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b.) T.S. Eliot

The most significant event of 2015 for anyone interested in T.S. Eliot was the publication of his *Complete Poems* in two volumes edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. Unevenly distributed across two volumes, the first of these includes those poems Eliot chose to collect and publish in his lifetime, followed by uncollected material from drafts, manuscripts and *Valerie Her Book* - a commonplace book Eliot prepared for his second wife, containing handwritten versions of his published poems and some previously unpublished poems. Volume two contains the *Practical Cats*, further uncollected verse derived largely from Eliot's correspondence and coterie poems written for friends and acquaintance at Faber and Gwyer. This volume also includes a 'Textual History' providing an extensive and detailed collation of published texts and manuscripts relating to the poems across both volumes. It's clear from this that the establishment of the texts of Eliot's poems is an impressive feat of scholarship in its own right, but these volumes are also characterised by copious scholarly notes. In some respect these annotations are unusual: keen to preserve a neutral stance, the editors avoid imposing critical opinion by sticking to factual, rather than interpretative statements and by supplying quotation from Eliot's own writings for context and comparison. The sheer extent of these quotations is what distinguishes these volumes from standard editorial practice, but it is also what makes them a joy to read. Moving back and forth between the poems and the notes is a journey through some of Eliot's most salient critical statements, as well as reflections upon his own practice. Public reaction to these volumes in the press has tended to focus upon previously unpublished erotic verses Eliot wrote to Valerie, but the editorial and scholarly achievement represented in this edition will have a longer lasting impact upon our understanding and appreciation of Eliot's craft as a poet.

This was a bumper year for Eliot studies. In addition to the poems, two further volumes of his prose were published as part of the ongoing project under the general editorial supervision of Ronald Schuchard. *Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929*, edited by Frances and Jennifer Formichelli and *English Lion, 1930-1933*, edited by Jason Harding, chart Eliot's continuing public engagement into the 1930s as editor of the *Criterion* and the increasing prominence he assumed as an Anglo-Catholic. This public role saw him defending the right-wing French philosopher and activist, Charles Maurras, espousing the poetry of Dante and pronouncing upon the policies and doctrines of the Church through pamphlets such as *Thoughts After Lambert* (1931). Elsewhere he explores the relationship between poetry and belief through critical tussles with I.A. Richards and John Middleton Murry, as well as his

engagement with the humanism of Irving Babbitt. Of particular interest are Eliot's unsigned contributions to the *Times Literary Supplement* and his contributions to the *Criterion* since many of these have not previously been collected. Eliot's close scrutiny of detective fiction in these articles, from contemporary potboilers to the origins of the genre in work by Wilkie Collins, Edgar Allan Poe and others, has also attracted particular attention. Likewise, in documenting Eliot's radio broadcasts for the BBC during this period, the editors return to the typescripts submitted to the *Listener*, restoring passages excised by the magazine's editor.

Volume four documents Eliot's lecture tours in the United States during 1933, previously published as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* and incorporated into Schuchard's *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* (1996). The editors also attempt to reconstruct some of Eliot's other American lectures from this period on the basis of newspaper reports and other accounts from those present. Such composite texts enjoy a dubious, secondary authority, but they do provide insights into Eliot's views on the poetry of Edward Lear (amongst other topics) to which we would otherwise lack access of any kind. As with the first two volumes in this series, Schuchard's team are assiduous in their annotations and bibliographical scholarship.

