

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University Open Scholarship

Eliot

University Archives

4-1934

Washington University Eliot

Washington University Eliot, St. Louis, Missouri

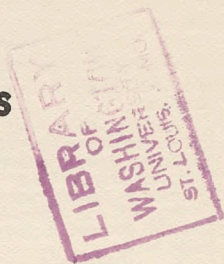
Follow this and additional works at: <https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/eliot>

Recommended Citation

Washington University Eliot, St. Louis, Missouri, "Washington University Eliot" (April 1934). *Eliot*. 74.
<https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/eliot/74>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Eliot by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.

Insect Chorus



Small minute hands prick off the hours,
 Filing the mind's thin wire to dust,
 And we shall die of little things
 —Scrailed down to bone, not cut of life.

We shall die waiting for that phantom hour
 Whose greatness could be born
 Only within the formless fog of our desire;
 And we shall die
 Neither in shadow of Hell or Heaven,
 But on this grey and insect-fretted, neutral ground
 Lie down,
 —Not seeing, not remembering
 Either the blood and garnet oaks of autumn
 Or the cold white quarries in the spring,
 But with the mind
 Full of old thoughts and menus, old obsessions,
 Unwritten letters and tomorrow's rain.

We shall die listening, gnat-tormented,
 And the sound
 Of shrill familiar voices in our ears,
 And know
 The great voice dumb, which once in life
 Smothered the little shouting mouths,
 And cried "Be still!"

Now only Death shall silence
 The loud insect chorus of these days.

—JOSEPHINE W. JOHNSON.

STORIES, ARTICLES
 REVIEWS, POEMS

Contributors

Will Wharton

Gordon Sager

J. W. Johnson

Clark Mills

H. Angert II

Berenice Purcell

THE ELIOT

Published Monthly by Students at
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Saint Louis, Mo.

Editor: Clark Mills McBurney.

Associates: Leigh White, Gordon
Sager, Dorothy Weiner.

Managing Editor: William Edgar.

Distribution Manager: Melvin
Roman.

Staff: Robert Campbell, Virginia
Price, Berenice Purcell, William
Swindler, James Gibson, Selwyn
Pepper, Dorothy Rauscher,
Charlotte Anschuetz, Mary
Catherine Trueblood, Jeanne
Milam, Russel Crider, Mildred
Molasky.

Price 10 cents; the year, 75 cents.

COMMENTS AND NOTE

The Eliot has been criticized for failing in its purpose to give a sample of the literary talent on the campus, but I think such adverse criticism should not be directed entirely at the editors. They have worked diligently to improve the magazine and have succeeded, I think, in making the March issue superior to the previous issues. The greatest difficulty lies in the fact that so few students contribute, giving the editors little choice in selection.

—CLARA GIESE, PRESIDENT, W. S. G. A.

In my opinion, a serious literary outlet is of great benefit to those students of the university who are interested in the development of literary expression. Unfortunately the field of such interest is so limited that talent alone must not be relied upon to establish *The Eliot* as a permanent Washington U. publication. *The Eliot* would be far more interesting if the subject-matter of the stories were more closely connected with the daily life of Washington U. and St. Louis.

—HARRY BLEICH,
Business Manager, *Dirge*.

I should like to see *The Eliot* become an organ of intelligent thinking rather than of the pseudo-intellectual thought it now expresses. It should stop printing the "stark, bleak" verse

that is, at best, an imitation of Gertrude Stein or T. S. Eliot. *The Eliot* should make no effort to uplift. Its style should be clean, direct and honest—typical of the intelligent college student. Above all, do not be high-brow.

—HAROLD CLOVER, Editor, *Dirge*.

I think the greatest improvement would be to widen the scope of material so that it would appeal to more people and thereby increase the circulation.

My impression of the magazine now is that it appeals to a very small percentage of the students. This can probably be remedied by having articles concerning the history of the school, or incidents in the lives of some of the professors or athletic coaches and even students. Although *The Eliot* is a literary magazine, I think that if it were closer to the students and included some of the suggested topics, it would be of more interest to the student body.

