

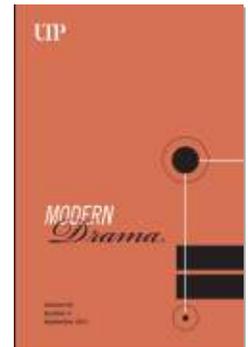


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Finding T.S. Eliot's "Little Devils": Marionettes and *Sweeney Agonistes*

MERT DILEK



ABSTRACT: *Taking its cue from T.S. Eliot's early marionette poems, this article argues that the puppet, and the puppet-like, played a vital but critically neglected role in the development of Eliot's early dramaturgy and its practical, though partial, realization in his first play, Sweeney Agonistes (1926–27). Eliot's penumbral evocations of the marionette in his reviews of human performers from the early 1920s point to his fascination with grotesque and inhuman styles of performance. This critical stance, along with modernist theatre's broader preoccupation with puppets, shaped Eliot's first foray into writing for the stage, resulting in a work that behaves like a puppet play, both on the page and in performance. Drawing on archival materials, the article goes on to consider the stylistic and thematic features of Sweeney Agonistes in light of their resonances with puppet performances and discusses how certain stage productions, especially those directed by Hallie Flanagan and Rupert Doone in the 1930s, made these connections explicit. It concludes that despite Eliot's departure from this dramaturgy in his later plays, his turn to drama had significant but unacknowledged, because largely renounced, roots in an aesthetics of performance whose ideals were best manifested by the puppet.*

KEYWORDS: *puppet performances, modernist theatre, Ballets Russes, Léonide Massine, Alfred Kreymborg, Hallie Flanagan, Group Theatre*

In the beginning were marionettes. Though T.S. Eliot declares him “dead,” his marionette in “Humouresque” (1909) vacillates between banality and theatricality with his “common face” and “who-the-devil-are-you stare” (*Poems* 237). At once savvy manipulator and sardonic spectator, Eliot casts a wider glance at his marionettes in “Convictions (Curtain Raiser)” (1910), imagining them in social routines where they purport to express themselves in a “monotone / Of promises and compliments” (*Poems* 238). As critics have observed, the young poet's pivotal reading of Franco-Uruguayan poet Jules Laforgue looms behind this authorial recourse to the puppet show, and with his internalization of the Laforguian influence, the marionettes disappear from his poetry (see Sigg 95;

Mayer 43; Gordon 43). Exiled from Eliot's poetic praxis, however, they migrate to his dramatic imagination, enacting what is in many ways a fitting homecoming, as Eliot now deploys them in his thinking about their habitat: the stage. But how do marionettes register their presence outside Eliot's poems? What force in the budding dramatist's mind pulls their strings, and why?

It is odd that the role played by the marionette in Eliot's dramatic theory and practice should have received short shrift: the marionette is by definition a performing figure, and its presence in Eliot's early drama, however submerged it may be, turns out to have more illuminating and wide-reaching implications than its poetic renderings. Anne Stillman – the only critic to have taken a sustained look at the marionette in Eliot's work – has discussed how Eliot's quatrain poems, especially "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" (1918), "rework aspects of the earlier marionette poems" (119), but has not considered how the nature of the "marionette-like" changes as the term lodges itself in Eliot's dramatic thinking (137). Inversely, the comparatively thin critical branch that deals with Eliot's drama has overlooked his persistent interest in the marionette, favouring instead his relationship to other forms of popular performance and the theological concerns of his plays (see C.H. Smith; Malamud; Chinitz). Yet, as archival materials from his theatrical life testify, both the development of Eliot's early dramaturgy and its practical – though partial – realization in his first play, *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926–27), were variously indebted to the charms and suggestions of this influential puppet figure.

This article contends that the aesthetic attributes of the marionette, spilling over to the practice of marionette-like acting, formed a key principle of evaluation and composition in Eliot's engagements with drama and performance until the mid-1930s. To this end, I first examine Eliot's penumbral evocations of the marionette in his reviews of human performers from the early 1920s and situate them in relation to modernist theatre's preoccupation with puppets. Eliot's critical writings yield a thick description of his sustained preference for styles of performance connoted by the marionette, which, I argue, underpins his burgeoning dramatic practice. To shed light on this nexus, I then turn to *Sweeney Agonistes* and probe the ways in which it behaves like a puppet play, both on the page and in performance, reflecting Eliot's formative investment in the aesthetics of puppetry. The resulting portrait of Eliot and his work helps enrich our understanding of his interests and influences as an emerging dramatist, especially as they arise from – and feed into – the early twentieth century's diverse performance cultures.

Performing the "Unhuman"

Eliot's approach to performance has its basis in his conviction that any form of art dependent on representation by performers – such as drama, music,

and dance – is inherently unstable. For him, performative representation is tantamount to the contentious “intervention” of an “interpreter” between the artist and the audience (*Complete Prose* [CP] 2: 283). What makes this interpretation so undesirable is its inevitable distortion of the work’s form as it is conveyed to the audience. “The performer is interested not in form,” Eliot writes in 1920, “but in opportunities for virtuosity or in the communication of his ‘personality’” (2: 283). Because Eliot would prefer a work of art that “cannot be altered by each interpretation” (2: 507), he disdains the modern actor’s “interpretative gifts” (meant ironically) and sees them as preventing the poetry in a verse play from reaching the audience intact (2: 172). In what Christopher Ricks describes as a moment of “overstatement” “on the edge of fury” (171), Eliot claims: “poetry is something which the actor cannot improve or ‘interpret’; there is no such thing as the interpretation of poetry; poetry can only be transmitted; in consequence, the ideal actor for a poetic drama is the actor *with no personal vanity*” (CP 2: 173, emphasis in original). It is precisely this “*personal vanity*,” elsewhere called “personality,” that exacerbates the actor’s mediating role.