A third welcome contribution to textual scholarship on Eliot's work is the latest volume in the ongoing edition of *The Letters of T.S.Eliot*. Under the editorship of John Haffenden, volume five covers the years 1930 and 1931. A preface details the contribution made by Valerie Eliot (who died in 2012) to this edition, describing her extensive efforts to track down letters and notes written by the poet. The end result is a volume of over 800 pages that covers only two years of his life. The impulse towards bibliographical completeness is understandable in relation to a writer of Eliot's stature and influence, but this book contains both Eliot's correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury and his tax returns. There *are* letters of literary, biographical and bibliographical interest here in relation to Eliot's life and work, but its real value lies in the abundance of its accompanying notes and biographical sketches. Even seemingly trivial material helps form this volume's fascinating gateway into the world of publishing and letters during the 1930s. It constitutes an important act of recovery extending beyond Eliot's career to a host of his contemporaries, from publishers to poets, to scholars and figures from the religious establishment.

One problem for Eliot's biographers has been his repeated insistence that poetry is 'impersonal', that the poet's own emotions and experience are not the end point of a literary work, but a point of departure – the material with which he or she works. Robert Crawford's *Young Eliot* negotiates this cautiously, generally resisting the temptation to read Eliot's

poems biographically, but also making repeated and insistent biographical connections. Crawford is similarly cautious about other potentially contentious aspects of the poet's life, exercising both tact and a sensible refusal to gloss over matters in relation to Eliot's sexuality and his wife's adultery. Crawford's insistence on referring intimately to Eliot as 'Tom' throughout is cloying, but the strength of this biography lies in the sheer depth of detail with which it probes Eliot's most seemingly casual reading encounters to find material of potential relevance. *Young Eliot* stops at the publication of *The Waste Land*, but another volume is anticipated. Flawed in some places, this is now by far and away the best of currently available biographies of Eliot.

Turning to academic criticism of Eliot's work, 'The Beauties of T.S. Eliot', Seamus Perry's contribution to Michael O'Neill, Mark Sandy and Sarah Wootton's volume, *The Persistence of Beauty* (pp. 59-70) examines with great insight not only those occasions when Eliot uses the term 'beauty' in his critical writings, but also his general aversion to the concept as tainted by its association with the Impressionist criticism of Arthur Symonds and Walter Pater. Eliot's reconciliation with this word, Perry argues convincingly, comes through the location of the beautiful and the poetic within a sense of some fuller dramatic situation.

Gabriel McIntire's collection of essays, *Cambridge Companion to 'The Waste Land'* is unusual, but not exceptional within the Cambridge Companion series since it focusses upon one seminal text rather than a broader topic, period or oeuvre. There is no doubt that a poem like *The Waste Land* can bear the weight of scrutiny, but the collection feels a little stretched in places and its claim to present 'the most current lenses of critical thinking' (p. 4) does not always seem justified.

Jean-Michel Rabaté's contribution on World War I ranges widely and deploys an unusual form, close to bullet points in places, in order to outline parallels between Eliot's personal experiences and broader events in Europe. Rabaté draws upon Eliot's reading in Dostoevsky in order to identify a 'double unreality' in *The Waste Land*, juxtaposing the domestic unreality of Eliot's marriage to Vivien – her infidelity with Bertrand Russell and the demands of her mental illness – with the effects of war on the continent. Spencer Morrison's essay on the geography of *The Waste Land* explores the tension between Eliot's sense of a present crisis in London and the cycles of Imperial history. Morrison draws upon theories of urban experience in the work of Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre. He examines the concept of the 'ruin' in particular, mapping tensions between public and personal histories within the phrase '*my ruins* [emphasis added]' in the final section of the poem. A ruin, Morrison suggests, may paradoxically be the site for rebuilding as well as a place of

devastation. In this way, the poem moves between social collapse and the assertion of 'governance'.

Drawing upon her experience as Eliot's biographer, Lyndall Gordon attempts to read *The Waste Land* as 'rooted' in 'personal issues and preoccupations' (p.39), although she struggles to reconcile the obscenity, misogyny, racism and levity of Eliot's contemporary 'Bolo' verses with her sense of his serious purposes in *The Waste Land*. Barry Spurr reads *The Waste Land* in terms of its religious implications, warning against dividing Eliot's career too strongly around the watershed of his public conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in the 1920s after the completion of *The Waste Land*. Spurr finds the notion of a quest or journey more attractive, propounding a sense of Eliot's 'protracted struggle to attain meaning' (p.55) in *The Waste Land* as representative of concerns similar to his later, explicitly Christian poetry. He acknowledges Eliot's interest in Buddhist and Hindu religion, but connects Eliot to Anglican theology.