—JACK HARDAWAY, Editor
The Hatchet.

The Eliot should be printed on glossy paper and should appear in a longer, wider format. As to the contents, I feel that *The Eliot* would benefit by the inclusion of intelligent caricatures of faculty members and students.

—SOULARD JOHNSON, Editor,
Student Life.

The general opinion concerning *The Eliot* is that it does not interest the majority of students on the campus. The above critical notes seem to bear out this opinion. But if preceding issues have lacked immediacy, it is because other campus publications have appeared to be adequately expressing non-literary student activity.

However, these criticisms will direct the new editors in preparing the next issue, which in content will reflect future numbers of *The Eliot*.

—CLARK MILLS MCBURNEY.

"GOD'S WILL," MRS. TERRENCE SAID

The most exciting part of it happened twenty-five years ago while I was delivery boy in the grocery store. I mean the time when they brought his body in for her to identify. She wouldn't go to the morgue. They had to bring it to her.

I was about twelve years old then. It is one of the most vivid pictures I have—that little crowd of people on Olive Street eagerly waiting to see the body of John Terrence.

He had drowned himself in the Mississippi two days before. It took them two days to fish his body out.

The body was on a stretcher and all covered over, but it was enough for the crowd of people waiting in front of her house. Everybody had known that John drowned himself before she did. And to tell you the truth, I think most of them cared more than she did.

That's a funny thing to say because she was his mother. But when I was waiting there I divided my attention between her and the corpse, although it was the first one I had ever seen. She was really more interesting. She sat in her second story window as they took the body of her dead son from the ambulance and carried it to the door for all the world as if she were watching nothing more than the street cars passing by, or the men going into the houses of the prostitutes across the way. There wasn't a tear on her face.

She didn't even look sad, as I remember it across those twenty-five years.

She just looked hard, as she always did. Mrs. Terrence was tall, thin, and angular. Her face was sharp. There was never any color in her cheeks, and her complexion was of that transparent kind which only young girls are supposed to have. She wore all her hair on top of her head and a black band forever around her thin neck. She seemed to feel no sorrow

and no pity for herself or him as she watched them bring in the corpse of her son.

Maybe I was remembering her as she used to look after her son's funeral, sitting at the window day after day. But I think I can recall wondering how hard she must have been to accept his death as she did. One of the men there in that crowd said, "God, she's a heartless bitch." I think I joined in the murmur of agreement that followed, or maybe I was too excited to say anything.

As soon as they had brought the body in and she had left the window, I had to hurry back to the grocery.

I was out on a delivery and I had passed by the Terrence house. When I saw that crowd there I had to wait to see what was going to happen. All that day, whenever I had a delivery I would pass by the house on my way back, no matter where the order was.

I suppose Mr. Halter wondered why all those deliveries were taking so long.

But when I reached the store and told him about their bringing the body in, he became so excited he forgot to ask me how I happened to be near the Terrence house. The delivery I was taking then, as I remember it, was about five blocks in the opposite direction.

"What did she do?" was his first question.

"Nothing. She just sat there," I said.

"Yeh. That's all she would do."

"She buried a husband and she killed a son," he said.

"Killed a son?" My voice, which was changing then, must have broken in the middle of the sentence. Mr. Halter laughed and said, "Run along now, son."

Reluctantly I left the front of the store where Mr. Halter was standing by the window and went to the back to fill some boxes with potatoes.

I thought he must have been exaggerating, because everybody said that John jumped in the river. I thought of the river, as it flowed past St. Louis: smelly, dirty, menacing. Goose flesh stood out on my back and arms. I was ready then to believe that Mrs. Terrence had pushed her son in. Nobody would jump in by himself, I thought.

Mr. Halter said she killed him. I thought then that that was what he meant.

Some time later, while I was still in the back of the store Mrs. Duffy came in. Her husband was one of those who went in with the coroner to see Mrs. Terrence. Policeman Duffy told his wife all about it.

