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**Cognitive-Affective Formalism
T. S. Eliot and the Embodiment of Early Modern Verse**

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Abstract

This dissertation develops cognitive-affective formalism, a new analytical approach to versification, by re-examining T. S. Eliot's critical engagements with early modern verse, particularly Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse and metaphysical poetry. Integrating contemporary theories from cognitive neuroscience and philosophy with phonetic and prosodic analysis, this study argues for considering how versification shapes readers' embodied experiences. I define cognitive-affective formalism as a transhistorical mode of analysis rooted in the phenomenology of embodied reading, which posits that versification actively reshapes the processes underlying readers' emotional conception (how readers form emotions). By "reading Eliot reading," I attend to and reconstruct an understanding of his embodied experience of early modern verse. Through analyses of the early modern texts he cites in his criticism, I develop Eliot's concepts of "closeness of texture" in Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse and the "incarnation" of thought and feeling in metaphysical poetry into analytical frameworks. Through formal analyses of Eliot's readings of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Donne, and others, I demonstrate how early modern versification creates unique cognitive-affective affordances for readers. Synthesizing insights from modernist studies, early modern poetry and poetics, and cognitive science, this project offers new insights into the cognitive-affective affordances of Elizabethan and Jacobean verse and a fresh perspective on Eliot's critical engagements with early modern literature and a set of analytical tools for understanding how versification shapes readers' embodied experiences of thinking and feeling across historical contexts.

Cognitive-Affective Formalism

T. S. Eliot and the Embodiment of Early Modern Verse

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Abbreviations of Works by T. S. Eliot

Complete Prose 1   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 1: The Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*. Edited by Jewels Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard. Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber, 2014.

Complete Prose 2   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*. Edited by Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard. 2014.

Complete Prose 3   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 3: Literature, Politics, Belief: 1927–1929*. Edited by Frances Dickey, Jennifer Formichelli, and Ronald Schuchard. 2015.

Complete Prose 4   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 4: English Lion, 1930–1933*. Edited by Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard. 2015.

Complete Prose 5   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 5: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934−1939*. Edited by Iman Javadi, Ronald Schuchard, and Jayme Stayer. 2017.

Complete Prose 6   *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 6: The War Years, 1940–1946*. Edited by David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard. 2017.

Complete Prose 7	*The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 7: A European Society, 1947–1953*. Edited by Iman Javadi and Ronald Schuchard. 2018.
Complete Prose 8	*The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 8: Still and Still Moving*, *1954–1965*. Edited by Jewels Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard. 2019.
Complete Poems	*The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot.* Faber & Faber, 1969.
Criterion	*The Criterion.* Collected edition, 18 vols. Edited by T. S. Eliot. Faber & Faber, 1967.
Inventions	*Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909–1917*. Edited by Christopher Ricks. Faber & Faber, 1996.
Letters 1	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1: 1898–1922*, revised. Edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton. Faber & Faber, 2009.
Letters 2	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 2: 1923–1925*. Edited by Valerie Eliot and H. Haughton. 2009
Letters 3	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 3: 1926- 1927.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2012.

Letters 4	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 4: 1928–1929.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2013.
Letters 5	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5: 1930–1931.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2014.
Letters 6	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 6: 1932–1933.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2016.
Letters 7	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 7: 1934–1935.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2017.
Letters 8	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 8: 1936–1938.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2019.
Letters 9	*The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 9: 1939–1941.* Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden. 2021.
Poems 1	*T. S. Eliot: The Poems, Volume 1.* Edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. Faber & Faber, 2015.
Poems 2	*T. S. Eliot: The Poems, Volume 2.* Edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. 2015.
Waste Land Facsimile	*The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts.* Edited by Valerie Eliot. Faber & Faber, 1971, and Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971.

Introduction

Cognitive-Affective Formalism

T. S. Eliot and the Embodiment of Early Modern Verse

"Did Shakespeare think anything at all?" (*Complete Prose* 3: 251). T. S. Eliot's

provocative question from "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927) challenges

conventional approaches to literary criticism. This question responds to Wyndham Lewis's

claims that Shakespeare was "the only thinker we meet with among the Elizabethan dramatists"

and that his work contained "a body of matter representing explicit processes of the intellect" "

(*Complete Prose* 3: 251).[1] Eliot counters this view by depicting the poet not as a conscious

thinker but as the embodiment of a creative compulsion. "The poet makes poetry," Eliot argues,

"the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey, the spider secretes a filament; you

can hardly say that any of these agents believes: he merely does" (*Complete Prose* 3: 253).

Eliot's emphasis on Shakespeare's "doing" suggests an understanding of poetic composition as

an embodied action rather than in intellection alone. Moreover, Eliot's further conception of

Shakespeare's verse—a term he uses as a metonym for versified language— as presenting "the

emotional equivalent of thought" leads him to suggest his belief writing and reading poetry

serves a primarily emotional function (*Complete Prose* 3: 252). "Poetry is [...] not intellectual

but emotional," he further explains, adding that only "We can say that it provides 'consolation':

strange consolation, which is provided equally by writers so different as Dante and Shakespeare

(*Complete Prose* 3: 254).

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[1] Wyndham Lewis. *The Lion and the Fox: The rôle of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare*. New York: Harper, 1927, 179, quoted in *Complete Prose* 3: 252.

By characterizing poetry's consolation as "strange," Eliot does two things. First, he alludes to Ariel's Song, an inset lyric from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), an issue I return to below. Second, he suggests that critics consider the consolation his verse offered rather than asking what Shakespeare explicitly thought, thus eliding the generic distinction between poetic drama and lyric poetry. For Eliot, Shakespeare becomes a synecdoche for the poet, struggling to write personal experience into poetic form:

> Shakespeare, like Dante, was occupied with the struggle – which alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal (*Complete Prose* 3: 254).

Again, putting aside for a moment his fuller allusion to "Ariel's Song" ("Into something rich and strange"), Eliot's alchemical metaphor of transmutation and the language of "impersonality" further recalls his seminal essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). Indeed, the syntactic parallelism of "something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal" both suggests a close alignment between "Stoicism" and "Tradition" and invites one to consider the qualities of richness and strangeness as apposite universality and impersonality, indicating more than broad human commonalities and depersonalization.

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot argues that the poet must develop a "historical sense" that allows them to perceive "the whole of the 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" (*Complete Prose* 2: 106). When Eliot speaks of the "whole of the literature of Europe" existing simultaneously, he's suggesting a living, interconnected network of texts and influences. "Richness" thus partly signifies the complexity of these literary relationships and the poet's ability to engage with and transform the tradition. Therefore when, in

"Tradition," Eliot asserts, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists." (*Complete Prose* 2: 107). In other words, "rich" verse successfully alters this simultaneous order of literature. Understood this way, universality becomes less about broad appeal, timeless cross-cultural relevance, or criteria for canonicity and more about what a poet gains by engaging with what appears from the finite center of situated subjectivity, the ever-changing monument or dynamic system of a particular literary history.

Meanwhile, composing or reading from the "finite center" of one's place within the tradition, the *sensuous communis,* or "the mind of Europe," the poet's individual experiences and emotions become impersonal in the sense of extended or more fully realized. Thus, as Eliot conceives it, impersonality does not mean the complete erasure or effacement of the individual personality. Instead, it means the recontextualization of personality within the broader tradition and the "transmutation" of personal feeling into an impersonal "art emotion" that signifies a unitary and intersubjectively legible core of experience that criticism cannot wholly trace to the poet's subjectivity. A poem expressing a poet's personal feeling properly transmuted into an impersonal art emotion contains some intersubjectively legible quantum of strangeness that does not originate in the poet or reader but emerges between them. Understood apposite to impersonality, strangeness suggests the transmutation of personal feeling as a subjective kenosis through the reading or writing of poetry that, paradoxically, expands subjectivity beyond its singular boundaries. Such a transmutation renders the personal "strange" in new contexts and combinations that seem to go beyond the parishes of one's individual experience. One can

understand the strangeness of impersonality as a form of defamiliarization, allowing poetry to

offer new perspectives on common experiences, emotions, and ideas.[2]

These notions of richness and strangeness offer a more dynamic framework for

understanding poetic form's embodied, cognitive-affective affordances than universality and

impersonality. Indeed, understood as phenomenological qualifiers of versified language and not

just compositional or appreciative ideals, richness and strangeness, in suggesting materiality, also

prefigure the sense perception of writers and readers and the diversity of embodied experiences

that such perception requires and affords. Thus, to further develop the embodied, poetic

affordances of Eliot's terms, I suggest that richness should refer to the relative density of sensory

stimuli embedded in the materiality of versification—to the complex of auditory, visual, and

tactile signifiers that reading poetry a multifaceted sensory experience. In contrast, versification

achieves strangeness by defamiliarizing language, often through formal strategies that draw

attention to the crafted identity of the poem or text. To emphasize the point, versified language

achieves a degree of richness whenever the materiality of versification directly affects palpable

sensorimotor responses in readers; it becomes strange by affecting readers' thoughts and feelings

such that those thoughts and feelings seem to originate or extend beyond the self. Both richness

and strangeness engage readers' embodied cognition by activating multisensory experiences and

disrupting habitual patterns of perception.

If Eliot understood something of the embodied significance of poetic richness and

strangeness, that understanding would be best exemplified in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of

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2 The term "defamiliarization" first achieved widespread currency in literary studies following the appearance of the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 article "Art as Technique." For Shklovsky, defamiliarization [*trans. ostranenie*] signified any technique in art that renders familiar objects or experiences strange and unfamiliar. Defamiliarization involves presenting objects in a manner that disrupts automatic perception "in order to restore the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony" Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art, As Device." Poetics Today, vol. 36, no. 3, 1 Sep. 2015, pp. 151 – 174, 162.

Seneca" through his allusions to "Ariel's Song," to which I now turn. *The Tempest* centers

around Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, who uses magic to shipwreck his usurping brother

Antonio and Alonso, the King of Naples, and other Italian nobles on the island of his marooning.

Prospero seeks to arrange a marriage between his daughter Miranda and Alonso's son, Prince

Ferdinand, solidifying his political power. Seeing Ferdinand separated from the other

shipwrecked nobles and mourning his perceived loss of his father, Prospero commands the sprite,

Ariel, to comfort the prince through an anonymous, disembodied song comprising two verses,

the first of which appears as follows:

> Come unto these yellow sands
>
> And take hands
>
> Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd
>
> The wild waves whist,
>
> Foot it featly here and there;
>
> And, sweet sprites, the burthern bear [...]

<p style="text-align:center">(The Tempest 1.2.452-62).[3]</p>

Ferdinand's response in the following lines emphasizes the disorientation he initially experiences

at being unable to determine the song's source before reporting on the consolation he feels at

being "drawn out" of his immersion in grief:

> Where should this music be? I' the' air, or th' earth?
>
> It sounds no more; and sure it waits upon

---

[3] I take my citations of *The Tempest* here from the first folio edition, available online through Brandeis University's Internet Shakespeare Editions. "Facsimile Viewer: First Folio (1623)." *Internet Shakespeare Editions.*, University of Victoria, 2024. Unless otherwise noted, all other citations of Shakespeare and other early modern writers come from the editions Eliot owned or is known to have read.

Some god o' the' island. Sitting on a bank,

Weeping again the King, my father's wrack

This music crept by me upon the waters,

Allaying both their fury and my passion

With its sweet airs. Thence I have followed it,

Or it hath drawn me rather […]

(*The Tempest* 1.2.465-472).

Reading through Eliot's allusion, Ferdinand's response to "Ariel's Song" dramatizes the richness and strangeness that "Stoicism" identifies as the mark of the poetic. Ferdinand's initial confusion about the music's source ("Where should this music be? I' the air or th' earth?" [l. 465]) suggests a disorienting sensory experience that blurs the boundaries between different physical realms. Ferdinand's anthropomorphism, "This music crept by me upon the waters," ascribes intentional, stealthy movement to the music as if it were a living entity capable of deliberate action, suggesting an experience of poetic strangeness only compounded by his sense of that the song has "drawn" him along the shoreline as though it were sung by a predator, luring him, the singer's prey, into a trap (l. 469; l. 472). The phrase also suggests that "Ariel's Song" causes him to experience the simultaneous or cross-modal of his auditory (music), tactile (crept), visual (waters), and proprioceptive (motion) sense modalities, the mark of poetic richness (l. 469). Furthermore, Ferdinand perceives "Ariel's Song" as causing an aestheticizing effect upon both the waters and his grief, noting its capacity for "allaying both their fury and my passion / with its sweet airs" (l. 470). As he experiences temporary relief from his grief, "Ariel's Song," which initially seemed to Ferdinand a creeping and potentially disconcerting thing, now appears to him a "sweet" and airy melody.

Through such experiences of richness and strangeness, Ferdinand's personal feelings of grief seem to have undergone transmutation, partly affected by the first verse of "Ariel's Song" successfully distracting Ferdinand from "weeping upon" the image of what he falsely believes to be "the King, my father's "wrack" (l. 469). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "wrack" as "a total or partial disablement or destruction of a vessel by any disaster or accident of navigation."[4] In other words, Ferdinand weeps over what he believes to be his father's complete disablement: the destruction of his body and not simply his drowning in the shipwreck. While the first verse of "Ariel's Song" appears to anesthetize Ferdinand's grief, the second verse offers a more direct engagement with the specificity of his anguish, directly addressing his intrusive thought of his father's remains reduced to "maritime waste" with a counter-image:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
>
> Of his bones are coral made;
>
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
>
> Nothing of him that doth fade
>
> But doth suffer a sea-change
>
> Into something rich and strange.

(*The Tempest* 1.2.474-79).

Rather than Alonso's body decomposing into a mere "wrack," Ariel's lyric description presents a transmutation: his bones become coral, and his eyes turn to pearls. This image of the corpse changing "into something rich and strange" serves to dispel the most disconcerting element of Ferdinand's grief, the thought of his father's body decomposed by the ocean (l. 479). In this way,

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[4] Oxford English Dictionary. "wrack, n. 2". Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2024.

the second verse of "Ariel's Song" does not simply provide a comforting distraction but renders consolation, comprehending the specificity of Ferdinand's anguish and aestheticizing his grief over Alonso into the elegiac form. Thus, Ferdinand notes, "The ditty does remember my drowned father" (*The Tempest* 1.2.482). By elegizing Alonso's drowning, Ariel offers Ferdinand what Eliot calls the "strange consolation" of poetry: where previously there seemed no chance for preserving the memory of Alonso's death at sea, "Ariel's Song" preserves the memory and dignifies the manner of his death, aestheticizing the ocean's decomposition of Alonso's drowned corpse into a deep-sea funeral ceremony fit for a king.

Significantly, this allegorical reading of the transmutation of personality depends upon Eliot's allusion to "Ariel's Song" in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," where he gestures towards Ferdinand's embodied sense of consolation as the paradigmatic effect of poetry as such. More than a passing allusion, Eliot's argument about Shakespeare suggests that he conceptualizes—that he thinks through—Ferdinand's emotional response to "Ariel's Song" as though Shakespeare's character (Ferdinand) dramatized his (Eliot's) embodiment experience of reciting Shakespeare's verse. Indeed, in "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1951), Eliot wrote that the words "Full fathom five thy father lies" still provide "as keen a thrill, when I repeat them today, as they did fifty years ago" (*Complete Prose* 8: 133). The words "as keen a thrill" suggest a felt understanding or intuitive apprehension—a sense of excitement, delight, or frisson arising through the physical act of reciting Shakespeare's words. For him, such an experience required no "explanation" (*Complete Prose* 8: 133). Here, explanation signifies doubly in its inessentiality, neither needed for Eliot's embodied experience of poetic understanding nor for reflecting upon the significance of that experience. Instead, "Ariel's Song" afforded Eliot an

affective, embodied understanding, persisting over decades, enacted through recitation—through the felt sensations of vocalizing the materiality of Shakespeare's verse.

When recited, the opening line of Ariel's second verse, "Full fathom five thy father lies" (l. 474), requires readers to round their lips, force plosive expulsions of air, and shape their tongues against their teeth to produce the line's marked labial and linguodental consonant clusters. This includes the prominent bilabial plosives of "*F*ull *f*athom *five thy fath*er, the lateral liquid "l" of "fu*ll*," the labio-dental fricative of "fa*th*er" and "*l*ies." Taken together, the recitation of line 474 enacts the sensorimotor image of the tides' assault upon the shore represented in the measured expulsion of mostly voiceless breath upon the inner lips. However, those lips find the first signs of a fleeting reprieve from the forced breath in the gentler though elongated fricative "-s" of "lies," which feels as if it were drawing out the consonantal crashing into that moment of stillness before the breath—the water—recedes into the wash of the voiced, rounded vowels—the tide pool—to follow in line 475. "Of his bones are coral made" most prominently contains a series of bilabial phonemes. The cavernous "-o" and "-a" sounds in "*o*f," "b*o*nes," "c*ora*l," and "m*a*de" find simmering space in the "-s" fricatives of "hi*s* bone*s*," before the plosive "d" in "ma*d*e," swells up another wave of consonants in the line to follow. In attending to the phonetic structure of only this first couplet of Ariel's second verse, one realizes the tidal pattern of tensing and release, of voiceless breathing and breathless vocalization, required to recite "Ariel's Song."

Significantly, this recursive oral patterning of tensing and release, sounding and dissolution, embodies the tidal rhythms suggested by the song's imagistic content and dramatic context—an imitative reading of form that has an "objective correlative" in recitation. For Eliot, this embodied recitation likely contributes to the "keen thrill" he reports experiencing even decades later. The proprioceptive frisson arising from the recursive patterns of tension and

release in the mouth and vocal apparatus is an embodied experience beyond intellectual appreciation. The controlled exhalation required for articulating longer phrases, followed by brief pauses for inhalation, mimics the deliberate breathing patterns used in relaxation techniques. The resulting experience is soothing and invigorating—a "keen thrill" that emerges from physical relaxation and cognitive stimulation. Indeed, I argue that reciting "Ariel's Song" activates the same sensorimotor experiences as deep breathing exercises, thus embodying the "strange consolation" that Eliot abstracts from Ferdinand, which he makes the primary function of poetry as such. By repeatedly engaging in this embodied recitation, Eliot recreates the poem's semantic content and its affective and physiological impact, allowing him to access and renew the poem's consoling effects on his body across decades.

Cognitive-Affective Formalism and the Sensibility of Early Modern Verse

Informed by Eliot's allusions, my phenomenologically attuned phonetic analysis of "Ariel's Song" exemplifies one application of "cognitive-affective formalism," a new lexicon for describing how versification shapes embodied cognition and emotional conception, terms I borrow from contemporary cognitive philosophy and cognitive neuroscience. At its core, cognitive-affective formalism posits that poetic form does not simply represent or communicate predetermined emotions but actively reshapes the processes underlying emotional experience through encounters that disrupt readers' interoceptive inference. The foundation of this theory lies in reconceptualizing Eliot's notion of transmuting "personal feeling" into poetic "art emotion" through the lens of Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, the topic of Chapter One. For now, Barrett argues that the brain dynamically constructs emotions as it integrates bodily signals with environmental cues (Barrett "The Theory of Constructed Emotion: An Active Inference Account of Interoception and Categorization" [2017], 1). This emotional

construction process relies heavily on what Anil Seth and Karl Friston call "interoceptive inference"—the brain's ongoing predictive modeling of internal bodily states (Seth and Friston 5). Cognitive-affective formalism extends this idea to readers' engagements with versified language. Informed by cognitive philosophy and neuroscience research, cognitive-affective formalism understands elements of versification and form as environmental stimuli for readers' sensorimotor perception, capable of intervening in the brain's predictive processing of emotions and possibly leading to new moments of emotional conception.

In cognitive-affective formalism, the object of analysis is "verse" rather than "poetry." While recognizing its classical sense as writing composed in lines, I define verse as any segmented language accentuating linguistic materiality and literary form. By "materiality," I mean *linguistic elements become objects of sense perception*, especially the visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and temporal qualia of phonemes and graphemes.[5] By "form," I mean *any discernible and ostensibly intentional principle of pattern or organization*. By "versification," I thus mean the set containing both the material and formal elements of verse, including conventional categories of prosodic analysis including rhythm, meter, rhyme and rhyme scheme, segmentation, caesurae, and alliteration, but also syntax, grammar, and interlineal phonetics. Notably, this definition does not consider the referential—the denotative, symbolic, or representational—functions of versification as crucial as those terms are to fully appreciate a

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[5] See Marjorie Perloff. *Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021; Marjorie Perloff. *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1990; Marjorie Perloff. *Poetry on & Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1998; Marjorie Perloff. *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010; Craig Dworkin. *Dictionary Poetics: Toward a Radical Lexicography*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020; Craig Dworkin. *No Medium*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013; Craig Dworkin. *Radium of the Word: A Poetics of Materiality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020.

given versified text.[6] Instead, cognitive-affective formalism understands versification as a means for distilling the embodied, perceptual effects innate in all alphabetic language; it, therefore, analyzes versification to understand better the embodied—the intellective and emotional effects of versified language.

Without prescribing or normalizing the relationship between form, content, and embodiment as experienced by any given reader in response to any given verse, this dissertation develops cognitive-affective formalism by "reading Eliot reading" early modern verse. To put it another way, I adopt the deconstructive method of supplementation to ensure that cognitive-affective formalism respects contingencies that differentiate not just individual readers but every act of reading. By doing so, I identify with and further develop the embodied readings implicit in Eliot's voluminous literary critical writings on early modern verse. I take my lead in this regard from Jennifer Formichelli, who argues that "Eliot immersed himself in the writers of the seventeenth-century" and "inbreathed from that age 'the thoughts, feelings, senses, sights, smells and sounds'" to affect a "perceptive recreation" in his poetry of the "tactile mental sensings" he encountered therein (Formichelli 197). While I agree with Formichelli that Eliot's embodied engagements with early modern verse represent "perhaps his most significant contribution to modern poetic practice and criticism," my approach differs by primarily focusing on Eliot's

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[6] Moreover, cognitive-affective formalism does not suppose any essential relationship between poetry and verse. Eliot argues in "Poetry and Prose" (1921) that poetry occurs in both verse and prose as the emotional effect of self-consciously aestheticized language or adopted convention. As I define it, verse is a compositional medium with rhetorical or communicative functions opposite to prose. Whereas verse accentuates the perceptual features—the form and materiality—of language, prose emphasizes its symbolic, representational, and communicative functions. Though poetic modes or genres (e.g., epic, narrative, lyric, and drama) are critical to a fuller understanding of many instances of versified language, I argue that understood rhetorically and with respect to versification as a medium, poetic genres exist on a functional continuum that extends between the practically unachievable extremes of "pure" verse (e.g., language poetry) and "pure" prose (e.g., instruction manuals).

critical practice rather than solely on how his critical engagements inform our reading of his poetry (199).

By developing the embodied, sensorimotor aspects implicit in Eliot's early modern criticism through cognitive-affective formalism, this dissertation broaches the possibility of a transhistorical mode of analytical reading rooted in the phenomenology of embodiment that respects contextual and historicist methods and aims without expressly intending to advance contextualist and historicist understanding. To state my position more clearly, this dissertation values Eliot's early modern criticism because of his insights into the phenomenology of embodied reading afforded by early modern verse. For Eliot, early modern literature, especially Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and seventeenth-century metaphysical and Augustan lyric, mattered because of what such works revealed to him about the relationship between cognition and what he referred to as "poetry," a metonym for the aesthetic aspects of all cultural productions. Indeed, as he infamously wrote in "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), his review of Herbert Grierson's popular 1921 anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century,* "In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated *by* the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden" (*Complete Prose* 2: 380).

As Jewels Spears Brooker explains it, the dissociation of sensibility—despite its historical infeasibility—signified to Eliot an epiphenomenon of what, in the introduction to his 1924-25 "Clark Lectures" on Metaphysical Poetry, he identified as the "disintegration of the intellect" (Brooker 106). Brooker demonstrates that Eliot's "thesis" in his "Clark Lectures" is "that between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries," European poetry witnessed "a separation of the thinker from the object of thought and that this development was part of a broader breakdown

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in the history of ideas" (106). Brooker writes that, according to Eliot, "the chasm separating

Dante and Donne" appears as "a corollary of that between Aquinas and Descartes" (106). In

Brooker's paraphrase, Descartes claims that "since objects have no existence outside the mind,"

then the body, being "an object like any other [...] may well be simply a phantom conjured up

by the imagination" (106). Eliot tests this claim, she argues, by asking, "What happens to love

poetry, and to love itself, in a world without objects [...] when the subject is self-contained and

self-sufficient, when ideas refer not to meanings outside the self, but to a world inside one's

head?" (106). For Eliot, Descartes accelerates the disintegration of the intellect by

philosophically tearing the mind from the body.

 The dissociation of sensibility emerges from the disintegration of the intellect because,

under the influence of Descartes' mind-body dualism, thought falls asunder from feeling: the

former thus appears a function of the mind ("head") and feeling of the body ("heart"). Because

of the development of Enlightenment rationalism, Eliot finds that the dissociation of sensibility

leads to the valuation of the mind and the simultaneous devaluation of the body. However, kept

in a dissociated state, with the mind conceived of as separate from the body, Eliot finds that

thought decays into base "ratiocination" (Dryden) and feeling into mere "sentimentality"

(Milton). Thus, while a focus on embodiment might initially seem at odds with Eliot's well-

known roots in early twentieth-century British idealism, his early modern literary criticism

suggests that he understood the reading and writing of *verse* as a perceptual and, therefore,

embodied means of recreating, in a limited manner, modernity's dissociated sensibility.

 Indeed, as I show in Chapter Three, Eliot's critical interest in the metaphysical poets of

the seventeenth century, especially John Donne and Richard Crashaw, directly related to his

belief that such poets were the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth" and thus "possessed

a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience" (*Complete Prose* 2:

382). Indeed, for Eliot, metaphysical poets did more than devour disparate experiences: they

catabolized those experiences into their constituents of thought and feeling, converting those

constituents into linguistic equivalents or "physical concomitants," particles of language that the

poet metabolizes into new versified combinations of thought and feeling (*Complete Prose* 2:

382). "A thought to Donne was an experience," Eliot wrote in "The Metaphysical Poets"—"it

modified his sensibility" (*Complete Prose* 2: 382). He continues:

> A change of feeling, with Donne, is instead the regrouping of the same elements under a
>
> mood which was previously subordinate. It is not the substitution of one mood for a
>
> wholly different one [...] When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is
>
> constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic,
>
> irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two
>
> experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the
>
> smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new
>
> wholes

<p align="center">(Complete Prose 2: 382).</p>

In other words, for Eliot, metaphysical poetry mattered because it showed that "after the

dissociation," poets could, nevertheless, still recreate sensuous wholes of experience and could

still allow readers to "feel their thought as immediately as the odor of a rose" (*Complete Prose* 2:

382). While I reject the historical claims implied by the dissociation of sensibility and the

disintegration of the intellect, cognitive-affective formalism takes seriously Eliot's claims that

mind/body dualism has had deleterious consequences for the collective sensibility of Western

readers and writers. Moreover—and more importantly—I hold that engaging with versified

<p align="center">15</p>

language in a manner attuned to its cognitive-affective affordances uniquely challenges the Cartesian vice that keeps thinking to the mind and feeling to the body.

Embodied Cognition and Literary Studies

Before surveying the extant research on Eliot's early modern criticism, I first discuss the loose confederation of cognitive theories that inform cognitive-affective formalism's conception of embodiment. First, I must emphasize that cognitive-affective formalism is not a psycholinguistic interpretation or cognitive grammar of poetry *a la* cognitive poetics. As developed by scholars such as Peter Stockwell and Reuven Tsur, cognitive poetics applies cognitive linguistic theories to literary texts, focusing on how general cognitive processes shape readers' understanding and interpretation of those texts.[7] In contrast, cognitive-affective formalism examines how versification interacts with embodied cognitive processes involved in intellection and emotional conception. Unlike traditional cognitive poetics, which often emphasizes conceptual metaphor theory and schema activation, cognitive-affective formalism centers on the material properties of verse and its capacity to disrupt interoceptive inference, investigating how sensorimotor engagement with poetic form complicates and unsettles pre-existing ideational and emotional concepts and categories. In short, cognitive-affective formalism understands critical engagements with versification as fundamentally perceptual phenomena involving the dynamic coupling of readers and texts rather than encouraging readers

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[7] See Reuven Tsur. *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*. Amsterdam, New York: North-Holland, 1992; Reuven Tsur. *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive? The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992; Peter Stockwell. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 2002; Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen. *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*. London, New York: Routledge, 2003; Geert Brône, Jeroen Vandaele. *Cognitive Poetics: Goals, Gains, and Gaps*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009; Peter Stockwell. *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009; Reuven Tsur. *Poetic Rhythm: Structure and Performance: An Empirical Study in Cognitive Poetics*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2012; and Reuven Tsur. *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue: Precategorial Information in Poetry*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 2012.

to view texts through the hermeneutics of suspicion associated with forms of critique and interpretation.

Embodied, Enacted, Extended, and Embedded Cognition

To emphasize my foundational argument, cognitive-affective formalism involves close attention to how versification interacts with the embodied cognitive processes of readers. Thus, in establishing cognitive-affective formalism, this dissertation draws on insights from contemporary research on embodied cognition and the neurocognitive foundations of emotion. Of particular importance to my aims is the so-called "4E cognition," which names a loose confederation of interdisciplinary philosophical and scientific theories that treat the mind—to various degrees, combinations, and manners—as embodied, enacted, extended, and embedded. All theories of 4E cognition begin with the embodied mind hypothesis, often citing Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Evelyn Rosch's book, *The Embodied Mind* (1991), as foundational. In *The Embodied Mind,* Varela, Thompson, and Rosch synthesized ideas from cognitive science, neuroscience, Husserlian phenomenology, developmental psychology, philosophy, and Buddhism to "open a space of possibilities in which the circulation between cognitive science and human experience can be fully appreciated and to foster the transformative possibilities of human experience in a scientific culture" (Varela, et al. lxiv-lxv). For the authors, embodiment offered just such an interdisciplinary space that has only grown in decades since their book first appeared.

As for the embodied mind hypothesis, Shaun Gallagher explains it as the theory that "the body's neural and extraneural processes, as well as its mode of coupling with the environment," fundamentally shape cognition (Gallagher *Embodied and Enactive Approaches to Cognition* 1). Previously, in *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (2005), Gallagher similarly argued that "bodily

movement transformed onto the level of action, is the very thing that constitutes the self"

(Gallagher *How the Body Shapes the Mind* 8). He further explains:

> If, as indicated in these and many other studies, embodied movement contributes to the
>
> shaping of perception, emotional experience, memory, judgment, and the understanding
>
> of self and others, then we need an account of embodiment that is sufficiently detailed
>
> and that is articulated in a vocabulary that can integrate discussions across the cognitive
>
> sciences
>
> (Gallagher 10).

Gallagher explores how prenatal bodily movement organizes our perceptual and behavioral

capacities, enabling recognition and imitation of others' gestures from birth, arguing that

"movement prefigures the lines of intentionality, gesture formulates the contours of social

cognition, and, in both the most general and most specific ways, embodiment shapes the mind"

(9). Thus, the embodied mind hypothesis argues that an organism's physical body and

sensorimotor capabilities shape its cognitive affordances.

Complementing the embodied mind hypothesis, Alva Nöe, in his 2004 book *Action in

Perception,* posits that perception emerges through an organism's active and embodied

engagements with the environment. Indeed, he goes further, asserting that "perception is for

action and that this action orientation shapes most cognitive processes" (Nöe 30). Nöe's enacted

mind thesis thus challenges the traditional cognitivist notion that perception requires a library of

mental representations that reflect prior understandings of the cognitive richness of perceptual

experiences. Against mental representationalism, the enacted mind hypothesis asserts the

inseparable relationship between perception and action, where "action" does not necessarily

mean complex movements but merely intentionally directed environmental engagement—

especially "probing, exploratory activities" (Noë 77). Ultimately, the enacted mind hypothesis challenges the view that the self is an isolated, internal-oriented entity and instead proposes that one's perception of the world "shows up" or presents through the embodied knowledge enacted through sensorimotor engagements with the environment.

To illustrate his idea that perception requires active presenting or "enaction," Noë provides the example of apperceiving the dimensionality and shape of a cube from the direct perception of only one surface. For Noë, the cube should appear as a cube with extension, breadth, and depth and not just a square surface with extension and breadth "depends on our implicit grasp of the way perspectival shape varies as we move in respect to an object" (198). According to him, the perceiver presents the cube as cubical by detecting the minute aspectual variations of the object as the mind probes the surrounding environment for differential aspects that suggest "shape-critical" information. "We don't have names for every aspect we encounter," Noë writes, "but we have a grip on the way aspects vary. This grip is, in effect, our grasp of what it is for something to be *presented* as cubical, or spherical," adding that "our grasp of color" likewise "depends on our implicit mastery of the way appearances change as color-critical conditions change" (199).

Extended cognition further challenges traditional boundaries of cognition, arguing that cognitive processes can extend beyond the individual's brain and body to include external tools, artifacts, and resources. In their seminal article "The Extended Mind" (1995), Andy Clark and David Chalmers illustrate this concept with the example of Otto, who uses a notebook as a memory aid, demonstrating how external tools can become integral parts of our cognitive processes (Clark and Chalmers 8). Building on this idea, Lambros Malafouris in *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement* (2013) pushes for a more radical

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understanding of the extended mind. He argues that despite cognitive science's recent recognition of the body and environment's roles in shaping cognition, a reluctance remains amongst scholars to embrace fully the "extended mind proper" (Malafouris 3). Thus, Malafouris advocates for a "theory of material engagement" that posits a "constitutive intertwining of cognition with material culture" (3). This view goes beyond seeing the environment as merely scaffolding cognition, instead arguing the "ontological inseparability" of human minds and cultural objects. For Malafouris, understanding human cognition is "essentially interlocked with the study of the technical mediations that constitute the central nodes of a materially extended and distributed human mind" (4).

Finally, embedded cognition theories are the most varied among the 4E theories. However, they are united by the hypothesis that, given the validity of the embodied mind hypothesis, cognition extends not just to the action, perception, and material engagements of organisms. Due to its material nature, the mind is also socially situated and embedded in the organism's immediate environment, both of which—social and environmental context— influence and shape the individual organism's cognitive processes on non-evolutionary timescales and the species' cognitive capacities on evolutionary ones (Gallagher 23). Gallagher explains that some embedded cognition theories posit the socially situated mind as that which "extends across social dyads, teams, or small groups where the coupling is often direct, active, and mutual" (Gallagher 23). Cognition, according to situated theories, "literally extends beyond the boundaries of the individual brain into the world itself" (23). In embedded cognition, cognitive processes emerge from interplay with external props, tools, and artifacts, which leads some theorists to consider "the notion of the socially extended mind," the idea that "our thought processes and cognitive capacities are fundamentally co-constituted by the constraining and

enabling factors of the larger contexts we are embedded within" (23). Such a view further suggests embedded cognition as a "cognitive ecology comprising brain, body, and surrounding world" in which "our thought processes and cognitive capacities are fundamentally co-constituted by the constraining and enabling factors of the larger contexts we are embedded within" (23).

The interconnected perspectives of embodied, enacted, extended, and embedded cognition collectively intend to redefine conventional Western understandings of the mind and its relationship with the environment. 4E cognition supposes the brain does not confine cognition but rather sees cognition as distributed across an organism's body, external tools, social interactions, and the surrounding environment. This holistic view challenges traditional cognitivist representational theories and inaugurates a still nascent field of interdisciplinary research. Ultimately, the 4E cognition framework invites scholars from differing fields to reconsider the boundaries of the mind, recognizing the complex, reciprocal relationships that shape cognitive experiences. As a part of this broader 4E cognition framework, cognitive-affective formalism provides a robust methodology for analyzing how literary text and, more pertinent to this dissertation, versified language comprises one aspect of a complex cognitive ecology with readers' perceptual experiences.

4E Cognition and Literary Studies

Before returning to Eliot's readings of early modern verse, I survey extant research that bridges literary criticism and formalism with 4E theories of embodiment. The application of 4E cognition theories to literary studies has revealed how the materiality of texts, the embodied nature of reading, and the cultural contexts of literature all play crucial roles in shaping literary cognition. Scholars in this field have explored how the materiality of texts, the embodied nature

of reading, and the cultural contexts of literature all play crucial roles in shaping literary cognition. For instance, Marco Caracciolo's book, *The Experientiality of Narrative* (2014), applies enactive cognition to narrative theory, arguing that readers' embodied experiences fundamentally shape their engagement with fictional worlds.[8] Similarly, Karin Kukkonen's *4E Cognition and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (2019) demonstrates how one might understand eighteenth-century novels as cognitive artifacts that extend readers' mental processes.[9]

In poetry studies, in *Poetry and Mind: Tractatus Poetico-philosophicus* (2018), Laurent Dubreuil argues that poetry's disruptions to normal cognitive processes prompt participatory mind-text couplings transcending propositional rationality.[10] Previously, in *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (2013), G. Gabrielle Starr inaugurates poetry studies into the field of neuroaesthetics, borrowing insights from neurocognitive studies of literary reading and creativity and offers empirical evidence explaining how poetry evokes multisensory experiences.[11] Starr follows *Feeling Beauty* with an article on Wallace Stevens, wherein she argues that precise formal juxtaposition of conflicting sensorimotor images generates what I recognize as the cognitive-affective conditions of disorientation that support a temporary experience of "impossible embodiment."[12]

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[8] See Marco Caracciolo. *The Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014.

[9] See Karin Kukkonen. *4E Cognition and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: How the Novel Found Its Feet*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

[10] More specifically, Dubreuil posits that poetry "disrupts the common order of thoughts" to create an "intellective space," prompting a participatory coupling between text and reader, such that "poetic language incorporates "cognitive dissonance and non-consistent logical reasoning" to access domains beyond algorithmic rationality," Dubreuil. *Poetry and Mind: Tractatus Poetico-philosophicus*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018, 8, 76.

[11] See G. Gabrielle Starr. *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2013 and Starr, "Impossible Embodiment."