Eliot’s views in this regard can be attributed to the “substantial tradition” of anti-theatricalism among the modernists (Puchner, *Stage Fright* 2). In Eliot’s judgement, because drama cannot ordinarily be performed without such human intrusions, the dramatic form should be shaped so as to minimize the damage that can be inflicted by the actor. The “true acting play” is one that “does not depend upon the actor for anything but acting, in the sense in which a ballet depends upon the dancer for dancing” (CP 2: 506–7). Eliot’s evocation of ballet here is apposite, since he consistently regards it as the prime example of a “strict form,” worthy of emulation by contemporary dramatists (2: 506). So it is with the ballet dancer: “A great dancer, whose attention is set upon carrying out an appointed task, provides the life of the ballet through his movements; in the same way the drama would depend upon a great trained actor” (2: 507). Eliot’s new drama, for all its strictness of form, still needs the actor, but on the assumption that the actor’s training would now give them a novel state of mind to inhabit on stage. Referring to the dancers of Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, Eliot observes:

[T]he man or the woman whom we admire is a being who exists only during the performances [...] it is a personality, a vital flame which appears from nowhere, disappears into nothing and is complete and sufficient in its appearance. It is a conventional being, a being which exists only in and for the work of art which is the ballet. (2: 506)

Eliot’s return to the term “personality” in this context might be initially surprising, but he uses it cunningly, to highlight the vigour, depth, and transience

of the skilful dancer's stage presence. This is an all-encompassing "stage personality" that lives "only in and for" the performance and that is, significantly, not "supplied from and confounded with [the performer's] real personality" (2: 506). The crux of Eliot's account, however, goes on to upend this preliminary focus on "personality": "The differences between a great dancer and a merely competent dancer is [*sic*] in the vital flame, that impersonal, and, if you like, inhuman force which transpires between each of the great dancer's movements" (2: 506). "Impersonal" because detached from his or her own personality. But why "inhuman"?

Historically, this vocabulary of the "inhuman" has its first occurrence in Eliot's criticism in his 1921 praise of Ethel Levey as England's "best revue comedienne" (*CP* 2: 343). American-born actress and vaudeville singer Levey had a "bubbly, high-kicking" style, "with a surprisingly deep voice" (Hischak), and was particularly known for her version of the Grizzly Bear dance. According to Eliot's account, she is "the most aloof and impersonal of personalities; indifferent, rather than contemptuous, towards the audience [...]. Hers is not broad farce, but a fascinating inhuman grotesquerie; she plays for herself rather than for the audience" (*CP* 2: 343). In Levey's autonomous performance, then, her disregard for the audience becomes a trait of her stage personality. Crucially, this is a personality displayed by someone who is less (or more) than a person, an aspect of whose comportment is distorted or exaggerated beyond the borders of the human. Eliot finds such an "element of *bizarrierie*" in most of the revue comedians (2: 343), as well as in particular performers of the music hall stage, namely, Nellie Wallace and Little Tich, who are "a kind of grotesque; their acts are an orgy of parody of the human race" (2: 419). "The four-foot-tall Little Tich," Barry Faulk notes, "was famous for dancing and contorting on stage in three-foot boots, mixing graceful movement with comic pratfall," while "Nellie Wallace gained fame for her role as a pantomime dame, the Widow Twankey, a stylized caricature of an elderly female" (194). Little Tich's mischievous cavorting and Wallace's pantomime persona enabled these performers to distance themselves from "the human race" to such an extent that they could parody it. Because their grotesque energies outweighed their humanity, "the appreciation of these artists requires less knowledge of the environment"; that is, their "inhuman" performances constituted worlds of their own, considerably divorced from the actual, human world that they inhabited (*CP* 2: 419). Eliot's strategy in such comments is not only to "distance the performer's personality from the performance," as Amy Koritz writes (144), but to distance the performer from his or her humanity.

As much as Eliot wished to amalgamate these figures of popular entertainment into a new dramaturgy, described by Ronald Schuchard as "a total theatre where gesture, movement, rhythm, and detachment are essential attributes of

the actor" (110), he was also able to identify and develop this actorly ideal in what he saw on the theatre stage in the early 1920s. An echo of these qualities can be heard in what he has to say about the beloved comedic actress Athene Seyler, who would appear regularly in Restoration comedies and Shakespeare plays, and whom Eliot admires for acting with "a kind of cold ferocity, a pure and undefiled detachment" (*CP* 2: 524). This "detachment" refers to Seyler's dissociation from her own personality, but the "cold ferocity" that accompanies it points the way to a mode of fierceness that may well be inhuman. Eliot, according to his piece "Dramatis Personae" (1923), finds an even more resonant embodiment of his ideal actor in Ion Swinley's performance in the Phoenix Society's 1923 production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, which he contrasts with Michael Sherbrooke's "realistic" acting on the same stage (*CP* 2: 434). Unlike Sherbrooke, who is "not an actor" but "an illusionist," Swinley is "always an actor; he makes himself into a figure, a marionette; his acting is abstract and simplified" (2: 434). While the adjectives "abstract" and "simplified" are part and parcel of Eliot's discourse on a new poetic drama, the addition of "marionette" to this vocabulary should give us pause. "[H]e makes himself into a figure, a marionette": compressed in this is the overt expression of an aesthetics of performance that often goes by other names in Eliot's prose. Swinley's voluntary transformation of himself into the figure of a string puppet is tantamount to a surrendering of that very agency to a superior force that will control him. His physicality may indeed evoke a marionette, with its fixity of expression and angularity of motion, but there is also the sense that these marionette-like attributes come from a deeper drive toward conventional acting. Swinley, "with his mask-like beauty," belongs to the stage of the future, but not without a weakness: "he has not had the training in movement and gesture – the only training in movement and gesture – the training of ballet" (2: 434).

It is at this point that Eliot's commentary brings to the fore what he considers a superior model of performance: Léonide Massine, the Russian choreographer and dancer who worked with the Ballets Russes and whom Eliot called both "the greatest actor [...] in London" (*CP* 2: 434) and "the greatest mimetic dancer in the world" (2: 543). Massine's mimetic power was certainly not in the vein of Sherbrooke's. Rather, he was "the most completely unhuman, impersonal, abstract" performer (2: 434). Eliot's switch from "inhuman" to "unhuman" makes it difficult to call what Massine becomes on stage a persona or a character. As Schuchard states, "Massine, like Ethel Levey, had an uncanny ability to *transmit* intense dramatic emotion, both comic and tragic," embodying "the very sense of caricature that Eliot labored to define and resuscitate" (112, emphasis in original). Yet even the term "caricature" may not do justice to Eliot's conception of Massine: he abstracts the dancer to the point of not so much distorting as dissolving the contours of his personhood.