She had come to tell Mr. Halter.

Mrs. Duffy said that when the coroner asked old lady Terrence if she could give any reason for her son's killing himself, the old lady just shook her head. Didn't say a word.

Then the coroner asked her again. Well, she went to the desk and took a letter out. She showed it to the coroner, and he said he would have to keep it for the inquest.

It was a woman writing to break her engagement with John.

It was postmarked two days before.

Mrs. Duffy said that her husband told her he wouldn't kill himself for any woman. She laughed. Mr. Halter laughed too.

Then he said that it wasn't the first time.

Mrs. Duffy said, "You mean he tried to kill himself before?"

"No. I mean that that wasn't the first woman to break her engagement with him."

"Well, I wonder what was wrong with him," Mrs. Duffy said.

"There wasn't anything wrong with him."

"It was her—that mother of his."

Mrs. Duffy leaned a little further over the counter so she wouldn't miss a word, when her boy Tim ran in.

He told her that Aunt Teresa was over.

"Well, if that ain't luck for you," Mrs. Duffy said. "I'll be back just as soon as I can. There was something I wanted to buy."

Then she went out.

Mr. Halter knew she didn't want to buy anything, and so did I. He shook his head. Then he went to the back room, where he always had a stack of books. He used to lend me books to read at night. Right now he was reading "Vanity Fair." I know because I saw the book open on the chair.

"Scandalmonger," I said to myself. "Scandalmonger." I remember I thought it was a good word.

Just then Mrs. Terman came in. She came for two reasons. She had been visiting her mother in the country and she had just got back. She wanted some groceries, but mainly she wanted Mr. Halter to tell her all about the suicide.

Mr. Halter didn't mind.

He told her while she bought about four dollars worth of groceries.

"In the first place," he said, "that other girl quit going with John a couple days after you left. He was pretty broken up about it. Violet was in that day and she said he locked himself up in his room. Wouldn't talk to his mother, wouldn't even let Violet in to clean up. Violet said she was awful worried.

"But the old lady wasn't. At least, if she was she didn't let on."

"She never would," Mrs. Terman interrupted.

"That she wouldn't. Violet said he carried on more than he did the first time it happened.

"You remember that first time?"

Mrs. Terman nodded.

I, seated in a dark corner of the store, nodded too.

I remembered that first time.

Violet came in the store to tell Mr.



BERENICE PURCELL

THE FICTIONS

*In sleep the buildings rise as they have never risen
spired brick and plaster, floor on floor. Streets
grow longer, bend unsteadily, or turn into rooms.
At the roots of the brain this blossoms, dies, repeats.*

*And the stone is rolled away, and each of us ascending
to provinces where soundless noise meets dark light,
extracts desire and hate and fear and boredom
from their mixed counterparts hung through the bright*

*soul at morning. . . . The people we have known also,
they too are strangers, wrenched out of a foreign land;
the words they speak are blinding, and the corridors
and roofs about them shine like red magnetic sand.*

—CLARK MILLS.

Halter about it. She said that John had never said anything to the old lady about getting married before. Mrs. Terrence didn't like it a bit, she said.

You see, his mother liked for everyone she knew to live entirely in her. So was she with David Terrence, her husband. I heard—of course that was all before I came to work at Halter's—that he was the sort who liked people, but she soon drove that from him. At first, when she would insist on staying home all the time, he would try to make her go out. But she was stronger than he. And they would sit home, alone, and silent, I suppose, night after night.

Her husband died a few months before John was born. She seemed to have known that, to have provided herself with someone else to govern.

Mrs. Terrence used to teach John herself. Then, when he was eight years old, she engaged a tutor for him.

He was mean—this tutor, Violet said. He used to whack John in the face.

Violet said she didn't see how he could learn anything from a man like that.

When John was about thirteen years old, the tutor died. For some reason or other, Mrs. Terrence couldn't find any that suited her after that. She couldn't find one narrow and bigoted enough. I don't know why. God

knows there are enough of them like that, looking for a job.