[12] See G. Gabrielle Starr. "Aesthetics and Impossible Embodiment: Stevens, Imagery, and Disorientation," *Wallace Stevens Journal*, 39, 2, 2015, 157-81.

Meanwhile, Margaret Freeman's book *Aesthetic Cognition* (2020) explores the cognitive dimensions involved in the perceptual formation of poems from the perspectives of both writers and readers. Whereas much work in cognitive literary studies outside of Starr's neuro-aesthetic-informed poetics tends to model embodied literary cognition on the phenomenology of immersion afforded by fictional narratives, Freeman argues that versification uniquely prompts equally "immersive" experiences of intellection and emotional conception without relying on fictionality or representation.[13] She explains:

> When it comes to poetry [as opposed to immersive narrative forms], the problems are compounded. The sensory-motor-emotive (sensate) affects of a poem lie not only in the poem's images but rather the sounds together with the poem's images, its syntactic patterns, its metaphors, its subject matter. The challenge lies in determining how these combinations work to evoke affective response
>
> (Freeman 8).

Indeed, for Freeman, a theory of aesthetic cognition must attempt to identify "the sensory-motor-emotive processes of sensate cognition that created the poem or painting" (8). Moreover, such a theory must not identify the poet's personal feeling, which is irrecoverable, with the sensate cognition of the poem nor naively adhere to the idea that the same sensate cognition is "necessarily replicable for their respondents" (8). Thus, what Freeman calls "aesthetic cognition" must ground itself in an iconic theory of form—where a poem's sensate cognition resembles the cognitive-affective states to which it refers—and thus develop analytical tools capable of reflecting the sensate cognition emergent across a variety of individual engagements (8).

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13 For instance, in *Thinking with Literature* (2016), Terrence Cave argues that representational descriptions of characters in fictional narratives can trigger embodied cognitive experiences in readers, Terence Cave. *Thinking With Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Cognitive-affective formalism addresses Freeman's concerns in several ways. First, it provides a framework for analyzing the sensorimotor-emotive processes involved in poetic engagement by examining how the recitation of formal elements evokes specific embodied responses. For instance, in my earlier analysis of "Ariel's Song" from *The Tempest,* I demonstrated how recitation enacts and embodies the "sensate cognition" of Shakespeare's verse, giving the language shape on the tongue, teeth, and larynx. These embodiments, I further argued, enact distinct sensorimotor responses associated with deep-breathing exercises that might lead to a sense of emotional consolation. In this way, "Ariel's Song" enacts what Terrence Cave, in his reading of the famous "Dover Cliffs" scene in *King Lear* calls "cognitive mimesis"—the recreation, in verse, of some aspect of the phenomenology associated with some embodied experience be it a fictional or not. "Shakespeare's language, and his actors, take us *towards* the edge of an imagined cliff, get us to imagine the sensation of falling [Cave's emphasis]" (Cave 108). To analyze how literary works facilitate this "cognitive mimesis," Cave proposes viewing genres, rhetorical devices, and formal poetic structures as "affordances" that enable modes of participatory engagement for writers and readers (55).

Cognitive-affective formalism, as developed through my engagement with Eliot's readings of early modern verse in this dissertation, further resonates with Michael Burke's insights in *Literary Reading: Cognition and Emotion* (2010). Burke directly challenges previous approaches in psychological studies of literary reading that tended to treat reading comprehension as primarily demanding readers' abstract decoding of semantic meanings divorced from an embodied context. Instead, Burke's research frames literary reading as an inherently embodied perceptual act where the reader's cognitive processes intertwine with "affective and somatic inputs" from the text (Burke 5). Specifically, Burke argues that the reader

not only retrieves memories and experiences that feed into meaning-making as static

representations but actively reconstructs those meanings with "traces of associated movements,

postures, and somatic reactions from the original experience" (4). This allows the literary text to

effectively re-enact and re-animate embodied states in the reader, enabling them to "re-

experience some of the original feelings and sensations" associated with a particular memory or

personal narrative (4). By positing that "emotive and somatic markers are crucial to the dynamic

and fluvial meaning-making processes that take place in working memory" during reading,

Burke's perspective aligns with and substantiates cognitive-affective formalism's broader interest

in the phenomenological coupling effected between readers and verse and the sensorimotor-

emotive affordances of versification (4).

Eliot as Embodied Reader

Building on the above overview of cognitive-affective formalism and embodied reading,

I consider the possibility of understanding Eliot as an embodied reader before returning to his

critical engagements with early modern verse. Eliot's concept of the "auditory imagination," as it

appears in Eliot's 1934 lecture, "Matthew Arnold," provides the best warrant for such an

understanding. There, he famously writes:

> What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating
>
> far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to
>
> the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back,
>
> seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without
>
> meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current,
>
> and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality (*Complete*
>
> *Prose* 4: 666-67).

At its core, the auditory imagination suggests reading as the enaction of what, in the above discussion, Freeman calls "sensate cognition." As "the feeling for syllable and rhythm," the auditory imagination enacts a sensorimotor and emotive immersion in the materiality (syllable) and formal (rhythm) aspects of versification as they play upon the body. "Penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling," the auditory imagination suggests both an embodied complement to "the historical sense" as it appears in "Tradition and the Individual" and a psychodynamic corollary to impersonality. Moreover, in describing the auditory imagination as "sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back," Eliot raises the provocative possibility, familiar to theories of enactive and embedded cognition, that the development of niche-specific cognitive affordances occurs at both individual and evolutionary timescales. In other words, for the reader inclined towards writing verse, the auditory imagination means not just understanding and appreciating the meanings of old verse but actually "reinvigorating every word" through embodiment or, as he elsewhere suggests, "incarnation," which "fuses the old and the obliterated and the trite, with the current, and the new and surprising."

Though Eliot neither anticipates these terms nor leads to their development, one can nevertheless read the auditory imagination as implying the embodiment of the historical sense and the reinvigoration of past sensate cognition—the sensorimotor and emotive correlatives of thinking and feeling—embedded in old verse. Indeed, such a reading further develops Tony Sharpe's argument that Eliot's understanding of poetic incantation suggests an emotional and cognitive function for the materiality of verse. Quoting from the conclusion to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (1933)— Eliot's 1932-33 "Charles Eliot Norton Lectures" at Harvard—Sharpe explains that for Eliot:

Incantation [...] involves accessing or acceding to a kind of collective unconscious

immanent in the rhythms of words, and in this process, which partly involves a

displacement of 'our quotidian character,' "the mind which creates" is of less moment, it

seems, than "the man who suffers," since the release of pent-up energies "is less like

what we know as positive pleasure, than a sudden relief from an intolerable burden"

(Eliot qtd. in Sharpe 379).

One might interpret Eliot's suggestion of "sudden relief from an intolerable burden" following

incantation as the enactment of a cognitive-affective state similar to dissociation. Like

Ferdinand's "strange consolation" or the "keen thrill" he experiences in reciting "Ariel's Song,"

Eliot appears to place significant interest in the embodied experience of voicing versified

language.

Reassessing Eliot's Early Modern Criticism

Understanding Eliot as an embodied reader facilitates reconsidering his critical

engagements with early modern verse through cognitive-affective formalism. This matters

because traditional approaches to Eliot's early modern criticism and allusions typically involve

some methodological variety of "source hunting." As a hermeneutic reading mode, source

hunting reduces Eliot's early modern sources to ciphers for understanding his writings. Partly,

the dominance of source-hunting approaches in Eliot studies during the latter half of the

twentieth century owes to the dense allusions of *The Waste Land* (1922) and Eliot's appended

"Notes." Thus, beginning with contemporary reviewers, source hunting quickly solidified as the

critical approach to reading Eliot. Grover Smith's 1956 book, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A*

Study in Sources and Meaning (1956), only furthered the methodological solidification of source

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hunting by attempting to fix the intertextual weave of Eliot's poetry into a static "spatial pattern," a method typical of New Critical close reading.[14]

Smith's study influenced subsequent readings of Eliot's poetry, including works by Calvin Bedient, Jewels Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, Steven Matthews, and Allyson Booth.[15] While valuable in its own right, this persistent focus on source hunting and intertextual analysis overshadows the more nuanced aspects of Eliot's engagement with early modern literature. By prioritizing the identification and interpretation of literary allusions, these approaches risk reducing Eliot's complex, embodied reading practices to mere textual borrowing, failing to capture the cognitive and affective dimensions of his critical engagement with early modern verse. Moreover, using Eliot's early modern sources to explain his poetry without proper understanding of those sources in their early modern contexts risks perpetuating Eliot's sometimes mis- and dis-informed—and mis- and dis-informing—reading of the sources he engages with.

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[14] For some reviewers at the time, like the anonymous "J. M.," who wrote in the magazine *The Doubler, The Waste Land's* "medley of catchphrases, allusions, innuendoes, paraphrases, and quotations gives unmistakable evidence of rare poetic genius" even if, he admits, Eliot alone might understand the meaning (Brooker 105). Others, such as John Crowe Ransom, criticized the extensive borrowing, claiming hardly any lines were original and arguing that there is not "a single occasion when his context is as mature as the quotation which he inserts into it; he does not invent such phrases for himself, nor, does his understanding quite appreciate them, for they require an organization of experience which is yet beyond him" (Brooker 106). The first significant study of Eliot's citational and allusive method was Grover Smith's *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (1956). In the preface, Smith explains that his book "analyzes the poems and plays and examines their sources, insofar as these have been identifiable," adding that "my close attention to the minor poems, especially those in quatrains starting with 'The Hippopotamus,' has been owing to their general interest and to my wish to neglect nothing that might clarify 'the figure in the carpet'" (Smith vii). J. M. *Double Dealer 5* (May 1923), pp. 173-74, in *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews*, Jewels Spears Brooker, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 105; John Crowe Ransom, "Waste Lands." *New York Evening Post Literary Review* 3, pp. 825-26, in *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews*, Jewels Spears Brooker, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 106; and Grover Smith. *The Waste Land*. London, Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1983.

[15] See Calvin Bedient. *He Do the Police in Different Voices: The Waste Land and Its Protagonist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986; Jewels Spears; Joseph Bentley Brooker. *Reading the Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990; Steven Matthews. *T. S. Eliot and Early Modern Literature*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013; and Allyson Booth. *Reading the Waste Land from the Bottom Up*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, a division of St. Martin's Press, LLC, 2015.

Indeed, Matthews' *T. S. Eliot and Early Modern Literature* (2013), while the only full-length study of Eliot's engagements with the early modern period, somewhat mischaracterizes those engagements. Though Matthews recognizes that Eliot's "recourse to Early Modern sources enables him to build his large poetic structure upon" intimate and familial themes, his analysis remains trapped in a reductive "cryptogrammatic" approach (Matthews 112). His focus on decoding hidden connections obscures Eliot's evolving dialogue with dramatic form, his metrical innovations inspired by early modern verse, and his broader vision of historical engagement. Indeed, Matthews unduly emphasizes a remark from Eliot's 1926 review of F. J. C. Hearnshaw's *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*.[16] There, Eliot writes:

> Perhaps the final problem for historical students is a problem of imagination—that is, to reconstruct for ourselves so fully the mind of the Renaissance and the mind of the pre-Renaissance, that neither of them shall be dead for us – that is to say, unconscious parts of our own mind—but shall be conscious and therefore utilizable for our future development

<p style="text-align:center">(Complete Prose 2: 850).</p>

Matthews argues that Eliot's comment here "establishes how his poetry's historical understanding is at least partly derived from the necessity, for him, to bring the past into defined perspective, as an organizing principle for the new text" (22). However, Matthews fails to interrogate the implications of Eliot's critical program as it appears here, beyond simply noting

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[16] See F. J. C. Hearnshaw, editor. *The Social & Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. A Series of Lectures Delivered at King's College, University of London during the Session 1925-26.* London: Harrap, 1926.

that the above statement conflicts with Eliot's proto-Kuhnian view that the Elizabethan experience was forever irrecoverable behind the paradigm shift—the advent— of modernity.[17] Of course, one's understanding of past periods is inevitably filtered through one's contemporary perspective, making complete reconstruction impossible, meaning that the "reconstruction" of early modern minds is less a question of immersion in the past than an attempt to "present" the past in the way that Alva Noë's enactive mind hypothesis suggests: that is by recreating perception through the action of immersive recitation.

Indeed, in "Ben Jonson" (1919), Eliot advocates for such an enactive recovery of the Renaissance playwright. In that essay, he argues that "the immediate appeal of Jonson is to the mind" while his "emotional tone is not in the single verse but in the design of the whole (*Complete Prose* 2: 150). His sensibility, while not quite dissociated retreats from "the causal reader" because to experience something of the unified sensate cognition in Jonson's verse, Eliot argues, one must work towards "saturation in his work as a whole" (*Complete Prose* 2: 150). Such a process of saturation, Eliot continues, requires getting to "the center of his temperament," which he suggests means "we must see him unbiased by time, as a contemporary. And to see him as a contemporary does not so much require the power of putting ourselves into seventeenth-century London as it requires the power of setting Jonson in our London" (*Complete Prose* 2: 150). According to Eliot, Jonson's sensibility might be reinvigorated by the auditory imagination of twentieth-century readers because his verse embodies "a brutality, a lack of sentiment, a polished surface, a handling of large bold designs in brilliant colours, which ought to attract about three thousand people in London and elsewhere (*Complete Prose* 2: 150).

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[17] On the idea of the ontological incommensurability of perception and cognition following historical paradigm shifts, see Thomas S. Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Here, as elsewhere in his early modern criticism, Eliot reveals a sometimes dissociative tension in between contextual and presentist forms of critical reading. On the one hand, he dismisses certain forms of historical knowledge as unnecessary for understanding Jonson ("When we say that Jonson requires study, we do not mean the study of his classical scholarship or of seventeenth-century manners" [*Complete Prose* 2: 150]). On the other hand, his call for an "intelligent saturation in [Jonson's] work as a whole" and getting "to the centre of his work and his temperament" implies a mode of phenomenologically informed contextualization. Thus, Eliot sets his claim that "the knowledge required of the reader is not archaeology but knowledge of Jonson" against his imperative to see Jonson "unbiased by time, as a contemporary." While not becoming outright contradictory, the tension between these two perspectives complicates straightforward understandings of Eliot's critical engagements with early modern verse.

As I see it, Eliot's early modern literary criticism is neither simply ahistorical in the sense suggested by Pound's "make it new" version of modernism nor without concern for how the contingencies of embodied reading complicate other more conventional and somewhat naïve contextualist or literary-historical approaches that see the past as effectively recoverable, even if recovery is practically impossible (e.g., New Historicism, ideological critique, biographic criticism). Furthermore, Eliot's identification of Jonson's "brutality, a lack of sentiment, a polished surface, a handling of large bold designs in brilliant colours" as potentially appealing to contemporary audiences reveals a nuanced understanding of how historical works resonate across time. Eliot's approach challenges simplistic notions of specific poems as either achieving timeless artistic value or as the product of mere historical contingency. Most importantly, Eliot's dialectic idealism disqualifies Matthews' tendency to use "the past" as a heuristic for

understanding Eliot's compositional method and guiding interpretations of early modern allusions in his poetry.

While Matthews' approach falls short in recognizing the full significance of Eliot's critical engagement, Jonathan Goldberg's *Being of Two Minds: Modernist Criticism and Early Modern Texts* (2020) offers a more nuanced perspective on Eliot's complex stance towards tradition and criticism. Goldberg's analysis provides valuable insights that inform this dissertation's understanding of Eliot's embodied reading practices. For instance, Goldberg points out that in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot urges his English readers to reconsider their attitudes toward tradition, questioning both its use as a mode of "censure" and its weakly "approbative" archaeological deployment (Jonathan 13). As Goldberg observes, Eliot's goal seems to be consciousness-raising: "We might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism" (13-14). My reading of Eliot's early modern criticism starts from Goldberg's argument that Eliot's writings are not mere precursors to his poetry to then argue that Eliot's critical engagements with early modern verse enact and embody varieties of early modern sensate cognitions.

Twentieth-Century Approaches to Shakespeare Criticism

In proposing to read Eliot's early modern criticism through the lens of embodiment, this dissertation also challenges prevailing narratives about Eliot's outsized influence on developing twentieth-century early modern literary criticism, especially New Critical approaches to Shakespeare. This reassessment of Eliot's critical approach finds support in recent scholarship that challenges the conventional narrative of Eliot's influence. For instance, Kenneth Asher

questions the widely held belief in Eliot's central significance to New Criticism, summarizing how "typically, it will be pointed out that Eliot's theory of impersonality paved the way for the formalism of the New Critics and that his elevation of Donne and the metaphysical poets led to the New Critical valorization of wit and irony" (Asher 292). Indeed, as Asher writes, quoting Eliot's 1956 lecture, "The Frontiers of Criticism":

> Long after New Criticism's theory and practice were well established, Eliot spoke
> disparagingly of it as 'the lemon-squeezer school of criticism' and claimed that beyond
> giving some of its practitioners voice in *The Criterion*, he failed "to see any school of
> criticism which can be said to derive from myself"
>
> (Eliot qtd. in Asher 292).

Despite recent attempts to reevaluate Eliot's relationship to New Criticism, the narratives that Asher gestures towards still dominate contemporary scholarship in twentieth-century early modern criticism.

Richard Halpern, for instance, argues that "High modernism [...] dominated the cultural and critical reception of Shakespeare" in that era, accomplished through Eliot's "historical allegory" method of anachronistically "reading the past into the present" (Halpern 2-3). While his claims about Eliot's allegorical readings of literary history are true—he cites the same comments from "Ben Jonson" as I do in the previous section—Halpern nevertheless confuses the persistence of the poet's claims with the predominance of his critical methods. Cary DiPietro, in her reading of Eliot's essay "Hamlet" (1919), expands upon Halpern's claims that Eliot contributed to the twentieth-century "primitivization" of Shakespeare. Instead, in "Hamlet," Eliot emulated the style of his contemporaries, J. M. Robertson and E. E. Stoll, who were known for their "disintegrationist" views of Shakespeare and other early modern writers, going so far as to

satirize or even parody both Robertosn and Stoll, as well as the Victorian Romantic character criticism they reacted against.[18]

Eliot's complicated relationship to Romantic Shakespeare criticism is another conversation that would require much beyond the space this dissertation allows; however, as Eliot's criticism developed, so did his relationship to seminal Romantic Shakespeare critics such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare. As one example, consider Eliot's arguments about the poetic unity of Shakespeare's dramas as they appear in his posthumously published 1937 Edinburgh lectures, "The Development of Shakespeare's Verse." There, Eliot posits that "No play of Shakespeare can be wholly 'understood' by itself" but "needs to be read in the light of all his previous and all his subsequent plays" and insists that when read as a "unity and continuity" rather than a succession of dramas Shakespeare's verse calls "attention to the perfection of the whole" (*Complete Prose* 5: 540). Eliot's comment synthesizes Coleridge's remark from the third of his 1811-12 lectures on Shakespeare that "in the whole scheme of his Drama," Shakespeare "invented a work which was peculiar to himself" and second to none" (Coleridge, *Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819)* [2016], 30), with Wordsworth's later echo in his 1815 "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface [of *Lyrical Ballad*]" that Shakespeare's plays, in violating the classical unities, developed "an organic regularity" leading to "a unity of their own" when read as a whole (Wordsworth 168).[19] Meanwhile, Eliot's comments that the moments such as the

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[18] Eliot's essay originally appeared in *The Athenaeum* on September 26, 1919, as "Hamlet and His Problems: A Review of *The Problem of 'Hamlet,'* by J. M. Robertson." but later appeared as "Hamlet" in *Selected Essays.* See T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," *Complete Prose* 2: 122-28; J. M Robertson. *Elizabethan Literature*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1914; J. M. Robertson. *The Problem of "Hamlet."* London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1919; and Elmer Edgar Stoll. *Hamlet: An Historical and Comparative Study*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1919.

[19] See William Wordsworth. *The Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth,* edited by Paul M. Zall. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966 and Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Adam Roberts. *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819)*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

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balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* and the changing of the guards at the opening of *Hamlet* in which "the diction has become perfectly transparent" such that "one looks quite through it and only sees the meaning" of the words represent moments in which Shakespeare the poet, and Shakespeare the dramatist, become "perfectly one" echo Goethe's claim from his 1815 essay "Shakespesre Once Again" that "Shakespeare makes the world completely transparent for us; he does not write for the eye" (Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature* [1986], 166).[20]

However, as Hugh Grady argues "Eliot seems always to have had his greatest influence from the margins of his essays" (Grady 148). Indeed, Grady attributes more indirect influence to Eliot's "brief and undeveloped remarks on the dissociation of sensibility in 'The Metaphysical Poets' rather than any of several direct pronouncements on Shakespeare" (149). Eliot, of course, courted the early British New Critics by publishing their essays in *The Criterion* and flirted with the southern-agrarian politics of their American counterparts. However, it was New Critics such as Cleanth Brooks who, through decontextualized quotations from Eliot's early essays that the poet became associated with their "version of literary history" and its emphasis on "problematic unity, with its derivative concepts of tension and irony [...] the special hallmark of American new Criticism's 'spatial analyses'" (148-49).[21]

By "spatial analysis," Grady means a method of interpretation pioneered by G. Wilson Knight in his 1930 book, *The Wheel and the Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy.* Knight argued that a "Shakespearian tragedy is a set both spatially and temporally in the mind"

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[20]Johan Wolfgang von Goethe "Shakespeare Once Again" (1815), in *Goethe, Volume 3: Essays on Art and Literature.* Edited John Gearey, translated by Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

[21] See Cleanth Brooks. *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939; Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1938; Cleanth Brooks. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947; and F. O. Matthiessen. *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay of the Nature of Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1935.

(Knight 3).[22] The temporal set comprises the representational content of the drama (characters, setting, objects, action, and narrative). In contrast, the spatial set included patterns in the language (the materiality of character speech, symbolism, and imagery), if not the versification of Shakespeare's dramas. In other words, for Knight, the temporal set realizes the play's dramatic value; the spatial set, its poetic value. Therefore, a poetic drama "fuses" the two sets through direct correspondences between the textual surface and the symbolic "core," making it such that, according to Knight, "the commentator"—the literary critic or historian—who "does not look straight at the work he would interpret" misses this spatial element, understood to be the poetic essence of Shakespeare's tragedies (3, 5).

Gary Taylor further explains, that Knight's spatial reading was a synchronic mode of symbolic and thematic analysis. Its endpoint, Taylor suggests, was the identification of a stable "theme," wherein theme signifies doubly in the musical sense of "melody" and the rhetorical sense of "mood" (Taylor *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, from the Restoration to the Present* 221). Building on Grady's and Taylor's arguments, Neil Corcoran notes that the influence between Knight and Eliot was reciprocal and began with Eliot's poetry, not his criticism. He explains that Knight's criticism "was profoundly influenced by Eliot's poetry; and Eliot as a poet is, in turn, indebted in some respects in 'Coriolan' and 'Marina' to Knight's readings of *Coriolanus* and *Pericles*" (Corcoran 71-72). This nuanced understanding of influence contrasts with earlier views, such as Rene Wellek's, who, in Grady's paraphrase, characterized Knight as "a minor figure, of the 'New Romantics' whose chief importance is their (partial)

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[22] Knight was not the sole proponent of spatial interpretation of Shakespeare's writing between the interwar and postwar periods. For other notable examples, see Caroline F. E. Spurgeon. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*. New York: Macmillan, 1936 and Wolfgang Clemen. *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951.

influence on T. S. Eliot, 'by far the most important critic of the twentieth century in the English-speaking world" (Wellek qtd. in Grady 88-89).

While in his introduction to *The Wheel of Fire,* he praised Knight's spatial analysis as "the right way to interpret poetic drama," Eliot nevertheless expressed his skepticism towards interpretation as such (*Complete Prose* 4: 149). According to Eliot, Knight's readings of Shakespeare's tragedies did not escape the "essential error of all interpretation," namely, the tendency to forget that "in a work of art, reality only exists in and through appearances," a peril that "may be persevered in," Eliot adds, "by students of F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*" (*Complete Prose* 4: 151).[23] However, despite such misgivings about interpretation, Eliot admits that the desire to interpret may be instinctual. He suggests that those unable to resist this instinct might embrace a "skeptical approach" that involves "sticking" to the "more trustworthy senses" activated through close but non-interpretive observation and description (*Complete Prose* 4: 151). Therefore, "the Skeptical reader [of Shakespeare]" practices "appreciation of vocabulary and syntax, the analysis of line, metric and cadence" while attending to the effects of these elements on one's thoughts and feelings (*Complete Prose* 4: 151).). "Poetry is poetry," he concluded, "and the surface is as marvelous as the core [my emphasis]" (*Complete Prose* 4: 151).

By deliberately avoiding conventional interpretative frameworks, Eliot creates space for provocative, often counterintuitive readings that challenge established critical wisdom. Eliot's

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[23] F. H. Bradley was a neo-Kantian, British idealist who argued that reality was one and that absolute knowledge transcended lived experience. Eliot wrote his dissertation on Bradley as a graduate student in Harvard University's Department of Philosophy and Psychology during the 1914-15 academic year. Harvard accepted Eliot's dissertation when he filed it in 1915. However, the university did not grant him the title of Ph. D. because when it came time to defend his work, Eliot was already living in London and pursuing a career as a poet (*Letters* 1:142). Though he never returned to Harvard to defend his work, Eliot gave Columbia University Press permission to print and publish the dissertation in book form—later published as *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (1964). T. S. Eliot, "Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley," *Complete Prose* 1: 238-389; T. S. Eliot. *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964; F. H. Bradley. *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*. London: S. Sonnenschein and Co, 1899; and T. S. Eliot; Valerie Eliot; Hugh Haughton; John Haffenden. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009.

unconventional approach to reading Shakespeare exemplifies what Louis Menand calls "a theory of explicitly bad interpretation as a form of satire" (Menand 93). As a prime example of this strategy, I return to "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," the lecture with which I began this introduction, where Eliot deliberately puts forth an irreverent, self-undermining claim: that Shakespeare's tragedies manifest an attitude of stoical self-dramatization derived from Senecan philosophy. This intentionally bad misreading is a satire against what Eliot saw as the "recrudescences" of much philosophical Shakespeare criticism in the nineteen-twenties (*Complete Prose* 3: 245). Lytton Strachey's portrait of "the fatigued Shakespeare, a retired Anglo-Indian," John Middleton Murry's "messianic Shakespeare, bringing a new philosophy and a new system of yoga," and Wyndham Lewis's "ferocious Shakespeare, a furious Samson," were together, "beneficial" to literary criticism, Eliot argued, because they were wrong in the right way" (*Complete Prose* 3: 245).[24] "It is probable that we can never be right about someone as great as Shakespeare," he explained, and, therefore, "we should from time to time change our way of being wrong" because "nothing is more effective in driving out error than a new error" (*Complete Prose* 3: 245).

Recognizing that "there seems to be no evidence whatever" in the claim "that Shakespeare deliberately took a 'view of life' from Seneca," Eliot nevertheless suggested the apprehension of a stoical "attitude" that he believed Shakespeare "derived from Seneca, through the influence of the Senecan tragedy of the day, through Kyd and Peele, but chiefly Kyd" (*Complete Prose* 3: 247). Thus, although Eliot admitted that he thought it "quite likely that Shakespeare read some of Seneca's tragedies at school" and "quite unlikely" that "he knew

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[24] See Lytton Strachey. "*Shakespeare's Final Period*" (1904) in *Books and Characters, French & English*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1922; John Middleton Murry. *To the Unknown God: Essays towards a Religion*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1924; and Wyndham Lewis, *Lion and the Fox*.

anything of that extraordinarily dull and uninteresting body of Seneca's prose, one nevertheless

finds in Shakespeare and his contemporaries "an attitude of self-dramatization assumed by some

of Shakespeare's heroes at moments of tragic intensity" (*Complete Prose* 3: 247). Under this

satirical guise, Eliot posits the "stoical attitude" of self-dramatization was ubiquitous in

Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy, reflecting a fusion of "the Senecan attitude of Pride, the

Montaigne attitude of Scepticism, and the Machiavelli attitude of Cynicism" into the

"Elizabethan individualism" (*Complete Prose* 3: 249).

"Stoicism is the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for

him," Eliot cautioned, "it is the permanent substratum of a number of versions of cheering

oneself up" (*Complete Prose* 3: 249). He saw it "conspicuous" in works like Chapman's *Bussy*

D'Ambois plays and "in [John] Marston," but in Shakespeare, it manifested as something "less

verbal, more real" —as language incarnating living motives, emotions, and perspectives

(*Complete Prose* 3: 247). He felt that in a verse drama, a character's speech should provoke an

audience reaction yet maintain separation to allow "meeting" characters on an "extra-dramatic

plane" correspondent to an "ultra-dramatic" realm of emotion "into which the distinctions of

individuality melt" (*Complete Prose* 5: 557; *Complete Prose* 2: 85). Thus, for Eliot,

Shakespeare's characters' rhetorical speeches offered "a new clue to the character" by revealing

"the angle from which he views himself" when "a character in the play sees himself in a

dramatic light" (*Complete Prose* 2: 85).

As an example of the self-dramatizing attitude of characters in Shakespeare's dramas,

Eliot turns to Othello's final monologue. Having already strangled Desdemona, Othello halts

Lodovico and Cassio, his arresters, to manage his reputation before taking his own life:

Soft you; a word or two before you go.

I have done the state some service, and they know't

No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,

Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate

Nor set down aught in malice [...]

(*Othello* 5.2.337-40).

As Othello requests others, "Speak of me as I am […] set you down this," while recounting past

heroics, Eliot finds him dissociating into aesthetic self-fashioning, divorced from Desdemona's

reality (*Complete Prose* 3: 249). "What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is

cheering himself up," Eliot writes, "He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think

about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself" (*Complete Prose* 3: 249). Eliot's

characterization of Othello as "endeavouring to escape reality" mirrors the imperative action he

ascribes to the impersonal poet writing to "escape from personality" in "Tradition and the

Individual Talent." For Othello, "the man who kills" is, akin to Eliot's poet, the "man who

suffers": both are" separate from the mind which creates" (*Complete Prose* 2: 111). In Eliot's

hands, Othello ceases to think of Desdemona, dissociates from his crime, and aestheticizes

himself for the "tranquility" of "passive attending upon the event" (*Complete Prose* 2: 111).[25]

Thus, Eliot concludes: "Othello succeeds in turning himself into a pathetic figure, by adopting an

aesthetic rather than a moral attitude, dramatising himself against his environment. He takes in

the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to *take in himself*" [Eliot's emphasis] (*Complete*

Prose 3: 249).

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[25] Perhaps there is an echo of Othello in Eliot's Prufrock, who assures that "there will be time to murder and create" (*Poems* ???).

Eliot's reading, which attributes more to Othello than the text strictly implies, exposes the limits at which interpretation shades into personal projection. Indeed, if readers were unaware of the satirical intent, they might mistake Eliot's echoing of "Tradition" as a naive psychological projection—Eliot wanted to allegorize impersonality in Shakespeare. In any case, Eliot was neither an academic critic, a literary historian, nor an expert in early modern English literature or Elizabethan drama; he was a gifted poet who, on account of *The Waste Land*, amassed enough clout that, when paired with his exacting elitism and expansive reading, courted, infiltrated, confused, and rattled institutional authorities. From an academic perspective, he was a "bad faith actor," always reading from what Merve Emre calls a "paraliterary" perspective outside academic institutions.[26] Despite prevailing narratives positioning Eliot as influential in institutionalizing modernist and New Critical methods, Eliot read in ways the academy does not stomach—though it should. His 'bad' readings of Shakespeare are a far cry from the close reading of New Criticism, as Eliot flirts with the intentional and affective fallacies, encouraging readers to blend their thoughts and feelings uncritically with the dialogue of Shakespeare's characters.

Acknowledging Eliot's unconventional approach to reading Shakespeare matters significantly to the dissertation's broader interest in developing a cognitive-affective formalism through Eliot's engagements with early modern verse. Firstly, Eliot's misreadings challenge the prevailing narrative that positions Eliot as a progenitor of New Criticism and institutionalized modernist reading practices. By highlighting Eliot's "bad" readings and para-literary perspective, one begins to disentangle his critical practice from the New Critical orthodoxy that has long

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[26] See, Merve Emre. *Paraliterary: The Making of Bad Readers in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

defined his legacy. This reframing is crucial for the dissertation's overall aim of reassessing Eliot's engagement with early modern literature through the lens of cognitive-affective formalism. Eliot's willingness to blend thoughts and feelings suggested by Shakespeare's characters through his versification suggests the possibilities of a robust formalism unbounded by the strictly normative cognitive-affective assumptions and presumptions of traditional academic formalism.

Towards an Embodied Poetics of Early Modern Verse

Building on this understanding of Eliot's approach, this dissertation develops embodied poetics of early modern verse by "reading Eliot reading." This methodology bridges the gap between modernist literary theory and early modern poetic practices, illuminating both through the lens of contemporary cognitive science. By closely examining Eliot's engagement with early modern texts, I trace how current theories of embodied cognition and neurocognitive theories of emotional construction inform, develop, and complicate understanding of Eliot's reading practices. Primarily, I focus my analysis on Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists (e.g., Marlowe, Kyd, Shakespeare, Webster, and Jonson), Jacobean and Caroline metaphysical lyric poets (e.g., Donne, Crashsaw, Herbert), and later Restoration poets (e.g., Milton, Dryden, and Johnson) as appearing in Eliot's literary critical essays, reviews, and lectures. Those lectures include "Christopher Marlowe" (1919), "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" (1919), and "Ben Jonson" (1921), the 1924-25 "Clark Lectures" on Metaphysical Poetry, 1933-34 Johns Hopkins University lectures, "The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry," 1933 BBC radio broadcast, "Milton I" (1936) and "Milton II" (1947). In the interludes and coda, I focus on how Eliot's early modern verse citations inform his embodied poetics in *The Waste Land* (1922) and his development of these techniques in *Four Quartets* (1943).

In Chapter One, "Closeness of Texture: Emotional Conception through Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama," I develop Eliot's interest in the "closeness of texture" of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse into an object of analysis for cognitive-affective formalism. Applying theories of emotional construction (Lisa Feldman Barrett), interoceptive inference (Anil Seth), and emotional conception (Jamin Halberstadt) to comparative prosodic and phonetic analyses of the dramatic blank verse that Eliot cites in his criticism. Thus, I demonstrate how attending to the interplay of phonetics, prosody, and semantic content attunes criticism to the unique sensorimotor stimuli that dramatic blank verse affords for the brain's integration of bodily sensations and contextual information into novel concepts for emotion. By analyzing Eliot's critical writings on dramatists such as Shakespeare, Massinger, Tourneur, and Middleton, this chapter provides new insights into Eliot's critical method and challenges long-standing debates around impersonality while suggesting fruitful directions for future research in both Eliot studies and early modern literary analysis.

In Interlude 1, "'That Shakespherian Rag': Citing Anxiety in 'A Game of Chess,'" I apply the insights from chapter one, especially the enactive metaphor theory of the objective correlative to Eliot's citational method in "A Game of Chess," from *The Waste Land,* I argue that clippings of character speech from Shakespearean drama function as enactive metaphors, which, when recited, impossibly embody a sense of Shakespearean drama. However, these enactive metaphors only leverage the reader's "Shakespearean priors"—emotional concepts previously formed from embodied encounters with Shakespeare's works. Eliot's defamiliarized citations to objectively correlate with the sense of Shakespearean characters, conflicts, and scenes, the reader must have accumulated emotional concepts from prior immersive experiences reading or watching the plays. The more the reader encounters those embodied dramatic patterns and

contexts, the more viscerally the recontextualized fragments in "A Game of Chess" haunt their sensorimotor processing, allowing the citations to instantiate the sense of Shakespeare's characters and actions, without establishing a represented scene.

In Chapter Two, "Citational Parataxis: Christopher Marlowe and the Development of Elizabethan Blank Verse," I analyze Eliot's portrayal of Marlowe's blank verse as a rich emotional resource akin to a non-renewable material that dramatists refined and depleted over time. In his readings of Marlowe's works, particularly *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine,* Eliot practices a critical method I call citational parataxis that involves juxtaposing lines from Marlowe's works with those of his predecessors and contemporaries like Edmund Spenser. As Eliot sees it, citational parataxis reveals Marlowe's identity as a dedicated craftsman of blank verse rather than a genius as he borrows, refines, and innovates on his and other's verses. Eliot emphasizes Marlowe's transformation of Spenser's melodic blank verse into a more intense, emotionally charged metrical form by breaking up the line using vocative grammar and expressive punctuation, creating marked caesurae and end-stops. According to Eliot, these techniques allowed Marlowe to create discrete emotional units within his verse, enhancing its affective power and setting the stage for subsequent developments by Shakespeare and other dramatists. I develop Eliot's comparison of Marlowe's verse to that of Shakespeare and John Webster, tracing the evolution of blank verse from Marlowe's structured, rhythmic intensity to the more flexible, nuanced speech patterns in Shakespeare's and Webster's plays. This chapter thus supplements Eliot's citational parataxis with detailed prosodic and phonetic analyses, positioning it as a key tool for cognitive-affective formalism and for understanding Eliot's criticism of early modern writers.

In Interlude Two: Apostrophic Objects in "The Burial of the Dead," I examine the use of apostrophes and invocational character speech in "The Burial of the Dead" from *The Waste Land.* I analyze how Eliot's citational method creates a transversal structure that develops an impersonal idiom of emotional *dédoublement* or self-estrangement. The interlude traces the micro-poetic patterns in Eliot's citations of Shakespeare, Webster, and other sources, showing how they contribute to a poetic sensibility that comprehends opposing emotions as uncanny doubles. It focuses on the citation of "Ariel's Song" from *The Tempest* and its resonances throughout the poem. The analysis demonstrates how Eliot's use of the apostrophe and vocative address creates a structure of uncanniness that cycles through degrees of living and dying, memory and desire. This interlude provides insight into Eliot's technique of using citational fragments to evoke complex emotional states and create a sense of disorientation and existential confusion.