It is as though Massine's whole being, when on stage, turns into a symbol: "the difference between the conventional gesture of the ordinary stage, which is supposed to *express* emotion, and the abstract gesture of Massine, which *symbolises* emotion, is enormous. The former is usually untrue, and always monotonous" (*CP* 2: 435, emphasis in original). The engaging variety of symbolized emotion, unlike the dull "gesture of daily existence," elicits the spectator's response and therefore must occupy the contemporary stage (2: 435). "[I]nstead of pretending that the stage gesture is a copy of reality," Eliot exhorts, "let us adopt a literal untruth, a thorough-going convention, a ritual" (2: 435). The "literal untruth" of such stylization can only come from the "completely unhuman" (2: 435): Massine, to begin with, but also Charlie Chaplin, who "has escaped in his own way from the realism of the cinema and invented a *rhythm*" (2: 435, emphasis in original), and Enrico Rastelli, whose juggling is "more cathartic than a performance of *A Doll's House*" (2: 473). Just as a "great speech" in Shakespeare has "the impersonality of something which simply utters itself, which exists in its own life" (*CP* 5: 537), these superlative performers have the impersonality of "unhuman" beings that utter themselves through a symbolically charged vocabulary of the body, displaying, in Matthew Bevis's words, "an abstract, mechanistic cadence" (143).¹

When Eliot deploys the word "marionette" in his writings on performance, it is only with reference to Ion Swinley, whom he considers, for all his "abstract and simplified" qualities, inferior to Léonide Massine (*CP* 2: 434). Unsurprisingly, it was none other than Massine whose performances and choreographies had been described for years as singularly marionette-like. In this sense, Massine represents a crucial nexus in Eliot's prose between an explicit commendation of certain performative attributes and a subterranean preoccupation with the marionette. In all the Massine performances he watched, Eliot would have recognized that the grotesque abstraction of the dancer's contorted and rapid movements had its source, sometimes quite explicitly, in the marionette.² Ezra Pound, writing under the pseudonym B.H. Dias, had reviewed one of these shows, *La Boutique fantasque*, in 1919:

This ballet strikes at every fundamental of the photographic and imitative school of art; every gesture of these new puppets is infinitely more intense and significant by reason of its jerky restraint than were the languors of the Swinburnian dances, it is also the art of the dance as opposed to the personal charm of the dancer. The gesture is never a copy of real gesture; it is always something which represents the real gesture by puppet's proxy; it has the frenzy and the impotence of the puppet. (428)

One senses in Eliot's 1923 "Dramatis Personae" a delayed echo of these sentiments. Massine's revolt against the realist tradition, his prioritization of the

ballet's form at the expense of the performer's "charm," and his intensely symbolic gestures are all elements later picked up by Eliot. What is hidden in Eliot's account but overt in Pound's is the connection to puppets, significant not merely because *La Boutique*'s story features automata that come alive but because the representational tenor of the gestures emulates those of puppets.

All the same, Eliot's encounters with Massine and his kin were not the only source of his fascination with the puppet-like potentiality of the ideal performer. He knew well that the wooden actor had long been a fixture of modernist theatre, an accomplice to its evolving desire to control the human actor in novel and, at times, forceful ways. "Occasionally attempts have been made to 'get around' the actor," he wrote in 1920, "to envelop him in masks, to set up a few 'conventions' for him to stumble over, or even to develop little breeds of actors for some special Art drama" (*CP* 2: 283). Yet Eliot did not believe that the "utter rout of the actor profession" could be a viable solution to the problems instigated by the performer (2: 283): "I do not by any means intend the actor to be an automaton, nor would I admit that the human actor can be replaced by a marionette" (2: 507). A literal marionette theatre, then, could not be entertained as a legitimate, or universal, alternative to the personality-ridden stages of the time. Still, the aesthetic concepts underlying the marionette, coupled with what that figure could teach the human actor, had an irresistible appeal for Eliot, who was far from alone in this interest.

"There is a renaissance of the marionette," one reviewer declared in 1931: "The puppets are invading new fields; they are deserting vaudeville and setting themselves up in the art theatres. All over the world they are receiving new acclaim and playing new roles" (Levin 10) (see, e.g., [Figure 1](#)). The marionettes' invasion of highbrow circles was less the symptom of a vogue in the 1920s than the culmination of a broader trend since the 1890s. The turn of the century had, in Harold Segel's words, "far surpassed previous periods in its susceptibility to the allure of the puppet figure" (34), leading to the emergence of what John Bell has termed "puppet modernism" (88). As Martin Puchner notes, by "ushering in an estranged or uncanny theater in accordance with the antimimetic instincts of modernism" ("Puppets" 194), puppets created a "crucial undercurrent within modernism" (185). While some dramatists, including Arthur Schnitzler and Jacinto Benavente, developed work explicitly for puppets, others, including Alfred Jarry, Maurice Maeterlinck, W.B. Yeats, and Eugene O'Neill, wrote "plays for human actors whose character, movements, or mode of being might mirror those of puppets" (Gross 6). It was not unusual for playwrights and directors to describe their plays as marionette shows, even if there were no marionettes in them. Edward Gordon Craig's oft-misunderstood ideal performer, the Übermarionette, for instance, was not an actual marionette, but a human actor "disguised beyond recognition" (Craig 40), purged of the accidental, and trained



FIGURE 1: Mephistopheles and Dr Faust in the renowned puppeteer Tony Sarg's 1934 show *Faust: The Wicked Magician*. Source: bMS Thr 959 (113), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

to convey “depersonalized emotion by muscular tension alone” (Innes 123). The marionette, for Craig and many others, marked the standard to which the human performer ought to strive.

That even Bernard Shaw, whose realist strain was distasteful to Eliot, ended up celebrating the puppet is a testament to the distance traversed by

this figure since its tumultuous re-emergence in the Western dramatic imaginary in the late nineteenth century. "The puppet is the actor in his primitive form," Shaw pronounced in 1932, "its unchanging stare, petrified (or rather lignified) in a grimace expressive to the highest degree [...] the mimicry by which it suggests human gesture in unearthly caricature – these give to its performance an intensity to which few actors can pretend" (26). Writing in 1924, Eliot had found this "intensity" in the great dancer's "vital flame," which could be kindled only through a turn to the puppet (*CP* 2: 506); the puppet's "unearthly caricature" was the fount of the performer's "inhuman grotesquerie" (2: 343). It is clear, then, that Eliot had witnessed, read about, and alluded to the puppet-like on a number of occasions, but the question lingers: had he ever met the puppet itself?

Sweeney Agonistes; or, "How Do You Make a Puppet?"