David Chinitz and Julia Daniel revisit Chinitz's previous work on Eliot and 'popular culture' to explore the 'productive engagement' with various popular forms in *The Waste Land*, from jazz and cars to contemporary perfumes. Jewel Spears Brooker offers a summary of the composition of *The Waste Land* through the manuscripts, describing Ezra Pound's role in editing them and the interventions of Eliot's first wife, Vivien.

Michael Levenson's essay on 'voice' in *The Waste Land* offers the most protracted and detailed engagement with the form and technical achievement of the poem. Levenson explores phasal shifts within the voicing of each section of the poem, identifying 'a tonal rhythm that repeatedly passes from gnomic generality to ardent utterance' (p. 89). His reading turns upon the tensions in Eliot's poem between forms of impersonal speech (such as allusion) and situated utterance. Michael Coyle reads Eliot's allusive practice in *The Waste Land* in terms of 'pastiche' and argues that the poem played a role in subsequent debate between Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon about the nature and value of 'pastiche' in relation to 'parody'. Coyle sees Eliot's use of pastiche as part of his relationship with previous literary history. By this means, *The Waste Land* measures both continuity and separation from its precursors.

As part of the collection's attempt to engage with recent approaches to Eliot, it concludes with four essays that read *The Waste Land* through 'critical and theoretical approaches'. Rachel Potter explores the place of gender and obscenity in *The Waste Land*, arguing that Eliot 'tethers female physicality to the obscene' (p. 135), drawing upon details that Eliot (or Pound) excised from manuscript drafts of the poem. Although Potter is

concerned that Eliot conflates different female characters within *The Waste Land*, she concludes the essay by affirming a sense of shared physicality between the women in the poem as a site of potential resistance to official forms of censorship. Richard Badenhausen proposes Eliot's poem in terms of contemporary trauma theory, drawing in particular upon work by Sara Cole on the links between Modernism and trauma. The figure of Tiresias lies at the heart of this essay, as Badenhausen explores the degree to which he witness or suffers traumatising experiences within the poem. He reads 'Death by Water' as a failed elegy and suggests that *The Waste Land* is sanguine about the possibility of recovering from the traumatic aftereffects of World War One. Eve Sorum reads the poem in terms of 'Psychology, Psychoanalysis and New Subjectivities'. Citing Eliot's reading of F.H. Bradley on the nature of experience and his own experiences of psychoanalytic treatment at the hands of Roger Vittoz, Sorum explores polyphony in *The Waste Land* and the failure of various attempts at empathy by characters within the poem.

Finally, McIntire supplies an essay on 'ecocritique' in *The Waste Land*. The premise – that Eliot expresses his sense of broader collapse through devastated landscapes and oppressive cityscapes is promising. McIntire notes the 'compromised environmental exteriors and a complex range of similarly polluted interior states' within the poem (p. 178). This sounds a bit like what Ruskin called the 'pathetic fallacy' and the essay struggles to turn this into a convincing account of Eliot as an ecopoet. Indeed, McIntire sounds some inconclusive notes ('I begin to wonder' (p. 190)) in her own attempts to conclude this much. The whole volume is capped by Anthony Cuda descriptive summary of critical responses to *The Waste Land* since its publication. Although it contains little critical comment, this survey is probably a more useful and direct guide for students than some of the essays in the collection.