She finally let John go to high school.

She warned the principal though. Violet told about that letter she sent him. Violet used to think it was funny. So did everybody she told about it.

There was a standing joke about Mrs. Terrence's letter.

She told the principal in the letter that she would question John daily and that he'd better watch what they taught John.

At any rate, John finished high school, after she had withdrawn him once.

Then she let him go to college, providing he took no "heretical" courses, as she said.

She wrote a letter to the chancellor. He answered her. She gathered that he was not a particularly religious man.

She warned John not to associate with him.

After his graduation, he wanted to look for a job. She wouldn't let him work.

A few months later, when he was twenty-three, there was that time he wanted to marry. He brought the girl over to see his mother. But the old lady must have frightened her so greatly with stares, and her hardness, and her words, that the girl broke her engagement with John.

The old lady told John she didn't approve of the girl anyway. He was so accustomed to accepting her word that he did nothing. He was quiet and morose though for a week or so.

That was the time Violet referred to when she was telling Mr. Halter about the second girl John wanted to marry.

The same thing happened that second time.

I think John was anxious to marry so he could get away from his mother.

HISTORY

*Unfinished arrowhead
In chips of flint.
Unfinished, why?
Brown hand amid
Hard purple lint
With chipping done—
He paused to eat or sigh—*

*Dead golden grass, but one
Limp wisp, the name unknown—*

*An empty snail shell blue
Where black earths cling—*

*A porous brittle
Human vertebra
(It walked! this thing
two-pronged, age-gray,
Exhibit Number One)*

Among the rotten leaves.

*In this, he said, in hue
Of bone and flint, I can
Trace you my history,
And in that, that of man—*

*He entered the rotten leaves
And setting sun.*

—WILL WHARTON.

John did carry on more, though, Mr. Halter was saying to Mrs. Terman.

"Wouldn't even let Violet in to clean up.

"Dish out five pounds of potatoes for Mrs. Terman."

"But he got over it. He didn't seem any the worse for it either, Violet said."

"Poor boy," said Mrs. Terman.

"Then, about a week ago, he was at a party, and he met a girl he really fell in love with. I guess she did with him, too.

"That time he had some sense. He and the girl were going to elope, and then after it was all over tell his mother about it.

"Something happened though." Mr. Halter shook his head.

"The old lady found out about it and asked the girl to call. She did one

day, when John was out. I can imagine what happened. That old lady is enough to scare anybody. I don't know what she told her, but the next day John got a letter from her with his ring.

"Violet said he read the letter and then went to his room. He didn't say a word. Then a little while later he put on his hat and coat and left.

"He still didn't say a thing to her or the old lady.

"Well, you know the rest of it.

"That'll be four dollars and sixteen cents." Mrs. Terman began fishing in her purse for the money.

"Disappeared for two days. Then they found his body in the river early this morning.

"It sure is too bad.

"Four sixteen, four twenty, four twenty-five, and seventy-five make five dollars. Thanks, Mrs. Terman."

Realizing that Mr. Halter had finished and there was nothing more to say, Mrs. Terman prepared to leave, shaking her head sadly.

"Want the boy to help you with the bundles, Mrs. Terman?"

"No, thank you, I can manage all right."

She walked slowly from the store.

"Well, boy, you're lucky you got a lenient mother," Mr. Halter said to me.

I didn't know what lenient meant, but I said, "Yes sir."

I had to take a delivery then.

When I came back, Violet was in the store.

"When dey all left, de old lady said, 'It's God's will, Violet. Dat's what it is.' Ah said, 'Yas'm.' Den she didn't say nothin' else, so Ah left."

"She may call it God's will," said Mr. Halter, who was an intensely religious man, "but He may call it something else."

"Yassuh. You right. Ah got be gettin' back, Mistah Haltah."

Then Violet left. . . .

After Mrs. Terrence got back from her son's funeral, she shut herself up in the house and left it only once.

