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b. T.S. Eliot

The most significant publications in Eliot studies during 2014 were the first two volumes of his *Complete Prose* under the general editorship of Ronald Schuchard. Drawing heavily upon the work of Donald Gallup they bring together a great number of essays and reviews that Eliot did not republish during his lifetime, adding a wealth of unsigned or unacknowledged items that have been discovered since Gallup's bibliography was published in the 1950s. The first volume, covering the years 1905 to 1918 also reproduces transcriptions of previously unpublished documents, from stories written as a schoolboy to the essays on philosophy Eliot wrote during his studies at Harvard and Oxford. The second volume, covering 1919 to 1926, incorporates the Clarke lectures previously published by Schuchard as *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* [1993].

Readers will pick their own paths through the wealth of material here, all of which is accompanied by extensive and learned annotations as well as lucid and thoughtful introductions to each phase of Eliot's career. The format of these volumes encourages a historically sensitive approach, carefully reproducing texts in the chronological sequence of their composition. Accordingly, in the first volume, Eliot's doctoral thesis on F.H. Bradley is now reproduced alongside his other early student writings, although Eliot didn't publish it until 1964. Read in sequence, lines of development spring out: Eliot's career as a critic began with his philosophical studies and early reviews for journals such as *The Monist* or the *International Journal of Ethics*; his famous theory of 'tradition' first emerges from a defence of his friend Ezra Pound's historical erudition; diagnosing a 'dissociation of sensibility' in 1921, Eliot suggested that the rot 'set in' during the seventeenth century, by 1926, nearly every poet after Dante had become suspicious; and so on.

It is unfortunate that readers will not be able to get their hands upon physical copies of these volumes until the series as a whole is complete. Access is currently limited to an online subscription service. The editors hope to publish further ancillary material such as Eliot's notes online. But it is notable that little is done otherwise to take advantage of the edition's current digital format. Still, this is a major scholarly achievement to which all scholars of Eliot's work and intellectual historians of the twentieth century will be indebted.

Vincent Sherry's chapter on Eliot in *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (pp.234-79) is an important contribution to ongoing work on the connections between Eliot and the 1890s. In contrast to the emphasis upon direct lines of influence adopted by Ron Schuchard in *Eliot's Dark Angel* [1999], Sherry conceives of Decadence as a 'literary

sensibility' (p. 40) and a 'temporal imaginary' (p. 38), characterised in part by an intimation of crisis: 'this is the age of the secondary and the circumstance of the posthumous' (p. 279). Although this vocabulary may be Lacanian, Sherry's thesis has a historical basis since he roots this intimation of crisis within anxieties about the imminent collapse of 'Britain's fading colonial domain' (p. 247). His approach is also grounded in close reading: Sherry's account of Eliot's early poetry, for example, argues that his apprehension of time registers at an intimate level within their rhythms. Similarly, his detailed scrutiny of the composition of *The Waste Land* discovers 'textual memories and imaginative recesses' (p. 277) within its drafts. *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* is likely to be an influential intervention in Eliot studies.

Martin Lockerd also explores Eliot's links to the *fin-de-siècle* in "'A Satirist of Vices and Follies": Beardsley, Eliot and Images of Decadent Catholicism' (*JML* 37:iv[2014] 143-65), which explores the influence of Aubrey Beardsley's poems and line drawings upon Eliot's poetry. Lockerd examines the visual and verbal connections Aubrey establishes between Catholicism and the hints of violence and excess in his work, then traces comparable elements within poems such as 'The Love Song of St Saint Sebastian' and 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Interestingly, although Lockerd also cites Eliot's critical writings from the 1920s on the appeal of damnation in Baudelaire, he doesn't reflect upon the way that these poetic texts precede Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism by several years.