Scott Freer's monograph, *Modernist Mythopoeia* includes a chapter on Eliot's attitude towards myth in *The Waste Land* (pp.45-77). This occupies an important position within Freer's larger argument that 'modernist mythopoeia is a continuation of a metaphorical theology that rejected logo-centrism and regarded spiritual truth as poetic or metaphoric by nature' (p. 8), since Eliot's avowal of Anglo-Catholicism in the 1920s would seem to complicate or contradict this. Indeed, Freer argues, Eliot saw myth as 'a defunct moral base' (p.51) even whilst he was drawn to classical sources because he was 'aware that deep layers of human impulses were played out in the classics' (p.50). The 'underlying purpose' of the *The Waste Land*, Freer claims, was 'to induce the reader to make a choice between the non-redemptive aesthetic way of myth or the redeeming agency of Christian faith' (p. 45).

Paved with good intentions, *Reading 'The Waste Land' from the Bottom Up* by Allyson

Booth is not quite a work of annotation, but nevertheless aims to provide information for first-time students and readers of *The Waste Land* that will ease the difficulties they may experience in negotiating its different languages and points of cultural reference. After two general sections on the first world war and Eliot's use of comparative anthropological work by Jessie Weston and James Frazer, the body of Booth's book is structured around explicating the allusive cues provided by Eliot in his notes to *The Waste Land* in short sections of three or four pages. At its best, *Reading 'The Waste Land' from the Bottom Up* takes Eliot's sources seriously, probing the textual and dramatic contexts that inform Eliot's allusive practice. Elsewhere, it is over-familiar in its choice of language and simile and it is tantalising – there's an argument here about the play of similarity and difference running through *The Waste Land* that never quite coalesces.

Amongst the essays in Alex Davis and Lee Jenkins' extensive *A History of Modernist Poetry*, Miranda Hickman provides a brusque survey of 'early' Eliot, alongside H.D. and Ezra Pound (pp. 186-203), focussed upon the poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Davis and Jenkins' own contribution summarises Pound and Eliot in the twenties and thirties (pp.303-23). These useful introductory essays tend to cover familiar ground, but provide a good starting point for students of modernism.

Derived in part from a conference of the T.S. Eliot society held in Paris during 2011, *T.S. Eliot, France and the Mind of Europe*, edited by Jayme Stayer, aims to re-examine Eliot's engagement with French poetry and philosophical thought and the implications of his understanding of Europe. Charlotte Webb's essay on Eliot and 'hyper-consciousness' seeks to show how the poet's work 'seems to anticipate' (p. 40) the findings of the psychologists Louis Sass and Iain McGilchrist. Webb rereads early poems, including 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Hysteria' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' and emphasises the degree to which speakers are shown to be 'absorbed in the winding labyrinths of their own thought' (p. 43). Jean-Michel Rabaté ranges across the work of Mallarmé, Edouard Dujardin, Charles-Louis Philippe, André Gide and Proust, amongst others, in order to provide 'a French context for Eliot's sense of a homology between his personal death and the collective death entailed by the idea of tradition' (p.3). Elizabeth Däumer traces the influence upon Eliot of Jean Epstein's 'physiological theory of literature' in terms of a 'neuropathic aristocracy' (p. 115). Whilst their understandings of 'sensibility' do not quite mesh, Däumer establishes connections between Epstein's work and Eliot's 'conflicted, fascinated, revolted' (p. 123) treatment of the relationship between modern technology and feeling in his poetry.