A letter by Virginia Woolf, dated 12 May 1923, reads: "I shall recoup myself for the extreme coldness, colourlessness, and insipidity of the external world by going to the Italian marionettes tomorrow: by having Tom Eliot to dinner; by dining at the Cock with some brave spirit" (Woolf, *Letters* 37). Woolf was referring to the marionettes of Teatro dei Piccoli, a world-famous puppet theatre founded in Rome (see [Figures 2](#) and [3](#)). From April to August 1923, the company gave various performances in London, whose immense popularity and genuine artistic appeal were compared to those of the Ballets Russes ("Operatic Puppets"). There is no evidence to suggest that Eliot attended one of these performances, but he dined with Woolf four days after she saw the Roman marionettes, and the subject may easily have come up during this dinner, especially as the two often went to the theatre together and discussed their impressions (Woolf, *Letters* 38). During this period, British newspapers teemed with accounts of Teatro dei Piccoli, admiring the marionettes' "convincing and artistic acting" (Squire 16), their ability to foreground movements "for what they really are" ("Operatic Puppets" 10) (see [Figure 4](#)). Even if he did not see the show, Eliot would likely have read some of these pieces and known about the extent to which these marionettes had captivated London audiences. Not that London would have been the first place to provide him with this kind of thrill: previously, Eliot would have seen marionette performances at Harvard and in Parisian music halls (see "Program for Italian Festa"; Hargrove 238).

Just as Teatro dei Piccoli was wrapping up its London tour in August, Eliot started working on what would become his first play, *Sweeney Agonistes*. He wrote a draft synopsis and some of the dialogue between September 1923 and October 1924 and then left the work unfinished (Madden 109). The two fragments of Eliot's drama – *Fragment of a Prologue* and *Fragment of an*



FIGURE 2: A puppet performer in the Teatro dei Piccoli performance of *The Barber of Seville*.

Source: bMS Thr 959 (111), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Note: The lines on this figure are not part of the composition of this image.



FIGURE 3: Teatro dei Piccoli's concert pianist puppet. Source: BMS Thr 959 (112), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Agon – were published in the *Criterion* in 1926–27 and in book form in 1932. Critics of the play have extracted much from its fragmented state: they have not only teased out *Sweeney's* Aristophanic structure and theological sub-texts but tirelessly disentangled the astounding range of generic devices and



FIGURE 4: A cartoon depicting “a few of the 800 puppets that make up the Teatro dei Piccoli.” The caption comments: “The fascination that these puppets exercise over one is of an indescribable nature. It is however certain that they succeed in providing entertainment of the highest order.” Source: bMS Thr 959 (109), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

performance forms alloyed in this work, including ancient rituals of death and rebirth, music hall turns, vaudeville, burlesque, satire, and the racist tradition of the American minstrel show. Rachel DuPlessis aptly describes this “creolization of sources” as an “overloaded amalgam of generic allusions drawing on a maximum of theatrical traditions,” which “keeps the work mobile – campy, knowing, stylized, sincere, *and* mocking – difficult to fix or pin down” (103, emphasis in original). Fuelled especially by the play’s confluence of diverse tropes and its “purposefully unsettled and open-ended dramaturgy” (Robinson 230), some accounts of *Sweeney* have drawn attention to its “grotesque intensity” (Grove, “Pereira” 173), foregrounding its “diabolic energy” and “expansive, anarchic fun” (Chinitz 149). What lies dormant in such commentaries is the question of how *Sweeney* and Eliot’s fascination with the aesthetics of puppetry relate to each other. Both Schuchard (113–15) and Koritz (158), for instance, gesture to Massine’s influence on *Sweeney*, and DuPlessis finds Eliot’s remarks on Ethel Levey prescient of the play (99). While Robin Grove describes Dusty and Doris as “jerky marionettes controlled by something beyond themselves” (“Auden” 147), and Anthony Cuda notes “the puppet-like, inhuman demeanor” of Eliot’s characters (219), these connections remain rather sketchy.

Accounts of *Sweeney's* hazy compositional history often point to one of two records as the first sign of the play's inception: either Woolf's diary entry from 20 September 1920, where she mentions Eliot's turn to "caricature" and his desire to "write a verse play in which the 4 characters of Sweeny [*sic*] act the parts" (*Diary* 68), or Eliot's 1923 letter to Pound, where he notes that he has "mapt out Aristophanic comedy" (Eliot, *Letters* 2: 209). The glaring gap between these two moments is puzzling. An epigraph from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which Eliot appended to the typescript scenario of the play but later removed, hints as much: "Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma or a hideous dream."³ The noxious phantasms that haunted Eliot in this interim, between 1920 and 1923, were numerous, but marionettes lurked behind some of them. Consistently overlooked by critics of *Sweeney Agonistes*, but pertinent to almost everything about the play, is a letter from Eliot to the American poet and playwright Alfred Kreymborg, dated 23 August 1923. Eliot's first order of business in the letter is to confirm that he has received the manuscript of Kreymborg's article "Writing for Puppets" for possible publication in the *Criterion* (*Letters*, 2: 192). Eliot then points out how much he enjoyed Kreymborg's *Puppet Plays*, a collection of seven plays published earlier that year, with a preface by Craig. He describes how the volume has inspired him in his steps toward *Sweeney*:

I think you have really got hold of something new and fruitful in rhythm – at any rate they have been a great stimulation to me and I have read them several times. They are very different indeed from what I have in my mind to attempt, yet they are more like it than anything else I know. I am trying to get at a dominant rhythm and subordinated rhythms for the thing – I expect it will be called jazz drama. Anyway, you encourage me to continue. (2: 192)

It was clearly Kreymborg who had gotten closest to what had been germinating in Eliot's dramatic imagination for years. As Eliot admits, the distance was still considerable – "very different indeed" – but in Kreymborg's plays he had found something that provoked multiple readings and could serve as a reliable model for his own dramatic practice.