Amongst the essays in Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman's collection, *Modernism and Autobiography*, Max Saunders' 'T.S. Eliot's Impersonal Correspondence' (pp. 157-69) examines the value of the ongoing and extensive edition of Eliot's letters for our understanding of 'his creative and critical processes' (p. 158). This thoughtful essay maps Eliot's developing theory of poetic impersonality against the demand made upon his nerves by the need to find an appropriate tone and voice in his personal and professional correspondence. Under Saunders' scrutiny, Eliot's letters become simultaneously a figure for and a source of the kind of pained material that he sought to transform into poetry.

Roxana Bîrsanu's *The Waste Land as a Place of Intercultural Exchanges: A Translation Perspective* moves between an account of Eliot's reception in Romania and a history of *The Waste Land* as 'as a work of translation' (p. 178). This approach is strongly influenced by recent developments within translation studies, which emphasise the historical and ideological character of translation. Accordingly, Bîrsanu provides information about those Romanian translators who have tackled Eliot work from 1933 to 2009, providing social and historical background to his reception there. Her account of *The Waste Land*

determinedly locates Eliot's poem in a familiar historical narrative about its composition and publication. An interesting chapter describes 'the Modernist approach to translation' (p. 92), concentrating on Eliot's collaboration with St John Perse's *Anabase*; similarly, her account of *The Waste Land* as translation thoughtfully extends this concept beyond Eliot's allusions to texts in other languages, to recognise his incorporation of bird song and the verbal representations in the poem of various musical motifs from Wagner and elsewhere.

Beci Carver groups Eliot with Auden as practitioners of what she calls *Granular Modernism* (pp. 102-41). This elusive categorization comprehends 'techniques of irrelevance, plotlessness, miscellaneousness, convolution, and confusion' alongside a self-consciousness of 'futility' within certain Modernist texts (p.2). When it comes to Eliot, his fixation with 'fragments', shored or otherwise, as a means of amassing miscellaneous detail provides Carver with a 'granular' paradigm. This works best when she pulls out and inspects details such as the coughing goat in 'Gerontion' or the outdated 'combinations' of the Typist in *The Waste Land*. Where you might expect her to hold up such details as evidence of a rich imaginative quiddity in these works, her approach is to probe their significance by questioning their relevance. *Granular Modernism* is particularly interesting about the connective syntactical tissues of modernist poetry, especially where they fail to connect or cohere.

Elsewhere, William Viney devotes a chapter to Eliot in *Waste: A Philosophy of Things* (pp. 79-99). Pointing first to the drafts published as *Inventions of the March Hare*, Viney identifies three different approaches to the notion of waste as part of his broader argument about the way that 'things' become waste through narrative. First, he points to the clutter of discarded objects within the landscapes of Eliot's poetry; second, he treats fragments of unpublished poetry as potential waste, before observing their role within the 'intratextual' economy of Eliot's later, published poetry; and finally, the interaction of these elements is shown to be symptomatic of a broader, linguistic disquiet about the relationship between meaning and waste.

In his essay on Eliot's career as a radio broadcaster for the BBC, 'T.S. Eliot on the Radio' (in Matthew Feldman, Erik Toning and Henry Mead, eds. *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, pp. 99-117), Steven Matthews takes issue with previous accounts of Eliot's broadcasting career, arguing that Eliot's approach shows 'greater flexibility', greater humour and greater sensitivity to the medium than has previously been acknowledged. In place of a staid, Arnoldian sage, Matthews' reading produces a livelier Eliot, sensitive to difficulties and differences inherent in writing words and reading them aloud over the airwaves.

Benjamin Kohlmann examines Eliot's critical writings in a chapter of *Committed Styles* (pp. 18-52), his account of Modernism and politics in the 1930s. This pits Eliot against I.A. Richards on the question of 'belief' in poetry. Eliot's insistence upon the importance and possibility of expressing belief (particularly religious belief) is compared to Richards' doctrine of 'pseudo-statements' in *Practical Criticism* – the irony being that Richards may have modeled his argument about the inability of poetry to make assertions beyond its own verbal limits upon Eliot's own practice in *The Waste Land*. Kohlmann then traces the impact of Richards' critical tenets upon contributors to the magazine *Experiment* (including William Empson) during the 1930s. Eliot's debate with Richards had a shaping influence, Kohlmann claims, upon the ways in which critics subsequently debated the relationship between poetry and political commitment.