Many of these contributions focus upon the year that Eliot spent in Paris during 1910 after graduating from Harvard. Nancy Hargrove revisits her monograph *T.S. Eliot's Parisian Year* [2009], offering a general survey of the 'Parisian influences' upon 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock' from contemporary fashions to *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* by Gabrielle D'Annunzio which was performed at the Théâtre du Chatelet in May 1911. Jayme Stayer reconstructs Eliot's initial 'culture shock' upon his arrival in Paris and before he had acquired any fluency in French. This experience, Stayer argues, reverberates through a series of audiences that are imagined as uncomprehending in Eliot's early poetry. Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec suggests that Eliot's awareness of Charles Péguy dates from his Parisian sojourn, through his contact with Henri-Alain Fournier. She then charts allusions to Péguy and connections to his work through Eliot's subsequent career as a critic and poet. Benjamin Lockerd's contribution on 'Eliot's Critique of Evolutionary History' updates an article on the same topic from 2012, arguing that Eliot aligned himself with Catholic historiography of Christopher Dawson and Hilaire Belloc, against the 'pseudo-scientific historiography and the progressivism' of Herbert Spencer and H.G. Wells. Whilst Lockerd's argument concerns mostly Eliot's writings from the 1930s, he traces this position back to Eliot's Parisian encounter with Bergson and the French philosopher's critique of Spencer.

In her contribution, Jewel Spears Brooker re-examines Eliot's 'temporary conversion to Bergsonism' during his visit to Paris in 1909 (p. 24). This essay covers very similar ground here to Brooker's article, 'Eliot and Bergson: "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and the Intractability of Dualism' (*PAns* 13:i[2015] 1-17), which provides a cogent summary of Eliot's engagement with the French philosopher, from attendance at lectures by Bergson to his influence upon Eliot's early poem 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' and the philosophical papers Eliot wrote upon his return to Harvard. Condensing Bergson's philosophy into his claim to have reconciled binary pairings such as body and mind by subsuming the quantitative into the qualitative, Brooker reads this into the problematic self-splitting dialogue form of 'Rhapsody'. He may have rejected Bergson's philosophy, but Eliot's 'longing to transcend dualism', Brooker concludes, remained 'a significant factor' in his 'creative and spiritual life' (p. 16).

Returning to *The Mind of Europe*, other contributors place Eliot's work in broader, although not exclusively European contexts. Thus Joyce Wexler charts Eliot's fascination with nineteenth-century French Symbolism as it transformed into an aesthetic she sees as holding stronger affinities with the expressionism of Kurt Pinthus and Gottfried Benn, amongst others. William Blissett traces the elemental presence of wind and air across Eliot's

poetic oeuvre, drawing connections and comparisons with the work of Gaston Bachelard at the close of his contribution. Although Michael Webster claims ‘to restore Eliot to a Cummings-context (and vice versa)’ (p. 76), his contribution largely charts echoes of Eliot’s form and technique in the poetry of e.e. cummings, taking in the mutual suspicions tempered by the occasional entente between the two poets on the way. Tomislav Brlek’s contribution, ‘Eliot and Theory’ does not so much justify reading Eliot’s work through the lens of subsequent Literary Theory, as urge Eliot’s own qualifications as a theoretical thinker in his criticism. In his defence of Eliot, Brlek highlights mis-apprehensions of his work by Christopher Norris, Edward Said and others.

Fabio Vericat explores the impact of Eliot’s experience as a radio broadcaster upon his poetry, arguing that it helped him ‘to pinpoint legitimate poetic sounds by understanding writing as inherently performative as speech’ (p. 171). Comparing Eliot’s scripts with recordings of his broadcasts, Vericat suggests that his work on the radio provided Eliot with a more practical understanding of the ‘auditory imagination’. Margery Palmer McCulloch compares and contrasts Eliot’s work with that of Edwin Muir, finding a point of contact in their mutual investment in European literature. Eliot recruited Muir to the *Criterion* for his writings on German literature and later wrote a preface to a posthumous edition of his *Selected Poems* [1965]. Despite this, McCulloch laments, Muir has yet to find recognition for his contribution to modern writing.