Even though Eliot singles out Kreymborg's use of rhythm as the source of his admiration, the letter's conclusion lays bare the broader reason for his interest in Kreymborg's work. Eliot poses key questions that masquerade as an afterthought: "By the way, how do you make a puppet? As I think I told you, I want to build a small theatre – a box small enough to stand on a table 3 × 3 ft. – and preordain every move and gesture and grouping. How do you make faces for the little devils?" (*Letters* 2: 192–93). Resembling an inadvertent confession, these throwaway lines make transparent a desire that appears to have been brewing for a long time. In his autobiography, *Troubadour*, Kreymborg recounts how Eliot, when they met in London sometime before October

1922, “asked him a casual question about writing for puppets,” which Kreymborg had answered in a “dithyramb,” quoting Beethoven’s dedication for *Missa Solemnis*: “*Vom Herzen, mag es zu Herzen gehen*. This is how one cannot help writing for them” (316–17).⁴ “Eliot smiled his sphynx-like smile,” Kreymborg adds, “and nodded in a friendly fashion” (317). Let us recall that, months later, in April 1923, Eliot would go on to praise performers for being like marionettes. Behind the sphinx-like visage must have lain a yearning to create “little devils” himself, or to have human performers, like Swinley and Massine, create them: Eliot’s first dramatic work was to be a puppet play, but in the sense that Kreymborg’s plays were puppet plays – “intended for human as well as for wooden actors” (*Puppet Plays* [PP] vii). His characters, like Kreymborg’s (or Maeterlinck’s, for that matter), were to be “subject to primitive designs of puppetry, controlled by a circumstantial figure or puppeteer, however vague or varied his outline, or curious the manifestation of his will” (PP vii).

Kreymborg had qualified the suitability of his plays for human actors by making clear that he would prefer “lifeless nonentities” to act in them (PP vii). This was because his plays made “certain technical demands” upon actors, such as “a type of contrapuntal ritual to be sounded; of harmonious pantomime to be observed,” which could be better “apprehended” by marionettes (vii). Part of this ritualistic aspect, especially fitting for puppets, can be traced to Kreymborg’s dreamy, impressionistic theatricality: in *When the Willow Nods*, for instance, one of the characters “*speaks with a detached air in a rubato tempo*,” while caressing a hidden drum “*with exquisite, haphazard rhythms*” (3). Elsewhere in the collection, Kreymborg calls for “*a series of unconscious poses*” (3), “*geometrical*” gesticulation (65), and a pantomime that suggests “*the contours of certain ancient Burmese dances*” (79). Other plays are haunted by “*weird shadows*” thrown either by the “*low, gnarled stature and twisted arms*” of oaks (21) or by two *bisque* figures that “*join in a grotesque silhouette*” (47). These directives for visual stylization are complemented, and in large part buttressed, by the syncopated, repetitive, and mechanical verse spoken by the characters, which for Eliot was the sign of “something new and fruitful in rhythm.” Kreymborg appears to have crafted the language of his plays primarily to be spoken by – that is, through – puppets, as the bizarre rhythms of his verse constitute a sonic counterpart to the often grotesque and abstract stage action. It bears noting that at the time, realist plays – and especially plays in prose – were generally not deemed fit for puppets; marionette plays were those that required “something beyond realism – a tangible rhythm, an overemphasis of the droll or of the poetic” (Levin 10). In 1934, the American puppeteer Donald Vestal would go on to address this issue directly in his correspondence with Gertrude Stein. In Vestal’s judgement, “a perfect style of writing” for marionettes would have to be “as stenographic as the short steps they must take to keep proportions,” since “long-windedness kills all effect” (Vestal).

The “stenographic” quality of Kreymborg’s versification left a mark on *Sweeney Agonistes* in ways that have been largely ignored. While nearly every account of *Sweeney* refers in some capacity to Eliot’s distinctive language in this work, none points to its kinship with the speech of Kreymborg’s puppets. As has been observed, a key element of Eliot’s play is its factitious and mechanical rhythmic energy, manifested in the form of stichomythic back-chat and likely inspired by jazz, as well as Seneca.⁵ But this feature of *Sweeney* also has an immediate precursor, and a source of stimulation, in Kreymborg’s *Puppet Plays*, where much of the over-stylized and foreshortened dialogue relies on stichomythia and syncopation. Consider, for example, this moment from *Blue and Green*:

HE: Come and sit down.
SHE: I’ve sat down before.
HE: Let us weigh the question.
SHE: We’ve weighed it before.
HE: Or premise a new discussion—
SHE: Old discussion—

(PP23)

The distance between these lines and the following dialogue in *Fragment of a Prologue* is not long:

DUSTY: You’ve got to know what you want to ask them
DORIS: You’ve got to know what you want to know
DUSTY: It’s no use asking them too much
DORIS: It’s no use asking more than once

(ELIOT, *POEMS* 118)

Eliot’s largely monosyllabic and deflective lines echo those of Kreymborg, much as She captures and twists what He says. Yet whereas in Kreymborg’s dialogue, it is a single word that jumps from one line to the next, Doris teeters on the brink of iterating Dusty’s lines in their entirety. In this, too, Eliot might have had in mind Kreymborg’s penchant for repetition. Especially in *Lima Beans* and *People Who Die*, Kreymborg frequently blurs the boundary between stichomythia and mere repetition, creating long stretches of dialogue where one character simply replicates the words of another. Although the extent of repetition in *Sweeney Agonistes* is limited, several instances in the play set store by such overt echoes. One need only recall Doris’s duplicated “You cut for luck,” Krumpacker’s thrice-exclaimed “Do we like London,” and these lines by Sweeney: “Birth, and copulation, and death. / That’s all, that’s all, that’s all, that’s all. / Birth, and copulation, and death” (*Poems* 118, 120, 122). While Kreymborgian characters’ prolonged repetitions may become tediously

predictable at times, Eliot's more sporadic and sophisticated use of this technique creates a disturbingly dynamic effect, enriching these iterative moments with a jerky undertone.

Another verbal gesture Eliot might have picked up from Kreymborg is his accentuation of speech through stressed syllables and words. Kreymborg overexploits this habit in *Lima Beans*, where the Huckster lists his fruits and vegetables with specific stresses, such as "tomatoes," "cabbages," "cauliflower," and "red beets" (*PP* 80–81, 88–89, emphasis in original). *Sweeney* displays a controlled borrowing of this typographic notation, most prominently in Dusty's phone call with Pereira, where five words are stressed, and in her later lines, "Well I *never* / What a *coincidence!*" (Eliot, *Poems* 116, 118, emphasis in original). Later on, Doris, Swarts, and Snow also utter stressed lines. Such accentuation not only renders the characters' speech off-kilter but creates a form of vocal angularity, imbuing the lines with resounding twists and turns. It also complicates some of the play's repetitions by injecting into them sonic variety, as when Dusty responds to Doris's "I like Sam" with "*I like Sam*" (115, emphasis in original).