I worked for Mr. Halter for two years more. Violet used to come in for groceries.

She'd always say, "Nothin' new ovah dere."

Not once in those two years did the old lady leave the house, or even unbolt the front door.

We moved away then.

I used to pass by once in a while. Every time I did, Mrs. Terrence would be sitting up there at the window.

She didn't change a bit, it seemed to me.

Just sat there, watching, watching.

Yesterday, almost twenty-three years exactly since the day we moved away, I read that Mrs. Terrence had died.

They didn't know about it for a week, the paper said.

Finally Joseph Silver, who ran the grocery store, noticed that Violet, Mrs. Terrence's maid, had quit coming in. He told the policeman on the beat.

They broke into the house the next day. That was yesterday.

They found Mrs. Terrence lying in bed upstairs, a sheet over her. She had been dead for about a week, the doctor said.

They found no trace of Violet. She had packed her things and left. They were still looking for her, but they didn't think they'd find her.

After I read that newspaper story yesterday, I sat in the chair and thought for a long time.

I thought of that day I saw them bring John's body in.

I thought of the grocery store.

I thought of Mr. Halter.

I rather fancied him saying, "She lived alone for twenty-five years, and she died alone. Maybe that was God's will."

But Mr. Halter had been dead himself for four years.

—GORDON SAGER.

Book

Review of *Collected Poems, 1921-1931*, by William Carlos Williams. The Objectivist Press.

Williams is made up largely of cleverly manipulated surfaces, held together by a delightfully suave attitude. This Objectivist is a master at piecing together the crooked ends of the world of the objects of outer experience. He writes in what might be called a chromatic style, with a feeling for surfaces that works itself into a pattern at once sporadic and inclusive. Williams is particularly good at applying his light touch to bringing together moods and mental attitudes and external, disconnected fragments. Though he lacks the blank satire of Eliot in his photograph of the urban scene, he possesses the subtle technique of avoiding certain parts of reality and focusing his eye on gay colors and motions to give a kaleidoscopic effect. Often he magnifies a particular bit of matter simply because he likes it; the result is a mild caricature of the modern scene.

Williams has a tendency to unloose a great deal too much of sheer "literary nonsense," an inheritance from the era of the Cummings-Stein ravings. Much of his work is the expression of an enthusiasm for occurrences in everyday life; it is scarcely ever profound or philosophical. His thin sentimentality, when applied alike to animals,

waitresses and balloons, becomes rather tiresome. The sort of thing he does best and should stick to is a delicately shaded still-life, picturing concrete particularities.

*Pink confused with white
Flowers and flowers reversed
Take and spill the shaded flame
Darting it back into the lamp's horn.*

is perfect still-life and does not lack a peculiarly subtle internal movement; but on the opposite page we find:

*The universality of things
draws me toward the candy
with melon flowers that open.*

...
*distortion of eyeglasses
that see everything and remain
related to mathematics.*

If only Williams would not dilute the richness of his surfaces by technical abstractions! It may be seen that his pattern relies almost solely on the capricious movement of small things, whether it be the trickling of a waterfall or the selling of nut chocolates in some towering stone building. He scorns the methodical in everyday life, and this probably detracts from the value of his best reflective lyrics. He has benefited by going his own way, without being much affected by the taut, compressed imagery of Pound or MacLeish.

—E. H. Angert II.

CALENDAR

- April 17-May 16.—Exhibition of French Impressionists, 1860-80, *City Art Museum*.
- April 18-19.—Frank Parker, *Discur*, at the *Little Theater*.
- April 24.—Lecture, "Whistler and His Contemporaries," Wuerpel, *City Art Museum*.
- April 28.—Demonstration by John J. Eppensteiner, "An Artist Draws," *City Art Museum*.
- April 29.—Two One Act Plays by Washington University Students, at the *Little Theater*.
- April 30.—Maria Jeritza in *Annina*, at the *American*.
- May 7-12.—*Both Your Houses*, play at the *Little Theater*.