In Chapter Three: "Recreating Sensuous Wholes": Incarnation and Enactivist Metaphors in Eliot's Metaphysical Criticism, I trace the development of Eliot's 'enactivist' theory of reading metaphysical poetry, focusing on his works from 1921 to 1933, including "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), "The Clark Lectures" (1925-26), and his BBC radio broadcasts (1933-34). I argue that Eliot viewed the reader's role as recreating—or enacting—embodied "sensuous wholes" from the dissociated thoughts and feelings expressed in metaphysical poetry. The chapter examines how Eliot's approach anticipates contemporary enactive cognition theories, offering a framework for understanding poetry as an embodied, participatory process of meaning-making. The chapter reappraises Eliot's concepts of "dissociation of sensibility" and "unified sensibility" through the lens of enactivist theory and embodied cognition. It analyzes

Eliot's close readings of poets like Donne, Herbert, and Crashaw to demonstrate how he enacts this process of understanding metaphysical poetry.

Finally, in the Coda, "Milton's Syntax, Eliot's 'Obsessional Neurosis," I explore the implications of applying a neurodivergent lens to Eliot's work, examining how Eliot's potential neurodivergent traits, particularly those associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), may have shaped his critical and poetic practices. I find this exemplified in Eliot's meticulous—even pedantic—critique of Milton's syntax in "Milton I," where his obsessive attention to linguistic detail reveals unique insights and potential biases in his analysis. Taking an autoethnographic approach informed by my own experience of neurodivergence, I demonstrate new inclusive possibilities for formalism. Ultimately, I advocate for a more inclusive cognitive poetics that recognizes and values the contributions of neurodivergent minds to literary art and criticism, challenging us to expand our conception of poetic cognition and the complex, dynamic nature of the self-pattern in literary creation and interpretation.

This dissertation significantly contributes to multiple fields by developing cognitive-affective formalism through Eliot's criticism of early modern verse. This framework, grounded in theories of embodiment, offers a new lens for understanding the cognitive-affective affordances of early modern verse. For Eliot studies, cognitive-affective formalism addresses a significant lacuna caused by New Criticism's influence, revealing the centrality of embodied experience in Eliot's work. For modernist researchers, it deepens our understanding of how early modern poetic forms influenced modernist critical practices, revealing possible continuities in embodied reading experiences across periods and promising new possibilities for collaborative research across historically disparate fields. Furthermore, cognitive-affective formalism opens

new intersections between formalist reading, disability studies, and neurodivergent ways of reading. Ultimately, this approach challenges us to expand our conception of "normal" cognitive-affective experiences, fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to both literary studies and our understanding of human cognition.

Chapter One

"Closeness of Texture": Emotional Conception through Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama

T. S. Eliot's critical engagements with Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse offer unique insights into the relationship between versification, cognition, and emotion. In his essay "Philip Massinger" (1920), Eliot suggests that "Had Massinger had a nervous system as refined as that of Middleton, Tourneur, Webster, or Ford [...] his style would be a triumph. But such a nature was not at hand, and Massinger precedes, not another Shakespeare, but Milton" (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). For Eliot, the most effective dramatic verse creates an immediate sensory and intellectual experience for the reader. In contrast, Massinger's verse appears to Eliot as "pure and correct, free from muddiness or turbidity," but lacking "the finer tissues of the mind" (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). By placing Massinger as a precursor to Milton rather than Shakespeare, Eliot emphasizes that Massinger's verse represents an early indication of "the dissociation of sensibility" of thought from feeling that he finds in Milton's too-personal, "sentimental" proto-Romantic blank verse, and Dryden's better but too-cold, too "ratiocinative" heroic couplets (*Complete Prose* 2: 283). In Eliot's view, Massinger's less refined "nervous system" resulted in verse that, while technically competent, failed to achieve this synthesis of sensory experience and intellectual engagement.

Eliot praises Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists for their ability to create "words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations, meanings perpetually eingeschachtelt into meanings" (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). The German word "eingeschachtelt," meaning "boxed" or "nested," suggests a layering of meanings within meanings. Eliot uses this term to describe the complex, multifaceted nature of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic verse, in which he finds a richness and strangeness that marks the period as an "incarnational" one when

"Sensation became word and word was sensation" (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). In his essay "Cyril Tourneur" (1930), Eliot praises the "highly original development of vocabulary and metric" in The Revenger's Tragedy (1606), noting how the verse's "closeness of texture" creates a sense of "frenzied" energy—a "consistency" and "rapidity" of sensory stimuli that unnerves and overwhelms (*Complete Prose* 3: 204). Similarly, Eliot lauds Middleton as "a great observer of human nature, without fear, without sentiment, without prejudice," whose versification produces flashes of "sudden reality" amidst "tedious discourse" (*Complete Prose* 2: 128; 126).

This chapter argues that Eliot's interest in the "closeness of texture" he finds in Tourneur and other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists suggests a category of formal analysis attuned to the interplay between phonetic materiality and formal patterning that partly affords these writers' versification its striking cognitive-affective value. By developing such analyses, this chapter opens a new textual space for formalist-minded critics to consider the intricate interplay between phonetics, prosody, and semantic content in early modern blank verse drama. Applying contemporary theories of emotional construction (Lisa Feldman-Barrett), interoceptive inference (Anil Seth), and emotional conception (Jamin Halberstadt) to comparative prosodic and phonetic analyses of Eliot's examples, this chapter demonstrates how the "closeness of texture" and other related phenomena in Shakespeare, Tourneur, Middleton and Jonson afford unique sensorimotor stimuli for the brain's integration of bodily sensations and contextual information into novel concepts for emotion. For scholars of early modern poetry and drama, this analysis suggests how the interplay of phonetics, prosody, and semantic content shapes the emotional and cognitive impacts of dramatic verse, revealing material and formal qualities that might underpin often noted but little understood, felt differences between the blank verse of various Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists.

Impersonality Reconsidered

 This chapter intervenes in recent debates surrounding T.S. Eliot's concept of impersonality by refocusing attention on Eliot's enduring interest in the emotional power of versification. Controversies around the meaning and political implications of impersonality have dominated Eliot scholarship for decades and as a consequence have often overshadowed his nuanced how versification shapes readers' thoughts and feelings into ideationally supplemented concepts for emotions. By examining Eliot's critical writings on Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic verse through the lens of contemporary cognitive theories, this chapter offers a fresh perspective on the "closeness of texture" that Eliot admired in these works. Recent scholarship, such as Maud Ellmann's political readings and Frances Dickey's biographical approach, has tended to interpret impersonality as either a conservative doctrine or a mask for personal expression. However, these approaches have largely overlooked Eliot's consistent focus on the affective dimensions verse. As Marianne Thormählen notes, "It is odd that Eliot's criticism has not been more markedly influenced by the recent foregrounding of the emotions in the academic study of literature" (445). This chapter responds to Thormählen observation by developing a formalist framework for analyzing the cognitive-affective affordances of versification in early modern drama. In doing so, I intend to bridge the gap between formalist and contextual approaches to Eliot's work.

 When Eliot first introduced his theory of impersonality in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), he famously suggested that "the poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which

can unite to form a new compound are present together" (106).[27] This metaphor of poetic

creation as a chemical reaction underscores Eliot's belief in poetry's capacity for integrating

diverse emotional, intellectual, and sensory elements of personal experience into

intersubjectively legible wholes. Eliot emphasizes that "the emotion of art is impersonal"

(*Complete Prose* 2: 105), arguing that significant emotion in poetry has "its life in the poem and

not in the history of the poet" (*Complete Prose* 2: 105). He contends that to achieve this

impersonality, the poet must undergo "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of

personality" (*Complete Prose* 2: 108). This process of depersonalization, for Eliot, is what allows

poetry to "approach the condition of science" (108), suggesting a kind of objective, universally

accessible emotional experience. Eliot further argues that "honest criticism and sensitive

appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry," emphasizing that one should

consider the emotion of verse independent of the poet's biography or intentions (*Complete Prose*

2: 108). This view of the impersonal emotion of art aligns with Eliot's broader concept of

tradition, in which the individual poet's work gains significance through its relation to "the

whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own

country" creating a "simultaneous order" of past and present literary works (*Complete Prose* 2:

106). [28]

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[27] Stan Smith calls Eliot's alchemical analogy here "deeply confused" on account of how the poet "implicitly converts literary 'sublimity' into the alchemical process of sublimation, reinforced by the reference to the 'transmutation of emotion' in the *Agamemnon* or *Othello* in terms which make it a mysterious, even magic operation," Stan Smith, "Proper frontiers: transgression and the individual talent," in *T. S. Eliot and the Concept of Tradition*, Cianci and Harding, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 26-41.

[28] For more regarding Eliot's understanding of "tradition," see Giovanni Cianci and Jason Harding. *T.S. Eliot and the Concept of Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Louis Menand. *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Philip Irving Mitchell, "A Quest for Coherence: T. S. Eliot as Public Intellectual," *Christianity and Literature*, 71, 3, 2022, 425-43; Helen Gardner. *T. S. Eliot and the English Poetic Tradition*. Nottingham: Nottingham University, 1966; Seán Lucy. *T. S. Eliot and the Idea of Tradition*. London: Cohen & West, 1960; Gabrielle McIntire. *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Christopher Ricks. *T. S. Eliot and*

The critical discourse surrounding Eliot's theory of impersonality has seen significant

developments since its introduction in 1919. Early formalist interpretations, particularly by New

Critics like F. O. Matthiessen, Cleanth Brooks, and Grover Smith, often cited impersonality to

discourage biographical and contextual criticism of Eliot's poetry.[29] Matthiessen, for instance, in

his 1935 book *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, interpreted Eliot's impersonality as suggesting that

a poem "possesses in a very real sense a life of its own which is distinct from the biography of its

creator and also from any idea or belief that it expresses" (Matthiessen 113).[30] This

interpretation, while of a piece with Eliot's intention to separate the poet's personal emotions

from the poem, ultimately sidestepped a more nuanced understanding of Eliot's theory. The mid-

twentieth century saw a shift towards broader questions of authorial intention in literary

criticism. For instance, the American News critics W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley's well-

known article, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), extended Eliot's separation of the poet from the

poem to a more radical rejection of authorial intent in interpretation. They argued for a

distinction between "internal" evidence discoverable through linguistic and cultural analysis and

"external" evidence consisting of authorial explanations or biographical details (Wimsatt and

Beardsley 485-86).

Prejudice. London: Faber, 1988; and Flemming Olsen. *Eliot's Objective Correlative: Tradition or Individual Talent: Contributions to the History of a Topos*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2012.

[29] Cleanth Brooks. *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939; Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1938; Cleanth Brooks. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947; F. O. Matthiessen. *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay of the Nature of Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1935; and Grover Smith. *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1956.

[30] Matthiessen directs this comment to Cecil Day-Lewis, who, in his 1936 book, *A Hope for Poetry,* argued that because "Eliot's editors have been so occupied with extracting meanings from 'The Waste Land' [...] they have given comparatively little attention to 'Prufrock' [...] and the sinister nature of the allegory it contains" In these early critical scuffles, the crux of the disagreement had little to do with a serious interest in how Eliot conceived of poetry to the self and instead centered on determining the objects, aims, and methods of criticism as such. See, C. Day Lewis. *A Hope for Poetry*. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1936, 23.

However, this extreme position diverged from Eliot's stated views. Eliot maintained that the poet's understanding of their work was significant, particularly when poetry and thought are "unified," writing in his "Clark Lectures" on metaphysical poetry in 1926 that "When thought, such as that of Dante or Donne, is clearly expressible in another form, then it is not necessary to understand the thought to appreciate the poetry, for the poetry and the thought are quite distinct; and [when they are] one, it is sufficient that the author of the verse understand what he means" (*Complete Prose* 2: 738). This statement suggests that Eliot viewed intentionality as inseparable from understanding verse and its effects on experience; even if the poet's intentionality remains secret to the poet, if the poet intended the poem with enough clarity, then the poem's effects would still observe themselves on the reader.[31]

More recent scholarship has revealed the complex political and cultural implications of Eliot's theory of impersonality. In *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (1987), Maud Ellmann argues that impersonality is not merely an aesthetic category but a doctrine with far-reaching cultural and political implications. She contends that "the doctrine of impersonality was born conservative" and "began as an attack against the individualism that Eliot and Pound had both rejected" (Ellmann 198). Ellmann's analysis suggests that attempts to separate the aesthetic from the political in modernist poetry are futile, arguing that "the closer one examines the theory of impersonality, the more its ideological objectives reappear, and it

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[31] The tension between Eliot's theory of impersonality and the apparent intentionality in his poetry became more pronounced in his later reflections. In his 1956 lecture, "The Frontiers of Criticism," Eliot admitted to inadvertently encouraging over-interpretation through his notes to *The Waste Land*: "Here I must admit that I am, on one conspicuous occasion, not guiltless of having led critics into temptation. The notes to The Waste Land! I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism," *Complete Prose* 8: 127.

becomes impossible to separate its politics from its poetics" (198).[32] While Ellmann's analysis

provides valuable insights, it risks oversimplifying a complex concept. Jewels Spears Brooker

offers a more nuanced understanding, framing impersonality as a dialectical concept derived

from Eliot's engagement with F. H. Bradley's idealist philosophy. Brooker argues that in

"Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot presents a dialectical process where the poet's

analogical imagination leads "automatically to an emphasis on depersonalization because, in

recognizing similarity, acknowledging that every knowable thing is a fragment, and accepting a

comprehensive system that includes other (ultimately, all) parts, one is conceding that the

autonomous self is a fiction" (Brooker, *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* [2019], 78).

Impersonality has again become a topic of discussion in Eliot studies following the

opening of the Emily Hale Archive of Eliot's Letters in 2020. Frances Dickey's work has been at

the forefront of this reassessment, arguing for renewed critical interest in biographical and other

contextualist approaches to Eliot's writings. [33] For Dickey, Eliot's confession that his love for

Hale is the "private" meaning of well-known figures in his poetry— "The Hyacinth Girl" from

"The Burial of the Dead" in *The Waste Land* (*Poems* 56: 35-41), "Pipit" from "A Cooking Egg"

(*Poems* 38-39), and the "Lady of Silences" from *Ash-Wednesday* (*Poems* 89)—"finally puts an

end to any lingering plausibility of Eliot's theory of 'impersonality'"(Dickey, "May the Record

Speak," 443). As Dickey reads them, his letters to Hale reveal how "Eliot's art reflects his life to

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[32] Ellmann further complicates our understanding by suggesting that impersonality "exemplifies the philosophical, aesthetic, and political assumptions which inspired the reactionary fervour of the modernists," particularly those of the far-right political movement *L'action française* first introduced to the modernist Avant-Garde by Wyndham Lewis, Ellman, *The Poetics of Impersonality,* 12.

[33] For recent biographical approaches to Eliot, see Lyndall Gordon. *The Hyacinth Girl: T.S. Eliot's Hidden Muse*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2023; Lyndall Gordon. *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999; and Robert Crawford. *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to the Waste Land*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015; Robert Crawford. *Eliot After the Waste Land*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2022; and Frances Dickey, "May the Record Speak: The Correspondence of T. S. Eliot and Emily Hale," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 66, 4, 2020, 431-62.

an extent previously unknown, and how his life also followed art, in a pattern of renunciation imposed both on himself and on Hale (434). She notes that Eliot's letters to Hale demonstrate how "all his major works from 'La Figlia' through Four *Quartets* show her magnetic pull on his imagination" (456).

However, Dickey also acknowledges the complexity of Eliot's approach, observing that his letters "are literature, worthy of attention and a source of delight, and they are also life— messy, painful, inconclusive" (457). Dickey's work challenges us to reconsider the relationship between Eliot's life and his art without oversimplifying it. She points out that "Eliot planned to have the final word on himself, but in the closely typed pages of his 1,131 letters to Hale, there are many Eliots, 'Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings'" (Eliot qtd in Dickey 457). Nevertheless, in her recent article, Dickey argues that examining Eliot's method of concealing biographical identities in his poetry through simple name changes can help us "put 'Tradition' in its proper place as a statement of Eliot's practice rather than a generalizable theory" (Dickey, "The Theory of Pipit: Emily Hale, Naming, and Impersonality" [2024], 106). Impersonality, from Dickey's perspective, thus appears more a practical technique for Eliot than an absolute theoretical stance.

These varied interpretations of Eliot's theory have largely overlooked the possibility that impersonality sincerely intends something insightful about the emotional function of poetry. Marianne Thormählen's work provides crucial insights into Eliot's understanding of emotion and its relationship to poetry. In her article "T. S. Eliot, Emotion, and the Reader" (2015), Thormählen argues that Eliot challenged the idea of a rigid "dichotomy between thought and emotion" (Thormählen 445). She notes that for Eliot, reading and writing involved "mixing elements from affect and intellect," re-integrating and synthesizing fragments of perception into

organic wholes through form (446). This view of emotion and thought as co-arising aspects of an integrated experiential unity resonates with contemporary efforts to re-situate the mind within a dynamic relational ontology spanning the brain, body, environment, and culture. Thormählen observes that "there was reason to expect that the 'affective turn' in literary studies around the turn of the millennium would have a powerful effect on academic engagement with the work of T. S. Eliot" (445). However, as I mentioned above, she finds that this anticipated effect was relatively mild, suggesting "it is odd that Eliot's criticism has not been more markedly influenced by the recent foregrounding of the emotions in the academic study of literature," especially, I would add, given Eliot's apparent efforts to develop an affective poetics grounded in philosophical idealism (445).

Jasmine Jagger's recent work, *Rhythms of Feeling in Edward Lear, T.S. Eliot, & Stevie Smith* (2022), offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between poetic form and emotion in Eliot's work. Jagger argues that "poetry embodies affective states" through rhythm and concludes with Ezra Pound that "a poet's rhythm is unique to their individuality and 'particular shade of emotion'" (Jagger 5). According to Jagger's reading of Derek Attridge, "affects" encompass "feelings and subjective experiences" as well as "their physical reproduction within bodies of poetry" (2). However, while Jagger's work provides valuable insights into how poetic form can shape readers' affective experiences, her approach relies heavily on Ezra Pound's expressive notions of poetry directly embodying the poet's subjective emotional states. This perspective risks oversimplifying the complex cognitive dynamics underlying felt experience during reading. Indeed, Paul B. Armstrong argues that literary critics analyzing the neurocognitive and affective aspects of literary form should ground their work in empirical research from neuroscience and cognitive science. In H*ow Literature Plays with the Brain*

(2013), Armstrong contends that "The areas of neuroscience where the 'facts' are well established should cause humanists to take notice and revise their views accordingly [...] And when humanists invoke science, they should try to get the science right" (Armstrong 8, 10).

Thus, following Armstrong, I argue that a more nuanced approach, integrating Eliot's insights with contemporary theories of embodied cognition, might offer a richer understanding of how versification engages readers' emotions without falling into simplistic expressionism. Indeed, Eliot's philosophical background provides a foundation for this approach. In his dissertation "Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F .H. Bradley" (c. 1914-15), Eliot explains that for Bradley, experience is a fundamental unity that "contains within itself every development which in a sense transcends it" (*Complete Prose* 1: 244). Bradley viewed immediate experience or "feeling" as not merely subjective but as something that transcends itself to affect external reality. As Eliot elaborates, the "self-transcendence of feeling is not an event only in the history of souls" but impacts "the history of the external world" as well (*Complete Prose* 1: 244-45). Eliot argues against the "prejudice that feeling is something subjective and private" that only "affects what feels, not what is felt" (*Complete Prose* 1: 244-45).[34]

By rejecting the "prejudice" that feelings only affect isolated subjective interiors, Eliot establishes an anti-Cartesian philosophical foundation that anticipates core tenets of embodied, enactive, and extended cognition. His view of emotion and thought as co-arising aspects of an integrated experiential unity resonates with contemporary efforts to re-situate the mind within a

[34] For more on Eliot's idealism, see his dissertation, "Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley" For critical perspectives on Eliot's idealism, see Jewels Spears Brooker, ; Mark Taylor, "The Forgetting of Idealism: T.S. Eliot, Robert Browning, and the Origins of Literary Criticism," *ELH*, 90, 2, 2023, 491-519; Thalia Trigoni, "Feeling Unconscious Thoughts in T. S. Eliot," in *The Intelligent Unconscious in Modernist Literature and Science*, New York: Routledge, 2021, 156-91.

dynamic relational ontology spanning the brain, body, environment, and culture. This is so because, by its nature, immediate experience—which Eliot, along with Bradley, identifies as "personal feeling"—contains both sense perception and intuition, straddling the divide between the physical world (the source of sensory input) and the mental realm (where sensory data is processed and interpreted). In Eliot's framework, immediate experience or personal feeling encompasses both the material aspect of sensation and the ideal aspect of intuition and meaning-making: it is not just "sense-data or sensations, it is not a stream of feeling which, as merely felt, is an attribute of the subject side only" but must "in some way be 'related' to an external world" (*Complete Prose* 1: 244). In other words, immediate experience already includes the presentational aspects of the realm of objects (sense data, feeling) and the intellective, reflective aspects of the subject.

Therefore, for Eliot, immediate experience or personal feeling is not a purely subjective state but instead involves some reflection of an undifferentiated reality anterior to consciousness. Thus, Eliot apprehends aspects or moments of objectivity through subjective appearances and concludes:

> We are forced, in building up our theory of knowledge, to postulate something which is not merely immediate experience, or merely a presentation to be accepted or rejected by thought, but something which includes both presentational immediacy and thought, both subject and object [...] Feeling is to be taken 'as a sort of confusion, and as a nebula which would grow distinct on closer scrutiny' […] Immediate experience seems to be in one aspect a condition of the conscious subject. The real appears in feeling, and feeling is undifferentiated
>
> (*Complete Prose* 1: 244; 247).

This perspective lays the groundwork for analyzing Eliot's materialist criticism—specifically, his interest in the materiality of versified language. Eliot diverged from Bradley by rejecting the idea that individuals might transcend the material world and thus contact the "Absolute" by acquiring abstract, propositional knowledge. Instead, Eliot argued that all individuals perceive "appearances" (illusions, misperceptions, falsities) and "reality" through "immediate experience," a combination of intuition and sense perception where "everything actual, no matter what must be felt" (*Complete Prose* 1: 244). Thus, while Eliot maintains an idealist metaphysics, his epistemology emphasizes the role of embodied experience in our apprehension of reality, thus creating the potential for a surprising reconciliation between idealist philosophy and materialist cognitive theory.

By grounding knowledge in sensory experience and intuition, Eliot's philosophy opens his writings to be read through theories of embodied cognition that hold individuals' understanding of the world derived from their physical and bodily interactions with the material concomitants—the objects—of one's senses. Thus, while Eliot maintains an idealist metaphysics, his epistemology emphasizes the role of embodied experience in our apprehension of reality, thus creating the potential for a surprising reconciliation between idealist philosophy and materialist cognitive theory. Such an insight allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the material qualities of verse can engage readers' embodied emotion concepts, potentially leading to rich and varied emotional experiences. By focusing on the interplay of phonetic and prosodic elements that create the 'closeness of texture' Eliot finds in Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse, this analysis avoids seeking direct correlations between these elements and specific emotions. Instead, I acknowledge the cognitive-affective affordances of versification and literary

form, recognizing that the emotion of art, of verse, achieves a degree of impersonality in the intersubjective effects embodied across readers.

Defining "Closeness of Structure" Through "Cyril Tourneur"

Eliot's concept of "closeness of texture" emerges from his critical writings on Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. However, he first introduced the concept in "Cyril Tourneur" (1930), originally a book review of *The Works of Cyril Tourneu*r, edited by Allardyce Nicoll and published by *The Fanfrolico Press* in 1929.[35] The review appeared anonymously in the *Times Literary Supplement* on November 13, 1930 (*Complete Prose* 3: 203, n. 1). Eliot had enthusiastically accepted an invitation from Bruce Richmond to write this review, expressing that he wanted to write about Tourneur "more than about any other Elizabethan" (*Complete Prose* 3: 206, n. 1). In this review, Eliot follows the prevailing belief of his time that Cyril Tourneur wrote both *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) and *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611). He praises *The Revenger's Tragedy* for its "highly original development of vocabulary and metric" and considers it a work of "full mastery of blank verse" (*Complete Prose* 3: 204). However, modern scholarship has since attributed *The Revenger's Tragedy* to Thomas Middleton, following E. H. C. Oliphant's determination on "metrical and stylistic grounds" (*Complete Prose* 3: 206, n. 4).[36]

This misattribution significantly affects the validity of some of Eliot's observations about Tourneur's style and development as a dramatist. The qualities Eliot admires in *The Revenger's Tragedy* characterize Middleton's work, not Tourneur's. Despite Eliot's misattribution of *The*

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[35] See Cyril Tourneur. *The Works of Cyril Tourneur*. Edited by Allardyce Nicoll. London: The Fanfrolico Press, 1930.

[36] Oliphant defended the theory that Middleton and not Tourneur was the author responsible for *The Revenger's Tragedy,* which H. D. Sykes first proposed in a 1919 article for *Notes & Queries,* in a 1926 article for *Studies in Philology.* See E. H. C. Oliphant, "The Authorship of "The Revenger's Tragedy"," *Studies in Philology*, 23, 2, 1926; H. Dugdale Sykes, "Cyril Tourneur: 'The Revenger's Tragedy': 'The Second Maiden's Tragedy.'" *Notes & Queries*, 5, 96, 1919.

Revenger's Tragedy to Tourneur instead of Middleton, his analysis of the play's versification remains valuable and insightful. Eliot praises the play for its "highly original development of vocabulary and metric" and considers it a work of "full mastery of blank verse" (*Complete Prose* 3: 204). He notes the play's "peculiar abruptness" and "frequent change of tempo" as characteristic features, highlighting the innovative use of language and rhythm. These observations hold true regardless of the play's authorship, demonstrating Eliot's keen eye. Eliot's analysis inadvertently sheds light on Middleton's skill as a dramatist, particularly his ability to create verse with "closeness of texture" and a unique rhythmic quality. While historically inaccurate, the misattribution does not diminish the value of Eliot's critical insights into the play's versification and its significance in developing Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse.

Throughout the essay, Eliot cites specific examples from *The Revenger's Tragedy* to highlight the compression of images that characterize the diction of Tourneur's verse, for instance,

The poor benefit of a bewildering minute

The POOR | BEN-e-fit | OF a be- | -WIL -der-ing | MIN-*ute*

<div align="right">(<i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i> 1.1.84).[37]</div>

As the scansion shows, the line is an iambic pentameter with an irregular feminine ending. Only the first foot ("the POOR") is an iamb, while feet two ("BEN-e-fit"), three ("OF a be-"), and four

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[37] Eliot likely drew his sources from one of two texts: John Churton Collins, two-volume edition, *The Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur*, or, as the editors of *The Complete Prose* suggest, The Mermaid Series 1888 edition *Webster and Tourneur* with an introduction by John Aldington Symnonds. For clarity's sake, unless otherwise noted, I reproduce Eliot's citations as they appear in *The Complete Prose.* See *The Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur*. Edited by John Churton Collins, 2 volumes. London: Chatto & Windus, 1878; John Webster and Cyril Tourneur. *Webster and Tourneur*. London, New York: Ernest Benn, Scribner's, 1903.

("-WIL-der-ing") are dactylic substitutions, and the fifth a trochaic inversion ("MIN-ute"). This

metrical variation, pronounced as it is, contributes to what Eliot sees as the tendency for

Tourneur "to say everything in the least space, the shortest time" (*Complete Prose* 3: 205).

Regarding diction, Eliot specifically notes that "bewildering" is "much the richer word here"

compared to the alternative reading "bewitching" (*Complete Prose* 3: 205). Phonetically, the line

demonstrates Tourneur's skill in sound patterning through alliteration of 'b' in "benefit" and

"bewildering," assonance with short 'i' sounds, and the complex consonant cluster in

"bewildering." This combination of metrical variation, precise diction, and phonetic complexity

exemplifies what Eliot terms the "closeness of texture" in Tourneur's verse.

Eliot also provides longer passages to highlight Middleton's [Tourneur's] "peculiar

abruptness" and "frequent change of tempo," such as:

Faith, if the truth were known, I was begot

After some gluttonous dinner; some stirring dish

Was my first father, when deep healths went round

And ladies' cheeks were painted red with wine,

Their tongues, as short and nimble as their heels,

Uttering words sweet and thick; and when they rose,

Were merrily disposed to fall again.

In such a whispering and withdrawing hour . . .

[Eliot's ellipsis] (*The Revenger's Tragedy* 1.3.97-

104).

The lines scan as follows:

FAITH, if | the TRUTH | were KNOWN, | I WAS | be-GOT

AF-ter some | GLUT-ton-ous | DIN-ner; |some STIR-| -ring DISH

Was MY | first FA- | - ther, WHEN deep | HEALTHS | went ROUND

 And LA- | dies' CHEEKS | were PAIN- | ted RED | with WINE,

Their TONGUES, | as SHORT | and NIM- | ble AS | their HEELS,

UT-ter-ing | WORDS SWEET | and THICK; | and WHEN | they ROSE,

Were MER- | ri-ly | dis-POSED | to FALL | a-GAIN.

In SUCH | a WHIS- | -p'ring AND | with-DRAW- | ing HOUR.

The metrical variations contribute to what Eliot calls the "peculiar abruptness" and "frequent change of tempo" characteristic of Middleton's [Tourneur's] verse. Line 97 begins with a trochee ("FAITH, if"), immediately setting up a departure from standard iambic pentameter. Line 98 features dactylic substitutions in the first and second feet ("AF-ter some | GLUT-ton-ous"), while lines 99, 100, and 101 largely follow the iambic rubric against which the other variations stand out. Line 102, "UT-ter-ing | WORDS SWEET | and THICK; | and WHEN | they ROSE," epitomizes the meter Eliot admires. Opening with a dactyl ("UT-ter-ing") that tumbles into the sludge of the spondee in the second foot ("WORDS SWEET"), the sensation of motion arrested, arouses in the iambic rhythm of the third foot, halted, suddenly, against the caesarian-colon ("and THICK;"); the iambs of feet four ("and WHEN") and five ("they ROSE,") pick themselves up, dust themselves off, in time to find the line punctuated by the end-stopping of the comma. Despite the variations, the line is iambic pentameter at its most surprising.

Phonetically, this line demonstrates a rich and varied sound pattern. The line opens with the plosive /t/ in "UT-ter-ing" followed by the approximant /r/ and the nasal /ŋ/, which softens the sound as the word progresses. The transition to "WORDS SWEET" introduces a combination of the voiced fricative /w/, the vowel /ɜː/, and the alveolar plosive /d/, followed by the sibilant /s/

and the high front vowel /iː/, contrasting between the rounder sounds of "words" and the tighter, condensed of "sweet." This contrasts "and THICK," which introduces the dental fricative /θ/, adding a new texture to the line's sound. The short vowel /ɪ/ in "thick" contrasts with the longer vowels that precede it. The final segment, "and WHEN | they ROSE," brings in the voiced dental fricative /ð/ in "they," softening again. The line ends with the diphthong /əʊ/ and the sibilant /z/ in "rose," drawing the voice into a hum.

To quantify Eliot's claims about Middleton's [Tourneur's] "highly original development of vocabulary and metric" and the "peculiar abruptness" and "frequent change of tempo" in his verse, an analysis of the metrical and phonetic patterns in the line reveals systematic variations. Metrically, this single line demonstrates three different feet (dactyl, spondee, iamb) compared to the regular iambic pentameter and seven of eleven stressed syllables (63.6% stressed). Phonetically, the line uses nine different consonant sounds: (/t/ ["truth" li. 97], /r/ ["stirring" li. 98], /ŋ/ ["stirring" li. 98], /w/ ["was" li. 98], /d/ ["deep" li. 99], /s/ ["sweet" li. 101], /θ/ ["thick" li. 101], /ð/ ["their" li. 100], /z/ ["rose" li. 101]), including plosives, fricatives, nasals, and approximants and seven different vowel sounds (/ʌ/ ["was" li. 98], /ə/ ["father" li. 99], /ɜː/ ["stirring" li. 98], /iː/ ["deep" li. 99], /æ/ ["and" li. 100], /ɪ/ ["thick" li. 101], /eɪ/ ["painted" li. 100]), including monophthongs and diphthongs. The transitions move from sharp plosives to softer sounds, back to harder sounds, and finally to softer fricatives, creating a varied sound texture.

Eliot's analysis of verse in *The Revenger's Tragedy* suggests he experienced a complex, if not contradictory, interplay between compression of meaning, the complex patterning of phonemes, the intensification of stress caused by frequent spondees and caesurae, and the

rapidity of adjacent anapests and dactyls. Consider, for instance, another of Eliot's examples

from *The Revenger's Tragedy*:

> This murder might have slept in tongueless brass,
>
> But for ourselves, and the world died an ass.
>
> Now I remember too, here was Piato
>
> Brought forth a knavish sentence once;
>
> No doubt (said he), but time
>
> Will make the murderer bring forth himself. '
>
> Tis well he died; he was a witch

> (*The Revenger's Tragedy* 5.3.146-52).

This MUR-| -der-MIGHT | have SLEPT | in TONGUE- | -less BRASS,

BUT for | our-SELVES, | and the | WORLD DIED | an ASS.

Now I | re- MEM-| -ber TOO, | HERE was | PI-a-to

BROUGHT forth | a KNAV- | -ish SEN- | -tence ONCE;

No DOUBT | (said HE), | but TIME

Will MAKE | the MUR- | der-er | BRING forth | him-SELF.

'Tis WELL | he DIED; | he WAS | a WITCH.

Eliot's example demonstrates the complex interplay he perceives in Middleton's [Tourneur's]

verse. The line "This MUR-| -der-MIGHT | have SLEPT | in TONGUE- | -less BRASS"

exemplifies compression of meaning, condensing the idea of an undiscovered crime into a vivid

metaphor. The complex patterning of phonemes is evident in the alliteration of "murder" and

"might" and the assonance in "slept" and "tongueless." Stress intensification occurs through

frequent spondees, as in "WORLD DIED" (l. 147) and "TOO, HERE" (l. 148), creating

moments of emphasis that punctuate the verse. Caesurae, such as after "No DOUBT" (l. 150) and again with "(said HE)," further contribute to this effect. Phonetically, Middleton employs various sounds to create a complex auditory texture. The passage begins with plosives in "This MUR-| -der-MIGHT." The alliteration of 'm' in "MUR-der-MIGHT" (l. 146) and "Re-MEM-ber" (l. 148) creates a sonic link between the concept of murder and the act of remembering. This phonetic connection subtly reinforces the thematic idea of a crime, once forgotten, now recalled. The passage opens with an end-rhymed couplet: "This murder might have slept in tongueless brass, / But for ourselves, and the world died an ass" (ll. 146-147) and the internal slant-rhyme of "TOO" with the final syllable of "PIATO" (l. 148).

Middleton's skillful manipulation of tense and language spans the passage, creating a complex temporal structure. The opening line, "This murderer might have slept in tongueless brass" (l. 146), uses the past modal "might have" to suggest a hypothetical past scenario where the crime remained undiscovered. This contrasts sharply with the future certainty expressed in "will make the murderer bring forth himself" (l. 151). Middleton emphasizes this shift from past possibility to future inevitability through the repetition of "forth" with its temporal variants "bring" and "brought.": "BROUGHT forth | a KNAV- | -ish SEN- | -tence ONCE;" (l. 149) refers to Piato's past utterance, while "BRING forth | him-SELF" (l. 151) points to the murderer's eventual self-revelation. In each case, "brought" and "bring" comprise the first syllable in a trochaic substitution (i.e., "BROUGHT forth" and "BRING forth"), emphasizing the temporal shift between Piato's deliverance of a sentence and the murderer's self-incrimination. Indeed, the final foot of line 151, "him-SELF" emphasizes the reflexive aspect of the pronoun, underscoring the idea of self-revelation. Middleton's deft manipulation of tense not only creates linguistic

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echoes across the passage but also reinforces the theme of inevitable disclosure central to the play's plot

This sophisticated interplay between phonetics and prosody contributes significantly to what Eliot terms the "closeness of texture" in Middleton's verse (*Complete Prose* 3: 205). The varied sound patterns and metrical inversions create a rich auditory experience that complements the semantic density of the lines, further emphasized in what Eliot identifies as the "togetherness" of Middleton's characters suggesting that "closeness of texture" encompasses not only language but also character interrelationships and their contribution to the play's overall emotional impact. Eliot's high praise for *The Revenger's Tragedy* — "For closeness of texture, in fact, there are no plays beyond Shakespeare's, and the best of Marlowe and Jonson, that can surpass The Revenger's Tragedy" —indicates that he views "closeness of texture" as a complex interplay of language, character, and dramatic structure creating a rich, multifaceted experience for the reader or viewer (*Complete Prose* 3: 204).

Emotional Conception and Embodied Cognition: A Modern Framework for "Closeness of Texture

To fully appreciate Eliot's concept of "closeness of texture" and its relevance to cognitive-affective formalism, I argue that contemporary theories of emotion and embodied cognition provide a framework for understanding how versification's material and phonetic aspects might possess affective value. The theory of emotional conception proposed by Halberstadt et al. offers a framework for understanding how versification's material and phonetic aspects might possess affective value. Halberstadt and colleagues argue that emotion concepts are "modality-specific embodied simulations of emotional states involved in perception, action, and interoception" (Halberstadt et al. 1255). This means that emotional concepts are not abstract,

amodal representations in the brain but embodied simulations that engage multiple sensory, motor, and interoceptive systems. Halberstadt and his co-authors further explain that "the application of a concept in perception, thinking, or memory involves a partial, context-dependent re-instantiation of the relevant original experiences with the stimulus, rather than access to a generic amodal redescription of such experiences" (1255).

Applied to the context of reading and reciting verse, Halberstadt's theory suggests that when readers feel something in response to verse, the verse is not directly stimulating an emotional response nor even indexing or activating some abstract concept for an emotional response. Instead, the theory of emotional conception suggests that verse might partially stimulate readers to re-experience bodily states associated with *some* emotional concepts formed from past experiences. In the context of recitation, this might mean that a particular consonant cluster in a particular selection of verse stimulates a state of arousal by triggering, say, one's pre-formed emotional concept associated with the sound of that consonant cluster. This embodied simulation is not a full-blown emotional experience but a partial re-activation of the relevant neural patterns. In the context of versification, this theory suggests that verse's phonetic and rhythmic qualities might directly engage these embodied emotion concepts, potentially creating rich, multidimensional emotional responses in readers.

