

Reflections on T.S. Eliot

Loren Brown '23



Like many of my fellow high-school boys of the time, poetry was anathema to my seemingly rugged and straightforward ways—that is, until I was introduced to T.S. Eliot. Upon reading Eliot’s “The Hollow Men,” I was introduced to the possibilities of poetry: its jagged verse, dark literary allusions, and trailing voice came together to form a work that could never be replicated in prose. This poem began in me what has become an ever-present love for T.S. Eliot, and poetry in general. My affection for Eliot arises from our shared commitment to tradition, memory, and continuity, and these concepts we both find essential to the life of any functioning civilization.

His search for faith, beginning with the aimlessness of “The Waste Land” and ending with the love of the “Four Quartets,” is one I have taken up in my own time at Harvard, and is a search that has been aided by Eliot’s words. Walking the same halls here at Harvard as Eliot once did imposes a feeling of respect and awe in me, knowing that it was this college that produced the poet and philosopher whose undying work now guides me down the same path he once trod. In “Little Gidding,” Eliot remarked that “the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living,” and nowhere have I been more conscious of this

than reading Eliot, here at Harvard, over a hundred years after his residency. Many often experience a strong spiritual communion with a writer they deeply admire: for me it is T.S. Eliot, whose poetry will always be near my side offering me hope and a path out of the waste land.