In 'Listening to Eliot's Thrush', (*PANs* 12:ii[2014] 231-49), Christopher Irscher traces the 'ornithological genealogy' (p. 232) of the water-dripping song attributed to the Hermit thrush in 'What the Thunder Said'. After consulting sources including Frank Michler Chapman's *Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America*, Irscher concludes that Eliot valued the sound poetry, symbolic value and evocative power of this formulation over ornithological accuracy.

In 'Feeling the Elephant: T.S. Eliot's Bolovian Epic' (*JML* 37:iv[2014] 109-29), Loretta Johnson attempts to reconstruct Eliot's account of the adventures of 'King Bolo' and his 'Big Black Queen' from in letters and notebooks in order to counter assertions that these bawdy poems simply reinforce stereotyped ideas of race.

Although it ranges widely, *Ascetic Modernism in the Work of T.S. Eliot and Gustave Flaubert* by Henry Gott does not offer a comprehensive review of Eliot's relationship to the French author. Instead, it focuses upon comparing *The Waste Land* with *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. Gott's starting point is a shared 'poetics of citation' (p. 17) between these two texts which allowed their authors to bring together and fuse disparate literary, historical and mythical materials. At the heart of *Ascetic Modernism*, however, lies an argument about the shared symbolic resonance for Eliot and Flaubert of the figures of the desert and the saint. Gott finds a deep structural affinities here, which extend beyond a dissatisfaction with contemporary society towards a sense of personal loss and nostalgia for childhood. In his emphasis upon asceticism, the saintly and negation, Gott's readings sound very like those critics who address Eliot's later openly Christian poetry. He finds, however, the representation of sainthood in these two texts 'radically inconclusive' (p. 105).

Jim McCue 'T.S. Eliot, Edgar Lee Masters and Glorious France' *EiC* 64:i[2014] 45-73) concerns the accretive absorption of allusive material (described, in Eliot's own terms, as 'saturation') in Eliot's work, as much as it traces one particular path of allusive reference. McCue ranges across Eliot's poetic career, identifying debts and points of comparison with Edgar Lee Masters, poet of the *Spoon River Anthology*, but his argument, such as it is, concerns the way that the death of Eliot's friend Jean Verdenal in France during the first world war resonates more generally through the poetry within borrowed images and words, such as 'axeltree'. Masters' work, McCue suggests belongs to this 'vortex of feelings' (p.64).

Within the same issue of *Essays in Criticism*, Kit Toda pursues one of the same points of allusive reference, in 'Eliot's Cunning Passages: A Note' (*EiC* 64:i[2014] 90-97). Toda re-examines Eliot's borrowing of the word 'axeltree' from George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* in order to suggest that the phrase 'cunning passages' in *Gerontion* derives from another speech in Act Four Scene I of the same play rather than the misprint of 'cunning axeltree' for 'burning axeltree' in Act Five Scene I of the edition that Eliot used. Toda suggests that Bussy's predicament in the play speaks more directly to the atmosphere of backroom machinations in Eliot's poem and his chosen theatrical monologue form.

Omitted from last year's entry in this section, Steven Matthews' *T.S. Eliot and Early Modern Literature* has interests in common with Toda. Matthews moves with agility between Eliot's dramatic, poetic and critical writings, providing a broader context to Eliot's response to Early Modern writers, such as Chapman, Donne, Andrewes and Jonson. He investigates contemporary editions of these writers and places Eliot in context with his immediate critical precursors, as a reader of sixteenth and seventeenth-century literature. Although his general argument that Eliot's 'Early Modern sources [...] form a conscious and informing part' of his poetic achievement seems a little obvious, the importance of this book lies in Matthews' close scrutiny of neglected contextual material and in some of the nuanced connections he makes with Eliot's poetic practice. For example, tracking familiar recurrent points of reference, such as Chapman's 'burning axeltree' (discussed by Toda), Matthews also identifies points of allusive contact which do not function as affirmations of the prior text. Rather, they become part of a 'conscious negotiation' (p. 79): in 'Gerontion', Matthews suggests, allusion to Chapman helps signal the speaker's 'lack of consonance with the rhythms of his experience' (p.80). Amidst the acts of historical recovery in this book, then, there are also some fine readings of Eliot's poetry.