As an example, one might consider Eliot's of Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* (1622), as it appears in his 1927 essay on Middleton:

I that | am OF | your BLOOD | was TA- | -ken from YOU

FOR your | BET-ter | HEALTH; LOOK | no MORE | up-ON't,

But CAST | it TO | the GROUND | re-GARD- | -less-LY [...]

Eliot argues that such lines show how "Incidentally, in flashes and when the dramatic need comes," Middleton, "is a great poet, a great master of versification" (*Complete Prose* 2: 128). The embodiment of Middleton's verse through recitation integrates sensory, motor, and cognitive processes in a complex interplay. The physical act of vocalization engages multiple bodily systems simultaneously. The choriambic structure in the first line creates a wave-like rhythm that might physically simulate emotional turbulence. At the same time, the stress on "BLOOD" followed by the quick unstressed syllables of "was TA-" could evoke a sensation of something rapidly drawing away. After "HEALTH," the caesura requires a pause, affording a chance for some reflection upon the changing rhythm and the imperative stress that follows to form the spondee ("HEALTH; LOOK"). Returning to regular iambic pentameter in the third line might resolve the tension. In any case, the end-stopped line affords a pause for breathing. As one recites, the physical sensations of forming sounds combine with the semantic content, creating a rich, multisensory stimulation, if not of the emotional states described, of something that metaphorizes the stimuli associated with such emotions. In any case, becoming more aware of the flashes and jolts that versification such as Middleton's enacts above the body during recitation perhaps captures something of Eliot's meaning when he suggests Middleton as "a great observer of human nature," demonstrating how language can capture and convey human experience through physical engagement (*Complete Prose* 2: 128).

Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion provides additional insights into how readers might experience emotions in verse. Barrett argues that "the brain constructs meaning by correctly anticipating (predicting) incoming sensations. Predictions are corrected by

sensory samples from the world and the body" (Barrett 7). This process of prediction and

correction fundamentally shapes how readers experience emotions in verse. According to this

view, the brain does not passively receive sensory information from the phonetic aspects of verse

and then label it with an emotion. Instead, it actively predicts what these phonetic sensations

mean based on past experiences and current context and then updates these predictions based on

incoming sensory information.[38] Barrett's theory challenges the traditional view of emotions as

fixed, universal categories with distinct neural signatures. Instead, she suggests that emotions are

highly variable constructions shaped by individual experiences, cultural context, and situational

factors. In the context of reading verse, this theory implies that readers' emotional experiences of

phonetic patterns might be highly variable and context-dependent. The same phonetic qualities

might evoke different emotional responses in different readers or even in the same reader at

different times, depending on their past experiences, current state, and the broader context of

their reading.

      I argue that Barrett's emphasis on the variability and context-dependency of emotional

experiences finds a complement in Stephen Cushman's critique of the "fallacy of imitative form"

he finds too often in the formalist analysis of verse. Just as Barrett argues against neuroscientists'

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[38] For other important work supporting Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, see Lisa Feldman Barrett. *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017; Lisa Feldman Barrett, Paula M. Niedenthal and Piotr Winkielman. *Emotion and Consciousness*. New York: Guilford Press, 2005; Victor Carranza-Pinedo, "Rethinking core affect: the role of dominance in animal behaviour and welfare research," *Synthese*, 203, 5, 2024, 1-23; Panteleimon Ekkekakis. *The Measurement of Affect, Mood, and Emotion: A Guide for Health-behavioral Research*. Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Rick Anthony Furtak. *Knowing Emotions: Truthfulness and Recognition in Affective Experience*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018; John Madden. *Neurobiology of Learning, Emotion, and Affect*. New York: Raven Press, 1991; Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan. *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015; Jochen Musch and Karl C. Klauer. *The Psychology of Evaluation: Affective Processes in Cognition and Emotion*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003; Jaak Panksepp. *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998; James A. Russell, "Emotion, core affect, and psychological construction," *Cognition & Emotion*, 23, 7, 2009, 1259-83; David Sander and Klaus R. Scherer. *The Oxford Companion to Emotion and the Affective Sciences*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; G. R. Semin and Eliot R. Smith. *Embodied Grounding: Social, Cognitive, Affective, and Neuroscientific Approaches*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

interpreting individual behaviors and expressions through essentialist ideas about emotions as solid, Platonic abstractions, Cushman warns against assuming that formal elements of versification—or formal choices made by a poet— guarantee mimetic relationships to content or cognitive or affective responses in readers. Referencing Yvor Winters, Cushman argues that "the formal intent to imitate some inward or outward phenomenon is an insufficient justification for, and guarantee of, aesthetic value" (Cushman 518). This caution against simplistic mappings of form to content or the cause of an emotional response in a reader encourages a more nuanced approach to understanding the relationship between formal elements and emotional experience. Combining Cushman's critique with Barrett's constructivist theory of emotion challenges the idea of pre-existing, fixed emotional categories or responses.

One important caveat in combining Cushman and Barrett, however, is that Cushman's critique is concerned with the relationship between intentionality (of the poet), the objective qualities of the verse (its versification), signification (the represented content), and interpretation (reader response) and not specifically with the relationship between versification and what I refer to as the cognitive-affective affordance of such versification. Nevertheless, his critique of the fallacy of imitative form serves as a reminder that a spondee-heavy line, such as Milton's—

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death

—does not necessarily represent anything about the "heaviness" of the objects the line denotes nor any thematic relationship between those objects (*Paradise Lost* 2.611 qtd in Cushman 514). However, Milton's line presents a distinct accentual-syllabic pattern for recitation. Despite the diversity of dialects and the physiological variations among readers, a shared understanding of prosody will yield a finite, though potentially extensive, range of embodied enactments. These enactments, while varied, remain constrained by the line's inherent rhythmic and phonetic

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structure. Therefore, while Cushman further warns against the "tortured justifications of every small formal gesture in a poem into meaningful interpretation," the physical act of recitation itself provides a basis for understanding how versification engages readers' bodies without resorting to simplistic mappings of form to emotional content.

Anil Seth's work on interoceptive inference complements these views, offering insights into how the body contributes to emotional experiences in reading verse. Seth proposes that "interoceptive inference means that bodily states are regulated by autonomic reflexes that are enslaved by descending predictions from deep generative models of our internal and external milieu" (Seth and Friston 2). This suggests that our perception of our bodily states when encountering phonetic patterns in verse is not a simple bottom-up process but rather a top-down predictive process guided by our brain's models of how our body typically responds to various phonetic stimuli. Seth further explains that "emotional feeling states can be seen as the joint content of interoceptive predictions, while embodied selfhood rests on the multimodal and amodal predictions that distinguish self-related from non-self-signals via active inference" (Seth and Friston 2). In the context of cognitive-affective formalism, such a theory likely means that readers' emotional experiences of versification arise from the brain's predictions about bodily states in response to phonetic patterns. In other words, enacting, through recitation, the rhythmic and phonetic patterns represented by verse might interact with readers' interoceptive predictions, potentially altering their perception of their bodily states and, consequently, their emotional experiences. For example, specific phonetic qualities in a poem might subtly influence a reader's breathing or heart rate, which could, as I suggested above, trigger an emotional concept of anxiety.

Building on these theories of emotional conception, construction, and interoceptive inference, G. Gabrielle Starr's work provides further insights into how verse might affect readers' emotional experiences. In her 2015 article "Aesthetics and Impossible Embodiment," Starr argues that poetry can provoke "sensations of physical and perceptual disorientation," through its phonetic qualities (Starr 171). She develops this idea in her 2013 book *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience*, contending that versification can stimulate kinetic imagery and a felt sense of motion. Starr argues that "aesthetic experience engages the senses (as well as sensory analogues in imagination), and we are not indifferent to that experience" (Starr 18). She further posits that such embodied aesthetic experiences make "possible the unexpected valuation of objects, ideas, and perceptions as we assimilate them in new ways through the arts. These entail sensory experiences that resonate with our sensorimotor processes and draw upon the body's proprioceptive awareness" (20). This perspective suggests that the material qualities of verse—its phonetic patterns, rhythms, and sonic structure—might engage readers' sensorimotor systems in ways that go beyond mere semantic processing, potentially creating novel emotional experiences or altering existing ones.

For an example of what Starr means when she argues that versification stimulates sensorimotor responses in readers, consider the famous "Echo Scene" from John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623):

Antonio

'Tis very like my wife's voice.

Echo

Ay, wife's voice.

Delio

Come, let us walk further from it

I would not have you go to the cardinal's to-night:

Do not.

Echo

Do not.

Delio

Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting sorrow

Than time. Take time for't; be mindful of thy safety.

Echo

Be mindful of thy safety.

Antonio

Necessity compels me.

Make scrutiny through the passages

Of your own life, you 'll find it impossible

To fly your fate.

Echo

O, fly your fate!

Delio

Hark! the dead stones seem to have pity on you,

And give you good counsel.

Antonio

Echo, I will not talk with thee,

For thou art a dead thing.

Echo

Thou art a dead thing.

Antonio

My duchess is asleep now,

And her little ones, I hope sweetly. O heaven,

Shall I never see her more?

Echo

Never see her more

(*The Duchess of Malfi* 5.3).

When one adopts Antonio's perspective and thus voices each line, the recitation enacts an embodied expectation of metrical and syntactical completion violated by the echoed fragments, and the effect of that echo might be disconcerting—or directly stimulating embodied affective states that correlate with one's emotional concept for disconcertment. Specifically, when Antonio utters a set of complete lines, such as

Necessity compels me.

Make scrutiny through the passages

Of your own life, you'll find it impossible

To fly your fate,

the reader's interoceptive predictions might find some stability, resolving any excitement or disruption caused by the previous echo. However, when the echo returns— "O, fly your fate!"— it violates those embodied expectations again. Indeed, with each echo fragment, the brain must adjust its predictive model, integrating the new sonic and semantic information to derive coherence from the formal disruption and the effects of the disruption compound. The constant

cycle of embodied arousal and resolving creates a dynamic interplay of "tensing" and "releasing" interoceptive states; indeed, that cycling elicits a state of apprehension or even something akin to dread. At the same time, the echoed distortions combine with exteroceptive cues about Antonio's grief over potentially losing his wife, the Duchess. Webster's verse engages the reader's predictive modeling, presenting distinct cues that beg readers to unify their fluctuating interoceptive sensations caused by the versification with the disturbing contextual information about Antonio's anguish into a concept for emotion: one of a very particular form of anxiety, sorrow, or existential disorientation.

Massinger's "Cerebral Anaemia," Shakespeare's "Precise Vigour"

I return now to Eliot's essay, "Philip Massinger," originally a review of A. H. Cruickshank's 1920 book *Philip Massinger*.[39] Eliot praises Cruickshank's work as "a work of scholarship" that "presents us with evidence which is an invitation to the critical faculty of the reader: it bestows a method, rather than a judgment" (*Complete Prose* 2: 244). He values Cruickshank's approach because it provides readers with "facts which are capable of generalization," allowing them to engage critically with the material and draw their own conclusions (*Complete Prose* 2: 244). Cruickshank's method, which Eliot admires, involves a comprehensive analysis of Massinger's works, including detailed examinations of plots, characters, and versification. Eliot specifically praises Cruickshank's appendices as "as valuable as the essay itself," noting their importance in understanding Massinger's place within the broader context of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, the study of which, he argues, requires one to study "twelve dramatists all at once to dissect with all care the complex growth, to ponder

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[39] See A. H. Cruickshank, editor. *Phillip Massinger*. Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1920.

collaboration to the utmost line" (*Complete Prose* 2: 244). Eliot sees Cruickshank's work as exemplifying the kind of meticulous scholarship necessary for understanding Elizabethan drama, which he believes requires studying "a dozen playwrights at once, to dissect with all care the complex growth, to ponder collaboration to the utmost" (*Complete Prose* 2: 244). Using Cruickshank's scholarly work as a foundation, Eliot then builds his own critical assessment of Massinger and his place in the Elizabethan dramatic tradition.

Eliot's assessment of Massinger is multifaceted. He acknowledges Massinger's technical proficiency, noting his "grasp of stagecraft" and "flexible metre" (*Complete Prose* 2: 245). However, this skill alone is not enough for Eliot to elevate Massinger to the level of his predecessors, especially Shakespeare. Echoing Cruickshank's claim that Massinger's drama was "typical of an age which had much culture, but which, without being exactly corrupt, lacked moral fibre," Eliot writes that Massinger's verse, "without being exactly corrupt, suffers from cerebral anaemia" (*Complete Prose* 2: 245). He contrasts Massinger's "anaemia" with Shakespeare's "vigour" and finds that while the former's "language is pure and correct, free from muddiness or turbidity," it lacks the "finer tissues of the mind" found in Shakespeare (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). "Massinger does not confuse metaphors, or heap them one upon another," Eliot writes, "He is lucid, though not easy" (*Complete Prose* 2: 246). To demonstrate this critique, Eliot contrasts lines from Massinger's *The Emperor of the East* (1631) with Shakespeare's *Othello* (c. 1603-05)*.* In Massinger's play, Emperor Theodosius reflects upon his power and inability to change the past or regain a former state of mind:

> Can I call back yesterday, with all their aids
>
> That bow unto my sceptre? or restore
>
> My mind to that tranquillity and peace

It then enjoyed

Eliot compares this to Shakespeare's *Othello*, where Iago warns Othello that once jealousy has

taken hold, he will never again know the peace of mind he had before suspicion entered his

thoughts:

Not poppy, nor mandragora,

Nor all the drowsy syrops of the world

Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep

Which thou owedst yesterday

A preliminary analysis reveals that Massinger's lines adhere closely to iambic pentameter

with minimal variation, while Shakespeare's verse demonstrates greater metrical complexity and

phonetic richness. Massinger's verse scans as follows:

can i CALL | back YES- | -ter-DAY, | with ALL | their AIDS

That BOW | un-TO | my SCEP- | -tre? OR | re-STORE

My MIND | to THAT | tran-QUIL- | -li-TY | and PEACE

It THEN | en-JOYED?

The first line begins with an unstressed syllable, creating a rising rhythm throughout the excerpt.

Each of the first three lines contains five iambic feet, while the fourth line is a shortened version

of the pattern with only two feet. This metrical consistency results in 17 stressed and 17

unstressed syllables across the four lines, maintaining the expected 50:50 ratio of standard

iambic pentameter. The only variation occurs in the shortened final line, which maintains the

iambic pattern but truncates the line at two feet. The consistent iambic pentameter and lack of

metrical variation may account for Eliot's perception of Massinger's verse as lacking the

dynamic energy and emotional complexity found in Shakespeare's more varied prosody:

> Not POP- | -py, NOR | man-DRA- | go-RA,
>
> Nor ALL | the DROW- | -sy SY- | -rops OF | the WORLD
>
> Shall E- | ver ME- | di-cine THEE | to that | SWEET SLEEP
>
> Which THOU | OWED'ST YES- | -ter-DAY

<div align="center">(Othello 3.3.333-36).</div>

The passage begins with an iambic tetrameter line, then shifts to iambic pentameter in the second

line. The third line maintains the pentameter but deviates from strict iambic rhythm in "precise"

ways: the first two feet are iambic, followed by an anapestic substitution ("-di-cine THEE"), a

pyrrhic foot ("to that"), and concluding with a spondee ("SWEET SLEEP"). The fourth line

opens with a trochaic substitution ("which THOU") before returning to the iambic meter. The

passage from Othello contains eighteen stressed and seventeen unstressed syllables. Compared to

Massinger's verse, Shakespeare's shows a minute increase in the density of stressed syllables

from fifty- to fifty-one percent—a slight increase that matters greatly, especially, for instance,

when four stresses occur in a six-syllable line such as line 336 above. Likely, this is the sort of

thing that Eliot intends when he describes Shakespeare's metric as having a "*precise* vigor":

globally, Shakespeare's blank verse is quite regular; locally, it can be exotic.

Phonetically, Massinger's and Shakespeare's verses display marked differences that

support Eliot's characterization of their respective styles. Massinger's lines feature a balanced

distribution of consonants and vowels without notable patterns or clustering. Plosives (/k/, /b/, /t/,

/d/), fricatives (/θ/, /ð/, /s/), nasals (/m/, /n/), and approximants (/j/, /w/, /l/, /r/) are spread evenly throughout, as are monophthongs (/æ/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /ʌ/, /ɒ/, /e/, /iː/) and diphthongs (/aɪ/, /eɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/). This even distribution is exemplified by the plosive /k/ appearing in "Can" (l. 1), "call" (l. 1), "back" (l. 1), and "tranquility" (l. 3), and the approximant /r/ in "restore" (l. 2), "tranquility" (l. 3), and "enjoyed" (l. 4). Alliteration is minimal, with only "call" and "can" (/kæn/, /kɔːl/) sharing initial sounds (l. 1). Some assonance occurs with the /aɪ/ sound in "I," "my," and "mind," but it's not dominant. In contrast, Shakespeare's lines demonstrate greater phonetic variety and patterning. The passage contains a diverse array of consonants, including plosives (/p/ in "poppy" [l. 1], /d/ in "drowsy" [l. 2]), fricatives (/s/ in "syrops" [l. 2], /ʃ/ in "shall" [l. 3]), nasals (/m/ in "mandragora" [l. 1], /n/ in "nor" [l. 1, 2]), and approximants (/r/ in "drowsy" [l. 2], /l/ in "all" [l. 2], /w/ in "world" [l. 2]). Vowel sounds are equally varied. Words like "mandragora" (/mænˈdrægərə/) [l. 1] and "drowsy" (/ˈdraʊzi/) [l. 2] offer complex interplays of sounds. Alliteration is more prominent, with "poppy" and "mandragora" sharing initial nasals (l. 1), and "drowsy" and "drench" repeating the initial /dr/ sound. Assonance occurs, particularly in the repetition of the /ɪ/ sound in "medicine" and "sleep" (l. 3).

Moreover, Shakespeare's lines demonstrate a complex interplay between metrical structure and phonetic richness. Consider, for instance, Iago's phrase "drowsy syrops," in the third foot of line 334. Within a single metrical foot appears a phonetic contrast between the same syllable at the end of the adjective "drowsy" and at the head "syrops," the noun that drowsy modifies. In other words, the "-sy" (/zi/) in "drowsy" contrasts with the "sy-" (/sɪ/) in "syrops," creating a phonetic paronomasia that compresses signification with the cognitive-affective affordances of versification: through wordplay, Iago attributes the effect (drowsiness) to the cause (syrups), characterizing the syrups themselves as drowsy. The metrical structure further

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accentuates the phonetic contrast; the iambic foot ("-sy SY-") places these contrasting sounds in immediate juxtaposition

Interlude One

"That Shakespherian Rag": Impossible Embodiments in "A Game of Chess"

Building on the understanding of how versification engages embodied emotion concepts, I now extend my analysis to Eliot's poetic practice, particularly his use of citation in *The Waste Land*. In "A Game of Chess," Eliot employs a citational method that harnesses fragments from other texts, particularly Shakespeare's plays, as objective correlatives functioning as enactive metaphors. These enactive metaphors impossibly embody a sense of Shakespearean drama, leveraging the reader's "Shakespearean priors"—the emotional concepts previously formed from embodied encounters with Shakespeare's dramas. So, for Eliot's defamiliarized citations to provoke an uncanny resonance of Shakespearean drama in "A Game of Chess," he relies on the reader's accumulation of modal residues and emotional concepts formed through their prior immersive experiences reading or watching the plays. Recognizing the echoed speeches, gestures, and scenes activates residual neural patterns encoded from those previous embodied encounters with the original dramas, allowing the citations to function as enactive the sense of Shakespeare's characters, actions, and conflicts. Without a grounding in emotional concepts constructed through direct bodily engagement with the sources, the defamiliarized linguistic patterns would fail to catalyze the desired experience of "impossible embodiment" and a sense of dislocation for the reader. "A Game of Chess" would be disorienting but not in a productive, inviting, or thrilling way. However, when that impossible embodiment does occur—when one enacts enough of those voices—one experiences a state of disorientation, existential confusion, and radical self-alienation akin to the sort of nervous breakdown or psychic fragmentation that Eliot seems to have experienced when composing *The Waste Land.*

The passage opens by alluding to Enobarbus's well-known image of Cleopatra from *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606-07):

> The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
>
> Burned on the water

> (*Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.203-204).

Eliot's version retains the analogy but shifts the sense of imagery:

> The chair she sat in like a burnished throne,
>
> Glowed on the marble

> (*Poems* 58: 77-78).

The substitution of "glowed" for Shakespeare's "burned" creates a subtle but significant shift in the phonetic and connotative qualities of the line. Phonetically, "glowed" (/gləʊd/) features a diphthong followed by a voiced alveolar stop, creating a softer, more drawn-out sound compared to the shorter, more abrupt quality of "burned" (/bɜːnd/). Connotatively, "burned" suggests a more active, potentially destructive process, even when used intransitively. It carries associations of heat and transformation. "Glowed," on the other hand, implies a gentler, more static emanation of light without the implication of heat or change. Combined with the shift from "water" to "marble," Eliot's alteration gives a sense of stillness and permanence in contrast to the heat and fluidity connoted in Shakespeare. Indeed, the chair, glowing on the marble, suggests a static, self-contained scene disconnected from external forces, clashing with the conventional sensorimotor patterns sometimes afforded by images of light reflecting and refracting. Rather than the natural phenomenon recognizable from experience, the "glowing" chair/throne represents an "impossible" material condition. By stimulating the Shakespearian context and displacing the anticipated verb, Eliot produces a phenomenological disruption that might

challenge the reader to integrate with embodied knowledge of the physical world. This strategic defamiliarization of the source text's sensory details destabilizes our capacity for sensorimotor simulation, provoking the experience of "impossible embodiment" that Starr associates with poetry's ability to transcend ordinary perception.

Moreover, just as Eliot destabilizes embodied simulation by shifting from "burned" to the paradoxical "glowed" when depicting the chair/throne, he employs a similar defamiliarizing technique in describing the woman's hair:

Spread out in fiery points

Glowed into words, then would be savagely still

(*Poems* 59: 108-110).

Eliot's analogy for the woman's hair, "spread out in fiery points," activates sensorimotor recollections associated with flames. However, this fiery quality is not explicitly present in Eliot's text; rather, it's indexed by the absent "burned" from Shakespeare's original line. This absent presence creates a complex cognitive effect: the verse encourages readers to imagine flames fanning out, suggesting fire—a word at home in this context only because of Eliot's allusion to Cleopatra's barge burning on the water of the Nile. This indexical relationship to Shakespeare's "burned" adds another cognitive complexity to Eliot's image. The reader must simultaneously activate the embodied concept of fire (indexed by the absent "burned") and integrate it with the present "glowed," which carries different sensory implications. This creates a tension between the intense, active quality suggested by "fiery points" and the softer, more static emanation implied by "glowed."

As "A Game of Chess" proceeds, Eliot's citational method only further overloads the reader with conflicting sensory cues. Eliot's line "Glowed into words, then would be savagely

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still" presents paradoxical imagery and employs phonetic and prosodic elements that create conflicting sensorimotor experiences. The line scans as follows:

GLOWED in- | to WORDS, | then WOULD | be SA- | -vage-ly STILL.

Preceded by a trochaic foot ("GLOWED in-"), the midline iambs ("to WORDS, | then WOULD | be SA-") suggest movement and progression, at least in recitation, build-up towards a conflict with the signification of stillness at the end of the line. Phonetically, the line is rich with fricatives and sibilants (/d/, /w/, /s/, /v/, /dʒ/, /s/), which create a sense of continuous sound or motion when voiced. The consonance of the /w/ sound in "words" and "would" produces a wavering effect in the voice, further contradicting the notion of stillness. The long vowel sounds in "glowed" and "words" extend the voice until clipped by the barbed consonance of "savagely still." The final anapest, "vage-ly STILL," combined with the abrupt stop of the final consonant cluster in "still," creates a sensorimotor experience of sudden arrest or freezing that mimics the line's content if only to create the effect of a savage arrest of the sensorimotor logics activated by the soft consonance and assonance of the liquidity of "glow [...] words [...] would."

This complex interplay between present and absent textual elements and the impossible sensory experiences they evoke exemplifies how Eliot's citational method intensifies the cognitive-affective affordances of versification, creating a rich, multifaceted, embodied response in the reader. The sensorimotor disruption caused by that image only doubles when, after a long pastiche of Alexander Pope, her hair glows its first expression:

'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.'

(*Poems* 59: 111-14).

These lines arrive incandescent, glowing on the wick of words from Shakespearean men meant to express patriarchal, colonial, and supernatural authority over women and other marginal figures, demanding their vocalization. For instance, there is Lear's domineering demands to Cordelia in *King Lear*'s first act, where the ailing monarch demands his daughter lavish praise and affection upon him to secure her inheritance:

> Strive to be interested, what can you say to draw
>
> A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

<div align="center">

(*King Lear* 1.1.80-88).

</div>

The speaker's words now resonate with power—or at least, index it. When Lear demands Cordelia "Speak," his command carries not just the promise of a lavish inheritance that he assumes will compel her to display her love but also embodies the monarch's totalizing power to dictate her self-expression. His imperative is equally meant to entice Cordelia's subordination while also serving as a blunt instrument for compelling her into articulation on patriarchal terms. Lear's authoritarian stance rests on the presumed desire for wealth and status he arrogantly projects onto his daughter.

So, while she strives to speak in the manner of the monarch, she is nevertheless destabilized by the echoes of subjugation and oppressive demands for speech that the glowing words also embody from their Shakespearean origins, as in the further echo of Prospero's demand of his daughter, Miranda, in *The Tempest* (c. 1610-16):

> Thou hast. Where was she born? Speak; tell me.

<div align="center">

(*The Tempest* 1.2.260).

</div>

Now channeling masculine dominance, Eliot has his speaker borrow words from the arguably colonialist figure of Prospero. The linguistic objects take on an incandescent materiality,

radiating with the promise of paternal privilege and power—the father's sovereign right to know the daughter's history and identity. That presumption echoes in yet another of Prospero's imperatives:

What ho! Slave! Caliban! Thou earth, thou speak!

(*The Tempest* 1.2.313-314).

Prospero's dehumanization of Caliban further enforces the point that for all their sensuous opulence, words also activate embodied concepts associated with patriarchal and colonial power dynamics that subjugate the feminine and racial "other."

Other echoes inhabit the garden. Macbeth's demand to the Weird Sisters transforms an epistemological query into an ontological challenge:

Speak if you can. What are you?

(*Macbeth* 1.3.50).

shift from "Who are you?" to "What are you?" extends beyond the subjugation of feminine or racial "others" to probe the of being. Macbeth's imperative attempts to compel articulation from entities that defy human comprehension, pushing language to its limits in expressing the supernatural. In "A Game of Chess," Eliot's citational technique refracts this Shakespearean moment, creating a multifaceted resonance encompassing authority, domination, and an ambitious reach towards the supernatural. However, the coherence of the speaking subject fractures under the weight of these accumulated voices. Eliot seems to construct a feminine subjectivity only to negate it, leaving readers with a spectral presence—a void animated by echoes of patriarchal rhetoric.

This ontological instability manifests in the versification itself. The disjointed imperatives to "speak," stripped of their original contexts, create a phonetic landscape that

mirrors the confusion of who speaks or refuses to speak. The sibilant 's' hisses a demand for vocalization that paradoxically silences as it forces air towards a pressurized apogee on the tip of the lips in preparation for the plosive "p" falling into the nadir of the muted diphthong "ea" and the final silence of the "k." The repetition of these sounds across the fragmented citations and allusions creates a rhythmic insistence that both compels and repels, mirroring the paradoxical construction and deconstruction of subjectivity. Readers, compelled to voice these fragments, become caught in a web of conflicting sensorimotor experiences. Speaking these lines involves the physical production of sounds that semantically negate the speaker's existence, creating an embodied paradox that mirrors the poem's thematic concerns. Thus, Eliot's versification does not merely describe a state of existential confusion—it produces the physical concomitants of that state, which, when voiced, create an experience of "impossible embodiment" that stimulates readers toward an attempt to stabilize a fundamentally destabilizing network of half-whispers and dissolutions. Indeed, the string of disjointed imperatives to "speak," stripped of their original contexts, creates an estranging phenomenology centered on ontological confusion. These demands to speak enact a paradoxical dynamic - they simultaneously construct a subject position ("you") while undermining the coherence of that subject position through their disorienting, fragmented delivery. So, the citational speech acts that should solidify a unified subject produce an experience of self-alienation for the reader compelled to "speak."

Eliot crafts this citational form to produce ontological confusion and radical self-alienation from stable subject positions and boundaries between self/other and human/inhuman. The layering of patriarchal voices denies the coherence of any unified feminine subjectivity, creating instead an "impossible embodiment" of womanhood as an absence, a void animated by the echoes of male authority grasping at the limits of language and being. The phenomenological

estrangement emerges, if at all, from an inability to locate a stable subject behind the utterances. One cannot tell if these are a woman's words or merely the hollow reverberation of patriarchal rhetoric. In any case, these citations activate competing sensorimotor patterns from the reader's previous experiences of archetypal figures like the "cruel king," "ambitious thane," and "powerful magician," producing "an uncanny mode of resonance" that, as Starr writes of Stevens, "unsettles assumptions about physical boundaries and proprioceptive coherence" (Starr 171).

However, amidst the confusion, another voice appears to appear in response to the first specters:

I think we are in rats' alley

Where the dead men lost their bones

(*Poems* 59: 115-16).

The shift contrasts the tone and imagery of the echoed imperatives and questions the dominated the preceding lines. In contrast, this new voice offers a declarative statement, a moment of seeming clarity amidst the confusion. The line adheres closer to iambic pentameter than the fragmented citations that came before:

i THINK | we ARE | in RATS' | al-LEY

Where the DEAD | men LOST | their BONES

This rhythmic regularity provides a momentary sense of stability, even as the content of the line introduces a new, unsettling image. Phonetically, the line is rich with long vowel sounds and softer consonants, particularly compared to the sharp, staccato quality of "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak." The assonance in "I," "we," and "alley" creates a more fluid, continuous sound that contrasts with the abrupt, consonant-heavy imperatives of the earlier lines.

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However, the content of these lines —the imagery of a "rats' alley" and "dead men" who have "lost their bones" —introduces a new register of decay and desolation. This shift in imagery, combined with the more conversational tone and regular meter, momentarily grounds the poem in a specific, albeit grim, physical setting, providing a brief respite from the disembodied voices and demands of the previous lines. Yet, the ground rumbles. The surreal image of dead men losing their bones resists easy visualization, creating tension between the more conversational tone and the impossible scenario it describes. This tension mirrors the larger structure of the poem, where moments of apparent clarity or stability quickly dissolve.

Almost immediately, further citations from King Lear overlay and interfere with this intruding perspective:

'Do

'You know nothing? Do you see nothing?

Do you remember 'Nothing?'

(*Poems* 59: 121-23).

Here, the original "voice," always marked by inverted commas, suggests a dialogic part for the new voice that reverts to the scene from Lear gestured towards above. Indeed, those lines comprise Cordelia's response:

Cordelia   Nothing, my lord.

Lear   Nothing?

Cordelia   Nothing.

Lear   Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again

(*King Lear* 1.1.80-88).

Phonetically, the repetition of "nothing" creates a hollow resonance. The nasal 'n' sound, followed by the open vowel 'o' and the soft 'th', produces a sound that seems to fade away, mirroring the semantic emptiness of the word itself. The stichomythia of the characters' exchanges meanwhile breaks the pentameter up over three-rapidly exchanged half-lines:

NOTH-ing, | my LORD |

| NOTH-ing? |

| NOTH-ing. |

The subjectivity of the line is swallowed by the "sound and fury" of Macbeth's soliloquy, which proclaims that all utterance is doomed to dissolution

a tale Told

by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing

(*Macbeth* 5.5.25-27).

The shift from the clipped, monosyllabic stichomythic exchanges between Lear and Cordelia to the resonant blank verse soliloquy of Macbeth produces a jarring shift in formal register that catalyzes sensorimotor confusion. The painfully mimetic

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time,

clashes with the sensorimotor dynamics activated by the bantering half-lines of Lear and Cordelia (Macbeth 5.5.16-18). Macbeth's "tomorrow" burns in "The Fire Sermon" where it joins with the nothings of Lear, Cordelia, and countless other Shakespearean characters

'On Margate Sands.

 I can connect

 Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing'

          la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning   burning   burning   burning

(*Poems* 66: 305-07).

Eliot's citational form purposefully short-circuits proprioceptive coherence, leaving the reader suspended between embodied sensorimotor resonances that cannot unify into a stable subjective locus. The experience is one of estrangement from Eliot's defamiliarizing juxtaposition of radically divergent formal registers, thus priming the faculties of emotional conception towards disorientation, dread, and anxiety.

At this point, the interlocutor cuts in with a familiar vocalic gesture "The Burial of the Dead":

I remember Those are pearls that were his eyes

(*Poems* 59: 124-25).

Ariel's Song, again, this time, with the soft, liquid consonants in "pearls" and the long vowel sounds in "eyes" contrasts with the interlocutor's once colloquial voice. Now, like to original speaker, the interlocutor's voice becomes citational. Rather than re-grounding the poem in a more unified perspective, the interlocutor's Shakespearian interjection intensifies the

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fragmentation and dislocation. By contrast, the woman's voice now takes on the interlocutor's initial conversational idiom:

Are you alive or not? Is there nothing in your head?

(*Poems* 59: 126).

The abrupt questions, with their staccato rhythm and harsh consonants ('v' in "alive", 't' in "not", and 'd' in "head"), jar against the musicality of "Ariel's Song" The interlocutor answers with a fitting image of impossible embodiment:

O O O O that Shakespearian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent

(*Poems* 59: 127-30).

The repetition of "O O O O" embodies, in textual form, the archetypal formal concept for emotional expression—the vocative. Graphically, the vocative "O" circumscribes a spatial center for the voices that indexes the roundness of the simple vowel sound—together offering a dramatic equivalent for the lyric "I." This moment should enter embodiment back in the expressive voice.

Yet the text immediately throws the reader back into "that Shakespearian Rag," as it disembodies this material vocalization, framing it as a commentary on "A Game of Chess" itself. The embodied "O's" paradoxically flesh into sound while simultaneously displaying themselves as a kind of textual artifact or "rag." Indeed, the staccato phrasing echoes both Lear's howling laments at the death of Cordelia—

Howl, howl, howl, howl!

Oh you are men of stones!

<p style="text-align:center">(*King Lear* 5.3.231-233)</p>

—while the "so-s" of,

it's **<u>so</u>** elegant

<u> so</u> intelligent,

echo a verbal tic of Prospero's: the phrase, "so, so" that Ariel first identifies in 4.1, after Prospero

commands he

Go bring the rabble,

O'er whom, I give thee power, here to this place:

Incite them to quick motion

<p style="text-align:center">(*The Tempest* 4.1.37-39).</p>

Out of fear, Ariel quickly obliges:

Before you can say, 'come,' and 'go,'

And breathe twice, and cry, 'so, so'

<p style="text-align:center">(*The Tempest* 4.1.40-41).</p>

On one level, the vocalization materializes the interlocutor's lamentation, a howling of anguish

over language's inevitable decay into mere textual "rags." Yet simultaneously, the phrasing also

casts their perspective into the role of Prospero, one who wields language with controlling

rhetorical mastery, subduing the text's materiality into obedient submission. Again, a coherent

subject position cannot be located. Is this a corporeal cry of grief or an ethereal sorcerer's

enchantment? Materialized anguish or disembodied domination over a linguistic subject?

Because of how Eliot maps the so-so of his interlocutor speech onto Ariel's fear of Prospero's "so, so" magic, the Shakespearian-attuned reader quickly recognizes Ariel's voice as it appears in the following lines, the woman:

What shall I do? Say, what shall I do?

<div align="center">(<i>The Tempest</i> 1.2.300),</div>

Ariel speaks the lines in response to Prospero's threat of further bondage for complaining, and these words becomes the woman's threat to the interlocutor:

'What shall I do now? What shall I do?'

'I shall rush out as I am and walk the street

'With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?'

<div align="center">(<i>Poems</i> 59: 131-33).</div>

The image recalls the woman's fiery hair "spread out in points" from the beginning of "A Game of Chess," except here, she threatens something between a gesture of liberated, unrestrained embodied presence and a nightmare scene of howling in the streets. Eliot's citational haunting undercuts the embodied materiality that the line attempts to invoke—of a woman defiantly letting down her hair—because her voice comes through the subjugated perspective of Ariel from *The Tempest.* From the start, the citational quality of her speech frustrates her declaration of corporeal independence. Thus, rather than cohering an embodied concept for emotion, the citational method splinters subjectivity across a kaleidoscope of dramatic personae, archetypal roles, and incompatible experiential registers. And that experience is a sort of emotional concept much like the experience of a mental health crisis—a poetic realization of a nervous breakdown, much like the one Eliot and his then-wife Vivien Haighwood-Eliot famously suffered while the

two voraciously consumed Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies while collaborating on

The Waste Land.

Chapter Two

Citational Parataxis: "Christoper Marlowe" and the Development of Dramatic Blank Verse

Eliot's 1919 essay "Christopher Marlowe" conceptualizes Elizabethan and Jacobean

blank verse as a material resource containing stores of affective affordances that the dramatist

refines into complex emotions during the composition of poetic drama. Eliot's essay directly

challenges Algernon Charles Swinburne's assessment of Marlowe's primacy in "the invention"

of English blank verse drama.[40] In challenging Swinburne's and other Victorian Romantic critics,

Eliot's essay on Marlowe joins with the "disintegrationist" critic J. M. Robertson, whose book

Elizabethan Literature (1914) Eliot cites in questioning Marlowe's standing as the primary

innovator of Elizabethan dramatic blank verse.[41] The "disintegrationist" approach involved

dismantling or breaking down the romanticized, mythologized reputations and perceived

originality of writers like Marlowe. Robertson identified specific instances where Marlowe

borrowed language from other writers, especially from Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (c.