Yet another element that situates *Sweeney's* language in the realm of puppet plays is Eliot's inclusion of objects into the play's verbal texture: *Sweeney* represents the ringing of a phone as though it were a line – "Ting a ling ling / Ting a ling ling" – spoken by a character called "Telephone" (*Poems* 116). The knocking at the door is similarly verbalized twice, in each case nine "KNOCK[s]" parading as though they were words spoken by someone (*Poems* 119, 127). The result is not, as Barbara Everett claims, "a single speech style" shared by people and objects alike, but an ontological reordering, if not levelling, between the seemingly human and the seemingly inanimate (259). In *Manikin and Minikin*, Kreymborg had animated and given voice to bisque figures, endowing them with humanity in the absence of people. In *Sweeney*, by attributing lines to the telephone and the door, Eliot does not necessarily make them more human but does make his other characters appear less so.

When Mary Trevelyan confronted Eliot about his dramatic characters in 1950, she was onto something revelatory about *Sweeney*. "Your people are mere puppets," she said, "speaking what you want them to speak. [...] They don't really come alive at all" (qtd. in Gordon 466). Eliot himself had previously observed a similar phenomenon in the works of other dramatists: Pierre de Marivaux's "shadowy" characters, who become "very real" only when together (*CP* 2: 4), for example, or the "shadow-show" of John Marston's plays, with its "significant lifelessness" (*CP* 5: 117). The characters of "all the greatest drama," he claimed in 1919, "are drawn in positive and simple outlines," with "a clear and sharp and simple form" (*CP* 2: 154).

Sweeney might be deemed the result of Eliot's own experimentation with this principle of simple and contoured characterization, whereby the characters appear at once insubstantial and delineated. Commentators have acknowledged this aspect of the play in a number of related ways, often describing Eliot's characters as "dramatically conventional" and deliberately "flat" (G. Smith, *Waste Land* 62; C.H. Smith 59). There is, however, more to such flatness than convention, disembodiment, or vacuity: it is a distorted flatness, or "flat distortion" (*CP* 2: 159), that makes the characters appear edgy, bizarre, and "queer" (a word that appears four times in the play). Hence, Raymond Williams observes that "the real basis" of these characters is "the comic strip (by which Eliot had always been fascinated): the jerky, angular outline figures, going through a stylised routine of ordinary life" (177–78). It is important to add here that Eliot was also enamoured with Wyndham Lewis's angular, menacing caricatures, called Tyros.⁶ He would have identified in Lewis's "human animals" (qtd. in *CP* 2: 347, n22) the sort of pointed simplification he had admired in Ben Jonson's and Christopher Marlowe's dramatic characters, whose charm consists in a "reduction of detail" (2: 159). Eliot deemed such "stripping" essential to the art of "great caricature," "to which is also essential a flat distortion in the drawing" (2: 159).

It is precisely in relation to these aesthetic allegiances – subtending, as we have seen, Eliot's preference for styles of performance that were knowingly grotesque or inhuman – that the contorted figures of *Sweeney* should be read, for when Eliot was creating them, these modes of embodiment were at the forefront of his mind. It is not for nothing that he intended to have the play's second part begin with a scene where "Doris and Dusty are waltzing [*sic*] together like two automatic dolls" ("Sweeney Agonistes": Early Typescript"). Similarly, he considered concluding the second fragment with Doris's "hysterical screams of laughter" between the ominous knocks at the door ("Early Typescript"). The convulsive, puppet-like physicality Eliot seems to have envisioned for his characters has its counterpart in their figuration, without any stage directions or descriptive statements, as elusively grotesque beings, each – like Ethel Levey – with an "element of *bizarrierie*" (*CP* 2: 343). Eliot creates this effect primarily through his dialogue's rhythmic thrust and semantic opacity, which not only distance the characters' sphere of existence from that of the audience but make them appear as though they were otherworldly creatures, like puppets, only pretending to be human.

Sweeney Agonistes is often read as a meditation on the experience of the spiritually aware individual forced to live in a corrosive modern world (see, e.g., C.H. Smith 12–13, 71; Chinitz 115–18; Spanos 10; G. Smith, *T.S. Eliot's* 115). Accordingly, *Sweeney* serves as the play's superior figure, compounding

rituals of sacrificial rebirth with the Christian process of redemptive purgation. Nonetheless, Sweeney remains a character with dark and disturbing streaks; as David Galef puts it, his is a “schismatic” personality, “an odd composite of gaucherie and grace” (503). Sweeney’s sinister side becomes especially evident in his banter with Doris, in which he says he will carry her off to “a cannibal isle” and “eat” her in “[a] nice little, white little, missionary stew” (Eliot, *Poems* 121). In fact, in Eliot’s draft scenario for the play, Sweeney kills Mrs Porter, who is then resurrected to redeem him (“Early Typescript”). As “both a theologian and a murderer,” then, Sweeney pushes at the boundaries of coherent or traditional characterization, spasmodically bringing together, like the form of the play itself, divergent qualities (Galef 499). In this, he is alarmingly akin to puppets, or “prophet-demons,” as Kenneth Gross calls them:

Every puppet [...] has a potential for being at once devil and sorcerer, mocker and teacher. The puppet’s power lies in this way of joining such diverse identities, in its ability to move quickly from one to the other, to join the trivial and the urgent, the commonplace and the magical, the human and inhuman, as well as the living and the dead, impishness and violence. (24)

In words that may as well have been written to describe Sweeney, Gross unwittingly shows us the way to connect Eliot’s expansive vision for this character with the various binaries inherent in the puppet.

One of these joined polarities, the living and the dead, deserves particular attention, as Eliot’s play, much like *The Waste Land* (1922), makes a point of insistently breaking down the distinction between life and death. “Life is death,” Sweeney intones, just before he starts telling the story about the man who “once did a girl in” but later “didn’t know if he was alive and the girl was dead” (Eliot, *Poems* 124–25). His speech nears its climax with these anti-metabolic lines: “I tell you again it don’t apply / Death or life or life or death / Death is life and life is death” (126). Again, before tailing off into the cries of “Hoo ha ha,” the play’s concluding chorus puts its finger on this state of radical indeterminacy: “And perhaps you’re alive / And perhaps you’re dead” (126). The words “life” and “death” nearly forfeit their conventional meanings; they simply “don’t apply” in the intensely liminal world of *Sweeney Agonistes* (126). It is hardly a coincidence that the same existential affliction is also the trademark of puppets, which are “dead things that belong to a different kind of life” (Gross 28). As several theorists have observed, the term “uncanny” is supremely apposite in the context of puppet performances, which epitomize, in particular, the essence of Ernst Jentsch’s 1906 definition of the term. In Jentsch’s account, “the uncanny feeling” arises out of one’s “doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” (221). And this doubt is

what defines the experience of watching a marionette perform: the spectator's perceptual conflict as to whether the marionette is dead or alive constitutes the basis of its theatricality. *Sweeney's* thematic interest in underlining just such a conflict, as repeatedly articulated by its titular character, can be considered a suggestive allusion to the style of performance that the play seems to have in mind, if not actively demands – one that jolts the audience into questioning whether the performers are alive or not, just as the full chorus at the end projects the same uncertainty onto the audience: "And perhaps you're alive / And perhaps you're dead."