John Whittier-Ferguson begins the chapter on Eliot's later Christian poetry in *Mortality and Form in Late Modernist Literature* (pp. 31-78) by complaining about the

current state of the field. Work on Eliot published by major, established university presses tends to favour, he notes, the earlier modernist writings or misunderstands the poetry Eliot published after his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. The problem lies, according to Whittier-Ferguson in an imaginative failure to take the question of Eliot's belief seriously. His own study (published by Cambridge University Press) seeks to offer 'an edgy, unsettling, and unsettled Eliot' (p. 31), emphasising that Eliot's turn to the Church was not a comfortable choice or resignation from the world. Instead, Whittier-Ferguson identifies Eliot's conversion as the start of a difficult path along his 'Christian pilgrimage' (p. 39). This pilgrimage is then traced through readings of *Ash Wednesday*, 'Marina' and Section IV of each of the *Four Quartets*. This focus on the fourth section of each Quartet is informed by Whittier-Ferguson's desire to redeem Eliot's later poetry from accusations of flatness. His dedication to taking Eliot's beliefs seriously produces readings which are passionately sympathetic to the spiritual journey perceived as underlying these poems.

Similarly sympathetic to Eliot's Christian poetry, G. Douglas Atkins published two books on Eliot in 2014, *T.S. Eliot: The Poet as Christian* and *T.S. Eliot's Christmas Poems*. As he notes in the former, 'I have written a good deal about Old Possum recently' (p.vi) and, indeed, Atkins has published two books on Eliot with Palgrave every year since 2012. Inevitably, there is a little overlap: in *Christmas Poems* Atkins devotes a whole chapter to *The Cultivation of Christmas Trees*, identifying its 'essayistic' voice (p.33) whilst praising Eliot's capacity to enter into a 'childlike' perspective upon the incarnation, mediated in part through the fate of child-martyr St Lucy, but a chapter on the Christmas poems in *The Poet as Christian* also concludes by examining the role of St Lucy in this poem and its negotiation between childlike wonder and the theology of incarnation. Still, Atkins is an impassioned advocate for Eliot's poetic and theological achievement ('it is a gift to us all' (p.38)).

Unfortunately, a copy of Benjamin Lockerd's *T.S. Eliot and Christian Tradition* was not made available for consultation. Such information about this volume of essays as is available suggests that it ranges widely, including, amongst others, contributions by William Blisset on Eliot's anglo-catholicism, Dominic Manganiello on Eliot's interest in Dante and John Morgenstein on the influence of the French Catholic revival on Eliot.

David Soud's "'The Greedy Dialectic of Time and Eternity": Karl Barth, T.S. Eliot, and *Four Quartets*' (*ELH* 81:iv[2014] 1363-91) argues for the influence of the theology of Karl Barth upon T.S. Eliot after his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. Soud notes differences in theological opinion and temperament between Barth and Eliot regarding mystical

experience, but suggests that the central role of moments in and out of time within *Four Quartets* owes much to the ‘discourse of dialectical theology’ (p.1372) in Barth’s work.