1590-1596). By pointing out Marlowe's ostensible borrowings from others such as Spenser,

Robertson portrayed Marlowe as a conscious craftsman synthesizing material from various

sources rather than as the unconscious artistic genius the Victorian romantics had depicted him.

When Eliot joined the fray on the side of the disintegrationist critics, he directly

amplified Robertson's challenge to the argument that Marlowe was "the father of English tragedy

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[40] See Algernon Charles Swinburne. *Contemporaries of Shakespeare*. London: William Heinemann, 1919; Algernon Charles Swinburne. *The Age of Shakespeare*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1908; and Algernon Charles Swinburne. *A Study of Ben Jonson*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1889.

[41] Robertson was part of an early twentieth-century movement that aimed to reassess and re-evaluate early modern writers such as Marlowe through more rigorous scholarly methods, separate from the romanticized Victorian views that had dominated earlier. See J. M Robertson. *Elizabethan Literature*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1914; Algernon Charles Swinburne. *Contemporaries of Shakespeare*. London: William Heinemann, 1919; Algernon Charles Swinburne. *The Age of Shakespeare*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1908; and Algernon Charles Swinburne. *A Study of Ben Jonson*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1889.

and the creator of English blank verse" (*Complete Prose* 2: 96). Instead, he counters: "Thomas Kyd has as good a claim as Marlowe to the paternity of English tragedy" and "the Earl of Surrey has a better claim than Marlowe to have been the creator of the finest English blank verse before Marlowe" *(Complete Prose* 2: 96). Indeed, Eliot repositioning Marlowe as a critical *developer*, but not necessarily the singular progenitor, of Elizabethan dramatic blank verse whose accomplishment consists in successfully working new "several new [emotional] tones" into the metrical form that helped commence "the dissociative process which drew" blank verse "further and further away from the rhythms of rhymed verse," a claim I discuss below (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). For now, Eliot implies that his study of Marlowe's development of blank verse metonymizes the development of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse as such as akin to "the analysis of that astonishing industrial product coal-tar," framing blank verse as a non-renewable material resource—a fossil fuel that multiple dramatists and dramatic lyric poets refined and depleted over time (*Complete Prose* 2: 97).

Indeed, Eliot describes Marlowe's blank verse as "one of the earlier derivatives," possessing "properties which are not repeated in any of the analytic or synthetic blank verses discovered somewhat later" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97).[42] Looking towards *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592-93), Eliot finds that through the development of a more complex syntax, invocative and vocative grammar, and marked used of end-stopping, Marlowe "broke up the line" of Spenser and the other early Elizabethan lyricists "to a gain in intensity" of idiom emotional expression

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[42] Indeed, Eliot portrays the blank verse of Marlowe's contemporaries, such as Shakespeare and Webster, supplying an enriched emotional intensity that later poets struggled to replicate. "The blank verse of Tennyson," he writes, "a consummate master of this form in certain applications, is cruder […] than that of half a dozen contemporaries of Shakespeare; cruder, because less capable of expressing complicated, subtle, and surprising emotions" Notice that Eliot does not say that Tennyson is "less capable" than Shakespeare; the "blank verse of Tennyson" meaning that by the Victorian period, subsequent generations of poets had so thoroughly tapped the emotional stores of blank verse to run the well dry of its vitality pioneered in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, *Complete Prose* 2: 97.

proportionate to the loss of form and "harmony" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). Moreover, he finds that

Marlowe's "torrential imagination recognized many of his best bits (and those of one or two

others), saved them, and reproduced them more than once, almost invariably improving them in

the process" (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). Eliot's observation challenges the notion of Marlowe as a

"genius" or even individually talented poet, instead portraying him, as Robertson suggests, as "a

deliberate and conscious workman" who treated his verse as a material outside of himself, a

community resource for the creation of emotions requiring a process of refinement, analysis, and

development (*Complete Prose* 2: 99).

To substantiate his view of Marlowe as a craftsman developing the emotional affordances

of dramatic blank verse, understood as a shared emotional resource, Eliot employs a distinctive

method of critical parataxis that involves juxtaposing excerpts from Marlowe's dramas, often

single lines from different contexts montaged together, alongside those of his contemporaries and

predecessors, particularly Spenser. Eliot implies that his paratactic approach shows Marlowe's

development of blank verse to have involved a process of refinement and synthesis.[43] By

presenting these textual fragments side by side, Eliot demonstrates how Marlowe incorporated

Spenser's "melodies" while moving away from end rhymes and enjambment towards more end-

stopped lines. This method substantiates Eliot's argument that Marlowe's innovation lay not in

inventing blank verse but in expanding its emotional range and intensity. Eliot's paratactic

analysis ostensibly reveals how Marlowe "lyricized" dramatic blank verse and "dramatized"

Spenser's lyric verse by substituting apostrophes, invocational, and vocative addresses for

conventional dialogic dramatic speech, and idiomatic diction, simpler syntax, and end-stopped

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[43] Marlowe's blank verse, Eliot elsewhere suggests, is contrary to Ben Jonson's versification, which he finds underwent a permutational analysis, dispersing the metrical form's emotional efficacy across the surface of the whole of Jonson's dramas rather than concentrating into the single line.

punctuation for the "poetical" diction, syntactical inversions, and end-rhyming enjambments. The result, Eliot argues, is a form of dramatic blank verse wherein individual lines function as discrete emotional units, each capable of expressing a self-contained affective state while retaining the potential for dynamic recombination. Eliot's view of Marlowe's versification as both object-like and animate shapes his broader conception of Elizabethan and Jacobean blank verse as a rich emotional resource, providing a foundation for his analysis of how later dramatists expanded and eventually exhausted the emotional potential of the form.

In this chapter, I examine Eliot's method of citational parataxis in his Elizabethan and Jacobean drama essays, particularly focusing on his analysis of Marlowe's development of blank verse. I argue that Eliot's approach of juxtaposing excerpts from various playwrights without explicit connective commentary serves a dual purpose: it reveals the complex lineage of poetic techniques across generations of dramatists and demonstrates how Marlowe refined blank verse into a form capable of expressing a wide range of emotional "tones." To contextualize Eliot's approach, I first analyze the textual history of variants in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, demonstrating how editorial choices in punctuation and orthography from the sixteenth to early twentieth century reflect changing approaches to the representation of emotion in printed drama. This analysis provides a foundation for understanding Eliot's own editorial interventions in his citations.

Moreover, by tracing Eliot's citational parataxis of Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Webster, I show how his criticism allegorizes the development of dramatic blank verse but also prefigures his own citational parataxis in *The Waste Land,* a claim I further evidence in the interlude after this chapter. Eliot's treatment of individual lines of Marlowe's and others' blank verse as discrete emotional units that one can extract, manipulate, and recombine, becomes an

analytical tool for understanding the development of blank verse and a creative strategy for composition. Thus, this chapter reconsiders Eliot's critical engagement with early modern drama informed by his understanding of blank verse as a malleable emotional resource and argues that such an understanding ultimately influences his poetry. Drawing on Susan Stanford Friedman's concept of cultural parataxis and Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan's idea of reciprocal defamiliarization, I develop the concept of citational parataxis to describe Eliot's critical method, showing how it enables a transformative engagement with early modern texts that both allegorizes their historical development and informs modernist poetic practice.

Citational Parataxis

Before examining Eliot's specific critical approach, it is crucial to understand the concept of parataxis and its significance in literary analysis. Parataxis, derived from the Greek words for "side by side arrangement," refers to a literary technique where clauses, phrases, or textual elements are placed alongside each other without explicit subordination or coordination. This contrasts with hypotaxis, which uses connectives to create clear hierarchical relationships between elements. In literature, parataxis can create a sense of immediacy, equality between ideas, or deliberate ambiguity in the relationships between juxtaposed elements. As a critical method, parataxis involves juxtaposing seemingly unrelated textual fragments to reveal unexpected connections or generate new insights. This approach allows critics to defamiliarize conventional readings and unsettle established hierarchies of meaning. By placing diverse textual elements in proximity without explicitly stating their relationships, paratactic criticism invites readers to actively construct connections and meanings actively, often leading to fresh interpretations.

I draw the concept of cultural parataxis partly from Susan Stanford Friedman's article "Why Not Compare?" for a 2009 special issue of the journal *New Literary History*. In this article, Friedman coins the term "cultural parataxis," referring to the juxtaposition of texts and perspectives from different historical and cultural positions to "provoke disorientation and facilitate new understandings" of transhistorical and intercultural likenesses and differences (Friedman 759). By licensing critics to juxtapose texts across temporal or cultural boundaries, Friedman's cultural parataxis allows for critical creativity. In Friedman's model, textual juxtaposition or parataxis generates a space of re-contextualization—a spatial form emergent through the paratactic arrangement of text on the page—facilitating an intercultural or transhistorical blending or contextual hybridization. Friedman models her understanding of cultural parataxis on Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan's "reciprocal defamiliarization," a concept he first develops in *Theory in an Uneven World* (2003) but later refines in his companion to Friedman's essay, "Why Compare?" (2009).[44] In the latter, Radhakrishnan writes:

> How far does a critique go and what is its mode of validating recognition? When two centrist worldviews or knowledges meet in conversation, are they capable of divesting from their respective anchorages substantively or strategically; or to put it in hermeneutic terms, can each centrism do no more than lay bare its prejudices and forestructures of understanding in the presence of the "other"? In other words, to revert to Derrida and Spivak, no direct access to the other is possible; but what is indeed eminently possible is rigorous autocritique and autodefamiliarization in coeval response to the presence of the

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[44] See R. Radhakrishnan, "Why Compare?" *New Literary History*, 40, 3, 2009, 453-71. See also R. Radhakrishnan. *Theory in an Uneven World*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

other. The assumption, of course, is that the "other self is performing something similar from its own location"

(Radhakrishnan 463).

Radhakrishnan's statement probes critical discourse's limitations, particularly when different worldviews or knowledge systems intersect. His use of the term "centrist worldviews" suggests less a critique of "centrist" perspectives than a sort of relativism in which all perspectives appear as an epistemological center grounded in particular "prejudices and forestructures of understanding." Questioning whether these worldviews can "divest from their respective anchorages," Radhakrishnan tacitly challenges the notion of any marginal critique of "the center" because, according to him, all analytical frameworks depend upon the situated cultural and intellectual contexts in which they arise. By thus imagining "reciprocal defamiliarization" as involving not just a means of comparing but as a mode of "rigorous autocritique and autodefamiliarization," Radhakrishnan shifts the central aim of critical engagement from understanding to transformation.

Building on Friedman's concept of cultural parataxis and Radhakrishnan's idea of reciprocal defamiliarization, I propose the term "citational parataxis" to describe Eliot's critical method in his Elizabethan and Jacobean drama essays. Citational parataxis involves strategically juxtaposing single lines of verse from different sources or contexts with minimal explicit connective commentary. By placing these citations side by side, citational parataxis intends to defamiliarize conventional strategies of readings and pre-formed rubrics for interpretation. Unlike Friedman's broader cultural approach, citational parataxis focuses more narrowly on the prosodic and phonetic analysis of verse within and across a particular historical context. Indeed, Eliot's citational parataxis often functions diachronically. By chronologically arranging verse

selections from across a single writer's career, Eliot's citational parataxis traces the development of verse over time. Less commonly, Eliot's citational parataxis functions synchronically in comparing the verse of two near contemporaries or from two nearly contemporaneous texts by the same writer.

Consider Eliot's 1919 essay, "Rhetoric and Poetic Drama." There, Eliot's citations affect a "reciprocal defamiliarization" in the perceived value of the "rhetoric" of Thomas Kyd and Shakespeare. Eliot begins by citing Hieronimo's infamous apostrophe from Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587):

Oh eyes no eyes, but fountains full of tears!

Oh life no life, but lively form of death!

(*Complete Prose 2*: 84).

As he cites them, Eliot introduces a unique variant into a complex textual history of Kyd's well-known lines. Rather than simply choosing among existing variants, he actively reshapes the lines to suit his critical purposes. The significance of Eliot's intervention becomes clearer when considering how the editorial variants from the first edition in 1592 to those in the early twentieth century seem to reflect changing understandings and attitudes in what one might describe as an emergent grammar of apostrophic emotion affected by targeted changes in punctuation, syntax, and orthography. While the following examples aim to contextualize the variants within broader historical trends in textual editing and emotional representation, they do not represent claims about the intentions of editors or the reception of these texts by contemporary readers. Rather, they offer possible ways of understanding how changing editorial practices might reflect evolving conceptions of how emotion in dramatic verse respective to Eliot's citational parataxis and theory of emotion in early modern drama.

In the first extant, anonymous, 1592 edition of *The Spanish Tragedie,* printed by Edward Allde for Edward White, Hieronimo's apostrophe appears as:

Oh eies, no eies but fountains fraught with teares,

Oh life, no life, but liuely fourme of death:

(wll. 1157-1158).[45]

This version uses the orthographic variant "Oh" to mark the vocative; the spelling "eies" for "eyes" exemplifies early modern orthographic practices, where editors often represented the 'y' sound by "i." The use of "teares" for "tears" demonstrates the early modern practice of adding an "e" to indicate a long vowel sound. "Liuely" for "lively" highlights the interchangeability of 'u' and 'v' in early modern printing, while "fourme" for "form" illustrates the retention of Middle English spelling conventions. The comma after the first "Oh eies" creates a pause that emphasizes the apostrophe, while its absence after the second "eies" allows for a quicker transition to "but fountains." The comma at the end of the first line suggests a brief pause before the parallel construction in the second line. In contrast, the colon at the end indicates a stronger pause and potentially introduces further elaboration in subsequent lines.

By 1623, in the edition printed by Augustine Mathewes for Thomas Langley, punctuation had changed markedly:

Oh eyes! no eyes, but fountains fraught with teares.

Oh life! no life, but liuely forme of death:

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[45] Thomas Kyd. *The Spanish Tragedy (Hieronimo is mad again). Newly corrected and amended of such grosse faults as passed in the first impression*, London: printed by Edward Allde for Edward White, 1592, reprinted in *A Digital Anthology of Early Modern English Drama*. Edited by M. Brown, M. Poston, and E. Williamson. Available at: https://emed.folger.edu/sites/default/files/folger_encodings/pdf/EMED-ST-reg-3.pdf (Accessed: 27 July 2024).

Mathewes's version introduces exclamation points after "Oh eyes" and "Oh life," marking a shift towards more explicit emotional signaling, retaining some archaic spellings while modernizing others. The period between lines creates a stronger pause, altering the syntactical relationship. This full stop presents each metaphor as a separate, complete thought. The colon at the end suggests further elaboration might follow, creating tension between each line's self-contained nature and the implication of continued speech. These punctuation changes align syntax with lineation, strengthening the correspondence between metrical structure and logical units. This alignment emphasizes the parallelism between metaphors while suggesting that each line functions as a distinct yet related emotional expression within a broader outburst.

The eighteenth century saw further standardization, as exemplified by Robert Dodsley's 1744 edition of *A Select Collection of Old Plays:*

O eyes! no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears:

O life! no life, but lively form of death:

(Dodsley 230).[47]

The colon after the first line functions as a grammatical marker for emotional intensification, suggesting that the second line amplifies the first's emotional content. This punctuation emphasizes the lines' parallel structure and codifies an emotional progression, presenting the second line as a logical extension of the first. These choices might reflect editors' growing concern with textually representing characters' emotions in printed verse drama, possibly due to

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[46] Thomas Kyd. *The Spanish Tragedie OR Hieronimo is mad againe*, new edition, edited by A. Mathewes, sold by T. Langley. London: 1623.

[47] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, in *A Select Collection of Old Plays* (12 vols), vol. 2, ed. by Robert Dodsley, London: 1744.

anxieties over shifts from performance to silent reading. The appearance and retention of internal expressive punctuation alongside end-stopped punctuation variations imply an effort to grammaticalize emotional expression in the text.

Whereas seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early-nineteenth-century printed editions of Kyd's drama display a marked vacillation in end-stopped punctuation, those appearing during the fin de siècle display a marked vacillation in orthography. For instance, John M. Manly's 1897 edition in *Specimens of Pre-Shakespearean Drama* returns to the 1592 orthography, though Manly retains the internal exclamations even as he settles on two end-stopping semi-colons:

Oh eies! no eies but fountains fraught with teares ;

Oh life! no life, but liuely fourme of death ;"

(Manly 526).[48]

Manly's reversion to original spellings ("eies," "teares," "liuely," "fourme") could reflect a bibliographic instance of fin de siècle anthropological primitivism. By retaining archaic spellings, Manly's edits may intend to evoke a sense of temporal otherness, presenting the text as an artifact of a more emotionally authentic time. Nevertheless, while he retains the exclamation points of his predecessors, suggesting some continuity in the grammar of emotion, his use of semicolons with spaces before them at the end of each line represents a departure. This punctuation choice creates a more pronounced pause, potentially altering the rhythm and emotional flow of the lines. The semicolons might indicate an attempt to balance the archaic spellings with a more modern approach to syntactical logics.

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[48] John M. Manly, editor. *Specimens of Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, vol. 2. London: J. M. Dent, 1901.

In contrast to Manly's orthographical variation, Josef Schick's 1898 edition in *The Temple Dramatist*s drops the "Hs" in Hieronimo's "Ohs" and modernizes spelling, though he maintains the semicolons of his predecessor:

O eyes! no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears ;

O life! no life, but lively form of death ;

(Schick 49).[49]

Meanwhile, Frederick S. Boas's 1901 edition of Kyd's drama, featured in the anthology, *The Works of Thomas Kyd,* returns to the 1592 edition, exchanging the internal exclamations for the original commas, reverting the orthography, though he too retains the spaced semicolon at the end of line one.

Oh eies, no eies, but fountains fraught with teares ;

Oh life, no life, but liuely fourme of death ;

(Boas 39).[50]

Finally, W. W. Greg's version of *The Spanish Tragedy* in the 1910 anthology, *The Minor Elizabethan Drama Vol I. Pre-Shakespearean Tragedies*, modernizes spellings and intensifies emotional punctuation, returning the internal exclamation marks after vocative noun phrases ("o eyes! / o life!") and introduces, for the first time, end-stopped exclamations to match:

O eyes! no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears!

O life! no life, but lively form of death ;

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[49] Josef Schick, editor. *The Temple Dramatist*s. London, UK: J. M. Dent, 1898.

[50] Frederick S. Boas, editor. *Works of Thomas Kyd*. London: Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1901.

(Greg 217).[51]

Eliot's citation, likely drawn from Greg's 1910 edition, differs notably:

> Oh eyes no eyes, but fountains full of tears!
>
> Oh life no life, but lively form of death!

(*Complete Prose* 2: 85).

A metrical and phonetic comparison of Eliot's variant with Greg's 1910 edition and the original 1592 text reveals subtle but significant changes in the rhythm and sound of the lines. The 1592 edition presents the lines in iambic pentameter with some variations, using archaic spellings that likely produced different vowel sounds:

> Oh EIES, | no EIES | but FOUN- | -tains FRAUGHT | with TEARES,
>
> Oh LIFE, | no LIFE, | but LIVE- | -ly FOURME | of DEATH:

Greg's edition maintains the iambic pentameter but modernizes spellings, standardizing pronunciation:

> O EYES! | no EYES, | but FOUN- | -tains FRAUGHT | with TEARS!
>
> O LIFE! | no LIFE, | but LIVE- | -ly FORM | of DEATH;

Eliot's version, while preserving the basic iambic pentameter structure, introduces changes that affect the lines' rhythm and sound:

> Oh EYES | no EYES, | but FOUN- | -tains FULL | of TEARS!
>
> Oh LIFE | no LIFE, | but LIVE- | -ly FORM | of DEATH!

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[51] W. W. Greg, editor. *The Minor Elizabethan Drama*. New York: J. M. Dent, 1910.

Eliot's removal of internal punctuation potentially alters recitation. His substitution of "full" (/fʊl/) for "fraught" (/frɔːt/) significantly changes the phonetic texture of the line. "Fraught," in modern English, features a long, open-back vowel (/ɔː/) followed by an unvoiced dental fricative (/t/), creating a sound that stretches and then stops abruptly. In contrast, "full" employs a short, near-back vowel (/ʊ/) followed by a lateral approximant (/l/), producing a softer, more fluid sound. This change affects the recitation of the line's rhythm and its relationship to the word "form" (/fɔːm/) in the following line. In Greg's version, "fraught" and "form" create an assonant pair (/ɔː/), linking the lines phonetically. Eliot's use of "full" remediates this connection, emphasizing the consonance of the fricative "f" sounds (*f*ountains *f*ull o*f* [...] / [...] *f*orm o*f*).

The textual history of Hieronimo's lines matters to understanding Eliot's variant citation because it suggests that even if he does not explicitly address such a history—or indeed, even if he is not aware of it—he is nevertheless aware of textual variants and the role that editorial and cultural conventions play in driving the productions of new variants. Thus, his markedly deviant citation of Kyd's lines demonstrates his critical willingness to treat the verse of his source texts as a semi-malleable material for shaping new *emotional variants* on a textual motif. Removing all internal punctuation and altering metrically important words, he manipulates the text's materiality to ostensibly reflect his intentions to disorient and challenge conventional understandings of rhetoric in Elizabethan drama. Thus, immediately following his reworking of Kyd's lines, Eliot cites what he deems to be examples that seemingly support twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism's received understanding of Shakespeare as the poet with an "ability to concentrate everything into a sentence" :

Pray you undo this button

(*King Lear* 5.3.310).

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Or,

> Honest honest Iago

> (*Othello* 5.2.154).

According to Eliot, from a material perspective, Shakespeare's lines are no less "rhetorical" than Kyd's lines once modernized and shorn of their accrued editorial conventions; however, unlike Hieronimo's apostrophic lament, Shakespeare's invocations seem to arise organically from the characters in their contexts.

Thus, Eliot cautions readers against assuming "rhetoric is in the manner only, that it is merely bad writing" (*Complete Prose* 2: 85). Instead, he advocates examining rhetoric within its historical context, finding writers "who are rhetorical" in each period and inquiring "whether there is not some positive virtue in their rhetoric" (*Complete Prose* 2: 89). Thus, he writes:

> *The Spanish Tragedy* is bombastic when it descends to language which was only the trick of its age; *Tamburlaine* is bombastic because it is monotonous, inflexible to the alterations of emotion. The really fine rhetoric of Shakespeare occurs in situations where a character in the play *sees himself* in a dramatic light

> (*Complete Prose* 2: 86).

To exemplify his claim regarding Shakespeare's rhetoric, Eliot paratactically cites lines from *Othello* (c. 1604), *Coriolanus* (c. 1607), and *Timon of Athens* (c.1605) without offering contextual or interpretative commentary. He neither names the plays, identifies the speakers, provides act, scene, or line numbers, nor suggests what he intends for the reader's attention. He begins with Othello's last words:

> And say, besides, — that in Aleppo once […]

—Coriolanus's egging on of the mob—

> If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
>
> That like an eagle in a dovecote, I
>
> Fluttered your Volscians in Corioli.
>
> Alone I did it. Boy!

(*Coriolanus* 5.6.135-38)

—and Timon's refusal to return to Athens and confront Alcibiades before he dies—

> Come not to me again; but say to Athens,
>
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
>
> Upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood...

(*Timon of Athens* 5.2.546-48).

Eliot's paratactic juxtaposition of excerpts from Kyd and Shakespeare reveals similarities and differences that complicate a straightforward narrative of stylistic evolution in Elizabethan drama. While all examples employ conventional "poetic" rhetoric and forms of direct address, there are notable distinctions in their approaches. Kyd's lines from *The Spanish Tragedy* rely on repetition ("Oh eyes no eyes," "Oh life no life") and antithesis ("eyes" vs. "fountains," "life" vs. "death"), suggesting stylized "poetical" conventions. In contrast, Shakespeare's quotes demonstrate greater structural variety aimed at representing the same "Stoic" impulse towards self-dramatization: Coriolanus's simile ("That like an eagle in a dovecote […]"), Timon's location-specific imagery ("Upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood…"), and Othello's remembering ("And say, besides […]").

However, Eliot's decontextualized citational parataxis also emphasizes that what might at first seem a variety of character-specific utterances are upon closer inspection, variants on a recurrent rhetorical motif. Eliot further develops this argument in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927). There, he returns to such moments of self-dramatization in Shakespeare's plays and the plays of other Elizabethan dramatists and identifies this rhetoric as "a stoical attitude"—the product of Elizabethan individualism in the face of tumultuous sociocultural upheaval—that manifests as perpetual varieties of the desire to "think well of oneself" (*Complete Prose* 3: 285). According to Eliot, this desire in Shakespeare's characters is strong enough that they revert to the rhetoric of self-dramatization in the aftermath of committing actions that would suggest otherwise. *Othello* sets the paradigm example for Eliot as the titular character reverts to the Stoical rhetoric to "cheer himself up" after strangling Desdemona (e.g., "Speak soft a word or two before you go; / I have done the state some service" [5.3.???]).

Eliot's citational parataxis of Kyd and Shakespeare suggests that rhetoric in poetic drama is largely a matter of convention and thus of historical perspective; in any case, citational parataxis catalyzes the reciprocal defamiliarization of Kyd and Shakespeare. While Eliot admits a progression from the "bombast of Kyd and Marlowe" to the "subtle and dispersed utterances of Shakespeare and Webster," his juxtapositions complicate this linear view (*Complete Prose* 2: 89-90). Although perhaps more structurally varied and contextually grounded, Shakespeare's lines seem to develop elements of Kyd's "conventional" or "stylized rhetoric" into melodrama. Conversely, when placed alongside Shakespeare's, Kyd's lines reveal a rhetorical power that persists in later drama as varieties of vocative and invocational forms of address. Moreover, Eliot's citational parataxis prompts a reciprocal defamiliarization of the critical frameworks through which one reads, shifting critical perspectives from the "centrist" lens of conventional

literary historical methodological understandings about what a text is and the critic's relationship to the text towards the self-reflective transformational paradigm in which the radical differences contained in the text appear as they are: opaque surfaces reflecting and refracting the assumptions, sympathies, and prejudices back upon the critic.

However, it is also worth considering that Eliot's editorial practices may not always have been in good faith. Consider, first, Eliot's use of the term "bombast" when contrasting the dramatic rhetoric of Kyd and Marlowe against Shakespeare. echoes and reverses the Elizabethan pamphleteer's, Robert Greene's infamous approbation of Shakespeare's drama as "bombast" in his 1592 pamphlet *Groatsworth of Wit* (Robert Stagg 45). There, Greene derisively criticized Shakespeare for ostensibly "padding out" his blank verse with "portentous rhetoric and vacuous sound" (Stagg 45). Eliot was intimately familiar with Greene's pamphlets, such as *Groatsworth*, describing the author as skilled at blending "truth with realistic fiction" in works that mingled autobiographical confessions with fictionalized narratives (*Complete Prose* 3: 635). In "The Elizabethan Grub Street" (1929), a broadcast for the BBC on Tudor and Elizabethan prose later transcribed and published in *The Listener*, Eliot described Greene as "One of the most resourceful masters" of the pamphlet form, particularly those pamphlets that might be considered an early form of "true crime" writing (*Complete Prose* 3: 635). Eliot writes:

> Robert Greene was a resourceful fellow and managed to do very well with a special line
> of his own, which was deathbed confessions. Two were published in one year, his
> Groats-Worth of Witte, bought with a million of Repentance and The Repentance of
> Robert Greene. The fact that he repented and died so often has thrown some doubt on his
> sincerity, and obscured the genuine literary art which gives them plausibility and interest
>
> (*Complete Prose* 3: 634-42).

In any case, Eliot's description of Greene, especially his proclivity for mingling a "certain degree of truth" with fiction, is also an apt description of his own critical tendencies and a warning to critics who might otherwise treat his provocations as assuming good faith academic debate.

The Development of Marlowe's Blank Verse

Eliot's citational parataxis in "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" challenges conventional understandings of Elizabethan dramatic development while teasing the critical method that characterizes much of his early modern criticism and informs his poetics in *The Waste Land*. By juxtaposing seemingly disparate elements from Kyd and Shakespeare, Eliot constructs a framework for examining the complex interplay between linguistic form, emotional content, and rhetorical expression in dramatic verse. In "Christopher Marlowe," Eliot employs a similar paratactic method to argue that Marlowe refined and synthesized the emotional potential of Spenser's "melodies" into emotional affordances—the immediate intensity—of his dramatic blank verse. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Eliot reads the development of Marlowe's dramatic blank verse as the result of the dramatist working "several new [emotional] tones" into the metrical form (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). Building on this idea, Eliot frames blank verse as a non-renewable resource, describing Marlowe's verse as "one of the earlier derivatives" with unique emotional properties (*Complete Prose* 2: 97).

This metaphor of blank verse as a resource allows Eliot to explore how Marlowe refined and developed its emotional potential. In support of this view, Eliot notes Marlowe's "torrential imagination recognized many of his best bits (and those of one or two others), saved them, and reproduced them more than once, almost invariably improving them in the process" (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). This observation leads Eliot to portray Marlowe as "a deliberate and conscious workman" refining a shared emotional resource (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). By characterizing

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Marlowe in this way, Eliot emphasizes the intentional and iterative nature of Marlowe's development of blank verse. Eliot further elaborates on this development by highlighting Marlowe's creation of "a more continuous 'interior' verse," particularly in *Doctor Faustus*, where he "broke up the line" of earlier Elizabethan poets "to a gain in intensity" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). This breaking up of the line, Eliot argues, allows for a more dynamic shaping of emotional processes during reading. Specifically, Eliot claims that Marlowe's verse "reinforces the sentence period against the line period," creating "a new driving power" in blank verse that expanded its emotional range and intensity (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). Through these observations, Eliot traces a direct link between Marlowe's technical innovations in versification and the enhanced emotional affordances of his dramatic blank verse.

In analyzing Eliot's essay, I reproduce Eliot's citational parataxis, juxtaposing his commentary on Marlowe's verse with the textual examples he provides. I then supplement his analysis, offering detailed metrical and phonetic analyses. This approach allows the reader to observe not only Eliot's argument about the development of blank verse as an emotional resource but also the specific technical features that support or contradict Eliot's mostly tacit argument. My analysis focuses on Eliot's comparison of Spenser's and Marlowe's versions of similar lines, demonstrating how Eliot uses this paratactic juxtaposition to illustrate Marlowe's technique of "layering in new tones and symbolic resonances" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). This approach allows me to trace Eliot's argument about the development of blank verse, particularly how Marlowe "broke up the line" of earlier Elizabethan poets "to a gain in intensity" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). By extending Eliot's paratactic method with detailed scansion and phonetic analysis, I demonstrate how this critical technique indeed affords creative space for generating a mode of criticism that reads the development of form as a proxy for the development of emotion.

Eliot begins his analysis by citing a stanza from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (c. 1590-96) alongside a similar passage from Marlowe's first drama, *Tamburlaine* (c. 1587). Despite their order of appearance, Eliot cites Spenser's stanza first, though he omits the first four lines, which I include here:

> [Upon the top of all his lofty crest,
>
> A bunch of hares discolored diversely,
>
> With sprinkled pearl, and gold full richly drest,
>
> Did shake, and seem'd to dance for jollity,]
>
> Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
>
> On top of green Selinis all alone,
>
> With blossoms brave bedeckèd daintily;
>
> Whose tender locks do tremble every one
>
> At every little breath that under heaven is blown
>
> (*The Faerie Queene* 1.7.32.1-9). [52]

which he then juxtaposes with Marlowe's, arguing that the Marlowe's represents a reworking of the Spenser's:

> Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
>
> Upon the lofty and celestial mount
>
> Of evergreen Selinus, quaintly deck'd

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[52] Eliot's citation of Spenser reproduces what appears in J. M Robertson's *Elizabethan Literature*. Robertson's citation comes from J. C. Smith's and E. De Sélincourt's 1912 edition of *Poetical Works.* Interestingly, Robertson modernizes Spenser's orthography as it appears in Smith's and De De Sélincourt's version of the *Faerie Queene;* moreover, Robertson adds the diacritical mark on "bedeckèd" and removes the italics on the place name, "Selenis." See Robertson. *Elizabethan Literature,* pp. 78-79 and Edmund Spenser. *Poetical Works*. Edited by J. C. Smith and E. De Sélincourt. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1912, 37.

With blooms more white than Erycina's brows,

Whose tender blossoms tremble every one

At every little breath that thorough heaven is blown

(*Tamburlaine*, Part II. 4.3.119-24). [53]

Twentieth-century scholars and critics of early modern literature were happy to debate the direction of "plagiarism."[54] Given that Elizabethan literary culture comprised a relatively tight coterie of writers who were known to circulate pre-print manuscripts amongst themselves, it is by no means straightforward that, just because Marlowe's verse appeared in public first, Spenser stole from him. Indeed, there are good reasons for assuming the opposite is true, not least of which is the conspicuous alexandrine in the final lines of each—

At EV- | -ery LIT- | -tle BREATH | that UN- | -der HEAV'N | is BLOWN

(Spenser l .9).

and

At EV- | -ery LIT- | -tle BREATH | that THOR- | -ough HEAV'N | is BLOWN

(Marlowe l. 124).

—given that the Spenserian stanza, invented specifically for *The Faerie Queene*, comprises nine lines rhyming ABABBCBCC. The first eight lines are iambic pentameter; the ninth line is the alexandrine (iambic hexameter), a metrical form not prominent in *Tamburlaine* or elsewhere iin

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[53] Eliot miscites the lines as "*Tamburlaine*, Part II. Act iv, scene iv," *Complete Prose* 2: 98. Eliot owned and cited from Edward Thomas's 1916 edition, *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe.* All citations of Marlowe as they appear in this chapter reproduce Eliot's citations from Thomas's text. See Christopher Marlowe. *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Edited by Edward Thomas, London, New York: J. M. Dent, 1916.

[54] See W. B. C. Watkins, "The Plagiarist: Spenser or Marlowe?," *ELH*, 11, 4, 1944, 249-65.

Marlowe's mostly decasyllabic dramatic verse, strongly suggesting Marlowe's theft from Spenser.

In any case, Eliot's arrangement, with Marlowe's verse developing Spenser's suggests Marlowe's ability to work within established poetic forms while "layering in new tones and symbolic resonances" (*Complete Prose* 2: 97). Indeed, Eliot specifically highlights Marlowe's transformation of the place name from "Selinis" in,

On top of green Selinis all alone,

(Spenser l. 6)

to "Selinus" in

Of evergreen Selinus, quaintly deck'd

(Marlowe l. 121).

Although he does not say so, Eliot's parataxis draws attention to Marlowe's variant spelling, which appears to be an intentional alteration, removing Spenser's feminine "-is" ending and replacing it with the masculine "-us," thus Latinizing the place name as a nominative singular second declension noun. Other changes to the diction further solidify the Latinization of Spenser's blank verse. Marlowe's changes to Spenser's diction highlight his purposefully "layering in new tones and symbolic resonances to the natural imagery." For instance, compare,

With blossoms brave bedeckèd daintily

(Spenser l. 7),

And,

With blooms more white than Erycina's brows

(Marlowe l. 122).

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By replacing Spenser's simple "blossoms" with "blooms more white than Erycina's brows," Marlowe juxtaposes the delicate, natural imagery of white blossoms with the mythological grandeur evoked by the reference to Erycina, the ancient Roman goddess of beauty, love and fertility. The plain depiction of blossoms on a tree becomes imbued with symbolic, metaphorical resonances by bringing in the classical mythological figure. Marlowe's diction layers the lofty, idealized connotations of divine beauty associated with Erycina onto Spenser's original line's humble, grounded natural details. So, rather than just a straightforward natural description, Marlowe's rewording infuses the image with an elevated, romanticized quality rooted in mythic symbolism. The juxtaposition is between the quotidian reality of blossoms on a tree contrasted against the exalted, metaphoric plane of classical mythology's personified ideals of beauty and love embodied by the mythical Erycina. Marlowe's calculated diction change introduces this symbolic dimension into the sensory details

As for the versification, a prosodic and phonetic comparison of Spenser's and Marlowe's passages reveals subtle differences in their approach to blank verse. Both primarily use iambic pentameter, with the final line being an alexandrine (iambic hexameter):

Like TO | an AL- | -mond TREE | y-MOUNT- | -ed HIGH

On TOP | of GREEN | Se-LIN- | -is ALL | a-LONE,

With BLOS- | -soms BRAVE | be-DECK- | -èd DAIN- | -ti-LY;

Whose TEN- | -der LOCKS | do TREM- | -ble EV- | -'ry ONE

At EV- | -ery LIT- | -tle BREATH | that UN- | -der HEAV'N | is BLOWN

(Spenser ll. 5-9).

Like TO | an AL- | -mond TREE | y-MOUNT- | -ed HIGH

Up-ON | the LOF- | -ty AND | ce-LES- | -tial MOUNT

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Of EV- | -er-GREEN | Se-LIN- | -us, QUAINT- | -ly DECK'D

With BLOOMS | more WHITE | than ER- | -y-CIN- | -a's BROWS,

Whose TEN- | -der BLOS- | -soms TREM- | -ble EV- | -'ry ONE

At EV- | -ery BREATH | that THOR- | -ough HEAV'N | is BLOWN

(Marlowe ll. 119-24).