Sweeney on Stage, "Without Me There to Direct It"

A view to performance was certainly on Eliot's mind as he was working on *Sweeney*, whatever the play's eventual exile among his "Unfinished Poems" might imply. As early as November 1923, Eliot was articulating to others his intentions about *Sweeney's* staging, envisioning a "production with an orchestra consisting exclusively of drums" (*Letters*, 2: 268; see also Bennett 51–52). He recounted in 1944 that when he started to write *Sweeney*, he "had designed that the speech should have an accompaniment of percussion instruments, various drums, and also the bones" (qtd. in Eliot, *Poems* 790). Nor were his designs limited to sound: in 1929, Eliot wrote to the artist Edward McKnight Kauffer, "it is my duty to finish the play, so that the world may have the benefit of your scenery for it" (*Letters*, 4: 714). Kauffer's illustrations had reminded Eliot of Giorgio de Chirico's surrealist, angular work, and it was this quality that he hoped to replicate in the scenic design for *Sweeney*. His 1923 letter to Kreyborg also suggests that, despite the lack of stage directions in the published fragments, Eliot was thinking, or planning to think, in terms of his characters' spatial dynamics. Ideas about sound, scenery, and blocking were all integrated into his preparations for the play.

Years later, Eliot would go so far as to posit his preoccupation with *Sweeney's* conditions of performance as the reason for its incompletion. In a 1958 talk at Columbia University, he introduced *Fragment of an Agon* as follows: "This was a work I never finished because it has to be spoken too quickly to be possible on the stage, to convey the sort of rhythm that I intended. It was much too fast for dialogue, really" ("T.S. Eliot Talks" 14). Yet Eliot himself had already risen to the challenge in 1947 by reciting the fragment. In the six-minute recording, Eliot delivers a relentlessly mechanical and staccato performance that vacillates between sing-song and nervous cacophony.⁷ Even though Hugh Kenner praises Eliot's recitation as "a finer performance [...] than any cast on a stage is likely to manage" (212), one would do better to approach it as the residue of a distinct theatricality that Eliot had started to formulate for the play's life on the stage. No London theatre in the 1920s

could implement this vision, which is one reason, according to Katharine Worth, Eliot did not, or could not, finish the play (63–64). Nonetheless, with his approval (and involvement, even), the published fragments went on to receive full-scale productions in the 1930s.

The world premiere of *Sweeney Agonistes* opened its curtains at the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College on 6 May 1933. About two months before, in his response to the director Hallie Flanagan's request for permission to stage the play, Eliot had offered not only his approval but a new final scene and a litany of demands regarding the production. "I cannot imagine what anybody can do without me there to direct it," Eliot writes in this letter, reaffirming his directorial attitude toward the work over the years (*Letters* 6: 566). Then comes his attempt to pull the strings of the production from afar:

The action should be stylised as in the Noh drama – see Ezra Pound's book and Yeats' preface and notes to *The Hawk's Well*. Characters *ought* to wear masks; the ones wearing old masks ought to give the impression of being young persons (as actors) and vice versa. Diction should not have too much expression. I had intended the whole play to be accompanied by light drum taps to accentuate the beats (esp. the chorus, which ought to have a noise like a street drill). (6: 566, emphasis in original)

At its core, the letter makes concrete many of Eliot's formerly implicit (or unrecognized) thoughts about the play, displaying a self-assurance that was largely absent from his remarks on it in the 1920s. His stipulation of masked actors, deadpan speech, and a jarring, mechanical-sounding chorus is especially in line with his attraction to puppet plays and puppet-like attributes. In the letter, Eliot also encourages Flanagan to read F.M. Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (1914), which, among much else, draws comparisons between the "fixed conventional plot" of Punch and Judy shows and that of an Aristophanic play (Cornford 147) and deems it "a profound understanding of drama [...] to revert to the use of masks, and even to hanker after substituting the marionette for the living actor" (204). The public should learn, Cornford notes, "to tolerate nothing more realistic than the masked and stylised, puppet-like, figures that trod, with stilted gait, the stage of Aeschylus and Euripides" (204).

Flanagan presented *Sweeney* as part of a "Mime Sequence" titled *Now I Know Love*, grouping Eliot's play with four mimes by Theocritus and two contemporary plays by Vassar students. A note on the program reads: "No one knows what a mime is. See F. M. Cornford, Allardyce Nicoll, W. B. Yeats, T. Arbuthnot Nairn, Otto Crusius, and Ezra Pound. But 'I gotta use words when I talk to you'" ("Program for *Now I Know Love*"). With wilfully esoteric flair, the lines draw attention to *Sweeney's* ambivalence toward dramatic language and contextualize it, along with Eliot's own sources, in the tradition of mime.

Flanagan could, however, describe what a mime is: "the mime is a tour-de force [*sic*]. It breaks all dramatic rules: it has no exposition, no planting or developing of characters, no plot. Its achievement is to create, within the space of half an hour, character immersed in situation" (Flanagan and Davies 1). Insofar as this serves as a sign of her approach to *Sweeney*, her production appears to have made a virtue of the play's already thin plot and dwelt on the characters' situational convulsions, both psychological and physical. Flanagan staged all the pieces on an abstract, semi-cylindrical "construction," which "affords opportunity for exciting movement and choreographic composition" (Flanagan and Davies 18). Indeed, production stills show actors in carefully sculpted tableaux with considerable gestural force (see [Figure 5](#)). Contra Eliot's instructions, her actors did not wear masks, and there were no continual drum taps, though Quincy Porter composed occasional music for a string quartet and a percussionist (Porter). Even though Flanagan had not implemented some of his dicta, Eliot, who was present at the premiere, ended up approving of her rendition of the play (Malamud 34).