A.V.C. Schmidt devotes considerable space to Eliot in *Passion and Precision*, which draws together previously published articles from the Oxford Don’s lengthy career as a scholar. Five essays on various aspects of Eliot’s work, from his concern with linguistic precision, to the influence of his conversion to Christianity upon his poetry and criticism are republished here from journals such as *Essays in Criticism*, alongside five short notes on aspects of Eliot previously published in *Notes and Queries* (pp. 267-78). Elsewhere, in *T.S. Eliot and Spirituality*, Richard Brock offers a reading of *Four Quartets* that is ‘an attempt to bring Eliot’s poem down from its elevated place on the book shelves of scholars and literary critics’ (p. 3). This is a strongly personal account, anchored in Brock’s own experience of ‘spirituality’ as well the themes and contents of Eliot’s poetry.

Within scholarly journals during 2015, ‘Interpretation and Reality: Anthropological Hauntings in *The Waste Land*’ (*Mo/Mo* 22.i[2015] 237-54) by Sheela Banerjee reads the figure of Tiresias in the light of Eliot’s graduate writings on ‘primitive religion’, arguing that Eliot combines ‘the traditional qualities of a literary ghost’ with ‘modern anthropological anxieties over questions of knowledge, truth, and interpretation’ (p. 238). As a graduate, Eliot

used the work of Lucien Levy-Bruhl to probe the degree to which it was possible to access states of mind associated with other cultures and beliefs. Banerjee sees the ambivalence Eliot expressed in his philosophical inquiries as condensed into the attenuated experiences of Tiresias as they become fractured and split across various voices in Eliot's poem.

Anita Patterson's 'T.S. Eliot and Transpacific Modernism' (*AmLH* 27:iv[2015] 665-82) explores Eliot's 'concern with transpacific crossculturality' (p. 666). Centred upon his early, unpublished poem 'Mandarins', Patterson traces Eliot's interest in Neo-Confucian Buddhism, through the writings of Emerson and others and through personal contact in Boston with the art historian, Kakuzo Okakura and the scholar of comparative religion, Masaharu Anesaki. Patterson then outlines the place of Buddhist philosophies of indifference and detachment within later work, including *Coriolan*, *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Four Quartets*. Connecting Eliot's interest in these questions to his formative intellectual experiences in Boston, 'a world city' and 'cosmopolitan centre' (p.678-79), Patterson posits 'transpacific dialogue' as a source of Eliot's power as a 'great and representative poet' (p.679)

Margaret Greaves, 'The Spanish Copla in T.S. Eliot's "Landscapes"' (*JML* 37:iv[2014] 130-42) begins with Eliot's observation to a Spanish correspondent that 'Virginia' was indebted to the 'copla', a Spanish poetic form associated with expressions of love for a local landscape. Laying out other uses of this form by his contemporaries, Greaves reads all five of Eliot's 'Landscapes' as 'a cohesive sequence' characterised by 'the tensions between human desire and religious devotion' (p. 131). In this way, the landscape poems anticipate allusion to the Spanish mystics in *Four Quartets*.

Brian Cheadle's 'Four Quartets: Structure and Surprise' (*CQ* 44:iii[2015] 233-50) takes the lapse of seventy years since the completions of *Four Quartets* as the occasion to review the poem's reception and explore Eliot's turn of thought. Weighing up objections from Orwell, Leavis and Hill, Cheadle probes the language and form of *Four Quartets* for moments of pleasure.

A. Banerjee 'T.S. Eliot and the *Criterion*' (*SR* 123:ii[2015] 231-40) uses the ongoing edition of Eliot's correspondence to retell the poet's experiences in setting up the *Criterion*. Largely biographical, this essay also covers Eliot's beginnings at Faber & Dwyer and the transition to the *New Criterion*. Banerjee traces that Eliot's distinguished career in publishing to his 'fortuitous' entry into journalism during 1916 (p.240). Finally, no annual survey of scholarship on Eliot's work would be complete without the inclusion of a short work by G. Douglas Atkins, who has published at least one such volume with Palgrave every year since

2012. Dedicated to Atkins' Cavalier King Charles Spaniel (amongst others), *Strategy and Purpose in T.S. Eliot's Major Poems* contains chapters on *The Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*.