Marlowe largely maintains Spenser's iambic pentameter, with some subtle variations. Marlowe's adaptation of Spenser's verse demonstrates a careful expansion of sonic elements while introducing new imagery. In Eliot's five-line excerpt of Spenser's stanza, the long "i" (ī) sound appears twice ("high" [l. 5], "Selinis" [l. 6]). Marlowe doubles the frequency, with the sound appearing four times ("high" [l. 119], "Selinus" [l. 121], "white" [l. 122], "Erycina's" [l. 122]). This increase preserves some of Spenser's "melody" while simultaneously expanding his imagery, a technique suggested in Eliot's observation that Marlowe gets new "tones" into the verse. Short "e" (ĕ) assonance appears eight times in Spenser ("mounted" [l. 5], "bedecked" [l. 7], "every" [l. 8], "trembling," [l. 8], "heaven" [l. 9]) and twelve times in Marlowe's ("evergreen" [l. 121], "deck'd" [l. 121], "Erycina's" [l. 122], "tender" [l. 123], "tremble" [l. 123], "ev'ry" [l. 123], "every" [l. 124]. "heaven" [l. 124]). Marlowe doubles Spenser's "o" (/ɔ/) assonance ("on" [l. 6], "top" [l. 6], "of" [l. 6], "blossoms" [l. 7], "locks" [l. 8],) from four to six occurrences ("upon" [l. 120], "lofty" [l. 120], "of" [l. 121], "more" [l. 122], "thorough" [l. 124]), introducing a fuller, more resonant quality to the lines. The sibilant "s" ([s]) consonance, appearing seven times in Spenser's five lines ("Selinis" [l. 6], "blossoms,"[l. 7], "whose" [l. 8], "locks" [l. 8], "is" [l. 9]) increases to nine occurrences in Marlowe's six lines ("Selinus" [l. 121], "celestial" [l. 120], "blooms" [l. 122], "Erycina's" [l. 122] "brows" [l. 122], "whose" [l. 123], "is" [l. 124]). Moreover, Marlowe significantly amplifies the liquid "l" (/l/) consonance,

increasing its occurrence from four instances in Spenser ("a_lone," "_little," "b_lown") to seven in his adaptation ("_lofty," "ce_lestia_l," "b_looms," "_litt_le," "b_lown").

As for consonantal rearrangement, the shift from Spenser's "bedeckèd daintily" to Marlowe's "quaintly deck'd" sees several significant phonetic alterations while maintaining semantic similarity. Marlowe's elision "deck'd" introduces an elision that places the voiceless velar stop (/k/) "-ck" adjacent to the alveolar plosive "d" (<d>). Absent in Spenser's line, Marlowe's "ck'd" combination creates a more abrupt, forceful articulation that potentially generates what Eliot refers to as "the driving force" of the lines. Indeed, while both versions contain the "d" sound, Marlowe eliminates Spenser's soft bilabial plosive (/b/) "b" in "**be**deckèd" and thus bookends the line's "deck'd" within plosive "ds" ("**d**eck'**d**"), altering the rhythm and emphasis of the phrase. Moreover, Marlowe introduces a new digraph, "qu" (/k/ an /w/), in "**qu**aintly," adding more plosives to supplement the overall harder consonantal structure of his verse, even as he compresses Spenser's phrasing. These changes sacrifice some of the melodic softness and pastoral posturing locally, in Spenser's "With blossoms brave bedeckèd daintily," and globally across Marlowe's reworking.

In addition to establishing some of the more "objective" evidence of Marlowe's craftsman-like approach to poetic "thievery," citational parataxis affords Eliot a means of evidencing Marlowe's more qualitative and phenomenological borrowings. Indeed, Eliot cites the following passage from *Tamburlaine,* commenting only that "this is not Spenser's movement, but the influence of Spenser must be present":

> Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,
>
> As sentinels to warn th' immortal souls
>
> To entertain divine Zenocrate

(*Tamburlaine* Part II, 2.4.15-17).

"There was no great blank verse before Marlowe," Eliot writes of this selection, "but there was the powerful presence of this great master of melody [Spenser] immediately precedent; and the combination [of Marlowe and Spenser] produced results which could not be repeated" (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). As an explanation of this opaque statement, Eliot arranges paratactic citations of lines selected from *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1588-1592) and *Tamburlaine* that, he suggests reveals a subtle but significant lineage of rhythmic and imagistic development with roots in Spenser. In the following analysis, I reproduce Eliot's paratactic citations in reverse order, beginning with Marlowe's line from *Doctor Faustus,* because I think doing so clarifies Eliot's logic. Thus, in *Doctor Faustus,* one finds the following:

Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows

Than have the white breast of the queen of love

[SHA-dow- | -ING more | BEAU-ty | in their AIR- | -y BROWS

Than HAVE | the WHITE | BREASTs of | the QUEEN | of LOVE]

(*Doctor Faustus* 1.1.122).

Next, Eliot cites line 15 from *Tamburlaine Part II,* cited above:

Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,

[NOW walk | the AN- | -gels ON | the WALLS | of HEAV'N]

(*Tamburlaine* Part II, 2.4.15).

Finally, he offers the following from *Tamburlaine* Part I:

Like to the shadows of Pyramides

[LIKE to | the SHA- | -dows OF | Py-RAM- | -id-ES]

(*Tamburlaine* Part I, 4.2.103).

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A close examination of the metrical patterns in these examples demonstrates Marlowe's consistent use of a trochaic substitution of the first foot in each variation to create a choriambic rhythm that Eliot traces from *Doctor Faustus* back through to *Tamburlaine* Part II and I.

Indeed, Eliot asks us to return to Marlowe's ostensible theft of Spenser's stanza from *The Faerie Queene*, discussed above, to consider how Marlowe's ostensibly original addition to Spenser's verse,

With BLOOMS | more WHITE | than ER- | -y-CIN- | -a's BROWS,

may, despite the regularity of the pentameter, represent the earliest instance of that rhythmic phrase "melody," likely due to the tetra-syllabic classical names "Pyramides" and "Erycina's," words that come near the end of their lines and stand in contrast to the preceding monosyllabic words (*Tamburlaine*, Part II. 4.3.122). Given that this line is the only of Marlowe's not reflected in Spenser's original, one might assume that the "melody" would be Marlowe's unique addition to Spenser's lines——except that Eliot asks us to "compare the whole set with Spenser again":

Upon her eyelids many graces sate

Under the shadow of her even brows

[Up-ON | her EYE- | -lids MAN- | -y GRAC- | - es SATE

UN-der | the SHAD- | -ow of | her E- | -ven BROWS]

(*Faerie Queene* 2.3.25-26).

These lines from *The Faerie Queene*, Eliot writes, represent "a passage which Mr. Robertson says Spenser himself used in three other places" (*Complete Prose* 2: 99).

In other words, Eliot's paratactic method reveals a subtle yet significant lineage of rhythmic and imagistic development from Spenser through Marlowe's works. Indeed, Marlowe's

consistent use of choriambic (trochee | iamb) openings suggests a deliberate stylistic choice, likely influenced by Spenser's "melodic" iambic pentameter:

> This economy is frequent in Marlowe. Within *Tamburlaine* it [that "melodic" variant of Spenser] occurs in the form of monotony, especially in the facile use of resonant names (e.g. the recurrence of "Caspia" or "Caspian" with the same tone effect), a practice in which Milton followed M, but which Marlowe himself outgrew (*Complete Prose* 2:99).

Eliot goes on to explain that he finds Marlowe's efforts at synthesis and refinement of his and Spenser's prior verse as mostly failures, except for "one line Marlowe remodels with triumphant success" from *Tamburlaine* in *Doctor Faustus:*

> And SET | black STREAM- |- ers in the FIRM- | -a-MENT
>
> (*Tamburlaine* Part II, 5.3.49),

Becomes,

> SEE, SEE, | where CHRIST'S | blood STREAMS | in the FIRM- | -a-MENT!
>
> (*Doctor Faustus* 5.2.78).

The line in *Faustus* is metrically looser than the first—a spondee in the first foot, an anapest in the fourth. However, it also features crucial changes in diction ("black streamer's" becomes "Christ's blood") and punctuation that appear to develop in tandem with the emergence of the invocative ("See, see, […] !").

In his 1937 Edinburgh lectures, "The Development of Shakespeare's Verse," Eliot argues that "Marlowe's verse is a comparatively crude form of speech, which Shakespeare was to develop" (542). To illustrate this point, Eliot compares Marlowe's verse in Doctor Faustus with Webster's in *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1612-13), demonstrating the development of blank verse

as a vehicle for dramatic speech. Marlowe employs various metrical variations within the overall structure of iambic pentameter in lines 78-81 of *Doctor Faustus*:

> SEE, SEE, | where CHRIST'S | blood STREAMS | in the FIRM- | -a-MENT!
>
> ONE drop | would SAVE | my SOUL — | HALF a | drop: AH | my CHRIST!
>
> Ah, REND | not my HEART | for NAM- | -ing OF | my CHRIST!
>
> YET I | will CALL | on HIM: | o SPARE | me, LU- | -ci-FER!

Line 78 begins with a spondee, three iambs, and an amphibrach ("-a-MENT!"). Line 79 is an alexandrine, containing six feet instead of the usual five. It begins with a trochee ("ONE drop"), followed by two iambs ("would SAVE | my SOUL —"), another trochee ("HALF a"), and concludes with a spondee and an iamb ("drop: AH | my CHRIST!"). Line 80 includes an anapest ("not my HEART") amid iambs, while line 81 begins with a trochee ("YET I") before settling into iambs.In contrast, Webster's lines from *The Duchess of Malfi* demonstrate a more complex meter:

> I am PUZ-| -zled in | a QUES- | -tion a- | -bout HELL:
>
> He SAYS, | in HELL | there's ONE | ma-TER- | -ial FIRE,
>
> And YET | it SHALL | not BURN | all MEN | a-LIKE.
>
> LAY him | BY. how | TE-di-ous | is a | GUIL-ty | CON-science!
>
> WHEN I | look IN- | -to the | FISH-ponds | in my | GAR-den,
>
> Me-THINKS | I SEE | a thing ARMED | with a RAKE,
>
> That SEEMS | to STRIKE | at ME
>
> > (*The Duchess of Malfi* 5.5.1-7 [The Cardinal, with a
> >
> > book, before Bosola and servant enter with
> >
> > Antonio's body]).

The first line begins with an anapest ("I am PUZ-"), followed by a pyrrhic ("-zled IN"), an iamb ("a QUES-"), another pyrrhic ("-tion a-"), and concludes with an iamb ("-BOUT HELL"). Lines two and three adhere strictly to iambic pentameter, providing a rhythmic baseline. The fourth line dramatically shifts to six feet, beginning with two trochees ("LAY him | BY. HOW"), followed by a dactyl ("TE-di-ous"), a pyrrhic ("is a"), and concluding with two trochees ("GUIL-ty | CON-science"). Line five continues the trochaic dominance ("WHEN I | LOOK in-") but introduces pyrrhic feet ("-TO the | IN my"), also in six feet. Line six returns closer to iambic rhythm in its first half but then shifts to two anapests ("a thing ARMED | with a RAKE"). The final line is a short, regular iambic trimeter ("That SEEMS | to STRIKE | at ME").

As Eliot suggests, Marlowe's and Webster's skillful manipulation of blank verse demonstrates their ability to craft flexible verse forms for expression. This flexibility, according to Eliot, represents "a long process of development of blank verse as speech, between Marlowe and Webster, which is due to the work of Shakespeare," which shows how blank verse evolved to become "a more versatile tool for dramatic expression, capable of capturing the nuances of natural speech within a poetic framework" (*Complete Prose* 5: 543; 542). While Marlowe's verse has the driving force of its regularity and repetition, Webster's demonstrates a greater range of rhythmic effects that can more subtly convey shifts in thought and emotion. Without Marlowe, there could be no Shakespeare; Webster's verse grows out the darkest undertones left unexplored in Shakespeare's. The difference between Marlowe's blank verse and Shakespeare's, according to Eliot, lies in Shakespeare's "superiority in smaller things," which allowed him to imbue his later tragedies with "a depth of meaning which Marlowe could never have sounded" (543). Eliot acknowledges that "Within the limits of the chronicle play no development of verse was possible, beyond the point to which Marlowe took it" (543).

In any case, Eliot argues that the difference between the selections "represents a long process of development of blank verse as speech, between Marlowe and Webster, which is due to the work of Shakespeare" (543). To illustrate this development, Eliot provides examples from Shakespeare's works, tracing the evolution of his verse from early plays to later masterpieces, citing first lines from *King John* (c. 1596):

> Well, now can I make any Joan a lady.
>
> "Good den, Sir Richard!" – "God-a-mercy, fellow!" –
>
> And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter;
>
> For new-made honour doth forget men's names;
>
> 'Tis too respective and too sociable For your conversion.

<div align="center">

(*King John* 1.1.184-89)

</div>

In response to this passage, compared to those of Marlowe's and Webster's verse above, Eliot writes: "It is speech like this which foreshadows the creator not only of Iago but of Timon and Lear and Antony; for it is the humanity of Shakespeare, without which the magniloquence of Marlowe is shallow, that makes those figures as great as they are" (*Complete Prose* 5: 543). Eliot suggests that the colloquially plastic idiom already nascent in the verse of *King John* marks a significant *development of* that which Marlowe's verse accomplished. Indeed, Eliot goes as far as saying that without the development of Shakespeare's verse, Marlowe's would appear "shallow." Indeed, Eliot argues that the relative degree of flexibility Marlowe managed to work into his verse— despite the "magniloquence" of his "rhetoric"—refines the metrical form to a degree that allows for Shakespeare's further development. The development of Shakespeare's verse is significant enough to increase the value of Marlowe's.

Crucially, Eliot argues that while "Marlowe's verse, at its greatest, does everything that it is called upon to do," Shakespeare's verse demonstrates "an immense and perhaps unconscious reserve power" (*Complete Prose* 5: 544). This reserve power is evident even in Shakespeare's early works and chronicle plays, where Eliot finds "no doubt of Shakespeare's opinion of that raving and cursing crew of royalty and nobles who present his picture of the Wars of the Roses" (544). Nevertheless, part of that reserve power seems to come from Marlowe, as in these lines from *King John*:

> O, then began the tempest to my soul,
>
> Who pass'd, methought, the melancholy flood
>
> With that grim ferryman which poets write of,
>
> Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.

(*King John* 5.389-92).

Eliot argues that these lines, "If they are not indeed by Marlowe, are a forgery of Marlowe as good as the original" in the same way that one might argue if Marlowe's "original" line in *Tamburlaine* (*Complete Prose* 5: 544). Indeed, the rhythm of Shakespeare's line 392—

> UN-to | the KING-| -dom of | per-PET- | -ual NIGHT

—echoes that of Marlowe's

> LIKE to | the SHA- | -dows OF | Py-RAM- | -id-ES

(*Tamburlaine* Part I, 4.2.103).

And in so far as that echo persists, so too does Shakespeare's line echo Marlowe's echo of his own earlier "addition" to the passage he stole from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene,* namely,

> With BLOOMS | more WHITE | than ER- | -y-CIN- | -a's BROWS,

(*Tamburlaine*, Part II. 4.3.122).

Except, recall that *that* rhythm was likely Spenser's to begin with:

UN-der | the SHAD- | -ow of | her E- | -ven BROWS

(*Faerie Queene* 2.3.26).

Therefore, to the extent that Spenser is in Marlowe and Marlowe in Shakespeare, Spenser too is in Shakespeare—and, if one follows the transitive logic of Eliot's parataxis, then to the extent that Shakespeare is in Webster, so too is Spenser.

The more radical supposition of Eliot's argument is that the reverse is true as well, namely that Webster is already in Spenser. Take a line as strange as:

WHEN I | look IN- | -to the | FISH-ponds | IN my | GAR-den,

(*Duchess of Malfi* 5.5.1-7).

The precedent, as Eliot points out, is there already in *Othello,* a syllable short, perhaps, but no less for stress:

KEEP up | your BRIGHT | SWORDS, for the | DEW will | RUST them

(*Othello* 1.2.59).

And, via *Othello,* one finds Webster's *Duchess* nestled into *King John*:

YOUR sword | is BRIGHT, | sir; PUT | it up | a-GAIN

(*King John* 4.3.79).

From *King John,* Webster harmonizes with Marlowe and Spenser in a line from *Love's Labour's Lost* (c. 1590)

To MOVE | wild LAUGH- | -ter in | the THROAT | of DEATH?

(*Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.865).

Shakespeare loses the choriamb-structure (/xx /) at the head of the line, formed by the trochaic substitution in the first foot adjacent to the iamb in the second (/x | x/)—an inversion common to the above examples—though keeps the midline pyrrhic (xx), even if displaced to the left. That phrasing certainly resembles Marlowe's in *Tamburlaine*—

And SET | black STREAM- | -ers in | the FIRM- | -a-MENT

(*Tamburlaine* Part II, 5.3.49).

According to Eliot, the key difference between Marlowe's, Shakespeare's, and Webster's verses as they appear above, is Shakespeare's "superiority in smaller things," which allowed him to imbue his later tragedies with "a depth of meaning which Marlowe could never have sounded" (*Complete Prose* 5: 543).

Eliot, of course, would agree that Marlowe did not need to dream of such melodies. By "breaking" blank verse "free of rhyme" (*Complete Prose* 2: 100). Marlowe successfully does this, according to Eliot's citational parataxis, through an innovative handling of end-stopped punctuation that affords him the means of "reinforcing the sentence period against the line period" without allowing the latter to contort the former. Citing passages from Marlowe's later dramas, Eliot finds that Marlowe's verse develops a grotesque intensity, segmenting the line into caesural units through syntax and punctuation. Thus, Eliot cites Barabbas's speeches in *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589-90):

First, || be thou void of these affections,

Compassion, || love, || vain hope, || and heartless fear;

Be moved at nothing, || see thou pity none ...

As for myself, || I walk abroad o' nights,

And kill sick people || groaning under walls,

Sometimes I go about ‖ and poison wells …

The caesurae, marked by double vertical lines, segment the lines into smaller units. Though they do not directly affect the metrical structure, they add some rhetorical influence on the lines that inform scansion. Thus, for instance, line 175 scans as iambic pentameter—

Com-PAS- | -sion, LOVE, | VAIN HOPE, | and HEART-| -less FEAR

—except for the spondaic substitution in the third foot, afforded by the caesurae introduced by the commas, which, so long as one heeds their pause, bar elision of the plosive "-ve" at the end of "love" and the likewise plosive "va-" at the head of "vain." This interplay between the underlying iambic structure and the rhetorical pauses created by the caesurae allows Marlowe to achieve what Eliot describes as "always hesitating on the edge of caricature at the right moment" (*Complete Prose* 2: 102). The caesurae create a staccato effect emphasizing each emotional concept, while the underlying meter provides a unifying rhythm that holds the line together.

Eliot sees this segmenting technique as central to Marlowe's development of blank verse and further illustrates it with Barabbas's final words:

But NOW | be-GINS | th' EX- | -trem-i-TY | of HEAT

To PINCH | me WITH | in-TOL- | -er-ABLE- | -le PANGS,

DIE, LIFE! ‖ FLY, SOULl! ‖ TONGUE, CURE | thy FILL, ‖ and DIE!

Line 81 offers a particularly striking example. Marlowe segments the first two feet with caesurae created by the exclamation marks on the imperatives "Die, life!" and "fly, soul!" which he *further* segments with commas following the commands ("die" and "fly"). While he allows the

syntax to breathe a little in the third foot ("Tongue, cure"), the comma after "tongue" nevertheless carries the imperative mood and the emphasis it gives each syllable so that the first three feet become consecutive spondees. Of course, six stresses will not support an equally strong emphasis in recitation; still, the syntax and grammar of Marlowe's verse backs keep the vocal cords tensed and the lips shaped to shoot. The fourth and fifth foot likewise find themselves punctuated by a caesural comma, though the subordinate clause, "cure thy fill," allows a brief slackening on "thy" that recovers the iambic pattern by the line's end. To the eye and ear, the line appears less than linear, if not quite palindromic, as the monosyllabic imperatives find phonemic echoes (e.g. "die"/"fly), near anagrams (e.g., "life"/ "fill"), and thematic circularity (e.g., death, life […] death). The caesurae force pauses between these units, potentially allowing for dramatic delivery with each command punctuated by a beat of silence. This technique creates what Eliot calls a "prodigious caricature," saturating the verse with enough cognitive and affective stimuli to nearly burn out.

Eliot sees Marlowe's technique of using end-stops and caesurae for affective gains as the most significant of the dramatist's refinements of blank verse. Indeed, he finds similar stylistic features in Marlowe's other works, particularly in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (c. 1587-93). In discussing Marlowe's representation of the "account of the sack of Troy," Eliot traces the development of blank verse through the dramatist's late, "grotesque" style:

> The Grecian soldiers, tir'd with ten years war,
>
> Began to cry, 'Let us unto our ships,
>
> Troy is invincible, why stay we here? . . .
>
> By this, the camp was come unto the walls,
>
> And through the breach did march into the streets,

Where, meeting with the rest, 'Kill, kill !' they cried. . . .

And after him, his band of Myrmidons,

With balls of wild-fire in their murdering paws . . .

At last, the soldiers pull'd her by the heels,

And swung her howling in the empty air. . . .

We saw Cassandra sprawling in the streets . . .

(*The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage* 5.1.179-82).

The "tonal" intensities teeter on the edge of a farce because, in Eliot's reading, every end-stopped line condenses and intensifies *a concept for emotio*n. The emotions appear as both objects the reader might pick up, touch, and shuffle around to form endlessly new arrangements and, simultaneously, emotive subjects, shockingly alive, with a sense of motion. Eliot's method of citational parataxis amplifies the effects of motion—of sensorimotor activation, which he identifies in Marlowe's verse. As I show in the following interlude, it was likely through practicing this citational parataxis in essays like "Christopher Marlowe" that Eliot developed the idea of citing lines of Elizabethan drama in *The Waste Land*, as though each line were a self-contained emotional fossil or relic awaiting recombination in new contexts. By treating Spenser's, Marlowe's, Shakespeare's, and Webster's lines as material objects one might pick up, touch, and shuffle around, Eliot blurs the lines between his critical approach to early modern drama and poetic technique. By practicing citational parataxis on Marlowe and other early modern writers, Eliot became intimately familiar with the materiality and cognitive-affective affordances of early modern verse, and this intimacy informs *The Waste Land's* particularly lasting effects.

Interlude Two

Elizabethan Emotions in "The Burial of the Dead"

In Chapter Two, I argued that Eliot's paratactic reading of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse suggests that he understood apostrophic and invocational, end-stopped dramatic blank verse lines as equivalent to specific shades or tones of emotion: objects that one might extract, manipulate, rearrange, and recombine to produce new or different arrays of emotional experience. An understanding of citational parataxis further informs the unique insights of Eliot's criticism of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. This interlude demonstrates how such insights about Eliot's citational parataxis in his criticism informs an understanding of the Elizabethan and Jacobean quotations and allusions in *The Waste Land*, specifically the imperative, vocative, and invocational expressions from Webster and Shakespeare in "The Burial of the Dead." Eliot's use of citational parataxis in "The Burial of the Dead" suggests that Eliot conceptualized individual lines of verse as distinct emotional and cognitive units that one might extract from their original contexts and recombine to create new affective resonances. Indeed, citational parataxis further develops the cognitive-affective framework of this dissertation by suggesting that specific verses stimulate specific *ranges* of affects that readers think into emotional wholes of experience, a claim I further develop in Three. Eliot's use of citational parataxis in "The Burial of the Dead" not only demonstrates his understanding of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic verse as a repository of emotional objects but also highlights how he transforms the verses he cites into a distinctly modernist mode of expression, creating a complex dialogue between past and present that characterizes much of *The Waste Land.*

Eliot's use of citational parataxis in "The Burial of the Dead" demonstrates his understanding of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic verse as a repository of emotional objects.

This technique allows Eliot to extract, manipulate, and recombine individual lines of verse to create new affective resonances, transforming historical poetic forms into a distinctly modernist mode of expression. Throughout "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot employs various citations and allusions that exemplify this technique. These range from direct quotations to subtle echoes of earlier works, each carefully selected and recontextualized to create new emotional landscapes. A prime example is Eliot's use of "(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)" from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, inserted into the tarot reading scene:

> Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
>
> Had a bad cold, nevertheless
>
> Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
>
> With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
>
> Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
>
> (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
>
> Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
>
> The lady of situations
>
> Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
>
> And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
>
> Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
>
> Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
>
> The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
>
> I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
>
> Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
>
> Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

One must be so careful these days.

(*Poems* 56: 46-62).

Eliot's alteration and citation of "(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)" from Shakespeare's The Tempest echoes his approach to Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy,* discussed in Chapter Two. In both cases, Eliot introduces unique variants into complex textual histories. With Kyd's line, Eliot altered Greg's 1910 edition, which read "O eyes! no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears!" changing it to "Oh eyes no eyes but fountains full of tears!" Similarly, with Shakespeare's line, Eliot adds the imperative "Look!" and encloses the citation in parentheses. These interventions demonstrate Eliot's understanding of individual lines as distinct emotional and cognitive units. By extracting these lines from their original contexts, modifying them, and inserting them into new settings, Eliot creates new emotional resonances. He actively reshapes the lines to suit his critical and poetic purposes.

Eliot's use of this line exemplifies his citational parataxis and directly reflects his analysis of Marlowe's verse techniques. Just as Marlowe, according to Eliot, "reinforc[ed] the sentence period against the line period" without allowing the latter to contort the former, Eliot uses punctuation to create a moment of emphasis and pause that stands out from the surrounding text *Complete Prose* 2: 100). The effect is like what Eliot identifies in Marlowe's later dramas, where he finds that Marlowe's verse develops a grotesque intensity by segmenting the line into caesural units through syntax and punctuation, as in those lines from Marlowe's The Jew of Malta:

But now begins th' extremity of heat

To pinch me with intolerable pangs,

Die, life! fly, soul! tongue, cure thy fill, and die!

(*The Jew of Malta* Part 2.3.179-81).

Eliot notes that Marlowe's verse "secures its emphasis by always hesitating on the edge of caricature at the right moment" (*Complete Prose* 2: 102). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot takes this technique further, using the parenthetical aside to create a similar effect of emphasis and hesitation but appending an imperative to emphasize the preceding content.

The Waste Land commands the eyes to look beyond the illusion of its narrative gestures, urging one to engage the verse as a material resource available to the senses beyond sight. Indeed, Eliot's verse appears with the visual roundness of the parenthetical clause, the tactile roundness signified by the images of pearls and eyes, the conceptual roundness of "the Wheel" tarot and its astrological associations, and the Dantean image of "crowds of people going round in a ring" (l. 46). Moreover, the hollowness of long and short "o" sounds that resonate throughout the verse paragraph (e.g., "Sosostris" [l. 46], "cold" [l. 47], "known" [l. 48] "Europe" [l. 48], "Phoenician," [l. 50], "those" [l. 51], "Look!" [l. 51], "Belladonna" [l. 52] "Rocks" [l. 53], "forbidden" [l. 58], "round," [l. 59], "horoscope" [l. 61]) embody a phonetic roundness for the tongue and ears. Throughout, the long o phoneme performs dual functions: it forces readers to embody the congestion of Sosostris's "bad cold" as they recite the liens and draws attention to the repetition of "so" at the beginning and end of the passage ("Madame SO-SO-stris [...] / One must be SO careful these days" [ll. 46; 62]). The seer's name has significance: Lawrence Rainey suggests that "Sosostris" likely puns on the speaker's skepticism about the character's clairvoyance: she is, it appears, perhaps, a "so, so" sorceress.

Eliot's wordplay resonates with an early modern temporizing phrase: in *The Tempest,* Prospero mutters "so, so" at moments where the limits and efficacy of his magic seems uncertain. Indeed, Ariel draws attention to the habit in Act 4, Scene 1. There, Prospero commands the Sprite:

Go bring the rabble,

O'er whom I give thee power, here to this place:

Incite them to quick motion

(*The Tempest* 4.1.40-42).

Shakespeare leaves uncertain whether these imperatives are simple commands or magical

incantations, reflecting the uncertainty surrounding Prospero's power, an uncertainty that Ariel

compounds in his response:

Before you can say "Come" and "Go,"

And breathe twice, and cry "So, so,"

Each one, tripping on his toe,

Will be here with mop and mow

(*The Tempest*, 4.1.47-50).

Shakespeare complicates this reading further when Prospero uses the phrase in Act 5, Scene 1:

Why, that's my dainty Ariel! I shall miss thee;

But yet thou shalt have freedom: so, so, so

(*The Tempest* 5.1.105-06).

Lest Ariel misunderstands the magician's intentions and assumes his freedom now, Prospero

qualifies his promise with a thrice repeated "so, so, so" that defers the sprite's emancipation. In

any case, Shakespeare presents Prospero as lacking the precise control of language requisite to

magic, despite what the character would have his subjects think.

In any case, Shakespeare presents Prospero as lacking the precise control of language

requisite to magic, despite what the character would have his subjects think. Skilled in some

forms of magic, when Prospero desires action from Ariel, the sprite temporizes rather than

immediately concedes his will to Prospero's. For instance, in 1.2, when Prospero informs Ariel that there is more work for the sprite to perform on his behalf, Ariel complains thus:

> Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
>
> Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
>
> Which is not yet performed me

> (*The Tempest* 1.2.287-89).

Prospero responds with some confusion, given that Ariel appears to be bargaining with him:

> How now? Moody?
>
> What cans't thou demand?

> (*The Tempest* 1.2.290-91).

"My liberty," the sprite answers before reminding Prospero about the conditions of their agreement:

> [...] I prithee,
>
> Remember I have done thee worthy service,
>
> Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, served
>
> Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
>
> To bate me a full year

> (*The Tempest* 1.2.294-98).

Through their exchange, the audience learns that Ariel, before Prospero's arrival as an exile on the island, was under the command of another exile: the witch, Sycorax. According to Prospero, Ariel drove Sycorax "Into her most unmitigable rage" because he "wast a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands" (*The Tempest* 1.2.329, 325-326). Prospero reminds Ariel—as he admits he must do "once in a month"—how, in "refusing her grand hests,

she did confine thee" in "cloven pine" for "a dozen years" (*The Tempest* 1.2.327, 330, 332). This

leads Prospero to reiterate:

> [...] it was "mine art,

> When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape

> The pine and let thee out [...]

> If thou murmer'st, I will rend an oak

> And peg thee in his knotty entrails till

> Thou howled away twelve winters

> (*The Tempest* 1.2.345-47; 349-51).

In other words, Ariel has the ability not just to groan and gripe about his toil but also to refuse

Prospero's commands outright, just as he refused the commands of Sycorax. Ariel obliges those

commands through Prospero's coercion—that is, on account of his threat against Ariel, rather

than on the direct account of magical compulsion. When it comes to affecting the will of others,

the power of Prospero's language is strictly rhetorical.

However, *The Tempest* equivocates regarding the affective provenance of Shakespeare's

verse. Thus, in the "Epilogue," Prospero's character dissipates into some ultra-dramatic pattern

that melts the distinctions between himself, Sycorax, Ariel, and even, perhaps, Shakespeare:

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,

> And what strength I have's mine own

> Which is most faint. Now 'tis true

> I must be here confined by you

> (*The Tempest* E.1-4).

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Here, Prospero speaks in the form reserved in *The Tempest*, for magical speech, namely, rhyming couplets of acephalous iambic tetrameter—

> ^ NOW | my CHARMS | are ALL | o'er-THROWN,
>
> ^ AND | what STRENGTH | I HAVE's | mine OWN"

—that Rebeca Rush identifies as the "Elizabethan Anacreontic."[55] In adopting Ariel's form, Prospero's speech marks his servitude to an extradiegetic source, namely, the audience. That is, though he speaks from within the represented scene of the island, the content of his speech moves beyond the drama at hand towards a space in which, he realizes, his words have only the power of intercession:

> Let me not, Since I have my dukedom got
>
> And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
>
> In this bare island by your spell,
>
> But release me from my bands
>
> With the help of your good hands.
>
> Gentle breath of yours my sails
>
> Must fill, or else my project fails,
>
> Which was to please […]

> (*The Tempest* E.5-13).

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[55] According to Rush, the *English* Anacreontic has an *Elizabethan* history that predates the commonly cited date of the 1650s, "when two young sons of Ben, Thomas Stanley, and Abraham Cowley, included translations of Anacreon in iambic tetrameter couplets in their collections, but early imitations are scattered in nearly every genre of Elizabethan writing." However, because rhyming couplets of acephalous iambic tetrameter are also associated with other English verse forms, especially hymns and nursery rhymes, it is difficult to say whether Shakespeare consciously practiced the anacreontic or if other influences overdetermined his choice to represent incantation in the form. His practice of marking incantations in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter might be a matter of received convention and not necessarily indicative of his participation in a particular metrical tradition. Rush Rebecca M. *The Fetters of Rhyme: Liberty and Poetic Form in Early Modern England*. Princeton University Press, 2021, 98.

No longer the magician or the slave, Prospero now postures as both a criminal seeking pardon and a dramatist seeking an ovation. Nothing less than standing "O" will dispel the illusions of the stage or indeed release the dramatist from his occupation: the compulsion to create, which Prospero doubles here, as the desire to please.

Indeed, Prospero explains that though one might recant their art, recantation does not amount to release from the compulsion to create: Release, he suggests, is rather of absolution, as from a crime or sin:

> […] Now I want Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
>
> And my ending is despair,
>
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
>
> Which pierces so that it assaults
>
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
>
> As you from crimes would pardoned be,
>
> Let your indulgence set me free

(*The Tempest* E.14-20).

The structure that unites the magician and the slave, the exile and the politician, the sinner and pardoned, the supplicant and the dramatist, and even the dramatic and the lyric mode of verse is invocational, imperative, apostrophic, and vocative forms of direct and indirect address. In other words, the great "O" of the Globe is the "O"—explicit or implicit— of vocative address. The same "O," that is, that *The Waste Land* circumscribes in the Madame Sosostris episode of "The Burial of the Dead."

Not just local to the Madame Sosostris episode, Eliot disperses the vocative "O" and its cousin imperative forms across *The Waste Land* in the form of other lines he quotes from

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Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, creating a complex interplay between dramatic and lyric modes of address. For instance, one finds Eliot's reworking of Webster's "Dirge" from *The White Devil* (1611). In Webster, the lines read:

> Call unto his funeral dole
>
> The ant, the fieldmouse, and the mole,
>
> To rear him hillocks that shall keep him warm,
>
> And (when gay tombs are robb'd) sustain no harm;
>
> But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men,
>
> For with his nails he'll dig them up again

(*The White Devil* 5.4).

In Eliot, they read:

> 'O keep the Dog far hence that's friend to men,
>
> 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!

(*Poems* 57: 74-75).

Notably, Elipt exchanges Webster's "But" for "O," a change that recalls Marlowe's and Kyd's use of apostrophe and invocation. This substitution transforms the line from a straightforward imperative into the sort of vocative that Ben Jonson mocked as "rhetoric" in Kyd's "Oh eies, no eies, but fountains fraught with teares," but with all of the same Websterian grit that Eliot appears to have admired. Moreover, Eliot's substitutions of "dog" for Webster's "wolf," "friend" for "foe," and "hence" for "thence" create a significant shift in meaning and emotional resonance. In Webster's original line, "But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men," the use of "thence" suggests a clear separation between the safe space and the threatening outside: the pronoun implies distance, a specific place from which one should *keep* the wolf away. By

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changing "thence" to "hence," Eliot alters this spatial relationship. "Hence" typically means "from here" or "away from here," implying that the threat is already present, not at a distance. This substitution collapses the distinction between the safe interior and the dangerous exterior, bringing the threat (now a dog, not a wolf) into immediate proximity.

Moreover, keeping the dog "hence" appears to harmonize Cornelia's original lament with the tones of something more sinister, namely the cool contempt of her son, Flamineo, Marcello's brother and murderer. Arriving unannounced at Marcello's funeral, Cornelia remarks to Flamineo, "You are, I take it, the grave-maker," to which Flamineo responds with a simple "so"—another resonance with *The Tempest*, however slight (*The White Devil* 5.4). Outraged at his audacity, Cornelia explains that she will die before ever forgiving him and, indeed, will do all within her power to ensure his crimes are not forgotten, least of all by her, remarking

Cowslip water is good for the memory:

Pray, buy me three ounces of 't,

Flamineo responds laconically,

"I would, I was from hence

(*The White Devil* 5.4, Stage Direction: "Enter

Francisco de Médicis).

It is, perhaps, Flamineo's voice, then, that echoes atop Cornelia's in "The Burial Dead," suggesting:

'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

(*Poems* 57: 71-73).

In this reading, the dog appears as much a threat as threatened, both the specter of cruelty and cruelty's object. Like cruel April,

> breeding,

> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

> Memory with desire [...],

Eliot's hybridization of Flamineo's and Cornelia's diction mixes their actions and the emotions those actions dramatize or reflect (*Poems* 55: 1-2). From Cornelia's "Dirge" comes the impulse towards memory: from Flamineo, the desire to kill. As "The Burial of the Dead" concludes, Eliot's interpellates readers into the role of the murderous brother, accusingly mocking the hypocrisy of the Prufrockian moment—

> And indeed there will be time to murder and create

> (*Poems* 6: 29),

—with his citation of Baudelaire's "Au Lecteur" from *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857):

> 'You! hypocrite lecteur ! —mon semblable, —mon frère!' (

> (*Poems* 57: 69-76)

Ultimately, Eliot's citations in "The Burial of the Dead" create a paratactic network of emotional associations that complicates straightforward interpretation in a manner that mirrors his understanding of Marlowe's compositional method. As discussed in Chapter Two, Eliot notes that Marlowe's "torrential imagination recognized many of his best bits (and those of one or two others), saved them, and reproduced them more than once, almost invariably improving them in the process" (*Complete Prose* 2: 99). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot applies and extends this principle, creating a poetic landscape where he re-cites and recreates expressions from diverse sources, often superposing Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic contexts and echoes of character speech

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into new wholes. For instance, moving briefly beyond "The Burial of the Dead" to "The Fire Sermon," one finds the following well-known passage:

> A rat crept softly through the vegetation
>
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
>
> While I was fishing in the dull canal
>
> On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
>
> Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
>
> And on the king my father's death before him

(*Poems* 62: 187-92)

These lines echo Ferdinand's line from *The Tempest*: "Weeping again the King, my father's wrack" (*The Tempest* 1.2.468). However, upon closer consideration, Eliot's speaker appears to be more than Ferdinand, as his syntactical repetition Eliot's syntactical repetition "the king my brother's [...] / [...] the king my father's," echoes the rhythm of a stichomythic exchange between Hamlet and Horatio, regarding the latter's sighting of the deceased king's, Hamlet's father's, ghost:

> Horatio: My lord, I saw him yesternight
>
> Hamlet: Saw who?
>
> Horatio: My lord, the King your father.
>
> Hamlet: The king my father?