The tide would turn for masks over a year later in the London production. In the first instalment of its Revue Series, the London-based Group



FIGURE 5: Hallie Flanagan's production of *Sweeney Agonistes* at Vassar College in 1933. Source: MS Am 2560 Box 11: 295, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Theatre gave three private performances of *Sweeney* in November and December 1934, followed by public performances in early 1935. Characters spoke in American accents that were “INTENDED TO BE IMPRESSIONISTIC AND NOT AUTHENTIC,” and everyone except Sweeney wore a half-mask (“Program for *Sweeney Agonistes* by Group Theatre, November 11 & 25, 1934”). In his review of the production, Desmond MacCarthy described how these masks made the work “largely symbolic,” imbuing it with “a grisly impressiveness lifted above the matter-of-fact” (81). The reason Sweeney was denied a mask can be gleaned from the director Rupert Doone’s program note, where he deems Sweeney the “only three-dimensional character in the play,” while the rest are “conventionalised conventional characters” (“Program for *Sweeney Agonistes* by Group Theatre, December 16, 1934”). Doone’s attempt to hollow out these figures had its climax toward the end of the play: according to the production’s prompt book, just before the final chorus, Dusty and the four men “stand, remove masks, cut throat gesture, take black clothes from packet + put them on heads” (*Sweeney Agonistes*, “Prompt Copy” 31). Rehearsal photographs further suggest that after this procedure, those five actors wore on top of their caps new masks, which were even more stylized than the previous ones, to the point of looking demonic (see [Figure 6](#)). While the removal of



FIGURE 6: Rupert Doone’s Group Theatre production of *Sweeney Agonistes* in 1934. Capped and masked figures are visible at the back. Source: Group Theatre Archive, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Photo by Humphrey Spender.

masks would have first appeared as a humanizing gesture, their immediate replacement by black caps and another set of masks must have signified a more forceful current toward objectification. The unscripted presence of a teddy bear on the stage, held at some point by Dusty, might also be construed as a tongue-in-cheek nod to this mounting focus on the characters' non-human state (see [Figure 7](#)).⁸ Likewise, the second part of the play began with loud groans from Sweeney, which were amplified through microphones, and which may have conferred on him an additional degree of grotesquery, if not of animality (*Sweeney Agonistes*, "Prompt Copy" 23). Doone's production ended with Sweeney brandishing a razor and pursuing Dusty to the sound of her screams and police whistles (*Sweeney Agonistes*, "Prompt Copy" 30–31). By making Sweeney's murderous streak all too explicit, Doone appears to have turned his one "three-dimensional character" into another puppet-like "prophet-demon."

Though Eliot was at pains to point out that Doone's interpretation was "in important respects entirely alien" to his original intentions, he was still "very much pleased with the skill and intelligence of the production" (*Letters* 7: 399). Like the Vassar production, this was not an exact recreation of what Eliot had in mind, but he seems to have thought it an apt reflection of the play's governing spirit. So the show went on: in October 1935, Doone's production transferred to London's Westminster Theatre for fifteen performances, in a double bill with W.H. Auden's *The Dance of Death*. The revival highlighted, with even greater force than before, the differences between Sweeney and the other characters in terms of figural depth. According to Lyndall Gordon, in the Westminster performances, Doone had "made all the characters projections of Sweeney's mind [...]. Even when they unmasked at the end, they were scarcely human" (284). A review notes that "[t]he producers, interpreting their poet, did not intend any of the characters except *Sweeney* to be people," as they constituted a "background of horrible disembodied caricatures" (D.W. 412). It is safe to assume that Doone's actors were going for the "unhuman, impersonal, abstract" (*CP* 2: 434) – Eliot's precious triad – which may well be why he admired their "skill and intelligence" (Eliot, *Letters* 7: 399).

Kindred and keen understandings of the play's puppetry-infused dramaturgy were on display in certain stagings over the subsequent decades, particularly in The Living Theatre's 1952 production in New York, where actors kept moving "stiffly, dreamily" (*Sweeney Agonistes*, Script with Directing Book), and in Eva Vizzy's 1969 adaptation at the Yale School of Drama, which was governed by a "sense of hysterical, dehumanized behavior" ("At the Theater" 10). But if *Sweeney* was a puppet play, and Eliot a puppeteer in spirit, his troupe of marionettes did not last long, even in his lifetime. As they deviously dressed themselves in the borrowed robes of realist drawing-room plays, Eliot's



FIGURE 7: Rupert Doone's Group Theatre production of *Sweeney Agonistes* in 1934. Dusty holds between her fingers what the production's props list calls a teddy bear. Source: Group Theatre Archive, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Photo by Humphrey Spender.

so-called mature works as a playwright, especially after *The Family Reunion* (1939), turned their back on his early dramaturgy and took refuge, however knowingly, in what was in certain respects its opposite.

Yet Eliot's ultimate exorcism of his "little devils" should not make his years of abode with them, on both the page and the stage, any less remarkable. The puppet – as a material figure and an idea, as an imitable model of grotesque performance and an uncanny symbol of liminal and mechanical lives – constituted both an undercurrent in Eliot's dramatic criticism and a structuring principle in his first foray into writing drama. It served, too, as a connective tissue between this emerging dramatist and his theatrical milieu, opening up nourishing channels of influence and resistance. In 1910, Eliot's marionettes had seen "the outlines of their stage / Conceived upon a scale immense" – a scale that only grew bigger in its aspirations for over two decades (*Poems* 238). The curtain might have fallen long ago, but "even in this later age," they still wait for "an audience open-mouthed" (238) and a "KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK" upon the door (127).

NOTES

1. For a discussion of how Eliot's preference for this style of performance can be reconciled with his praise for Marie Lloyd, see Koritz (146–53).
2. For a list of these performances, see Schuchard (110).
3. See Eliot, "Sweeney." In his transcription, Eliot substituted "miasma" for Shakespeare's "phantasma."
4. In English, Beethoven's line means, "From the heart, may it return to the heart."
5. For Eliot on Seneca's use of stichomythia, see "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation" (1927) in *CP* (3: 212–14).
6. See *CP* (2: 344) and Eliot's letter to John Quinn, 9 May 1921, in his *Letters* (1: 452). Eliot's response to Lewis is mentioned in *Letters* (1: 558).
7. The recording is available at Houghton Library as *T.S. Eliot: Reading His Own Poem, 1947* (MS Am 3065, 1005).
8. See "Props List" interleaved in *Sweeney Agonistes*, "Prompt Copy."

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