How is a poem made? From what constellation of inner and outer worlds does it issue forth? Sarah Kennedy’s study of Eliot’s poetics seeks out those images most striking in their resonance and recurrence: the ‘sea-change’, the ‘light invisible’, and the ‘dark ghost’. She makes the case for these sustained metaphors as constitutive of the poet’s imagination and art. Eliot was haunted by recurrence. His work is full of moments of luminous recognitions, moments in which a writer discovers both subject and appropriate image. This book examines such moments of recognition and invocation by reference to three clusters of imagery – around and across the borderlines between light and shadow, surface and depth, self and other – drawing on the contemporary languages of literary criticism, psychology, physics, and anthropology. Eliot’s transposition of these registers, at turns wary and beguiled, interweaves modern understandings of originary processes in the human and natural world with a poet’s preoccupation with language. The metaphors arising from these intersections generate the imaginative logic of Eliot’s poetry.

T. S. ELIOT AND THE
DYNAMIC IMAGINATION

SARAH KENNEDY

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The intuition – is it something deeper even than that? – the conjecture, so strangely resistant to falsification, that there is ‘otherness’ out of reach gives to our elemental existence its pulse of unfulfilment. We are the creatures of a great thirst. Bent on coming home to a place we have never known.

– George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, p. 16
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Abbreviations

Where a quotation includes end punctuation, such punctuation has been incorporated within quotation marks. In all other instances, punctuation marks are placed outside quotation marks. All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Citations given without author are by T. S. Eliot, unless otherwise indicated.

List of Abbreviations