(*Hamlet* 1.2.188-191).

From Eliot's superposition of Ferdinand's, Horatio's, and Hamlet's voices emerges a fourth: Claudio, Prince Hamlet's uncle and King Hamlet's murderer appears "musing upon the King *my brother's* wreck / and on the king *my father*'s death before him," ostensibly referring to two

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deceased Kings Hamlet. "The king my brother" would be Prince Hamlet's father, the king my father" his and his brother's father. Claudius *muses* in *The Waste Land* as he does in *Hamlet,* first to the court:

> Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
>
> The memory be green, and that it us befitted
>
> To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
>
> To be contracted in one brow of woe,
>
> Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
>
> That we with wisest sorrow think on him
>
> Together with remembrance of ourselves
>
> (*Hamlet* 1.2.1-7).

Claudius's attempt to balance grief with political necessity and remembrance with the thrill of his power echoes in the strangely off-balanced syntax of Eliot's lines. The layering continues further as Hamlet enters court, mourning, only to be met with Claudius's reprimand:

> 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
>
> To give these mourning duties to your father.
>
> But you must know your father lost a father,
>
> That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
>
> In filial obligation for some term
>
> To do obsequious sorrow. But to persever
>
> In obstinate condolement is a course
>
> Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief
>
> (*Hamlet* 1.2.90-98).

If "Ariel's Song" provided the mourning Ferdinand, "Weeping upon the king, my father's wrack," Claudius commands disconsolation to Hamlet, which proves the driver of their undoing.

Returning once more to those lines from "The Fire Sermon," consider how the image of the rat "dragging its slimy belly on the bank" further resonates with troubling antisemitic themes that appear elsewhere in Eliot's work. In "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" (*Poems* [1920]), for instance, Eliot writes:

> But this or such was Bleistein's way:
>
> A sagging bending of the knees
>
> And elbows, with the palms turned out,
>
> Chicago Semite Viennese.
>
>
> A lustreless protrusive eye
>
> Stares from the protozoic slime
>
> At a perspective of Canaletto.
>
> The smoky candle end of time
>
>
> Declines. On the Rialto once.
>
> The rats are underneath the piles.
>
> The Jew is underneath the lot [...]

(*Poems* 34-35: 13-23)

Both poems employ imagery of decay and degeneration, with rats prominently featured. Moreover, both poems make use of Shakespearean allusions. In "Burbank," Eliot's "On the Rialto once," interpolates Shylock's speech from *The Merchant of Venice* (1598):

I understand moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England,

and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men:

there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I mean pirates, and then

there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks

(*Merchant of Venice* 1.3).

In "Burbank" and "Dirge," Eliot perverts Shylock's figural meaning. Where Shylock suggests

that as Antonio squanders his money and so might the "sea-rats" (pirates) squander him, Eliot

counters with the image of Bleistein's body lying squandered under a pile of rats and trash

("Burbank") and, then again, eaten by literal sea-rats in "Dirge," a poem Eliot composed for but

ultimately excluded from *The Waste Land* that reads, in part:

Full fathom five your Bleistein lies

Under the flatfish and the squid.

Graves' Disease in a dead jew's eyes!

When the crabs have eat the lids.

Lower than the wharf rats dive

Though he suffers a sea-change

Still expensive rich and strange

(*Poems* 285: 1-7).

Anthony Julius labels "Dirge" an "Emersonian poem of 'disgust' and 'rats,' but without any

corresponding Emersonian 'balance' of 'beauty' and 'magnificence'" (Julius ???). This

assessment highlights the poem's focus on decay and degradation, themes that resonate

throughout *The Waste Land*, often connected with Jewish characters or allusions. Eliot's

citational parataxis, in this context, serves to create a network of antisemitic associations that spans across his works.

Again, to emphasize a point I made above, if "Ariel's Song" represents the paradigm for the consolatory function of poetry that Eliot supposes in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927)—a point I discussed in Chapter One—then "The Fire Sermon" shows consolation's darker counterpart in the more disconsolate emotions: grief, revenge, prejudice, fratricide, and hate; a dirge of fire, indeed:

Burning   burning   burning burning

(*Poems* 66: 311).

In one stark line, Eliot pushes the development of blank verse to its logical extreme. If, as I showed in Chapter Two, Eliot's criticism traces the evolution of blank verse from Marlowe through Shakespeare to Webster, noting how, over this period, dramatic blank verse becomes increasingly plastic and capable of expressing "refined" emotions before the dissociation of sensibility during the English Civil War, in *The Waste Land*, Eliot developments the dissociation further. By stripping away all but the most essential elements — in this case, a single word repeated four times —Eliot creates a line that is simultaneously blank verse in its basic structure (five stressed syllables) and a radical departure from it. In *The Waste Land,* blank verse appears not as a ghost of meter but as meter's distillation—a return, with a difference, to the emotional intensity he admired in Marlowe's "mighty line" stripped of the "magniloquence" of Marlowe's rhetoric.

Chapter Three

Enacting Sensuous Wholes in Metaphysical Poetry

Eliot's engagement with metaphysical poetry suggests a phenomenology of poetic experience that enactive theories of cognition and reading further enhance. Eliot saw metaphysical poetry as a historical category and a lens through which to examine the relationship between thought and feeling. He argued that it "elevates sense for a moment to regions ordinarily attainable only by abstract thought, or on the other hand clothes the abstract, for a moment, with all the painful delight of flesh" (*Complete Prose* 2: 617). For Eliot, metaphysical poetry matters because it represents "the 'felt' realization of an 'incarnation'" (*Complete Prose* 2: 617), or as he puts it in "Poetry and Propaganda" (1930), a coming-into-contact with the "sensuous embodiment" of a poetic world of thought and feeling (*Complete Prose* 4: 30). One can understand Eliot's conception of metaphysical poetry as incarnating a "sensuous embodiment" of thought and feeling through Alva Noë's more recent enactivist theory cognition. To enact poetic experience in response to the sensate cognition of verse means performing the difficult crossmodal attention necessary to thinking of one's feelings and feeling one's thoughts as integrated wholes. As Eliot argued in his "Clark Lectures" on metaphysical poetry (1925-26), "from one point of view, to turn the attention to the mind in this way is to create, for the objects alter by being observed" (*Complete Prose* 2: 637).[56] This chapter takes seriously Eliot's claim that "a thought to Donne was an experience: it modified his sensibility" (*Complete Prose* 2: 283).

In his recent book, *Art in Mind* (2023), Noë argues that art is "more like philosophy than it is like play; it is rigorous and demanding" (Noë *The Entanglement: How Art and Philosophy*

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[56]See, T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Complete Prose* 2: 375-85; T. S. Eliot, "John Donne," *Complete Prose* 2: 440-44; T. S. Eliot, "The Clark Lectures," *Complete Prose* 2: 609-761.

Make Us What We Are 4). Discussing Noë's version of the enacted mind hypothesis, Mark

Rowlands posits that "visually perceiving [...] begins where sensation— the distribution of light

intensity over the retina— ends; and it consists in the internal processes responsible for the

production of the visual representation" (Rowlands 73). Eliot also viewed the reading of

metaphysical poetry as requiring one to begin where mere sensation ends: a creative,

performative enaction of perception beyond the realm of normal exteroceptive and interoceptive

monitoring. In his "Clark Lectures" on Metaphysical Poetry (1925-26), Eliot argues that

metaphysical poetry exemplifies a unique approach to experience: "from one point of view, to

turn the attention to the mind in this way is to create, for the objects alter by being observed"

(*Complete Prose* 2: 637).[57]

By integrating these cognitive perspectives with a close observation of Eliot's readings of

metaphysical poetry, we can better appreciate how his theory of incarnation anticipates

contemporary understandings of poetic cognition's embodied, enactive nature. This reinforces

the view of reading metaphysical poetry as a demanding process that involves active work that,

as Noë asserts, can be "rigorous and demanding" (Noë 4). This chapter reads Eliot's

incarnational theory metaphysical poetry through the lens of enactive cognition. I particular

focus on his 1933 series of BBC radio broadcasts. In these broadcasts, Eliot performed enactive

readings of Donne's style's innovation, elaboration, and decadence, using Herbert Grierson's

popular 1921 anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century,* as his

primary text.[58] These radio performances offer a unique insight into Eliot's approach, as they

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[57]See, T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Complete Prose* 2: 375-85; T. S. Eliot, "John Donne," *Complete Prose* 2: 440-44; T. S. Eliot, "The Clark Lectures," *Complete Prose* 2: 609-761.

[58] See Herbert Grierson; John Clifford Sir. *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921.

demonstrate not just his theoretical understanding of metaphysical poetry but his practical engagement with it as a reader and critic. By analyzing Eliot's on-air readings, we can observe how he enacts the process of understanding metaphysical poetry, tracing the development of Donne's style through its stages of innovation, elaboration, and eventual decadence. Eliot's radio broadcasts serve as a performative demonstration of his belief that reading metaphysical poetry requires more than passive reception; it demands active engagement and a willingness to inhabit the cognitive and emotional world of the poem.[59]

Probing the "Cerebral Cortex"

One might read Eliot's approach to metaphysical poetry through contemporary enactive cognition theories, which offer a framework for understanding engagements with versification as an embodied, participatory process of meaning-making. By viewing metaphysical poetry as a form of cognitive engagement that involves the whole person—body, mind, and emotions—Eliot prefigures contemporary understandings of how we make meaning through active interaction with our environment. This approach challenges traditional views of poetry as merely representational or expressive, positioning it as a form of enacted experience that shapes understanding of the world. Furthermore, Eliot's emphasis on the historical and cultural situatedness of poetic experience resonates with enactive cognition's focus on the role of context in shaping cognitive processes. In "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot argued that Donne's

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[59] Indeed, this definition of incarnation is what many of Eliot's late-twentieth critics *miss* about his understanding of poetry and impersonality. Thus, for instance, Sunil Kanti Sen argued in *The Metaphysical Tradition and T. S. Eliot* (1972) that "Only a poet who can think and feel simultaneously can escape from emotion" (87). Ken's argument suffers greatly from reliance—out of necessity—on the theory of impersonality as it appears in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Sunīlakānti Sena. *Metaphysical Tradition and T. S. Eliot*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965.

poetry requires probing "the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts" (*Complete Prose* 2: 382).

Eliot's physiological metaphor suggests that engaging with metaphysical poetry is not merely an intellectual exercise but a full-bodied experience that engages our entire nervous system. This perspective anticipates contemporary neuroscientific understandings of how the body, and not just the brain, actively processes language and emotion. By emphasizing the visceral nature of poetic engagement, Eliot challenges the Cartesian separation of mind and body that has long dominated Western thought. This challenge is evident in Eliot's analysis of metaphysical poetry, particularly in his comparison of Donne and Andrewes. As Jewels Spears Brooker notes, we find evidence of Eliot's view on the integration of intellect and emotion in his analysis of these poets' works:

> In Andrewes, 'intellect and sensibility were in harmony' (Prose 2.820). In Donne, the purple passages are moving, but moving to no end. The contrast between Donne and Andrewes is [...] and you cannot say that it is primarily 'intellectual' or primarily 'emotional,' for the thought and the emotion are reverse sides of the same thing. In Donne you get a sequence of thoughts which are felt; in Crashaw [...] a sequence of feelings which are thought. In neither do you find a perfect balance
>
> (Eliot qtd. in Brooker 115).

This perspective not only reshapes our understanding of Eliot's critical work but also provides a bridge between modernist poetics and current cognitive literary studies.

Consider, for instance, Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," which Eliot discusses in his "Clark Lectures":

> So let us melt, and make no noise,

No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move, '

Twere profanation of our joys

To tell the laity our love

<div align="center">(Donne qtd. in MLP 15).</div>

This stanza exemplifies the embodied, participatory process Eliot saw in metaphysical poetry.

The imagery of melting invokes a physical sensation, while the prohibition against "tear-floods"

and "sigh-tempests" demands active restraint from the reader. The meter, predominantly iambic

tetrameter, creates a rhythmic regularity that contrasts with the emotional intensity of the content.

This tension between form and content enacts the very restraint the poem advocates. Pseudo-

kennings such as "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests" create slightly off-kilter, multisensory images

that probe the reader's store of embodied emotion concepts. The final couplet's shift to religious

language ("profanation," "laity") elevates the lovers' experience to a sacred realm, requiring the

reader to blend the domains of love and religion conceptually. This complex interplay of sensory,

emotional, and conceptual elements demonstrates how metaphysical poetry, in Eliot's view,

engages the whole person - body, mind, and emotions - in the meaning-making process.

In "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot argued that Donne's poetry requires probing

"the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts" (*Complete Prose* 2: 382). This

aligns with I. A. Richards's view in *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) that poetic

language functions "emotively" to "evoke attitudes" rather than denote truth claims (Richards

Principles of Literary Criticism 252). As an example, Eliot reads this well-known stanza from

Donne's "The Funeral":

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme

Nor question much

That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme ;

The mystery, the signe you must not touch,

For 'tis my outward Soule,

Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,

Will leave this to controule,

And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution

(Donne ll. 1-8 qtd. in *MLP*).

Eliot specifically comments on "The Funeral" in his Clark Lectures and "The Devotional Poets" broadcast. In the latter, he highlights this poem as an example of Donne's experimental approach to form:

Donne, in his use of the long stanza, varying the length of line and number of syllables and the rhyme pattern, he is second in his time only to Spenser. Nearly every poem among his Songs and Sonnets is an experiment with a new arrangement: not all are completely successful, but the number of successes is very high

(*Complete Prose* 4: 72).

In the Clark Lectures, Eliot further elaborates on Donne's poetic technique, noting how he often starts with a striking idea and then explores its variations: "He begins with a rather grisly cynicism, suddenly strikes out a line which would distinguish the finest of Elizabethan tragedies, and proceeds to play solemnly upon a notion of religious relic-worship" (*Complete Prose* 2: 673) This approach aligns with what we see in "The Funeral," where Donne begins with the striking image of the "subtle wreath of hair" and then develops it into an extended conceit about the soul and body.

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That conceit is further complicated by ambiguities in the form of the poem that must be negotiated and resolved by the reader through specific enacted responses. Phonemic patterns weave through the text, with /m/ sounds linking "harm," "much," and "arm" across lines, while repeated /t/ sounds in "subtle" (l. 3) "wreath" (l. 3), and "touch" (l. 4) form additional sonic connections. And the strong mid-line caesuras, exemplified in "The mystery, the sign you must not touch" (l. 4), further complicate the reader's decision of enacting these lines through recitation. These elements coalesce to create a reading experience that necessitates continuous interpretation, as readers must make ongoing choices about pacing, emphasis, and the construction of meaning through sound and rhythm. Shorter lines punctuate the poem's iambic pentameter (2, 5, and 7), creating a rhythmic variation that demands attention:

> Who- EV- | -er COMES | to SHROUD | me, DO | not HARM
>
> Nor QUES- | -tion MUCH
>
> That SUB- | -tle WREATH | of HAIR, | which CROWNS | my ARM;
>
> The MYS- | -ter-Y, | the SIGN | you MUST | not TOUCH,
>
> For 'TIS | my OUT- | -ward SOUL,
>
> VICE-roy | to THAT, | which THEN | to HEAV'N | be-ing GONE,
>
> Will LEAVE | this TO | con-TROL,
>
> And KEEP | these LIMBS, | her PROV- | -in-CES, | from DIS- | -so-LU- | -tion,

The most intriguing metrical variation occurs in line 6, which resists the iambic scansion. One could indeed read it as a series of alternating feet (iamb, trochee, iamb, trochee, anapest), as in,

> VICE-roy | to THAT, | which THEN | to HEAV'N | be ing GONE.

Alternatively, one could mark the line as two choriambs followed by an anapest:

> VICE-roy to THAT, | WHICH then to HEAV'N | be-ing GONE

In Greek, "chori" (χορι) is derived from "choros" (χορός), which means "dance" or "chorus." The term "choriamb" thus combines "chori" (dance/chorus) with "iamb," reflecting its dance-like rhythmic quality in verse.

In the context of our discussion about Donne's poetry, the potential presence of choriambs adds a layer of rhythmic complexity and movement to the line, which one could see as enacting the poem's themes of spiritual transition or the dance between life and death. This metrical ambiguity invites the reader to engage actively with the line's rhythm, choosing how to read and interpret it. Rhythm manifests through several interconnected physiological and cognitive factors; considering just the ambiguous prosody of line six, either option first impacts the reader's breath and pacing. Just conceiving of the added metrical barrier or its absence between the alternating iambic-trochaic reading and the choriambic alternative might produce either a more staccato breath pattern, with slight pauses between feet, for the former, or a more integrated sense of undisrupted movement. This respiratory engagement physically enacts the poem's themes of spiritual transition and the interplay between earthly and heavenly realms. The kinesthetic imagery evoked by the line's meter, particularly the dance-like quality of the choriamb, might prompt subtle body movements or imagined sensations of motion. This could manifest as a slight swaying or a feeling of lightness, physically enacting the soul's transition "to HEAV'N." Furthermore, the different scansion options affect the reader's perception of time, with the alternating feet potentially creating a sense of time divided into distinct units, while the choriambic reading might evoke a more flowing temporal experience.

The cognitive load—a concept from embedded cognition that assumes all cognitive tasks require effort drawn from an organism's limited stores of energy—moves one beyond the

ambiguous line six, as the reader must navigate various complexities throughout the stanza.[60] The varying line lengths, from full pentameter to shorter lines such as the iambic trimeter,

For 'TIS | my OUT- | -ward SOUL

(l. 5),

require constant adjustment in breathing and pacing. This rhythmic variability might manifest physically in subtle changes in posture or tension as the reader adapts to each new line. The stanza's intricate sound patterning, with its network of assonance and consonance, for instance, the recurring 'o' sounds in the end rhyming "soul" (l. 5) and "control" (l. 7) and the consonance of "provinces" and "dissolution" (l. 8), engages the reader's articulatory muscles even in silent reading. This subvocalization can lead to subtle movements of the tongue and lips, creating a physical experience of the poem's sonic texture. Moreover, the conceptual complexity of the extended metaphor comparing the soul to a "Viceroy" and the body to "provinces" demands a cognitive effort that may manifest in physical signs of concentration, such as slowed breathing or a slight squinting of the eyes. The final line's expansion to the iambic hexameter with amphibrach in the final foot—

And KEEP | these LIMBS, | her PROV- | -in-CES, | from DIS- | -so-LUT-ion

(l. 8).

—hardly allows the breath to resist the isochronous principle of the pentameter as the additional foot, which adds three syllables, enacts the dissolution it promises to avoid, resulting in a "real" scansion that results in a pyrrhic in the fourth foot and a iambic elision in the sixth:

And KEEP | these limbs, | her PROV- | -in-ces, | from DIS- | -so-LU-TION.

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[60] See Edwin Hutchins. *Cognition in the Wild*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995.

The reader's task in reciting this line, as Eliot's criticism suggests, is to engage in the demanding process of integrating diverse embodied experiences—the breath patterns, the articulatory movements, the tensions and releases in various muscle groups—with the intellectual content of the poem. This integration is not automatic or predetermined but requires the reader's active participation in constructing meaning. The physical concomitants provided by the poem's form serve as raw material for the reader's cognitive and emotional engagement, allowing for the incarnation of a 'unified' aesthetic experience that transcends the sum of its parts.

"Understanding Without Believing"

One major impetus to Eliot's incarnational reading of metaphysical poetry was his disagreement with the emerging New Criticism, especially I. A. Richards, whose 1929 book *Practical Criticism* grappled with how readers' beliefs might impede appreciating the cognitive-affective affordances of poetic experience.[61] Recognizing poetry's paradoxical capacity to evoke "attitudes" readers cannot sustain as coherent "beliefs," Richards conceived what Eliot called an "ideal reader" capable of suspending beliefs to embody a poem's thoughts and feelings fully (*Complete Prose* 4: 26). Richard's suggestion was that prior beliefs only impede—they do not validate or invalidate—the poetic experience itself. By the 1930s, in "Poetry and Propaganda," Eliot firmly dismissed both Richards's "ideal reader" and Montgomery Belgion's opposing "suspicious reader" who reduced poetry to propaganda. For Eliot, both were undesirable—Belgion was "indifferent to the poetry" itself, while the ideal reader ignored "the life of poetry" (*Complete Prose* 4: 26).[62]

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[61] I. A. Richards. *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1929.

[62] Montgomery Belgion. *Our Present Philosophy of Life*. Faber & Faber Ltd., 1929.

Instead, Eliot advocated "understanding without believing" — to approach poems phenomenologically on their own semi-autonomous aesthetic grounds without reducing them to pre-existing conceptual schemes. An "understanding-without-believing" allows encountering the semi-autonomous materiality of verse, free from obligations to make it "make sense" according to external criteria. This phenomenological approach correlates to Anahid Nersessian's notion of "critical nescience"— a willful metaphysical bracketing of contextual determinations to engage the poem's semi-autonomous aesthetic dimensions. Rather than passively receiving poems as encoded messages or suspending one's situatedness to achieve an idealized perspectival removal, Eliot's approach enacted an active engagement, looping reader and text together in coupled dynamics. From this perspective, poetic meaning emerges through the reciprocal interplay between a reader's attentional processes and the intention of a poem's material surfaces. The materiality of metaphysical verse shapes and prompts the reader's cognitive-perceptual experiences, even as the reader's enacted dispositions and embodied situatedness influence the patterns apprehensible in the text. 'Meaning' in such an understanding is an embodied phenomenon, a pattern of thinking and feeling extending across the reader-text, subject-object divide.

His reading of George Herbert's "Prayer (I)" embodies the concept of "understanding without believing, a phenomenological engagement with the poem's material and aesthetic dimensions without reducing it to pre-existing conceptual schemes or religious doctrines. This method aligns with what Eliot advocates in his broadcast on "The Devotional Poets of the Seventeenth-Century" (1933), where he emphasizes that "a poem is primarily a poem" and should be evaluated as such, regardless of its religious content (*Complete Prose* 4: 76). In Herbert's "Prayer (I)," Eliot recognizes a "succession of brief conceits" that, while individually

might sound like mere wit, collectively form a cohesive poetic experience. He quotes the following stanzas:

> Prayer, the Church's banquet, Angels' age,
>
> God's breath in man returning to his birth,
>
> The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
>
> The Christian plummet sounding heaven and earth;
>
> Engine against th'Almighty, sinner's tower,
>
> Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
>
> The six-days' world transposing in an hour,
>
> A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
>
> Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
>
> Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
>
> Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
>
> The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
>
> Church bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
>
> The land of spices, something understood
>
> (Herbert "Prayer (I)" *The Poems of George Herbert, ed. Arthur Waugh,* London: Oxford UP, [1907], 51-52).

Eliot's reading of Herbert's "Prayer (I)" exemplifies his concept of "understanding without believing" by focusing on how the poem's form enacts its content. The poem's conceit—a single

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sentence comprising a series of images for praying—mirrors the act of prayer itself: a continuous, transformative process of addressing the divine. Indeed, the form "prays without praying" by enacting a state of kenosis. Alford's concept of "transitive attention" provides a useful framework for understanding Eliot's method of "understanding without believing." As Alford explains, transitive attention involves "close observation and description, creating or enacting a mode of focalization or what we might call in visual terms 'close looking,' though the degree of concentration varies between and within poems" (Alford 52). This aligns closely with Eliot's emphasis on the formal qualities of Herbert's poem, particularly its structure as "a succession of brief conceits" (*Complete Prose* 4: 76). Moreover, Alford identifies four primary modes of transitive attention: "contemplation, desire, recollection, and imagination" (Alford 51). Eliot's approach to Herbert's poem seems to engage primarily with the mode of contemplation, as he encourages readers to focus on its structure and imagery without necessarily sharing its religious convictions.

Alford's description of how poems can create specific "attentional stances" is particularly relevant to Eliot's reading of Herbert. She notes that in focalization, "while the 'real' object may of course not be present, the attentional stance of the poem is directed toward an object or central theme" (Alford 52). In Herbert's "Prayer (I)," the central theme is prayer itself, and Eliot's analysis focuses on how the poem's structure enacts this theme, creating an attentional stance that mimics the act of prayer even for readers who may not share Herbert's faith. Furthermore, Alford's idea that "the particular convergence of the dynamic coordinates of transitive attention in particular degrees and relationships within the scope of a poem constitute the specific nature of the attentive mode produced and/or required by the poem" (Alford 51) helps us understand why Eliot values Herbert's poem as a whole, even while acknowledging that some individual

conceits might "sound like wit but not like poetry" (*Complete Prose* 4: 76). By applying

Alford's concepts to Eliot's reading of Herbert, we can see how "understanding without

believing" operates as a specific mode of transitive attention, one that allows readers to engage

deeply with the poem's formal qualities and cognitive effects, regardless of their personal

religious beliefs.

As understood by cognitive science, *attention* is always selective, meaning it involves the

hierarchical processing of incoming sensory stimuli.[63] As a foundational definition, researchers

frequently cite William James's claim that "attention is the taking possession by the mind, in

clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of

thought. Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its essence" (James 403-04).

However, contemporary empirical understandings of selective attention grew out of early

research on the relationship between memory and performance in persons with and without

mental illnesses or impairments and in developmental studies of childhood learning disabilities.[64]

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[63] See Riley W. Gardner and Robert I. Long, "Cognitve Controls of Attention and Inhibition: A Study of Individual Consistencies," *British Journal of Psychology*, 53, 4, 1962, 381-88; Riley W. Gardner and Robert I. Long, "Control, Deference, and Centration Effect: A Stud of Scanning Behaviour," *British Journal of Psychology*, 53, 2, 1962, 129-40; Norman L. Corah, "Some perceptual correlates of individual differences in arousal," *Journal of Personality*, 30, 3, 1962, 471-84; Neville Moray. *Attention: Selective Processes in Vision and Hearing*. London: Routledge, 1970; Sara G. Tarver. *Verbal Rehearsal and Selective Attention in Children With Learning Disabilities*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1975; Margaret Metcalf Dawson. *The Effect of Reinforcement and Verbal Rehearsal on Selective Attention in Learning Disabled Children*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1978; James Clifton McCrory. *The Sensitivity to Nonverbal Communication of Learning Disabled Children With Varying Degrees of Distration on Selective Attention Tasks*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1980; Michael W. Eysenck. *Attention and Arousal, Cognition and Performance*. Berlin, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982; A. H. C. van der Heijden. *Selective Attention in Vision*. London, New York: Routledge, 1992; William James. *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt, 1890, vol. 1., 403-04.

[64] Researchers frequently cite William James's claim that "attention is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its essence" as a definition of attention. However, contemporary empirical understandings of selective attention grew out of early research on the relationship between memory and performance in persons with and without mental illnesses or impairments and in developmental studies of childhood learning disabilities. See Riley W. Gardner and Robert I. Long ; Riley W. Gardner and Robert I. Long, "Control, Deference, and Centration Effect: A Stud of Scanning Behaviour"; Norman L. Corah, ; Neville Moray, ; Sara G. Tarver, ; Margaret Metcalf Dawson, ; James Clifton McCrory, ; Michael W. Eysenck, ; A. H. C. van der Heijden, ; William James, , vol. 1., 403-04.

Selective attention is either endogenously or exogenously oriented.[65] Endogenously oriented selective attention is subject originating: it occurs when an individual voluntarily or intentionally decides where to direct their attention. The paradigmatic example of endogenously and exogenously oriented attention is "the cocktail party effect."[66] At a busy cocktail party, you selectively attend to a conversation with your friends and consequently filter out the surrounding noise—this intentional phenomenon is endogenously oriented selective auditory attention. However, someone calls your name at the same party, and your attention shifts rapidly from the conversation with your friend to locating whomever it is that called you—that reflexive phenomenon is exogenously oriented selective auditory attention. Finally, *crossmodal attention* theorizes the reorientations that sometimes occur across multiple sensory modalities that selectively attend to some spatial location, perceptual event, or object.[67]

To be clear, reading is always an act of selective attention. However, whether that attention is endogenously or exogenously oriented depends on a range of endogenous and exogenous factors, not least of which are individuals' biopsychosocial conditions of embodiment

[65] Michael Posner inaugurated the study of attention orienting in 1980 as a part of his study of selective visual attention. Attention orienting is a vital and active subdiscipline in attention studies. For Posner's paper, see Michael I. Posner, "Orienting of Attention," *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 32, 1980, 3-25. For recent review of attention orienting see "On the Modes of Spatial Attention" in Michael I. Posner. *Cognitive Neuroscience of Attention*. New York: Guilford Press, 2012.

[66] Nelle Wood and Nelson Cowan, "The cocktail party phenomenon revisited," *Journal of Experimental Psychology. Learning, Memory & Cognition*, 21, 1, 1995, 255-60.

[67] See Charles Spence and Jon Driver. *Crossmodal Space and Crossmodal Attention*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; The possibility of crossmodal attention was first broached in B. Rapp and S. K. Hendel, "Principles of cross-modal competition: Evidence from deficits of attention," *PSYCHONOMIC BULLETIN & REVIEW*, 10, 1, 2003, 210-19. Other early studies includeE. Macaluso, C. D. Frith and J. Driver, "Directing attention to locations and to sensory modalities: Multiple levels of selective processing revealed with PET," *Cerebral Cortex*, 12, 4, 2002, 357-68. For review of recent literature in the field of attention studies and in the subdiscipline of crossmodal attention, see Jonathan M. Fawcett, Evan F. Risko and Alan Kingstone. *The Handbook of Attention*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2015; Charles Spence, "Crossmodal spatial attention," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1191, 1, 2010, 182-200 Elizabeth A. Styles. *The Psychology of Attention*. Hove [England], New York: Psychology Press, 2006; and Addie Johnson and Robert W. Proctor. *Attention: Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2004.

differentially realized in every act of reading. A theory of "poetic attention" as such would have to convincingly account not only for each of these contingencies but also for how those contingencies shape the neurophysiological elements that make reading possible. Nevertheless, Alford's concept of "attending poetically" as "bringing formal attention to the ways in which attention is manipulated by the form of the language itself" aligns closely with Eliot's approach to metaphysical poetry(Alford 16). This "doubleness of 'attention to the form of attention;'" mirrors the enactive view that cognition is a process of active sense-making(Alford 16). Alford's work provides a framework for understanding how the formal qualities of poetry that Eliot valued—such as complex metaphors and intricate sound patterns—can shape readers' attentional processes. Her emphasis on the role of form in manipulating attention resonates with Eliot's belief in the cognitive power of poetic form to shape thought and feeling. Indeed, "attending poetically" suggests a mode of engagement that is both cognitive and affective, aligning with Eliot's view of metaphysical poetry as uniting thought and feeling. Furthermore, Alford's concept of a "doubleness of attention" - where we attend both to the poem's content and the way our attention is being directed—provides a way to understand the self-reflexive quality that Eliot often praised in metaphysical poetry.

Returning to Eliot's reading of Herbert, I indeed argue that "Prayer (I)" enacts a state of "intransitive attention," or what Alford calls "objectless awareness" (Alford 152). The poem's prosodic elements contribute significantly to this effect:

PRAY-er, | the CHURCH- | -'s BAN-| quet, AN-| -gels' AGE,

GOD'S breath | in MAN | re -TURN- | -ing TO | his BIRTH,

The SOUL | in PAR- | -a-phrase, HEART | in PIL- | -gri-MAGE,

The CHRIST- | -ian PLUM- | -met SOUND- | -ing HEAV'N | and EARTH;

EN-gine | a-GAINST | th'al-MIGH- | -ty, SIN- | -ner's TOW'R,

Re-VERS- | -ed THUN- | -der, CHRIST'S- | - side-PIER- | -cing SPEAR,

The SIX- | -days' WORLD | trans-POS- | -ing in | an HOUR,

A KIND | of TUNE, | which ALL | things HEAR | and FEAR;

SOFT-ness, | and PEACE, | and JOY, | and LOVE, | and BLISS,

Ex-ALT- | -ed MAN- | -na, GLAD- | -ness of | the BEST,

HEAV'N in- | -OR-din-ar- | -y, MAN | well DREST,

The MILK- | -y WAY, | the BIRD | of PAR- | -a-DISE,

CHURCH bells | be-YOND | the STARS | HEARD, the | SOUL's blood,

The LAND | of SPIC-| -es, SOME- | -thing un- | -der-STOOD.

 With all of its variations, the iambic pentameter in these lines encourages what Alford might describe as "letting go—of effort, of self, of objective, of ambition." This steady rhythm cultivates a kind of "deliberate and intentional passivity" in the reader, aligning with Alford's description of intransitive attention. Variations in the meter, such as the trochaic-iambic openings of many lines reproduces the choriamb effect (e.g., "PRAY-er, | the CHURCH-", "GOD'S breath | in MAN," "EN-gine | a-GAINST," "CHURCH bells | be-YOND"), elicit moments of lilting movement in the voice that allow the rhythm to move towards the hypnotic while also disrupting the dog-trot of the pentameter.

Such variations as these choriambic openings embody the "practical tension" between intentionality and passivity that Alford associates with intransitive attention. The varied length

and complexity of the metaphors, from brief phrases to elaborate conceits, create a shifting field of awareness that resists focalization on any single image. This embodies what Alford describes as attending "to the whole field of perception without focalizing on a single figure" (152). The phonetic structure, including alliteration and assonance, create a musicality that encourages immersion in the overall experience rather than fixation on individual meanings. For instance, in the line "SOFT-ness, | and PEACE, | and JOY, | and LOVE, | and BLISS," the anaphoric instantiation of the pentameter—comprised of ten syllables, four of which are the monosyllabic conjunction "and," four the more positive monosyllabic states of being and the last, the first, "softness"— expands as it speaks into unfocused awareness.

Presenting

"A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility," Eliot argued in "The Metaphysical Poets" (*Complete Prose* 2: 382). That is, he adds: "A change of feeling, with Donne, is instead the regrouping of the same elements under a mood which was previously subordinate it is not the substitution of one mood for a wholly different one (*Complete Prose* 2: 382). As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the significance of such a regrouping lies, for Eliot, in the apprehension that no matter the magnitude of the centrifugal force expressed by Donne's compulsive and associated mind, his verse nevertheless exerts a centripetal force of feeling that unifies the whole. Eliot argued that the inverse is true of Richard Crashaw, for in Crashaw, "there is the same constant diversion and dispersion as in Donne," except that whereas the centrifugalism of Donne was fueled by the "fragmentation of thought into thoughts," in Crashaw, it is fueled by the fragmentation of "emotion into emotions"(*Complete Prose* 2: 706). However, Eliot insisted that Crashaw's verse obtains unity through the centripetal force of thought— expressed as wit, just as in Donne, it obtained through the expression of a droning

mood. Crashaw threads the entire sequence of emotions in any of his verses into a unity, as if by a single strand of thought. Nevertheless, Eliot insisted that Crashaw's verse obtains unity through the centripetal force of thought— expressed as wit, just as in Donne, it obtained through the expression of a droning mood. Crashaw threads the entire sequence of emotions in any of his verses into a unity, as if by a single strand of thought.

Eliot's view of metaphysical poetry as demanding active cognitive engagement aligns closely with Alva Noë's ideas about art and perception. In *Varieties of Presence* (2004), Noë argues that "The world shows up for us in experience only insofar as we know how to make contact with it, or, to use a different metaphor, only insofar as we have the skills needed to bring it into focus" (*Varieties of Presence* 2). This resonates with Eliot's understanding that readers must actively engage with metaphysical poetry to experience it fully. Noë further elaborates, "Perception is a transaction; it is the sharing of a situation with what you perceive" (Noë 4). One can apply this transactional view of perception to how Eliot sees readers engaging with metaphysical poetry. The complex conceits and paradoxical juxtapositions in poems like Crashaw's "The Weeper" require readers to actively participate in constructing meaning rather than passively receiving it. Thus, in *Art in Mind*, Noë discusses how art "disorganizes and thus, finally, enables the reorganization of the life of which it is the representation and against which it is a reaction" (14). This idea of art as a disruptive and reorganizing force aligns with Eliot's view of metaphysical poetry as challenging conventional thinking and feeling. The "wit and tortuous ingenuity" that Eliot praises in Crashaw's work is a form of this disorganization and reorganization.

The concept of art as a precondition for life, which Noë discusses in *Art in Mind*, also resonates with Eliot's understanding of metaphysical poetry. Noë writes, "We make art out of

life, yes, but, as we now understand, we make life out of art. Art is one of life's preconditions"

(14). I find this reciprocal relationship between art and life reflected in how Eliot views

metaphysical poetry as reflecting and shaping human experience and understanding. By

integrating these perspectives from Noë with Eliot's incarnational paradigm, we can see

metaphysical poetry as a literary style and a cognitive tool that reshapes our perception and

understanding of the world. The active engagement required by these poems becomes a way of

developing new skills for experiencing and making sense of reality. Eliot further elaborates his

appreciation for Crashaw's poem "The Weeper" in "The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry"

(1933), where he praises it as an example of where "wit and tortuous ingenuity becomes poetry"

(*Complete Prose* 4: 727). This transformation of wit into poetry through emotional intensity and

intellectual ingenuity creates a rich cognitive environment that resonates with Alva Noë's

enactive approach to cognition. Consider the stanza:

> Not in the evening's eyes
>
> When they red with weeping are
>
> For the sun that dies,
>
> Sits sorrow with a face so fair,
>
> Nowhere but here did ever meet
>
> Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet
>
> (Crashaw qtd in *MLP* 31).

The stanza from Crashaw's "Saint Mary Magdalene, or The Weeper" illustrates Noë's concept of

the "fragility of presence" and the active nature of perception. In the lines "Not in the evening's

eyes / When they red with weeping are / For the sun that dies," Crashaw creates a complex

interplay between presence and absence that the reader must actively engage with to experience

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fully. The sun's presence is not given; it's already absent, having "died." Yet, to understand the evening's weeping, the reader must actively enact or reconstruct the sun's presence in their imagination. This enactment is crucial because, as Noë points out, "Presence is manifestly fragile" (*Varieties of Presence* 2). If the reader doesn't actively maintain the image of the sun in their mind, the entire metaphor collapses into darkness. The reader must hold in tension the sun's absence (it has "died") with its lingering presence (it still causes the evening to weep), mirroring the way we constantly work to maintain our perceptual grip on the world. This process aligns with Noë's view that perception is "a movement from here to there, from this place to that" (*Varieties of Presence* 5). The reader must move between the immediate image of the weeping evening and the implied image of the departed sun, actively constructing the relationship between them. This mental movement enacts the presence-making process that Noë describes as fundamental to our engagement with the world.

