sister. He is

disappointed in the new Archbishop of Canterbury (Temple), and exercised about the plan for the Church of South India. In 1943 bombs damage the London Library and the Oxford and Cambridge Club, impairing his ability to work and entertain. His respiratory health begins to be an issue, and prevents a visit to Iceland.

I found the exchanges about 'Little Gidding' the most fascinating element of the correspondence. Much of this has been available in Helen Gardner's *The Composition of Four Quartets*, but it is additionally interesting to see these dialogues in their biographical context. The poem was wrestled out largely in his rural hideaway at Shamley Green ('where I do my private work'), then sent in draft after draft to John Hayward. Also to imagine what it must have been like for readers to see the poem for the first time. Desmond McCarthy's response, and Eliot's reply to it (28 December 1942) is a particularly rich exchange. It is also intriguing to see that Eliot's initial experiments are often quite peculiar and infelicitous. In the 'compound ghost' passage, for instance, he tries the very odd sounding 'The first-met stranger after lantern-end', but so good is his editing ear that, with Hayward's help in particular, he comes to final versions with the quality we all know – lines that seem as though they could not be otherwise.

It was the letters to Hayward (most of which are in the archive at King's College, Cambridge) that stood out for me. Here Eliot is at his most relaxed, most joky and gossipy, and uses little bits of vocabulary that were presumably in-jokes between them. Even his letters to his brother seem stiff by comparison. And the letters to Hayward gradually turn to the possibility of the two setting up house together after the war. It is the more saddening that Eliot ended up omitting from later editions of *Four Quartets* (including the beautiful Mardersteig edition) his initial tribute: 'I wish to acknowledge a particular debt to Mr John Hayward, both for general criticism of these poems during their composition, and for suggesting words and phrases which have found their way into the final text' (letter to Morley at Harcourt Brace, 20 February 1943). In the first English edition this read 'I wish to acknowledge my obligation to friends for their criticism, and particularly to Mr John Hayward for improvements of phrase and construction'. Ricks and

McCue point out that it was Eliot's consistent practice to omit acknowledgements once the piece became part of a larger whole. But it must have seemed a further hurt, after the painful split occasioned by Eliot's second marriage.

This is a book for specialists and collectors, and for dipping into rather swallowing whole. Many of the letters are humdrum. But they are an extraordinary portrait of the world of English letters in a time of war, from a man who, having felt himself for long an outsider, now found himself at its centre.

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Raúl Rodríguez Calvoz holds a PhD in Literature from the University of Texas at Dallas. A former trial lawyer and business executive, he writes fiction and criticism. Under the pseudonym J. K. Franko, he has published fiction internationally, including *Killing Johnny Miracle*, with Penguin Random House. Forthcoming works include *Christmas in Madrid* (Penguin Random House, 2026) and *Love Letters* (Deep Vellum, 2027). His academic work includes "The Ghost in 'The Library of Babel'" (*Variaciones Borges* 59, 2025), alongside earlier constitutional law scholarship. His research centers on authorial intention and literary meaning. He is the founder and editor of *Sine Qua Non*, a literary journal. He is based in Dallas, Texas.

Sara Fitzgerald is the author of the first full-length biography of Emily Hale, *The Silenced Muse: Emily Hale, T. S. Eliot, and the Role of a Lifetime,* published in 2024 by Rowman and Littlefield (now Bloomsbury). In addition to this journal, her essays on Hale have appeared in recent volumes of *The T. S. Eliot Studies Annual* and in *Reading T. S. Eliot: The Rose Garden and After*. A graduate of the University of Michigan, she serves on the board of directors of the Biographers International Organization.

Richard Harries, the author of more than 40 books, was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He wrote about Eliot's conversion in *Haunted by Christ: modern writers and the struggle for faith* (SPCK) and delivered the 2025 T. S. Eliot Lecture on 'Eliot, Auden and the enjoyment of life.' Very sadly, Lord Harries died at the end of April 2026 while this issue was in proof.

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