Corey Latta devotes a chapter to Eliot (pp. 115-66) in *When the Eternal Can be Met*, his study of a Bergsonian theology of time in the work of Eliot, W.H. Auden and C.S. Lewis. Latta argues that Bergson is not only important to understanding the Christian thought of these writers as individuals, his philosophical writings about time provide theological common ground between them that has been neglected previously. Like a doctoral student, Latta is thorough in his discussion of previous critical writing on Eliot and Bergson and keen to establish the distinctive character of his own central claim that Eliot ‘poeticises Bergsonian intuition and duration to create a theology of experience in time’ (p.116). In this context, Latta is alert to the difficulties of connecting Bergson’s secular writing with Eliot’s religious thought and capable of negotiating consequent paradoxes within his readings of the *Four Quartets*. Oddly, however, *When the Eternal Can be Met* doesn’t seem to address Eliot’s own rejection of Bergson’s epistemology and ontology as a graduate student in the writings that have been transcribed in the new edition of his prose.

In contrast, Matthew Flaherty does look across Eliot’s career, linking his postgraduate work on F.H. Bradley to a reading of *Four Quartets* in ‘Incommensurable Worlds and “Impossible Union”’ (*YER* 30:iii-iv[2013-2014] 27-45). Eliot’s understanding of ‘finite centres’ in Bradley’s work as delineating the impermeable boundaries between the world of subjective human experience is used by Flaherty to emphasise how *Four Quartets* render the difficulty of reconciling ‘the conflicting assumptions made by other perspectives’ (p. 31). Flaherty identifies several differing perspectives or ‘windows on experience’ (p. 41) within *Four Quartets* in order to argue that there is no unifying force in the work. In this way, he hopes to meet the criticisms of critics, such as Edward Said, hostile to the seemingly reductive influence of Eliot’s conversion to Christianity.

David Thatcher also considers Eliot’s philosophical training in ‘T.S. Eliot’s (Dis)appointment with Schopenhauer’ (*YER* 30:iii-iv [2013-2014] 47-52), where he wonders whether an allusion to life as ‘a cheat and a disappointment’ within *Murder in the Cathedral* derives from Schopenhauer’s *Parerga und Paralipomena* [1851].

Kevin White’s ‘Accidents and Incidents: A Phenomenologist Reads T.S. Eliot’ (*Logos* 17:iv[2014] 169-83) offers a tribute to his philosopher colleague, Robert Sokolowski’s *Phenomenology of the Human Person* through a reading of the formal structure of *Four Quartets* to illustrate Sokolowski’s account of speech as predication and his distinction between accidents, properties and essences. Most interesting is White’s account of



Eliot's repeated use of 'the' to refer to situations and images that are simultaneously specific, but resonate with more general symbolic properties. Curiously, he makes no reference to Eliot's own training in philosophy.

Chad Schrock, 'The Passage T.S. Eliot Took' (*EiC* 64:i[2014] 74-90) reexamines the opening lines to *Burnt Norton* about 'time present and time past', by exploring their origin within a draft speech that Eliot cut from *Murder in the Cathedral*. Schrock reinvests the lines with specific context, giving them 'a local habitation' (p. 79) within the historical and dramatic sequence of Eliot's play and its depiction of the career of Thomas Becket. He also sites them within the personal and theological sequence of Beckett's spiritual dilemma, as represented in the play. Schrock concludes by connecting this textual prehistory to the general concern in *Four Quartets* with 'rewriting' (p. 86) in one form or another.

Anthony Cuda provides a summary account of Eliot's poetic output, concentrating upon the major works for David Chinitz and Gail Marshall's *Companion to Modernist Poetry* (pp. 450-63). Whilst this contains nothing new or contentious, it offers functional information and a useful overview for new readers or students of Eliot's work. Leila Bellour's 'Eroticism versus Mysticism in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of St. Sebastian" and "Death of St Narcissus"' (*YER* 30:iii-iv[2013-2014] 3-26) offers a summary account of two early poems by Eliot along with a digest of critical work on these texts, drawing out common elements of homosexual allusion and misogyny.

Finally, Ghanim Samarrai's 'Rejuvenating T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*' (*CRCL* 41:ii[2014] 112-25) points out the popularity and frequency of Eliot's works in Arabic translations, before exploring the possible debts to *The Waste Land* in Badr Shakir As-Sayâb's *Hymn of Rain* [1954].