The paradoxical juxtaposition in the final lines, "Nowhere but here did ever meet / Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet," demonstrates what Noë describes as art's capacity to "disorganize and thus, finally, enable the reorganization of the life of which it is the representation and against which it is a reaction" (*Art in Mind* 14). This paradox doesn't merely present contradictory ideas; it challenges readers to reconstruct their understanding of emotional states, blurring the boundaries between seemingly opposite feelings. This aligns with Noë's argument that "We are creatures of habit, but we are never only that. We are creatures of habit who, as I have remarked above, always already find ourselves in a world that exceeds our habits" (*Art in Mind* 11). The poem forces us to confront the limitations of our habitual ways of perceiving emotions and pushes us to expand our cognitive boundaries. Furthermore, the stanza demonstrates what Noë calls the "close interweaving of the practical and the intellectual in our

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lives" (Varieties of Presence, 12). The concrete imagery of weeping eyes and the dying sun is interwoven with abstract concepts of sorrow and sweetness, requiring the reader to engage in what Noë might term a "thoughtful understanding" that gives us the "poise we need to carry on over the rough spots" in our interpretation (*Varieties of Presence*, 12).

Reading further with Eliot, consider how, in the next stanza he cites, Crashaw's personification of dew as "weeping and sleeping creates a disorienting image that challenges our habitual ways of perceiving natural phenomena"

The dew no more will weep

The primrose's pale cheek to deck,

The dew no more will sleep

Nuzzled in the lily's neck;

Much rather would it be thy Tear,

And leave them both to tremble here

(Crashaw qtd. in *MLP* 132).

The final two lines, "Much rather would it be thy Tear, / And leave them both to tremble here," require the reader to enact a complex emotional and perceptual state. The reader must simultaneously hold in mind the image of natural dew and the concept of Mary Magdalene's tears, creating a kind of perceptual overlap that Noë might describe as a "thoughtful understanding" that gives us the "poise we need to carry on over the rough spots" in our interpretation (*Varieties of Presence*, 12). The poem thus functions as a cognitive tool, aligning with Eliot's view of metaphysical poetry as demanding active engagement and reshaping our perceptual and conceptual frameworks.

A final note on Crashaw *ala* Eliot's Donne: the pleasure one takes in a thought having a particular sound or that particular sense: the experience of reading one of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*—at least as I experience those poems—is, as Eliot suggested, of the release of feeling as such, the recognition of a singular and forceful letting out of the air: like bathos, perhaps, but without the sensation having any one rhetorical locus. Upon thought's cessation, one becomes aware that the act of thinking was floating on a buzzing sea of feeling from the start:

> To turn the attention to the mind in this way is to create, for the objects alter by being observed To contemplate an idea, because it is my idea, to observe its emotional infusion, to play with it, instead of using it as a plain and simple meaning, brings often curious and beautiful things to light, though it lends itself, this petting and teasing of one's mental offspring, to extremities of torturing of language

> (*Complete Prose* 2: 637).

If this is true of Donne, then the opposite is true of Crashaw, whom, Eliot claimed, threads emotional fragments through wit: the result, overall, tends towards simpler syntax but greater emotional torsion. Lest the magnitude of a feeling subsides, Eliot argued that Crashaw's verse makes us feel and, lest we stop feeling *this* feeling, desperately claws towards another of equal intensity through the expression of wit, or perhaps more often, clumsy exposition and between those extremes, all variety of etymological and pun-based wordplay. Consider, for instance, the first sustain of Crashaw's "Weeper":

> Hail, sister springs!

> Parents of sylver-footed rills!

> Ever bubbling things!

> Thawing crystal! snowy hills,

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> Still spending, never spent! I mean

> Thy fair eyes, sweet Magadalene!

(Crashaw qtd. in *MLP,* 131)

Crashaw treats poetry as rhetoric, which does not condemn it by any means; instead, as Eliot argued in Kipling, he translates the feeling into sound and iterates it. Each vocative arrives as its own thing—a pearl—a line—in a dissembled sequence until line 5 when the revelation of the thought that each of those addressed in the lines preceded are one in kind, equally fit, and even simultaneously obtaining images of "thy fair eyes, sweet Magdalene!" According to Eliot, the incarnation one arrives at by feeling through Crashaw's verse is the thought—"I should not have thought that were possible"—that such disparate feelings might have an intellectual or ideational structure running through them.

Reading Metaphysical Anthologies

Eliot's approach to metaphysical poetry, as exemplified in his appreciation of Herbert Grierson's anthology, represents a dynamic and embodied method of literary criticism. For Eliot, metaphysical poetry was "more than simply a 'school,'" but a living tradition that "must be continuously reinvented and renegotiated for every present moment" (*Complete Prose* 2: 621). His concept of "felt resemblances" underpins this approach, suggesting that metaphysical poets share a unique ability to synthesize thought and emotion into unified experiences. Eliot argued that metaphysical poets possessed "a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any experience," allowing them to amalgamate disparate elements into coherent wholes. This capacity created unexpected connections that Eliot perceived as resonating across different works and poets, forming the basis of "felt resemblances" (*Complete Prose* 2: 621). Eliot's critical approach, therefore, becomes a form of enactive cognition. By engaging with poems as

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"dynamic environments," he performs a kind of cognitive disintegration, breaking down conventional reading practices to reconstruct new ways of understanding. This process analyzes and actively performs the "disintegration and dissociation he sees as characteristic of seventeenth-century English culture" (*Complete Prose* 2: 619).

In this way, Eliot's criticism of metaphysical poetry, particularly his review of Grierson's anthology as "a piece of criticism, and a provocation of criticism" represents more than just literary analysis. It enacts a method of reading that emphasizes the "ongoing, dynamic nature of poetic understanding and appreciation" (*Complete Prose* 2: 375). This approach prioritizes the "experiential and emotional impact of poetry over more superficial categorizations," allowing for the construction of a living poetic tradition that is "continuously reinvented and renegotiated for every present moment" (*Complete Prose* 2: 621). For Eliot, this reading process enacts the disintegration and dissociation he sees as characteristic of seventeenth-century English culture. By engaging with the poems as dynamic environments, Eliot performs a kind of cognitive disintegration, breaking down conventional reading practices to reconstruct new ways of understanding. By reading this way, Eliot analyzes and actively performs the disintegration and dissociation he sees as characteristic of metaphysical poetry. His critical approach becomes a form of enactive cognition, breaking down conventional boundaries between reader and text, critic and poet, to reconstruct new ways of understanding poetry's capacity to reshape our cognitive and emotional experiences.

> When my grave is broke up again
>
> Some second guest to entertain
>
> (For graves have learnt that woman-head
>
> To be to more than one a bed),

And he that digs it spies

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,

<div align="right">(Donne, "The Relique ," ll. 1-11, MLP 21).</div>

Eliot notes how Donne begins with "a rather grisly cynicism" and then "suddenly strikes out a line which would distinguish the finest of Elizabethan tragedies" before proceeding "to play solemnly upon a notion of religious relic-worship" (*Complete Prose* 4: 63). This juxtaposition of the physical dissolution of the body with the conceptual disintegration of love and religious devotion exemplifies Eliot the metaphysical poet's ability to thread together disparate ideas.

Donne's characteristic blend of colloquial language and complex conceits is further evident in "Lovers Infinitenesse":

If yet I have not all thy love,

Deare, I shall never have it all,

I cannot breathe one other sigh, to move,

Nor can intreat one other teare to fall,

And all my treasure, which should purchase thee,

Sighs, teares, and oathes, and letters I have spent

<div align="right">(Donne, "Lovers infinitenesse" [1633], MLP, 4).</div>

The irregular meter and enjambment create a conversational rhythm. Eliot sees this as Donne displacing the Elizabethan "stock" of imagery with his discursive Renaissance-humanist idiom, while elaborating on metrical irregularity to develop a more plastic, sensible form of lyric (*Complete Prose* 4: 71). Eliot further exemplifies Donne's in "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day":

But I am none; nor will my sun renew.

You lovers, for whose sake the lesser sun

At this time to the Goat is run

To fetch new lust, and give it you,

Enjoy your summer all

(Donne, Final stanza of "A Nocturnall upon St.

Lucies day, Being the Shortest day").

And from "Of the Progress of the Soul: The Second Anniversary":

Her pure and eloquent blood

Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought

That one might almost say, her body thought.

In George Herbert's poetry, Eliot finds him representing a development of Donne's heterodox idiom into an orthodox language (*Complete Prose* 4: 471). This is evident in poems like "The Collar":

Shall I be still in suit?

Have I no harvest but a thorn

To let me blood, and not restore

What I have lost with cordial fruit?

(Herbert, "The Collar" *MLP* 111).

And "Faith":

What though my body run to dust?

Faith cleaves unto it, counting every grain

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With an exact and most particular trust,

(Herbert, "Faith," ll. 41-43; *The Poems of George Herbert*, 51).

Here, Eliot perceives a complete dissolution of logical connections, forcing the reader to engage in an active process of meaning-making from disparate sensory and conceptual fragments.

Henry Vaughan expands metaphysical themes into nature-oriented reflections:

Happy those early days! when I

Shined in my Angel-infancy.

Before I understood this place

Appointed for my second race,

Or taught my soul to fancy ought

But a white, celestial thought,

When yet I had not walked above

A mile, or two, from my first love,

And looking back (at that short space)

Could see a glimpse of His bright face;

When on some gilded cloud, or flower

My gazing soul would dwell an hour,

And in those weaker glories spy

Some shadows of eternity ...

(Vaughan, "The Retreat," *MLP* 145).

Andrew Marvell refines metaphysical techniques with concise, witty style:

Anihilating all that's made to gree

To a green thought in a green shade

<div style="text-align: right">

(Marvell, "The Garden" (1681), ll. 47-48; *MLP*

210).

</div>

Thomas Traherne focuses on spiritual themes and childhood innocence:

The streets were paved with golden stones,

The boys and girls were mine,

Oh how did all their lovely faces shine!

<div style="text-align: right">

(Traherene "Wonder" (1903), ll. 33-40; *The*

Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne, [1906], 6).

</div>

Abraham Cowley represents a transition towards less complex conceits:

Tell me, O tell, what kind of thing is

Wit, Thou who master art of it."

From "My Dyet":

"Now by my love, the greatest oath that is,

None loves you half so well as I:

I do not ask your love for this;

But for Heaven's sake believe me, or I die

<div style="text-align: right">

(Cowley, "My Dyet" (1647) stanza 1. Poems:

Miscellanies, The Mistress, Pindarique Odes,

Davideis,Verses Written on Several Occasions

[1905], 89).

</div>

Thomas Carew shows a simplification of metaphysical techniques:

Now you have freely given me leave to love,

What will you do?

Sir John Suckling adds:

Oh! for some honest lover's ghost

An anonymous poet from "Theophilia, or Loves Sacrifice" writes:

At first God made them one, thus; by subjecting

The sense to reason; and directing

The appetite by the spirit: but sin, by infecting

Man's free-born will, so shatters them, that they

At present nor cohabit may

Without regret, nor without grief depart away.

Sir John Denham, in *Cooper's Hill* shows a move towards more naturalistic imagery:

My eye, descending from the hill, surveys

Where Thames among the wanton valleys strays.

Thames, the most loved of all the ocean's sons

By his old sire, to his embraces runs,

Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,

Like mortal life to meet eternity.

Though with those streams he no resemblance hold

Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold . . .

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream

My great example, as it is my theme!

Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,

Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full

(Denham, *Cooper's Hill* [1642-65], ll. 159-66, 189-

92. *The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham,* [1928],

73, 75, 77).

This evolution culminates in the transition towards Restoration and Augustan poetry, as exemplified by Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*:

A man so various, that he seemed to be

Not one, but all mankind's epitome.

Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;

Was everything by starts, and nothing long

(Dryden, Absalom and Achitop hel, ll. 529-32,

Poems of John Dryden, 56

Eliot argues that "Dryden came to resolve the contradictions of the previous period and select from it the styles which were capable of development" (*Complete Prose* 4: 126). He sees Dryden's lines as "as astounding a vivification of the language as anything of Donne" (*Complete Prose* 4: 126).

Through this enactivist reading process, Eliot engages with the poems as dynamic environments that shape cognitive and emotional experiences. This approach allows him to construct a living tradition that is continually reinvented, embodying the idea that "Metaphysical

periods recur [...] in moments when the revolution of the sphere of thought will so to speak throw off ideas which fall within the attraction of poetry, and which the operation of poetry will transmute into the immediacy of feeling" (*Complete Prose* 2: 612). By reading in this way, Eliot demonstrates how the formal, intentional patterning of graphic and sonic signifiers in metaphysical poetry recreates, through threading, the experience of realizing that such a recreational unity is possible. This "incarnational" reading thus affords criticism a means of enacting significance, providing aesthetic sanction to the power of poetry to reconstruct fragmented experience into new wholes.

Coda

Neurodivergence: Milton's Syntax, Eliot's "Obsessional Neurosis"

In this dissertation, I have shown how viewing Eliot's critical and poetic work through the lens of 4E (embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended) cognition theories, reveals connections between modernist poetics and contemporary cognitive science. This establishes Eliot's critical approach as a forerunner to current theories of how poetry functions as a participatory, world-involving cognitive process. Collectively, these interventions reposition Eliot as a thinker whose work on poetic cognition was remarkably prescient, anticipating by decades many core insights of embodied and enactive approaches to mind and meaning-making in literature. Building on this reframing of Eliot's work through 4E cognition, we can envision exciting new directions for research at the intersection of cognition, poetry, and neurodiversity. This dissertation's embodied, enactive approach to poetic analysis opens pathways for exploring how diverse cognitive styles engage with and create poetry. In future research, I plan to extend the framework of embodied surface reading to examine how neurodivergent poets and readers interact with poetic form. Some questions for exploration include how individuals with autism spectrum conditions might, for example, experience the sensorimotor dimensions of verse differently. Could their unique perceptual styles offer new insights into the materiality of language? Similarly, the enactivist understanding of metaphysical poetry as requiring active cognitive synthesis could inform studies of how different neurotypes approach complex poetic conceits.

Such an approach, I argue, would develop neurodivergent modes of formalist analysis underrepresented in most studies of poetry and poetics, thus expanding our understanding of poetic cognition beyond neurotypical norms. This could lead to more inclusive models of literary

affect that account for a wider range of cognitive-emotional processes. Furthermore, applying 4E cognition theories to neurodivergent poetics might illuminate how different minds extend into and couple with poetic environments, potentially revealing novel forms of cognitive-poetic interaction not captured by traditional literary analysis. These directions promise to enrich both cognitive poetics and disability studies, fostering a more nuanced, inclusive understanding of how diverse minds engage with and create poetry. By embracing neurodiversity in our approach to poetic cognition, we may uncover new dimensions of literary experience and creation previously overlooked by conventional criticism.

As someone who lives with severe OCD and ADHD, I have found that my neurodivergent perspective has profoundly shaped my approach to literary analysis, particularly in this study of Eliot's work. My OCD tendencies have enabled me to engage in the meticulous, granular analysis of poetic form that Eliot himself practiced, allowing me to pick up on subtle patterns and variations that might escape others. At the same time, my ADHD has fostered a capacity for making unexpected connections across disparate texts and ideas, mirroring Eliot's own associative style in works like *The Waste Land.* However, I must acknowledge that these same neurodivergent traits have also limited my analysis. My OCD-driven perfectionism has sometimes led me to fixate excessively on minute details, potentially at the expense of broader contextual considerations. Meanwhile, my ADHD has occasionally resulted in tangential explorations that, while interesting, may have distracted me from the core arguments at times.

Recognizing these personal cognitive influences has made me acutely aware of how neurodiversity can shape literary criticism. Eliot's critical practice, particularly his meticulous and often severe assessments of poetic form, may reflect a neurodivergent perspective. Cuda's research reveals that Randall Jarrell viewed Eliot's work as "the result of a psychological

struggle with 'obsessional neurosis'" (Cuda "Reinventing Modernism: Randall Jarrell's

Unwritten Essay on T. S. Eliot" 85). Far from being a limitation, this obsessional quality

produced some of Eliot's most interesting formal experiments. As Cuda notes, Jarrell sought to

"extrapolate the artistic implications of Freudian obsessional neurosis" in Eliot's work, finding

"a highly stylized, crafted equivalent to the stuttering, halting, confused accounts of Freud's

patients" (Cuda 103). However, it's important to note that the same obsessive tendencies that

make Eliot's poetry so compelling can also make his criticism seem overly exacting, even

pedantic. This duality is particularly evident in his infamous critique of Milton's syntax in

'Milton I', which provides a compelling case study for how a potentially neurodivergent reading

approach can yield unique insights into poetic language while also revealing the limitations and

biases inherent in such a perspective. Jarrell's analysis suggests that Eliot's own poetry "seems,

to Eliot, to come from [the] unconscious," a perspective that may have influenced his approach

to critiquing other poets, including John Milton (Cuda 93). This neurodivergent lens offers a new

way to understand Eliot's critical method and the potential role of neurodiversity in shaping

literary analysis more broadly while also acknowledging the potential drawbacks of such an

intensely focused approach.

In his infamous 1936 essay "Milton I," Eliot provocatively claimed that "Milton writes

English like a dead language" (*Complete Prose* 5: 374). [68] This statement highlights Eliot's

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[68] For the better part of a century, this comment has been at the forefront of what is known as "the Milton
Controversy." As I understand it, mid-twentieth-century academics deemed Eliot's critique as "controversial"
because of the perceived audacity—that Eliot, a well-known transnational poet with a larger public platform than
perhaps any poet before or since, would attack John Milton, a much beloved English icon at a moment when
patriotic sentiment was reaching, not quite a fever-pitch, per se, but certainly levels that betokened the coming war
years. Indeed, "As a man he [Milton] is antipathetic" is a weapon of provocative sharpness tooled for a precise
attack. Eliot's unstated implication is that insofar as one maintains a sentimental and uncritical attachment to Milton,
the man, one is complicit with what he stood for, what he did, and the perpetuation of his influence. "Either from a
moralist's point of view, or from the theologian's point of view, or the psychologist's point of view, or from that of
the political philosopher, or judging by the standards of likeableness in human beings," Eliot continued, "Milton is

perception of Milton's syntax as flawed and fundamentally damaging to the English poetic

tradition. Eliot's assertion that Milton's verse "has done damage to the English language from

which it has not wholly recovered" underscores his obsessive preoccupation with 'purifying the

dialect of the tribe' (*Complete Prose* 5: 374). All that remains of Milton's greatness, given

Eliot's dismissals, is the greatness of his poetry. Considered for his poetry alone, Eliot found

Milton less than unsatisfactory: "When we measure him by […] the standards of language and

of something called Poetry, in our own language and in the whole history of English literature,"

Milton's verse, Eliot argued, appears to have "done damage to the English language from which

it has not wholly recovered" (*Complete Prose* 5: 374). "The criticism," he continued, "has been

made concerning his involved syntax. But a tortuous style when its peculiarity is aimed at

precision […] is not necessarily a dead one" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375). However, for Milton's

verse, "the complication of a Miltonic sentence is an active complication, deliberately introduced

into what was previously simplified and abstract thought" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375). Eliot

explained that he was not, in critiquing Milton's opaque syntax, expressing a belief that "Milton

has no idea to convey which he regards as important, only that the syntax is determined by the

musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow any actual

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unsatisfactory, *Complete Prose* 5: 371.Estelle Haan, "After "Word" Surprised by Syntax: The Vox Bilinguis of Paradise Lost," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 102, 1, 2012, 167-98; Charles A. Huttar, "C.S Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and the Milton Legacy: The Nativity Ode Revisited," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 3, 44, 2002, 324-48; Beverley Sherry, "The Legacy of T. S. Eliot to Milton Studies," *Literature & Aesthetics*, 1, 18, 2008, 135-51; Clay Daniel, "Milton and the English Auden," *Christianity & Literature*, 4, 64, 2015, 414-37; Glaser Ben, "Milton in Time: Prosody, Reception, and the Twentieth-Century Abstraction of Form," *Thinking Verse*, 3, 2013, 169-85; Todd H. Sammons, "A Note on the Milton Criticism of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot," *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, 1, 17, 1988, 87-97; and John Haffenden, "William Empson: The Milton Controversy," *Literary Imagination*, 11, 2, 2009, 136-53.

speech or thought" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375). "The result is a rhetorical style," Eliot argued of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* in "Milton I" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375).

"The auditory imagination," a concept Eliot first introduced in his essay "Matthew Arnold" (1934), signifies that element of a poet's sensibility apprehensive of the sense of sound and the sound of sense— "the sound of the word to the sound of the sense of the word, if you like; the sense of the sound or the sound of the sense; the consciousness of the meaning of the word and pleasure in that sound having that meaning (*Complete Prose* 4: 667). It is, he explained, a "feeling for syllable and rhythm" responsible for the recreative possibilities of a poet's historical sense (*Complete Prose* 4: 667). Eliot's issue with Milton's syntax, as he explained, is not that it emphasizes Milton's auditory imagination, but that Milton turns his auditory imagination towards rhetorical ends. Bent to the service of a rhetorical end, Milton's syntax causes "the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile," resulting in "a dislocation" between the two sense imaginations (*Complete Prose* 5: 375). The sound of the poem is thus dislocated from its sense, and Milton's syntax causes "the inner meaning" to be "separated from the [auditory] surface" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375). In this fashion, he continued, Milton's inner meaning "tends to become something *occult,* or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood [Eliot's emphasis]" *Complete Prose* 5: 375). "To extract everything possible from Paradise Lost," Eliot concluded, "it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second solely for the sense […] it is at least more nearly possible to distinguish the pleasure which arises from the *noise,* from the pleasure due to other elements [Eliot's emphasis]" (*Complete Prose* 5: 375).

As an example of this dislocation, Eliot cites four lines from Samson's well-known soliloquy in Milton's closet drama, *Samson Agonistes.* Indeed, the passage Eliot cites in "Milton

I" as evidence of the dislocation between sense and sound in *Samson Agonistes* concerns the titular character's blindness. In this soliloquy, Samson, a "Nazarite"— a Hebrew word that roughly means "one who is set apart"—finds himself blind, like Oedipus, his eyes gouged out by his Philistine captors:

> O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
>
> Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
>
> Dungeon, beggary, or decrepit age!
>
> Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
>
> And all her various objects of delight
>
> Annulled […]

> (*The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton* 12, ll.67-72).[69]

Anguish, however, soon gives way to despair as Samson recounts, in a figure that anticipates his more well-known image of a solar eclipse just a few lines down, how his blindness which seems to him a perpetual interior darkness, render him "visible" to the light of an exterior evil:

> I dark in light exposed
>
> To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
>
> Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
>
> In power of others, never my own;
>
> Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half

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[69] All my citations of Milton's poetry and prose in this chapter are to John Milton. *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*. New York: Modern Library, 2007.

"The most important fact about Milton, for my purpose," Eliot wrote in "Milton I," "is his blindness"—a provocation if ever there was one—quickly adding, "I do not mean that to go bind in middle life is itself enough to determine the whole nature of a man's poetry" (*Complete Prose* 5: 372). Eliot does not intend that statement to soften his critique, only to qualify it slightly. "Had Milton been a man of very keen senses—I mean of *all* the five senses—his blindness would not have mattered so much" does little to mitigate offense because offense, it seems, was Eliot's aim. Thus, he concluded, "for a man whose sensuousness such as it was, had been withered early by book-learning, and whose gifts were naturally aural, it [blindness] mattered a great deal. It would seem, indeed, to have helped him concentrate on what he could do best" (*Complete Prose* 5: 372).[70] Having clearly laid out his prejudice, Eliot thus turned to the last four lines of the following passage:

> O dak, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon
>
> Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
>
> Without all hope of day!
>
> O first created beam, and thou great word
>
> "Let there be light, and light was over all,
>
> Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
>
> The sun to me is dark
>
> And silent as the moon,
>
> When she deserts the night

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[70] For an interesting take on Milton's blindness, see John Rumrich, "The Cause and Effect of Milton's Blindness," *Texas Studies in Literature & Language*, 61, 2, 2019, 95-115.

Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

<div align="center">(CPSP 712, ll. 80-90).</div>

"Here interlunar is certainly a stroke of genius [Eliot's emphasis]," he wrote, "but it is merely combined with 'vacant' and 'cave,' rather than giving and receiving life from them" (Complete Prose 5: 373).

Had Eliot known that there was classical precedence for Milton's figure of the moon retiring to a cave between lunar cycles, I do not think it would have changed his opinion of these lines. The trouble for him was that vacant, even given the double meaning of both "empty" and "at leisure," makes no sense with Samson's image: if the moon is "hidden" in her "interlunar cave," then the cave is certainly not vacant; if vacant modifies the "interlunar" period, then it no longer makes sense to say that the moon is vacant because she is hiding. This is a complication of syntax that occurs because Milton is too concerned with sound. In this sense, Eliot's critique appears correct, Samson's line "hid in her vacant interlunar cave" deadens the passage because he lets his excitement over "the stroke of genius" that is tetrameter surprise of "HID in her VA- | -cant IN |- ter-LUN- | -ar CAVE," complicate the more straightforward figure of the trimeter, were the line to read "HID in her IN |- ter-LUN- | -ar CAVE." The point of contention for Eliot, is that Milton puts poetry into the service of his auditory genius rather than putting his auditory genius in service of the poetry.

Eliot continues his seemingly pedantic critique of Samson Agonistes as it appeared in "Milton I" with his citation of the passage in "East Coker" 3 (1941):

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,

The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,

The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,

<div align="center">191</div>

The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,

Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,

Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark,

And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha

And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,

And cold the sense and lost the motive of action

(*Poems* 188, "East Coker" 3.1-13).

Without an intimate familiarity with Eliot's critique in "Milton I," one might think that Eliot's "O dark dark dark" was a direct citation, *sans* commas, of Milton's "O, dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon" in *Samson Agonistes*. If this were the extent of Eliot's engagement with Milton, one would be justified in calling it an allusion. However, Eliot's engagement with Milton extends across the passage in subtler, more critical ways. There is, for instance, Eliot's "interstellar" in line two, his attempt to modernize the "stroke of genius" in Milton's "interlunar," while correcting also for the confusion caused by Milton's syntax in the line "hid in her vacant interlunar cave." Where does Eliot's "they" in line one go? "Into the vacant interstellar spaces." Indeed, as the lines usher them all into the darkness of oblivion, he also draws out the secondary sense of vacant— fickle or trifling—only hinted at, but again complicated by, Milton's syntax in *Samson*: in "East Coker," one witnesses the procession of "the vacant into the vacant" and thus finds that in *Samson,* the *vacant* (moon) is not "hid in" goes *into her* vacant interlunar cave.

In an article on Eliot's versification in *Four Quartets,* Ruth Abbott discusses, "the list, containing modern job titles that tend towards the ridiculous, and ungainly names such as the Almanach de Gotha, is reminiscent of Eliot's early poetic trick of establishing tone through the

associations of names" (339).[71] Of course, read in light of "Milton I," Eliot's list appears, in fact, an epic catalogue, a verse form very different from the mere association of names in both form and function. Eliot's names might be polysyllabic, but they are hardly ungainly: compared to Milton's "Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian / And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne, / To Paguin of Sinaean kings, and thence […]." Eliot's "Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees, / Industrial lords and petty contractors" establishes a "transversal" line with *Samson Agonistes* by repeating the phrase "all go into the dark" at the end of line eight, he does so to correct, in line nine, Milton's out of joint analogy between the "dark" sun and "silent" moon: what *common sense* does it make, after all to figure celestial objects as silent because dark? Keeping the sun and moon associated together "silent," he does so to emphasize the disconcerting lack of lamentation after everything, and everyone has been "buried" in "the silent funeral" of an apocalyptic future.

In any case, the point I am driving at is this: there is no possibility of understanding Eliot's versification—in this case, in "East Coker" and *Sweeney Agonistes*—without an intimate familiarity with Milton's versification in *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost* or the particulars of Eliot's theory of poetic language, more broadly, and his specific critique of those lines from *Samson* and of the epic catalogs in *Paradise Lost.* On the whole, statements to the effect of Abbott's pat claim that in "East Coker" "Eliot moves from his past style into his present style through graceful parallelism of phrasing, expanding the superstitious and capitalized 'dark the Sun and Moon' into the quiet iambic pentameter of' cold the sense and lost the motive of action' through the biblical linking device, 'And,'" are far too common in studies of Eliot's versification

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[71]Ruth Abbott, "T. S. Eliot's Ghostly Footfalls: The Versification of Four Quartets," *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 4, 34, 2005, 365-85.

(Abbott).[72] Eliot's reference back to the citational context of *Samson*'s "the sun to me is dark / and silent as the moon," that Abbott misses in remarking on the "superstitious and capitalized 'dark the Sun and Moon,'" underlines the sort of poetic stewardship—as patronizing as it may well be—that Eliot takes over Milton's verse.

Moreover, "East Coker" III turns Samson's despondence over his blindness into a more general despondency or cynicism about the twentieth-century world. Eliot does so partly by breaking up the monotony of the syntax in his "epic" catalogue. Not only is it

> the captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,
>
> The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
>
> Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
>
> Industrial lords and petty contractors
>
> that "all go into the dark," but so too do
>
> we all go with them, into the silent funeral
>
> Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.
>
> I said to my soul, be still, and let the darkness come upon you
>
> Which shall be the darkness of God

> (*Poems* 188, "East Coker" 3.10-13).

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[72] For the best critical treatments of Eliot's versification see; Ben Glaser, *Modernism's Metronome: Meter and Twentieth-century Poetics* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020); Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (Faber and Faber, 1965); Harvey Gross, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (University of Michigan Press, 1964); Rosemary L. Gates, "T. S. Eliot's Prosody and the Free Verse Tradition: Restricting Walt Whitman's 'Free Growth and Metrical Laws'," *Poetics Today* 11 no. 3 (1990), 547-578. Gross, picking up on the less than satisfying affordances of foot prosody, suggests that in Eliot's verse one ought to view the "syntactic unit" as a metrical "bass line" over which Eliot can be found "working" different lines of rhythm or "melody." Rosemary Gates, agrees with Gross's conception of "melody over bass," but argues that, throughout Eliot's *ouvre*, there are "three kinds" of patterning, namely, "repetition of metrical unit, repetition of speech-sound unit, and repetition of unit groupings that are established and varied within or across poems." Gates focuses primarily on the second category, "the repetition of speech-sound unit."

Examining Eliot's critique of Milton through a neurodivergent lens offers valuable insights into the cognitive processes involved in poetic engagement. Eliot's obsessive attention to detail, which Jarrell attributed to potential OCD tendencies, enabled him to discern subtle linguistic patterns that might elude other readers. This hyper-focused approach allowed Eliot to analyze the intricacies of syntax and sound with remarkable precision. Eliot's emphasis on the physical, sensory experience of poetry— particularly his concept of the "auditory imagination" - aligns with contemporary theories of embodied cognition. His intuitive understanding that readers do not just intellectually process poetry but also through bodily sensation anticipates modern cognitive approaches to literature. However, Eliot's intense focus on specific aspects of Milton's work demonstrates how cognitive biases can influence critical interpretation. While his critiques often yielded brilliant insights, they could also be myopic, highlighting the extent to which individual cognitive styles shape artistic interpretation.

The way Eliot poetically engages Milton's verse reveals a complex cognitive process that demands neuroses from the reader. To fully appreciate the intricate patterns in works like "East Coker," one must possess a comprehensive knowledge of Milton's verse, particularly *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes,* including their themes, imagery, and distinctive syntax. Additionally, a thorough understanding of Eliot's critical writings, especially his essays on Milton, like "Milton I," is crucial to grasp the context of his critiques and theoretical positions. This level of engagement extends to an intimate familiarity with Eliot's poetry, including his earlier works and their evolution, to trace how he incorporates and transforms Miltonic elements. Such multi-layered processing of literary influence suggests a cognitive style that may be characteristic of neurodivergent minds, requiring readers to engage in similarly complex, multi-layered interpretative processes. This demanding nature of Eliot's poetry and criticism might reflect his

potentially neurodivergent cognitive approach, challenging readers to develop a nuanced, intertextual understanding that operates simultaneously on multiple levels.

As a final example of the sort of obsessional pattern-spinning and patterns seeking behavior across Eliot's writings, consider this letter he sent to Emily Hale, the woman whom Eliot's biographer Lyndall Gordan calls his "hidden muse," on July 24, 1931, asking that she "please re-read the hyacinth lines in *The Waste Land,* and the lines toward the very end beginning":

> 'Friend, blood shaking my heart' (where we of course means privately of course I [Eliot's emendation and emphases]) and compare them with Pipit on the one hand and Ash Wednesday on the other, and see if they do not convince you that my love for you has steadily grown into something finer and finer. And I shall always write primarily for you.[73]

What would Hale have thought were she to follow Eliot's advice and turn with particular attention to the lines he references from "What the Thunder Said," the last section of *The Waste Land?* Here are the lines:

> *Datta:* what have we given?
>
> My friend, blood shaking my heart
>
> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
>
> Which an age of prudence can never retract

[73] T. S. Eliot to Emily Hale, "07/24/1933" in the Emily Hale Archive. Published in 2023 at https://tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters. For biographical approaches to Eliot, see Lyndall Gordon, "The Hyacinth Girl: T.S. Eliot's Hidden Muse," *The Hyacinth Girl: T.S. Eliot's Hidden Muse* ; Lyndall Gordon, "T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life," *T.S. Eliot* ; John Gordon, "T. S. Eliot's Head and Heart," *ELH*, 4, 62, 1995, 979-1000and Robert Crawford, "Eliot After the Waste Land," *Eliot After the Waste Land* ; Robert Crawford, "Young Eliot: From St. Louis to the Waste Land," *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to the Waste Land* .

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

(*Poems* 70: 401-09).

If Eliot assumed anything more than a cursory reading of these lines from Hale—and why should he not?—then he would have known that she was likely to turn to the "Notes" that he supplied for these lines. There, she would have found this, Flamineo's warning against the inconstancy of women in John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612):

[…] O men

That lie upon your death-beds, and are haunted

With howling wives, ne'er trust them; they'll remarry

Ere the worm pierce your winding-sheet, ere the spider

Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs.

...Trust a woman? never, never; Brachiano

Be my precedent. We lay our souls to pawn to the devil for

A little pleasure, and a woman makes the bill of sale. That

ever man should marry!"

(*The White Devil* 5.4.1182-190).

Eliot met Hale in 1912, when he was a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard, and she a drama teacher at Simmons College. When Eliot sailed for England in 1914, he left his romantic feelings for Hale unresolved. Indeed, the two had no further contact until 1923, when they briefly rendezvoused in London's Eccleston Square. Another period of separation followed,

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lasting until 1930. After that, Eliot began courting Hale with letters such as the one quoted above, in which he professed his love for her despite being still married to his first wife, Vivien Haighwood-Eliot. Two spiders, two women: Haighwood and Hale, one maleficent, the other beneficent. What should *Hale* have made of these lines if they were, as Eliot says, proof that "my love for you has steadily grown into something finer and finer"? Perhaps on the most cursory of readings, she was to find that he was no longer paralyzed by the fretting indecisiveness that bade his alter ego, J. Alfred Prufrock, ask, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" (*Poems* 32). In "What the Thunder Said," the daring is a done deed. Perhaps not, because Eliot's Pruforckian idiom cannot help but echo to Hale the supposition that:

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse

(*Poems* 32).

After all, Prufrock does appear to speak for a moment in Eliot's letter to Hale, fretting over where he should place the presumptive qualifier "of course." — "And how should I presume": Of course, Eliot intended that phrase to hedge against the possibility that, in directing her towards these lines from *The Waste Land*, Hale might have understood him to have presumed to know how she felt about him—that is, to have presumed that "he" and "she" were, indeed, a "we." In any case, Eliot implied to Hale that she was the "friend" addressed in line 403, but if "we" means "I," then the line is a self-reflexive response to the self-reflexive question prompted by the thunder's command in line 401: "what have we [I] given?" Surrender, it seems, though precisely *not* to the sort of surrender that might likely lead to either the public record of a "we"— not to marriage or children, traces of existence that *would* "be found in our obituaries"—nor in private memories except, perhaps, ere the spider.

In any case, Eliot's letter to Hale seems to signify that he will not marry again—and that he was not going to marry her, the beneficent spider though she may be. Indeed, when Haighwood passed from a heart attack on January 22, 1947, Eliot admitted that he did not intend —and perhaps had intended—to marry Hale, despite former statements he made to the contrary. A decade later, Eliot remarried Hale, not his longtime secretary, Valerie Fletcher. After receiving this news, Hale wrote to Eliot expressing her intent to abide by their plan and submit his half of the letters to Princeton University's special collections. In response, Eliot secretly burned Hale's half, silencing her voice from the archive (of over 1,000 such letters) that bears her name, "ere the spider / Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs [...]." In this letter, Frances Dickey writes, "Eliot's art reflects his life to an extent previously unknown, and how his life also followed art, in a pattern of renunciation imposed both on himself and Hale" (Dickey 434). With Dickey, I agree that the Hale archive states that biographical criticism is vital to understanding Eliot's writing. Eliot's theory of impersonality no longer works as the biographical shield he sometimes intended it to be. I would add only that, in addition to showing how Eliot imbricated art and life, the Hale Archive also evidences how Eliot diffracted his life through the prism of his theories and, likewise, derived his theories from personal experience to be used in the service of his poetry, indeed a marker of neurodivergent behavior. Such an approach to Eliot's poetry and criticism challenges readers to consider how neurodiverse perspectives might reshape non-hermeneutic formalist methods of poetic analysis and thus lead to a more inclusive understanding of how verification shapes cognitive-affective experiences.

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